



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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THURSDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2006

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. MF Reynolds, Townsville) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 am.

PETITION

The following honourable member has lodged a paper petition for presentation—

Teacher Aides, Prep Year

Mrs Attwood from 44 petitioners requesting the House to fund the placement of a full time teacher aide in every classroom containing prep children.

TABLED PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women (Mrs Keech)—

- Commercial and Consumer Tribunal—Annual Report 2005-06

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following ministerial papers were tabled—

Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie)—

- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian 2005-06 Annual Report
- Child Death Case Review Committee 2005-06 Annual Report
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian 2005-06 Annual Report on Deaths of Children and Young People
- Major Sports Facilities Authority 2005-06 Annual Report
- Queensland Competition Authority 2005-06 Annual Report
- Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund General Purpose Financial Statements for year ended 30 June 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Queensland Police Service, Annual Statistical Review

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.32 am): Queensland has always been a safe place to live and today we have new statistics that prove that this remains the case. A little later today Judy Spence, the police minister, will be releasing the new police figures which show that Queensland's overall crime rate has remained stable during 2005-06.

Each year, the Queensland Police Service releases its annual statistical review, which charts crime rates statewide and at a regional and district level. Last financial year there was a combined drop of three per cent in the rate of offences against people and property. Break and enters dropped overall by seven per cent for reported offences per 100,000 people. During 2005-06 there were 2,733 fewer homes broken into in Queensland. The rate of car thefts also dropped by 13 per cent. Last financial year, there were 1,494 fewer unlawful use of motor vehicle offences. Police also achieved a two per cent increase in the clear-up rate for these crimes. I say to the Queensland Police Service: well done.

Queensland police are doing their job more efficiently and with better resources. We have more police on the beat and involved in more targeted operations. Now we are seeing the results of that hard work and that long-term investment by my government.

Liquor offences rose by 28 per cent, which police attribute to the combined effects of alcohol management plans in Indigenous communities and the 17-point Brisbane City Safety Action Plan, including the Liquor Enforcement and Proactive Strategies program. I make no apology for being tough in both of those areas. Good order offences rose by nine per cent, which police attribute to the combined effect of the 3 am lockout, speed processing, rostering more police on in entertainment precincts over weekends and the introduction of the Summary Offences Act. In other words, we are cleaning up the streets in the early hours.

Drug offences increased by five per cent. We are getting higher drug detection rates from increased policing, for example, drug dog operations. I know that from time to time the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties attacks the police minister and also me in relation to the use of these drug

dogs. Let me make it really clear: if people do not have illegal drugs, they have no problems. This is a clear strategy to tackle drugs. Some of the nightclub owners seem to think that they do not have any responsibility in this matter. The message that I get back from some of them is, 'Look, it's not our problem if people come in and use drugs on our premises.' I am sorry to tell them that it is their problem. From our point of view, if there were no drugs on the premises, then we would not need drug dogs. We are going to keep using them. So they had better get used to the idea.

These increases are about our police doing their job, making Queensland a safer place to live and a safer place for all of us to go out and enjoy ourselves in. The police minister will go into more detail about these crime figures later today. While there is still work to be done, I again want to compliment the Queensland Police Service on its continuing efforts to make us all safer.

General Peter Cosgrove, Autobiography

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.36 am): I will have the honour later day of officiating at the Queensland launch of General Peter Cosgrove's autobiography. The autobiography, titled *My Story*, is a fascinating account of Peter's rise from a young soldier to Chief of Army and later of the entire Australian Defence Force.

Whether as a young soldier in Vietnam where he was awarded the Military Cross or as one of the first army officers into Darwin after Cyclone Tracy, Peter has always done his duty with courage and professionalism. I would like to read one brief excerpt from the book, because I think it sums him up pretty well. It is Friday, 17 September 1999 and the then Major-General Cosgrove has just been named head of the international force to take on the daunting challenge of bringing peace, order and hope to East Timor. On his first day in the job, he was thrust into the media spotlight and finds himself being interviewed by Kerry O'Brien on the ABC's *7.30 Report*. I quote from page 177 of *My Story*—

The operation would have its risks and the Australian people knew it. At the end of the interview, Kerry O'Brien asked a question along the lines of, 'Tonight there are a very large number of mums and dads (of defence personnel) out there watching. Is there any final thing you want to say to them?'

While I hadn't anticipated that exact question, I had it in the back of my mind that there was one thought I would like to express to underscore my approach to the mission. So I looked as squarely as I could at the camera and said 'I'll take care of them'.

That is Peter Cosgrove. Of course, Queenslanders have been lucky enough to experience that compassion firsthand. Back in March after Cyclone Larry hit far-north Queensland and flattened an area half the size of Tasmania, I picked up the phone and rang General Cosgrove and asked him to come up and help us, and he did. I appointed him head of the Cyclone Larry recovery task force. As all members know, particularly the local member, Warren Pitt, and the Minister for Emergency Services, Pat Purcell, General Cosgrove has done a magnificent job. Anyone who saw the General in action in far-north Queensland will tell you that he was a tower of strength. His firm but friendly hand at countless public and private meetings helped us get things done and helped get people focused. As many people in Innisfail will tell you, just the sight of the General strolling down the street was reassuring in itself.

All Queenslanders owe Peter Cosgrove a huge vote of thanks. His tireless dedication and professionalism in helping rebuild communities in cyclone-affected areas in far-north Queensland will not be forgotten. I take this opportunity to thank General Cosgrove publicly for what he has done.

Cyclone Summit

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.38 am): In recognition of the accelerating impacts of climate change, my government is committed to help better safeguard communities in coastal Queensland from the impact of cyclones. During the election campaign I launched my government's Safeguarding Cyclone Communities policy. One of the key planks of that policy is to hold a planning summit to review the lessons learned from Tropical Cyclone Larry and to consolidate planning for future cyclone seasons. The summit, titled *Living with Cyclones: Queensland Prepared*, will be held in far-north Queensland at the James Cook University campus in Cairns on Thursday, 7 December and Friday, 8 December. I seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard* the details of my ministerial statement for the information of members.

Leave granted.

The summit will include international delegates as well as State Government agencies, Local Government representatives, climate change and weather experts.

It will explore new and improved ways of making cyclone communities safer during the cyclone season—including better planning and building approaches, new approaches to early warning and education campaigns.

Cyclones have always been a part of life in Far North Queensland, but soon they might be bigger, more frequent and further south because of climate change. We need to better understand the risks created by climate change so that we can prepare for the future.

Smart State cyclone strategies should be based on the best research and experience available, here and internationally.

I have also asked that local people who lived through Cyclone Larry—the most powerful cyclone to hit our state in its history—speak to the summit about their experience.

Everyone involved in the Cyclone Larry preparation and response and recovery can be proud of the work they did earlier this year. This summit is an opportunity to ensure that the knowledge and experience we gained from that enormous storm can be used to make Queenslanders even safer during cyclones in the future.

We have provided financial and hands-on assistance to help communities affected by Cyclone Larry get back on their feet, recover and rebuild.

The local communities have proved themselves to be just as resilient and hard-working as their reputation would have us expect.

The Queensland Government will continue to work with emergency service personnel, local Councils and communities to safeguard cyclone communities and to enhance their capacity to respond to violent meteorological events such as cyclones and storm surges.

Further information about the summit will shortly be available online at www.qld.gov.au/cyclonesummit. Members of the public are encouraged to put forward their ideas and comments.

Lexmark Indy 300

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.40 am): Australia's No. 1 racing event, the Indy, has been another success this year. The 2006 Lexmark Indy was a stunning success. Over the four-day carnival, more than 312,000 people from around the world hit the Gold Coast. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Those that attended were lucky enough to see Holden Racing's Todd Kelly pick up the coveted victors surfboard in the V8s and Nelson Philippe claim victory in the Champ Cars.

Phillippe kept the unique streak alive at Indy—the 16th different champ car to hold up the trophy in 16 years of the event.

While I congratulate him for his win I must admit that I was cheering on Team Australia.

They didn't get across the line in first place this year but they came awfully close.

Will Power took pole position but was forced out the race and Alex Tagliani got up on the podium in third place.

In the support categories, Alex Davison won the Wright Patton Shakespeare Carerra Cup, Damien White took out the Hayman's Electrical V8 Utes and Kyle Clews won the CARSguide Aussie Racing cars.

The Lexmark Indy continues to go from strength to strength.

Our Government has always been a strong supporter and our support has paid dividends for Queenslanders.

It is estimated to pump approximately \$60 million into our economy each year.

That is money that means jobs for Queenslanders and benefits for business.

It provides priceless exposure for the Gold Coast with a potential audience of 900 million people in 164 countries.

Of course there are also many other benefits for tourism with many of the visitors that come from interstate and overseas also extending their holiday and visiting other parts of our great State.

The 17th Lexmark Indy 300 will be held on the Gold Coast from October 18 to 21 next year.

I encourage Queenslanders to get in early and get their tickets for one of the most popular and exciting sporting events in the world.

Double Jeopardy

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.40 am): In July 2000, the Council of Australian Governments agreed that the reform of the rule against double jeopardy merits nationally consistent treatment and established a national working group to develop proposals for reform. Queensland officers will be participating in the COAG working group of senior officials, which is meeting in December of this year. However, COAG will consider the matter in April 2007 and we are seeking to get a national approach.

Toowoomba, Community Cabinet

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 am): I am pleased to announce that the 97th community cabinet will be held in Toowoomba on 3 and 4 December. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

I want to take this opportunity to urge everyone in the area to come and join the Queensland Cabinet on the afternoon of the 3rd at the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE Campus, in Bridge Street Toowoomba.

As members know the Queensland Government's Community Cabinet's offer a unique opportunity for members of our community to discuss issues of concern—or to raise good ideas—directly with the Minister's responsible for making Queensland a better place to live.

Over the many years that my Government has been travelling around Queensland for Community Cabinets they have proved a very effective way of identifying problems and providing fast solutions.

Local member and now Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, the Hon Kerry Shine has been instrumental in ensuring that the first Community Cabinet of the new term is held in the Darling Downs region.

While water is a major concern to the community I know that many people will have other issues they want addressed.

People wanting to make an appointment with a particular minister can obtain deputation forms from Kerry Shine's electorate office, from the Department and Premier and Cabinet by phoning 1800 448 377 or Toowoomba City Council. They can also be downloaded from www.premier.qld.gov.au

Of course anyone with an issue can raise issues during the public forum on the Sunday.

On Monday the 4th I will also have the honour of opening a state of the art new training facility in Toowoomba—at the institute of TAFE.

Residents will see first hand the new training facilities for the region's future nurses, aged care assistants, respite centre workers, primary school teacher aides, special needs teacher aides and other professionals in the areas of community services, health and child care.

Redevelopment of the TAFE was a \$24.5 m investment by the Queensland and Federal Governments—with the Queensland Government providing 65% of the funds.

Mr Speaker I can think of no better place for the Minister's—that is, my cabinet—charged with responsibility for the Smart State to meet.

These community cabinets remain incredibly popular, and members just heard from the ministers who are enthusiastically looking forward to it.

Mr Schwarten: You beauty!

Mr BEATTIE: I want that on the record. The Leader of the House said, 'You beauty!' He will be there.

Mr Schwarten: I can't wait.

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed, none of us can.

Whitsundays, Nuclear Power Plant

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 am): I ask members to imagine the view across the coastline of the beautiful Mackay-Whitsunday region. It is wonderful: it has beautiful beaches, lush rainforests, idyllic islands, a nuclear power plant. That is the vision of the member for Dawson, De-Anne Kelly. That is what she wants. What a marketing tool that would be! Beautiful beaches, lush rainforests, idyllic islands and a nuclear power plant. De-Anne Kelly wants to boil the barrier reef. That is the vision of the member for Dawson, De-Anne Kelly. It is unbelievable that she has given up her community to kowtow to a push from the coalition in Canberra to move nuclear power into Australia.

I table an article that appeared in yesterday's *Daily Mercury* entitled 'De-Anne backs nuclear plant for Mackay', lest anyone think I could be exaggerating, not that I ever would.

Tabled paper: Article from Mackay Daily Mercury of 1 November 2006 (2 pages) titled 'De-Anne backs a nuclear plant for Mackay'.

The article states—

Member for Dawson De-Anne Kelly has thrown her personal support behind a nuclear power plant in the Mackay region.

If she has her way a plant will be plonked down in the middle of paradise and local tourism, business and industry will all suffer.

The articles goes on to state that she believes that nuclear power could offer the region some exciting opportunities. It will be boiled barrier reef and boiled fish; the usual thing. You wouldn't have to cook the fish. I do not know why she hates the tourism industry. I bet that when the thousands of people employed in the local tourism industry read that article yesterday, it left them choking on their cornflakes. Chimney stacks and nuclear waste are not usually popular tourism drawcards, but you never know; maybe De-Anne Kelly has found a niche market that no-one else in the world has found.

Of course, there are also issues with safety and the environment. As I pointed out earlier this week, we commissioned a new report, which I tabled in the House, that shows that a nuclear power station would use 25 per cent more water than a coal-fired power station. Where does Mrs Kelly plan to get the water supply for the nuclear power plant? The only guaranteed supply would be from the ocean. The water would be pumped through cooling towers and back into the ocean, several degrees warmer than when it came out.

I do not know where De-Anne Kelly has been while everyone else has been talking about global warming. She has no understanding of the fact that the greatest threat to the Great Barrier Reef is global warming. She simply cannot do this. She will heat the reef, wreck one of the most popular tourism attractions in the world and destroy the local economy.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The former Leader of the Opposition should be quiet. He was not even in the chamber last night for the debate on climate change. Not one member from the National or Liberal parties was in this parliament when the member for Nicklin moved a resolution in relation to climate change. Those opposite do not accept the fact that one of the major problems facing this planet is climate change. They want to play ostrich. Let the record show that the National Party supports a nuclear power reactor in Mackay. Opposition members should ask the local tourism industry what it wants. They should tell the people who support the reef that they want to see the Great Barrier Reef boiled. Those opposite should tell people that they want to bleach the barrier reef.

Opposition members: Oh!

Mr BEATTIE: They do not like the truth. On the one hand, those opposite want to say that they support nuclear power, but then they want to hide from the ramifications of it. What are they going to do? Put it in a vacuum and hide it?

Mrs Kelly is supposed to be a representative of the local community, not Canberra. When will she ever stand up for Queensland?

Mr Mickel: You cannot have your yellowcake and eat it.

Mr BEATTIE: I take that interjection, because I want it on the record. We can see the consequences of eating yellowcake. Just look across the chamber.

Mrs Kelly should stick up for her local constituents and not offer them up as sacrificial lambs. She should take a leaf out of the book of the member for Mackay. Tim Mulherin who immediately voiced strong opposition to the idea and pointed out the obvious: the local tourism industry would be outraged at the prospect of a nuclear power plant in the Mackay-Whitsunday region. I make it clear that my government will fight it every step of the way. We will do everything we can to stop a nuclear reactor being built in the Whitsundays, because we think it is incompatible. It is very simple: we will fight to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

Palm Island, Death in Custody

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.46 am): The final matter that I want to deal with today is a very serious one. It is the government's response to the coroner's findings in the Mulrunji inquest. I table the government's response to the Acting State Coroner's findings in the inquest into the death of Mulrunji in the Palm Island watch-house on 19 November 2004.

Tabled paper: Document dated 2 November 2006 titled 'Queensland Government response to coroner's comments in the inquest into the death of Mulrunji'.

The coroner made 40 comments in total. The bulk of the coroner's comments are policy recommendations. The government generally supports them. Indeed, many are already in place. Some of the comments are findings of fact. The response generally notes these, rather than accepting or rejecting them as many of the findings may become relevant in criminal or disciplinary proceedings against individual officers. It would be inappropriate for the government to prejudge those proceedings by accepting or rejecting those findings of fact until certain matters are determined by the DPP.

The government is already addressing the coroner's recommendations. I will go through these. Comments 1 to 10 relate to arrest and policing. The coroner recommended a re-emphasis of the principle that police should use arrest as a last resort. The government's response is that the government has always supported this principle. The Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 will be amended to insert an example to reinforce the principle. The Queensland Police Service's operational procedures manual will be likewise amended. Police training in arrest and custody issues, particularly relating to Indigenous people, will also be reviewed.

I want to be clear about this: this is not about being soft in any way. We have very tough laws and if people break the laws, they are arrested and they go to jail. However, there are appropriate procedures to be followed prior to that and we endorse that.

Comments 11 to 17 relate to diversionary centres and community patrols. The coroner recommended enhanced diversionary services on Palm Island. Our response is that the government has already established a cell visitors' program. An integrated diversionary services model, including community patrols, will be developed in consultation with the community.

Comments 18 to 26 relate to health assessment, supervision and monitoring. The coroner recommended improved assessment and monitoring of watch-house detainees. Our response is that the Queensland Police Service will review current processes with advice from relevant departments and Indigenous groups. The service cannot commit to the coroner's recommendation that watch-house detainees are never left unattended in all instances, particularly in remote areas. However, the service will minimise this situation as much as possible. I think that is a fair response. Basically, we are saying that in some remote communities that will be very difficult to achieve. As a matter of principle we will endeavour to do it, but we have to be realistic that in some places it is not practical. That is what we are talking about. I think that we can achieve the thrust of what the coroner recommended.

Comments 27 to 40 relate to the investigation of Mulrunji's death. The coroner recommends a range of improvements to investigations of deaths in custody. Our response is that the Queensland Police Service had previously entered into an MOU with the State Coroner and the Crime and Misconduct Commission about the investigation of custodial deaths. The service will seek to review the MOU to take account of the coroner's findings. The government remains committed to working with the Palm Island community—and Indigenous people generally—to avoid similar tragedies in the future.

Mr Speaker, I know that as the local member you have a personal interest in this. As a cabinet we have worked through this response and come up with what we believe is a positive response. As best as we can, we have sought to endorse as many of the coroner's recommendations as we can, bearing in mind that many of them were already in place. In essence, there are only two where we have any significant difference. One relates to supervision, and I have just dealt with that. The other relates to public drunkenness. In my humble view, there has been some misinterpretation about what the coroner said. We have consistently taken a view about the criminalisation of public drunkenness. We take the view that it should remain an offence. That has been the government's position for some time and we will not change that.

Energex

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (9.49 am): As members would be aware, the Energy Assets (Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2006 commenced on 13 October 2006 and will allow the government to make a structured and responsible exit from the gas and electricity retail operations. The legislation provides a degree of flexibility to the government by facilitating the packaging of the gas and electricity retail operations into a number of discrete businesses.

Yesterday, Wednesday, 1 November, marked an important milestone in the government's proposed sale of its energy assets, as the retail operations of Energex are split into two groups to prepare for the sale process. The split of the retail operations of Energex is part of the government's approach to ensuring a smooth and efficient sale process, as it will allow the energy assets to be sold in a way which delivers the greatest value to the state and ensures ongoing competition in the electricity retail sector following the sales.

For this split, the electricity accounts of 390,000 customers located in the northern suburbs of Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and Gympie will be transferred to Powerdirect Australia Pty Ltd, an energy retail company that is also owned by the Queensland government under the Ergon Energy group. The remaining 810,000 customers will remain with Energex in Sun Retail Pty Ltd.

It is important to note that while this important change is taking effect, there will be no significant change for electricity customers. I advise honourable members that the only change is that customers may notice some minor technical wording changes to their bills from 1 November, which have been made to appropriately reflect the new structural arrangements.

A letter explaining the account transfer to Powerdirect Australia will be sent to the 390,000 account holders in the northern Energex region from 1 November. Energex will continue to provide billing services, as well as services for new connections, metering inquiries and account transfers when a customer moves house. The sale of the retail operations will take place in two stages over the next few months, with customers in the south of the Energex area being affected by the first stage. The second stage is planned to take place early next year.

Following the government's announcement in April that it would sell its higher risk or non-strategic energy assets, the first major milestone was reached with the sale of the Allgas distribution network for a purchase price of \$535 million to Australian Pipeline Trust. This sale will be the first down payment into the Queensland Future Growth Fund, which will lock in the state's future economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Overall, including the retail sales process, the government sale process is expected to deliver in total more than \$1 billion to the Queensland government. The sale proceeds will be reinvested in commercial infrastructure projects that will not only replace the dividend revenue stream Queensland will lose after the sale but also directly contribute to the state's economic growth.

The recent resignation of Mr Andrew Kremor from Energex Ltd has had no effect on the sales process. On 26 October 2006, Mr Neville Bradford was appointed as acting chief executive officer, and Energex is now advertising nationally to fill this role permanently. The sale process for the government's energy assets is on schedule and is set to deliver substantial benefits for the people of Queensland for years to come.

Queensland Police Service, Annual Statistical Review

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.52 am): As the Premier mentioned today, I am releasing the 2005-06 Queensland Police Service Annual Statistical Review. The new figures show Queensland's overall crime rate has remained stable, with a three per cent decrease in offences against property and people and increases in the clear-up rates by police for these crimes. This is a credit to our police.

While the Premier has outlined some statistical increases which are welcomed, because they show the results of proactive policing work and targeted operations, there are some increases which we should take heed of. Clearly, we need to take more precautions when it comes to internet use. The

annual statistical review shows that computer based fraud jumped by 73 per cent last financial year. This highlights how technology dependent we have become on internet financial transactions and how much more at risk we are of new crimes such as 'phishing'. This government is already taking steps to help police counter this type of activity. We have announced we will set up Queensland's first police squad to crack down on high-tech crimes and credit card fraud. It will be dedicated to addressing cyber crimes and identity theft.

The new crime figures also come with a very important reminder for all of us about safeguarding our personal safety. I have been disgusted by the recent attacks and sexual assaults against women that we have been hearing about in the media. This behaviour is appalling and will not be tolerated. The annual statistical review shows that the rate of rape and attempted rape offences in Queensland increased by five per cent when taking into account population growth. It also shows an increase of 24 per cent in other sexual offences.

It is a sad fact that there is a higher chance of being sexually assaulted by someone we know than by a stranger—81 per cent of offenders charged with these offences were known to their victim. Even more disturbing, 38 per cent of offenders were from the same family. As we are all wearing our white ribbons and thinking about domestic violence, these are sobering statistics to remember. Forty-three per cent of offenders were either acquaintances, friends, neighbours or colleagues.

Females in the 10-14 age group are those most likely to be victims, with offences reported at rates six times higher than for males their age. I welcome the fact that women feel comfortable to report these incidents to police, and this could have some part to play in these increased statistics. I encourage women to keep reporting any such incidents to police. It is the only way that these offenders will be caught and have the full force of the law brought against them.

During 2005-06 there was also a two per cent increase in the rate of assaults. Early indications suggest that the rises may be linked to increased police activity in public areas to identify assaults, a greater tendency by police to charge domestic violence offenders with assault as well as breach of domestic violence orders, and an increased propensity by members of the public to report assaults. While the five-year trend rate for assaults has continued to decrease, we can clearly do more.

The Premier and I have set up the Youth Violence Task Force, which will meet for the first time next Monday. We are looking forward to some fresh ideas on reducing violence among young people through this initiative. More police officers on the streets and more targeted policing is responsible for a nine per cent increase in good order offences. This is good news, as it shows that police are arresting those who indulge in indecent behaviour or disorderly conduct.

I encourage all Queenslanders to take a look at these statistics, which will be available on the Queensland Police web site this afternoon. While they show that Queensland continues to be one of the safest places in Australia to live, they also carry an important reminder for all of us to take common-sense precautions. Whether it is remembering to lock your car, taking sensible precautions when exercising alone, or using only secure web sites for financial transactions, there are steps all of us can take to assist police in controlling and detecting crime, and providing a safe place to live.

I now table the Queensland Police Service Annual Statistical Review 2005-06, along with the Queensland Police Service Annual Report 2005-06, the Queensland Corrective Services Annual Report 2005-06 and the Prostitution Licensing Authority Annual Report 2005-06.

Tabled paper: Queensland Police Service 2005-06 Annual Statistical Review.

Tabled paper: Queensland Police Service 2005-06 Annual Report.

Tabled paper: Department of Corrective Services 2005-06 Annual Report.

Tabled paper: Prostitution Licensing Authority 2005-06 Annual Report.

Child Fatalities

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (9.57 am): This morning the Premier tabled the annual report of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian on the deaths of children across Queensland. The death of a child is hard to bear. It is so very sad to see a young life cut short.

In 2005-06, 426 children died across Queensland, most of these in the first year of life. The total number was 55 fewer than in 2004-05. The report indicates that 297 children died from natural causes; 19 died from sudden infant death syndrome and undetermined causes; 93 children died from external causes, including 41 in transport accidents, 18 drownings, two in house fires, nine fatal assaults and 15 suicides; and in 17 cases the cause of death is still pending.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian has expressed concern at the numbers of young people who have suicided and particularly because she is concerned that suicides are underreported. The children's commission has started a research project into this important issue. We all, I am sure, look forward to its findings.

A separate report tabled today concerns those children who died in 2005-06 and who were known to the Department of Child Safety in the three years prior to their deaths. The definition of a child 'known' to the department covers the whole range from a neighbour reporting parents yelling at their child through to children taken out of homes and placed under protection orders in alternative care.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2006, 51 of the children who died were known to the department. Most of these children died from illness, disease or accidents. This is not so surprising when it is realised that a high proportion of the children in our care have been born with significant disabilities and/or have been subjected to households in which violence and drug and alcohol abuse are the norm. Six children died from fatal assaults and four young people died from suicide. This is a statistic of concern to the commissioner for children and to me. In fact, there are messages in these reports for all of us who have responsibilities for children and who are in government and in the community. I commend the commission on the quality and thoughtfulness of these reports.

Rural Fire Service Vehicles

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (9.59 pm): I am pleased to announce that construction is now underway on 53 emergency response vehicles for the Rural Fire Service including 40 medium attack units, five heavy attack vehicles and eight light attack vehicles.

Over the past year I have had the pleasure of travelling throughout Queensland and meeting with thousands of volunteer members of the rural fire brigades. These men and women provide a vital service to their communities either as first responders in an emergency situation or by assisting their full-time counterparts.

These vehicles are worth nearly \$4 million. With the exception of the five heavy attack vehicles, they are being constructed by a Crows Nest based company, AAA Engineering Technologies. They will be distributed to brigades throughout Queensland over the coming 12 months. AAA Engineering Technologies do a great job on our fire vehicles. I commend their workers and their management for the great job they do on the vehicles and the extra mile they go in turning out great rural fire brigade vehicles.

The Rural Fire Service recently completed its five-year veteran replacement program on ageing vehicles. With that program now complete, these additional vehicles will add to the fleet and ensure that volunteers are supplied with the latest equipment and technology. Across Queensland there are more than 1,500 rural fire brigades. They are currently in the middle of what is shaping up as a longer than usual bushfire season, with the current dry conditions suggesting that they will be busy for some time yet. In fact, since early August these volunteers have attended more than 550 bush and grass fires throughout the state.

I call on all Queenslanders, particularly those who live in the rural-urban fringe—the iZone—to do their bit to assist our fires and make sure that their homes and properties are bushfire prepared. Our firefighting men and women play an important role in protecting their communities. This government will continue to ensure that they are well equipped and well trained to meet that challenge.

Citytrain Carriages

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lyttton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.03 am): Last Friday I inspected the new-look Citytrain carriages that are currently undergoing testing before being rolled out onto the south-east Queensland network. These modern, high-speed intercity trains have bigger seats, more leg room and improved security camera coverage. Passengers will also notice the clear sight lines between carriages.

However, readers of today's *City News* may be mistaken for thinking that we will not be rolling out any of our new train carriages in Brisbane until 2009. I have a lot of respect for *City News*, as I do for all the Quest newspaper group, but it has got it wrong. The state government is investing \$270 million in 72 carriages—that is 24 three-car sets—being built in Maryborough by EDI Rail in conjunction with Bombardier Transportation. These will be delivered from early next year onwards with an additional train rolled out each month until 2009. Those companies are very optimistic about bettering these delivery schedules.

During the election campaign, we announced a further 60 carriages—20 three-car sets—and they will be added from early 2009 at a cost of around \$260 million. The article in today's *City News* seems to be labouring under the misapprehension that none of the new services being rolled out between next year and 2009 will be for Brisbane commuters. The paper could not be more wrong. In fact, I made it clear when I was on the Gold Coast last week that the second train, for example, delivered to the Gold Coast will allow a train currently used there to be released for Brisbane services. While the Gold Coast line will be a big winner, with a 50 per cent increase in capacity by March 2008 from this rolling stock, with new services starting next year the majority of services will also be going onto lines elsewhere on the network.

Eight additional three-car sets are scheduled to go into service on the Gold Coast line. Three will go into service on the Sunshine Coast line. The remaining 13 three-car trains are set to go into service on the Citytrain network across greater Brisbane—not the Gold Coast, not the Sunshine Coast, but across Brisbane—and not in 2009, as the *City News* erroneously thinks. That is the second order.

Each new three-car train adds 217 seats. By 2009 we will have an extra 5,208 seats on the Citytrain network. That will increase to 9,584 when the 60 extra carriages we announced during the election come online. That will mean almost 10,000 extra seats on the network for each and every trip when all these trains operate simultaneously. Obviously, each train makes multiple trips per day. Benefits for commuters in south-east Queensland include more trains of modern design, additional jobs in Maryborough and, with increased track capacity, more seats on the Citytrain network. The Queensland government is planning, spending and building. Our investment is speaking for itself.

During the recent Gold Coast Lexmark Indy 300, a record 235,000 Indy fans climbed on board public transport to take advantage of the Beattie government's free Indy travel initiative. This means that 75 per cent of Indy ticket holders took public transport to Queensland's biggest motor racing event. That is great. I saw the member for Surfers Paradise there. It was a great event. People are voting with their feet. That is an increase of 43 per cent compared to last year when 164,000 people used Indy free travel. At big events such as Indy public transport is definitely the fastest, most convenient and easiest way to get there. At Broncos matches, 80 per cent of spectators use public transport to get to Suncorp Stadium. The Beattie government recognises this, and it will continue to offer free travel initiatives in conjunction with the delivering partners to our state's premier events. We will continue to invest in better public transport infrastructure and improved services.

WorkChoices

Hon. RJ MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations) (10.05 am): Several months into WorkChoices, what choices do workers really have? Not many. I have here the Brisbane telephone directory. It contains 1,752 pages. That is less than this federal Workplace Relations Act and accompanying document. It has 2,088 pages of cumbersome, complex federal laws, but for workers the options are limited and utterly confusing.

John Howard is focusing on the wrong issues. Ripping away penalty rates and removing job security for workers will not help businesses. Importing cheap labour will not help our nation develop an improved skill base over the long term. Under WorkChoices employees' state conditions are frozen. The only way they can get a pay increase is if the employer makes a new federal agreement. Penalty rates, leave loading, public holiday pay, overtime and shift allowances can all be removed or modified without compensation. Add to that the removal of unfair dismissal protections, and the balance is tipped completely in favour of employers.

Where can workers and employers go for clear and accurate information? Apart from contacting their union, workers have long relied on the Queensland government's Wageline information service. This service helped more than 1.2 million clients last financial year. In conjunction with the Department of Industrial Relations' 17 regional offices, that service recovered more than \$10 million in underpaid wages.

Under WorkChoices the picture is less clear. The federal WorkChoices hotline can handle simple questions about the legislation and federal awards. The Office of the Employment Advocate can help with AWAs and collective agreements. However, if there is a problem, employees can complain to the Office of Workplace Services, but what sort of service will they get? The OWS has indicated that underpayments of less than \$10,000 should be dealt with through the Small Claims Tribunal, where employees must represent themselves. It is difficult to imagine many workers taking up this option now as they have no protection against termination.

So WorkChoices, what choices? Agree to an AWA or face dismissal without access to unfair dismissal protections? What choice? Agree to reduced conditions and entitlements because someone else can do their job if they do not? What choice? While many employers will be fair to their workers, there is no choice for workers under WorkChoices if that employer is not fair. In reality, they have no choice at all.

Q-Fleet

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (10.08 am): I rise to update the House on the current status of Q-Fleet. The national decline in the used vehicle market has been well documented. It is the result of a number of factors, including rising fuel prices and a glut of used cars for sale across the country, especially big six and eight cylinder vehicles.

As I have reported previously, at the end of June 2005 the government's fleet operator had a stock of 2,353 used vehicles awaiting sale. We introduced a number of successful strategies to reduce this stock, including a lease extension program for larger vehicles, introduction of Saturday auctions, a wholesale sales program and additional regional auctions.

I am pleased to report that by mid October 2006 Q-Fleet had successfully reduced the number of vehicles for sale across the state to 522. That is an impressive achievement in the current market. While between 1996 and June 2005 Q-Fleet returned a profit of \$80 million to taxpayers, as was detailed in the last MPS the predicted trading loss for 2005-06 was \$14.2 million. I can advise the House today that the actual trading loss was \$13.3 million—almost \$1 million less.

Another exercise we have embarked on is the revaluation of the entire government fleet in accordance with standard accounting practices. It had been valued at \$335 million. This revaluation, supported by the Queensland Audit Office and Queensland Treasury, will show up in the annual report to be tabled soon as a write-down of eight per cent or \$24.6 million across the fleet of 13,700 vehicles. This is well within the devaluation guidelines of up to 12 per cent for used car stock quoted by national industry experts such as the Australian Fleet Management Association. Q-Fleet will bear the loss on behalf of its client agencies so there will be no negative effect on government services.

Let me assure members that Q-Fleet remains a very solid business. It is back on track and I am pleased to advise that at the end of the first quarter of 2006-07, as a result of the strategies we have put in place, the fleet operator held a positive trading position.

Primary Industries

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (10.11 am): Queensland's primary industries sector is set to make a significant contribution to the state's economy in 2006-07, despite the prolonged drought, with a forecast gross value of production of \$10.43 billion. This is just five per cent lower than last year and three per cent lower than in 2004-05.

Queensland continues to be gripped by drought conditions. Two-thirds of the land area of the state is officially drought declared and has been since the beginning of 2002. These exceptionally difficult conditions, along with international pressures on the beef and sugarcane industries, are expected to take their toll on the gross value of some of the state's primary industries.

Those that are expected to be hardest hit by the drought this year include cotton, wheat, barley and the turf and nursery sectors. While the drought is likely to have an effect on the quality of cattle slaughtered, Queensland's beef industry faces the added strain of international price pressures as the US re-enters the Japanese market.

The gross value of cattle and calf disposals for 2006-07 is forecast at \$3.175 billion—14 per cent lower than last year. Falls in Queensland's sugar pool price and a decline in the amount of cane crushed are expected to reduce the gross value of sugarcane production from last year's high of \$1 billion to \$920 million. The outlook for Queensland's fruit and vegetable industries is more optimistic with forecast increases in gross value of production. The fruit and nut industries are expected to contribute \$925 million to the state's total GVP—18 per cent higher than last year. Gross value of vegetable production is forecast at \$775 million—five per cent higher than last year.

Despite the exceptionally difficult conditions, particularly in the southern part of the state, Queensland's primary industry sector continues to deliver. The top five primary industry commodities that make up 70 per cent of the total primary industries GVP are: cattle and calves, \$3.175 billion; lifestyle horticulture, \$1.41 billion; fruit and nuts, \$925 million; sugarcane, \$920 million; and vegetables, \$775 million.

Yet again these figures emphasise the resilience of this state's primary producers. I table for the interest of members the report *Prospects for Queensland's Primary Industries 2006-07*.

Tabled paper: Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries document dated September 2006 titled 'Prospects for Queensland's Primary Industries 2006-07'.

White Ribbon Day

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women) (10.13 am): November 25 is a day of importance for all women and men around the world. It is White Ribbon Day—the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. White Ribbon Day is an opportunity for men around the world, working in partnership with women, to show their commitment to stopping violence against women.

On 25 November, thousands of men in Australia and across the globe will be wearing white ribbons to encourage all men to condemn violence against women. Violence against women is violence against the whole community and it is simply unacceptable in a civilised society such as Australia.

As the police minister has reminded us today, the incidence of domestic and family violence in Queensland is still too high. In 2004-05 police were called to over 41,000 domestic violence related incidences. Domestic violence does not just affect adults. A 2006 national survey of young people aged 11 to 24 years by Mission Australia found one of the main issues of concern to young people is family conflict.

The costs of violence against women are not just emotional and physical. A report by Access Economics in 2002-03 estimated the annual cost of domestic violence to the Australian economy was \$8.1 billion.

White Ribbon Day provides an opportunity for each of us to become involved and make a difference. The white ribbon is a symbol of a personal pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women. I thank members who have picked up their ribbons and put them on. I thank also the attendants. I hope that by the end of question time all members will be supporting White Ribbon Day by wearing their white ribbon in their lapel. The white ribbons members have before them have been supplied by the Office for Women, working with CEO Challenge. CEO Challenge is a partnership between the business sector and the community and its work is a reflection of the corporate sector's commitment to working with community organisations to eliminate domestic violence. Let us all join together in wearing the white ribbon in the hope that one day violence against women will be eliminated.

Bushfire Preparedness

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism) (10.16 am): Recently we have witnessed the occurrence of some severe bushfires in southern states. I am pleased to report that the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is constantly monitoring wildfire risk and fire danger conditions across its parks and forests. It is maintaining preparedness levels and emergency response plans to ensure rapid response to any wildfire outbreak.

In Queensland this calendar year, QPWS staff have responded to 131 wildfires impacting on over 154,095 hectares of its lands. The QPWS keeps its wildfire response procedures updated, maintaining priority firelines, and implementing planned burn programs over priority sections of the QPWS estate. So far this year the service has completed more than 427,000 hectares of planned burns on its lands. Some planned burning is still continuing where conditions allow, such as in the wet tropical coast. Officers have also undertaken maintenance work on more than 2,000 kilometres of firetrails. With specific regard to the wet tropical forest areas after Cyclone Larry, QPWS is remaining particularly vigilant since there is still a large amount of fallen dead timber on the ground. There is still concern that there will be a serious fire danger in that area when dry conditions prevail and this will be closely monitored over the next 12 to 18 months. Obviously, given its conservation and tourism icon status, it is critical that its world-class ecological values are maintained.

I would like to appeal to people planning to visit our parks and forests to be mindful of the continuing dry conditions over much of the state despite the occurrence of storms in some areas. Campfires should never be left unattended and must be fully extinguished before people leave the site. QPWS may limit the use of fires on its areas and may even close sites if the need arises. Similarly, both urban and rural neighbours to parks and in fact those living near any forested areas, should heed the advice given by the various state agencies dealing with bushfires, in particular by my colleague the Hon. Pat Purcell, Minister for Emergency Services.

QPWS will continue to maintain high levels of preparedness and proactivity in relation to fire management on its lands and is ready to respond swiftly as the need arises.

Mining Industry

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (10.19 am): Last week I convened a series of meetings with mine safety inspectors, union delegates and representatives from Anglo Coal Australia after a number of safety incidents at the Moranbah North mine site. I am pleased to report that all parties are committed to getting on with the practical job on site of addressing any safety concerns. The Mines Inspectorate is continuing its investigations into those incidents and I have requested a detailed report once they are finalised.

As a new minister, I expect and the government expects all industry stakeholders to ensure that high safety standards are maintained in the mining industry. Queensland has one of the best mine safety records in the world. For the sake of our mine workers and their families, every effort must be made to keep it that way.

The issue of safety was starkly brought home to me in Collinsville recently when I attended a memorial service to commemorate the seven miners who lost their lives in the 1954 mining disaster and the 19 others who have lost their lives there over time. Those deaths on the Collinsville coalfields are a tragic part of our country's collective history. The history of workers, their struggle and, sadly, the ultimate sacrifice of workers should never be forgotten.

It is important that we learn from delving into our history and that we reflect on what can happen if we are not vigilant about protecting the safety of our mine workers. In Collinsville, I also opened stage 2 of 'The Coalface Experience', a tribute to mine workers and coalmining in Queensland which was initially supported by the previous minister. It is a project that the state government has been proud to financially support. Collinsville has never forgotten its past, and I take this opportunity to commend the Collinsville and District Retired Miners Lodge for its efforts to preserve a rich and proud mining tradition.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Annual Report

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (10.21 am): I lay upon the table the Public Works Committee annual report 2005-06. The report details the work of the previous committee. I would like to acknowledge the work of the former member for Ipswich West, Don Livingstone, the past chair and the other members of that committee. I would like to thank all those who assisted the committee with its work during the year. I commend the report to the House.

Tabled paper: Public Works Committee Annual Report 2005-2006.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Annual Report

Mrs SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (10.21 am): I table the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's report No. 32, its annual report for 2005-06. I also would like to thank all of the members on the previous committee, particularly Ken Hayward, the chair.

Tabled paper: Scrutiny of Legislation Committee Report No. 32 titled 'Annual Report 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006' dated November 2006.

CRIMINAL CODE (DOUBLE JEOPARDY) AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.22 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Criminal Code to enable the retrial of acquitted persons for very serious offences in particular circumstances and to provide an appeal from a directed acquittal on a question of law, 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

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.22 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, the bill that I present today will address the public outrage over the fact that, even though compelling new evidence comes to light of an acquitted person's guilt, that person cannot be brought to justice because of the 800-year-old double jeopardy laws which prevent people being tried twice for the same crime.

In particular, I cite the Deidre Kennedy murder where a 17-month-old child was sexually abused, strangled and her body thrown on the roof of a toilet block. Raymond John Carroll was sentenced to life in jail for the murder but his conviction was quashed on appeal to the High Court. When he was convicted for perjury in 2000 this was overturned on the principle of double jeopardy.

This case, which received massive media coverage, highlighted the double jeopardy doctrine and the majority of Queenslanders were justifiably angry. To date, petitions containing thousands of signatures from people all over the state calling for the law of double jeopardy to be changed were gathered by Deidre Kennedy's mother, Mrs Faye Kennedy, and presented to this parliament. But parliament still has not acted, saying that it wants to present a united approach from all of the states.

In 2003 the then Attorney-General, the Hon. Rod Welford, referred the matter to the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, SCAG. SCAG sought a report from the Model Criminal Code Officers Committee, which has since issued a discussion paper and a report, and the issue has been on the agenda of SCAG ever since. Premiers and attorneys-general of Queensland and other states have stated several times that some reform was necessary but have stated that all jurisdictions should wait until a common approach could be agreed upon.

That was the response of the Hon. Mr Welford in 2005, and the next Attorney-General, Hon. Linda Lavarch, said the same thing in early 2006. And as long as every state has kept waiting for every other one to agree on a uniform proposal, nothing has happened. We have had a Mexican stand-off—that is, nothing has happened until two months ago when the New South Wales parliament bit the bullet and enacted the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Amendment (Double Jeopardy) Act 2006. This is now a valid act in New South Wales.

It follows basically the same principles as the UK Criminal Justice Act 2003—that is, it provides for a retrial to be ordered for a 'life sentence offence' if 'fresh and compelling evidence' has come to light, or for any '15 years of more sentence offence' if the original acquittal was 'tainted' in the sense that the acquitted person or anyone else has since been convicted of an 'administration of justice offence' such as perjury or a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. It also provides for a right of appeal from a directed acquittal on the ground that the direction to the jury to acquit involved an error of law.

The New South Wales act is a measured response to the problem, with all desirable safeguards. An acquittal can only be reopened on application to the Court of Criminal Appeal—here it would simply be the Court of Appeal. Only one application can ever be made in respect of any acquittal—the prosecutors cannot keep coming back time and time again.

There are limits on the powers of the police to conduct intrusive investigations into the alleged crime and on the capacity of the press to inflame public opinion against the accused by reporting proceedings for the reopening of a case.

I am not calling for us to completely abandon the law of double jeopardy—the doctrine certainly has a place in our law of criminal procedure. If everyone who had been acquitted of a criminal charge had to live in fear that the authorities might, at any time, seek to prosecute him or her again, it would be a terrible world. What I am saying is that there are times when there should be exceptions.

Now that New South Wales has broken the Mexican stand-off, the excuse that we can do nothing until the other states have agreed on a uniform approach loses its force. Clearly there is a way to ensure that all states and territories take a uniform approach—we can all copy the very reasonable and balanced New South Wales provisions.

The bill I have tabled does this, with appropriate changes to make it fit into the Queensland context. The explanatory notes provide sufficient explanation of the effect of each of the sections. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Shine, adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Hospital Performance Report

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (10.28 am): I would like to take the opportunity today to respond to the statement from the Minister for Health yesterday relating to the latest hospital waiting list data. We did not have to analyse the data long before we realised that the statements by the minister, the Premier and the Labor government that it has turned the corner with respect to health are just more spin. There are more sick Queenslanders waiting on the lists for category 1 and category 2 surgery. Sick Queenslanders are waiting longer for urgent operations. That is the most disturbing feature of this latest report.

There was a 45 per cent increase in patients waiting more than the recommended 30 days for the most urgent life-saving category 1 operations, compared to October 2005. For category 2, the number of Queenslanders waiting more than the required 90 days for semi-urgent operations increased by 65 per cent. There are now nearly 10,000 people waiting longer than they should for operations across all categories—up by 1,453 on the same period last year.

Yesterday the minister said that the Beattie government would address the most urgent of the long waits by recruiting to Queensland Health in the areas of key surgery and theatre nurse vacancies. Unfortunately, the government has not come to the realisation that the only way recruiting more health professionals is going to get results and is going to start reducing the number of Queenslanders on the waiting lists is if Queensland can retain those professionals. The minister and Premier make great play in this place to point out that Queensland Health has recruited more doctors and more nurses, but the minister has failed to reveal just how many health professionals have left and are continuing to leave Queensland Health. Lowering the waiting list figures is only going to be achieved if Queensland Health can recruit and also retain more health professionals.

I am attending the state medical radiation professionals crisis summit on Sunday—a crisis summit with the aim to address employment conditions and develop workplace issues, because these people from all over the state are telling me that their services are on the verge of collapse. One of the reasons people are leaving Queensland Health is that the pressure is too high. Those opposite should be ashamed for rejecting the coalition's amendments yesterday and, in doing so, rejecting the recommendations of the Forster review. It rejected the spirit of the calls from the AMAQ. It rejected those waiting longer than ever before on Queensland's waiting lists.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Road Infrastructure

Mr SEENEY (10.30 am): My first question without notice is to the Premier. Premier, the traffic problems in the Brisbane CBD following the closure of two ramps on the Riverside Expressway would indicate that there is no spare capacity in our road infrastructure. And just like our water infrastructure, our hospitals and our electricity network, there is no ability to cope with any abnormal situation. In the last eight years how many new roads and bridges have the Premier and his government built in Brisbane?

Mr BEATTIE: I am delighted to go through all of that. The Inner City Bypass—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Let us just pause for a minute. If the member wants to actually get an answer, just be patient.

Mr Seeney: I'm counting.

Mr BEATTIE: Okay. The Inner City Bypass is one to which we made a very significant contribution. It would not have happened without us. Does the member know where it went? Right through my electorate. I think the contribution was something in the vicinity—and I am going on memory here; this could be wrong—of \$133 million. In other words, the Inner City Bypass was made possible by the contribution of the Beattie government.

Mr Seeney: And built by the Brisbane City Council.

Mr BEATTIE: Let me say to you that is all very well. The second part—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: That is what I said: 'that is all very well'. The second part—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Do you know what? It is really bad when you get to laugh at my jokes! The second point is that we built the Goodwill Bridge, which is a very significant contribution to this city and was opposed all the way along by those opposite. With regard to the Goodwill Bridge, the biggest difficulty is that it is incredibly popular—too popular. Every day thousands of people use the Goodwill Bridge. One of the things those opposite have to understand is that we have to have a combination when it comes to crossings. We have built the busway to Mount Gravatt. The southern busway has reduced the amount of time taken to travel into the city dramatically. We are building an eastern busway and at the moment we are building a northern busway—with your opposition. The first thing is that we have good public transport. The second thing is that we are building things like the pedestrian bridge, and there will be more.

A government member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, and those opposite opposed that too. The third one is that we will continue to have cross-river links. We have indicated—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Does the member actually want an answer or does he just want to be the usual village idiot? We are duplicating the Gateway Bridge. We are—

Mr Seeney: Phone a friend! Ring Campbell!

Mr BEATTIE: Let me tell you: at least I actually have one.

Mr Johnson: You're going red, Premier!

Mr BEATTIE: I am not going anywhere but you are. As I indicated, we have continued to support the Brisbane City Council. We will support it with the cross-river tunnel. The airport link is our proposal. We have made certain that the airport link is a reality.

A government member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, that is right. We have done all of that. We are going to continue to do it. We have supported the proposal by the lord mayor, and, yes, we work in cooperation with the council. Let me come back—

Time expired.

Traveston Dam

Mr SEENEY: I will put the Premier out of his misery, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Do you also have a question, Leader of the Opposition?

Mr SEENEY: Yes. My second question without notice is to the Deputy Premier. On Tuesday the Deputy Premier tabled in this parliament a map that she said was the final boundaries of the Traveston Dam, and she distributed that to every member. I table today a copy of that map and marked on that map is a property that is owned by Mr and Mrs Blair and Pauline Price. When the Deputy Premier tabled

that map Mr and Mrs Price were pleased to see that their property was well outside the boundaries of the inundation area. But they were devastated yesterday to receive a letter to say that their property was going to be resumed. Does the Deputy Premier understand the mental anguish that is caused by her ineptitude when people receive letters to say that their property is going to be resumed the day after she tables a map showing that their property is well outside the boundaries of the inundation area?

Tabled paper: Map of area of proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

Tabled paper: Letter dated 30 October 2006 from Graeme Newton, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd to Blair D and Pauline L Price, and attachment.

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I think that he and every other member of the House would appreciate that with 1,000 information packs going out I am not in any position to comment on any individual letter. But let me say this about the issue: firstly, do I and every single member of this government understand the anguish of anybody whose home is needed for a public purpose, whether it is the Traveston Dam, a school or a road? Of course we do, and that is why we took the opportunity from day one to stand in the market to give certainty to people who wanted certainty about their homes and to enable them to offer their homes for sale as quickly as possible. It is why I am going up there tomorrow to talk to people personally, and it is why we have made available very reasonable, very compassionate and very generous leaseback arrangements on this project.

In relation to the specific circumstances, can I say this: I do not know the specific circumstances of this case and I do not think the member would expect me to, but of course I will look into it. The maps that I have released are the engineers' advice about the final boundaries. But it is not only the boundaries of the dams that will affect people's property, and I made this clear on Tuesday. The roads will need to be realigned. I do not know if that is the case in this person's situation, but in addition to the inundation levels every dam has to have a buffer area around the boundary. The buffer area will also affect properties. I will have a look at the circumstances of the case the member has raised here, but I am very confident that you could not find a more thorough and more committed person running the Queensland Water Infrastructure company than Mr Graeme Newton. I am very confident of the work that he has done. If there has been some mistake, I will look into that.

Mr Johnson: The buck stops with you, Minister.

Ms BLIGH: Of course it does, and that is why I will look into it.

Mr Seeney: You said they were the final boundaries.

Ms BLIGH: They are the final boundaries, and the boundaries include the inundation levels, the full supply level and then they include the buffer, and properties will also be affected by road and rail realignments. Yes, there are a number of things that can affect a person's property. Each and every single person will have the opportunity to think about how they want to take their circumstances forward. Can I also clarify that nobody has been sent a resumption notice, and the member's misleading of the House and characterisation of those letters as resumption notices is nothing more than dishonest. People received a letter outlining how the dam would affect their property. Some people have 10 per cent of their property affected, some 90 per cent, some 100 per cent. They have to make their own decisions about whether they will sell all of their property, just those parts that are affected, whether they will sell on a voluntary basis or whether they will ultimately be in the resumption category. So there were no resumption notices sent out this week—none. I would hope that we are able to work with every single landholder to find a solution that works for them and achieve that voluntarily, and that is what I am committed to doing.

Climate Change

Ms JONES: My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to an article in the business pages of this week's *Courier-Mail* headed 'Major upset for hot rocker'. The article indicated that Brisbane based company Geodynamics had missed out on a \$75 million federal government grant. Is the Premier aware of this decision and what are the ramifications in relation to climate change?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for this question, because as one of the newly elected members in this House she will have responsibility for fighting the problems associated with climate change. The member for Ashgrove is smart enough to know that nuclear reactors are not the answer but that projects like hot rocks are. I was disappointed—and I assume that the other side of politics would be disappointed about this, too—that this was not funded by the Commonwealth government.

I have to be honest: I do not quite understand why this project has not been funded. It is really crazy that it has not been funded. I saw the article that the member referred to and it shocked me to read that the Howard government refuses to fund one of the most promising greenhouse-friendly energy options that Australia has to offer—that is, geothermal power or, as it is commonly known, hot rocks. However, what was most amazing was the fact that the Howard government made this decision on the exact day that Dr Stern brought down his groundbreaking report on the worldwide economic implications of global warming.

What is it about the Howard government and \$75 million? This is the exact amount that it committed to our tree-clearing ban, and it welshed on that, too. The Howard government gave us nothing towards the ban on broadscale clearing, yet it takes credit for it in terms of reaching the Kyoto target. Here is an opportunity to put \$75 million into hot rocks technology—a whole new geothermal approach to generating energy that is about as environmentally friendly as we can get—and the federal government does not fund it. None of this is sensible. I cannot understand the Howard government's strategy. Clearly, it has no idea what it is doing.

For those members who are not familiar with hot rocks technology, it involves drilling a series of holes eight inches in diameter, four kilometres into the earth until super-heated granite rocks are encountered. Water is then driven down one of these holes, which causes horizontal cracking of the granite. The resulting steam, under enormous pressure, can escape only by roaring back up the other holes. Turbines at the top are spun at high speed, electricity is generated and the steam condensed and reused. This is great technology. The system is totally closed, self-sustaining, emission free, and one day could supply the bulk of Australia's electricity needs.

Queensland has a huge supply of this resource right here in the south-west of the state in the Eromanga-Cooper basins.

Mr Mickel: In whose electorate is that?

Mr BEATTIE: Not one of ours. To facilitate this new energy source, recently the state government passed legislation to enable this development and put out to the market five tenements in the area.

But what upsets me most about this decision of the Howard government is that the company leading the charge on hot rock power in Australia is a Queensland company called Geodynamics, which is based at Milton in Brisbane. That company has taken up two of Queensland's tenements and the trial that it is conducting near Innamincka will sometime in the new year see one of the world's biggest drilling rigs put a third hole down to allow the first electricity to be generated from this energy source. I look forward to that day. But thanks to the Howard government's lack of commitment to combating climate change, it will probably be later rather than sooner. This is a really silly decision.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Moggill, I welcome to the public gallery students and staff of the Vienna Woods State School, which is in the electorate of Capalaba and represented in this House by Mr Michael Choi.

Health System

Dr FLEGG: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. I refer the minister to the Forster report, which found that \$200 million which his government allocated for its elective surgery on time program had not yielded one extra elective operation. Yesterday's appalling waiting list report showed that the number of category 1 patients overdue for the most urgent, potentially life-saving operations has increased in the past two years by nearly 400 per cent and that the number of category 2 patients who are overdue to have operations has increased by 500 per cent. What has happened to the extra \$200 million that was poured into elective surgery by the minister's government?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the member for the question. Quite simply, the answer is contained in the hospital performance report that I tabled yesterday. That money has been used to treat a record number of elective surgery patients across certain categories. We are performing on a year-on-year basis. I think the increase that I talked about yesterday was a 2.4 per cent increase in elective surgery compared to the same quarter in 2005. That would indicate to me, at the very least, that the additional money which we are putting into elective surgery is resulting in more elective surgery being performed.

I see some would-be commentators are alleging that I was trying to engage in some sort of spin, which I find interesting, because the No. 1 call since I became health minister was for more information to be published about how our hospitals are performing. The first time I do so in such a comprehensive way I am accused of glossing over certain statistics or trying to spin it. The simple fact is that this report indicates that our hospitals are working harder than ever before. Queensland's health system is not a Third World health system, it is not a crumbling health system; it is a health system that is working harder than ever before and performing more operations. Emergency attendance presentations are up by four per cent in one year—two million occasions of outpatient services over the past three months. There are four million people in Queensland, and Queensland Health provided two million occasions of outpatient services in the past three months. That is why I say that our hospitals are working harder than ever before and will continue to do so.

The last page of this report also provides the most recent update of how many additional doctors, nurses and allied health professionals we are employing. But I am the first to admit that we still have significant vacancies in particular disciplines and that, of course, is contained in the elective surgery report as well. It is why, for example, Cairns Hospital, because it has a shortage of anaesthetists, was not able to perform the number of procedures that it would otherwise want to do.

That report also indicates that we are reaching out to the private sector. Long-wait patients in particular are provided with access in a more timely way through the private system. We will continue to do more of that. We will not rest until we see a long-term reduction in long waits across those categories.

I am disappointed, as everyone else is, with this quarter's figures. But they just mean that we will redouble our efforts. I have already met with the clinical CEO of the PA Hospital and the acting clinical CEO of the RBH. I will continue to meet with senior leaders of Queensland Health to continue to drive down these figures.

Prayer for Rain

Mrs ATTWOOD: My question is directed to the Premier and Minister for Trade. What can members of parliament do to support the week of prayer?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank those members who attended the Water: a Time for Prayer service this morning, including you, Mr Speaker, a number of ministers, a number of members, including the member for Mount Ommaney, the Leader of the Opposition and key members of his team. I table this morning's program for the information of members.

Tabled paper: Program titled 'Water: a time for prayer' in relation to service at St John's Cathedral on Thursday 2 November 2006.

As I said, earlier this morning members from both sides of the House gathered at St John's Cathedral for a special prayer service. The heads of churches in Queensland have come together to join in a special time of prayer from this Sunday, 5 November, to Sunday, 12 November. During this morning's service, which offered prayers for rain and offered support for communities and individuals, the leaders of our churches and of the Queensland parliament gathered as a show of support.

As all members know, the ongoing severe drought is wearing down the people on the land and the communities who depend upon them. During this special week, I urge all members of this House to assist churches across the state. Over the next week a common prayer for rain will be said. Churches are also being asked to ring the bells at midday to call people to pray. The heads of churches have also provided daily themes for discussions during the week of prayer. These themes are being thankful, changing our ways, calling for care, compassion and care, and rest for renewal.

I thought that the point that Anglican Archbishop Phillip Aspinall made this morning about rest for renewal was very sensible, because it is not just about rest for renewal for individuals who are under enormous pressure in dealing with the drought and what it means for them personally—and we have all heard the tragic stories of suicide—it is also about rest for the land. That is one of the reasons balance and sustainability are key issues for the future of any civilisation.

The churches have produced a guide for Water: a Time for Prayer to allow everyone to participate. It can be downloaded from the web site. I seek leave to incorporate the web address in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

www.bne.catholic.net.au/timeforprayer

I thank the heads of churches in Queensland for answering my call for a prayer for rain. I urge everyone, no matter what their faith, to take a moment to reflect on the people who are doing it tough because of the ongoing drought.

I know inevitably—and Archbishop Phillip Aspinall made this point—there is always some cynicism when politicians gather at a church service, but I think it is important that we say to Queenslanders that we are trying to reach out to them at this difficult time. I think that everybody, regardless of their politics, becomes distressed when they see farmers doing it tough and we end up with a number of suicides. That is why I think our attendance at the service was important. I applaud the Leader of the Opposition for the number of his colleagues who turned up this morning, because it sends a signal that the cities and the regions of this state care about the bush.

Often—and we all know this—when people are in distress and are going through enormous trauma, if they know that there are people in the community who understand, at least in part or, hopefully, fully, their problems and who are reaching out to them, that helps them. That is what we are trying to do.

Road Infrastructure

Miss SIMPSON: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. Now that we have established that south-east Queensland's road system collapses as soon as there is a problem with a major road, does the Deputy Premier support more river crossings for vehicular traffic, particularly the proposed Hale Street bridge?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. There were two parts to that question. Do I support more river crossings? In general, yes, I do. For example, we are supporting the duplication of the Gateway Bridge. I am very pleased that we are doing that. It would have been nice to

have had the opposition's support to get some federal funding for it. Do I support more cross-river crossings? Yes, as long as they are in the right place and, yes, as long as there is adequate planning with communities on both sides of the river to ensure that the impacts of any such new facility are sufficiently mitigated and taken into account.

The Hale Street bridge proposal will cause considerable disruption in my community. I have been working with my local councillor and Councillor Newman on this proposal and I would like to congratulate Councillor Newman and Helen Abrahams for the work that they and their officers have done, not only with myself but also with other community organisations in my electorate.

I have stated on the public record my concerns about the bridge, but I will support it if we can address the very legitimate concerns of the community at Brisbane State High School. The bridge will mean significantly more traffic in and around the school and that will affect the safety of the children, an issue that I would have thought would evoke bipartisan support. The noise levels experienced by the school during class times will also be an issue. As long as those things can be successfully mitigated, I believe that the bridge is a piece of infrastructure that I should support.

That is not a popular view among all of my constituents. They are very concerned about what this will mean in terms of traffic coming into what is an inner city area of Brisbane and part of what we might otherwise think of as the CBD. On the other hand, it is the suburbs, neighbourhoods and backyards of a community that is seriously experiencing the trauma of having a lot of infrastructure retrofitted into its backyard.

I make no apologies for actively working with my community and the members of the Brisbane State High School community to ensure that we can find a solution. If we cannot find a solution and there is no way of mitigating the safety aspects, we need to take a long hard look and think: do we really want to put children's lives at risk for this infrastructure? Would there be a better place to put the bridge? I do not know the answer to that, but I know that the Brisbane City Council, including the lord mayor, is taking that issue seriously. I thank him for doing so. I hope that we can find some solutions.

The other issue that I want to raise and which I think everybody should take an interest in—not only me because it happens to be in my electorate—is the way that the bridge might affect the Queensland Theatre Company, which is a great Queensland cultural institution. It is one of our premier artistic organisations. The Minister for the Arts and myself have had discussions with the council about this. The operations of that facility need to be considered when we contemplate a cross-river facility.

I am sure that the member asked the question to cause a lot of mischief. Today I have said nothing that is not already on the public record.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Gaven, I welcome to the public gallery students and staff of the Silkstone State School in the electorate of Ipswich, which is represented in this place by Rachel Nolan.

Gold Coast, Desalination Plant

Mr GRAY: I ask the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure to detail to the House the latest developments in the progress on the Gold Coast desalination plant.

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question and for the interest that he and other Gold Coast members are showing in this project. The Gold Coast desalination plant is a critical component of the Queensland government's proposed water grid for south-east Queensland. It is the only component that is not dependent in any way on the weather. We need to understand how important it is as a critical part of our supply.

I am sure that members will have noticed that this week the Gold Coast City Council has approved its involvement in and funding of its component of the project. Today I am pleased to advise members that the Cabinet Budget Review Committee and the Queensland government have agreed to proceed with the project and to endorse our component of the funding.

This project is very significant, not only in terms of the water grid. I would like to thank the Gold Coast City Council for its willingness to work with the government. Originally it was thought that the project would serve the water needs of the Gold Coast. After some discussions with the mayor and the council, the project will be more than doubled in size. A pipeline will connect the supply from the Gold Coast to the Brisbane area, so that it can be connected to the grid. That means that 125 million litres of water will be fed into the Gold Coast network and the water grid.

The state government has agreed to be equal partners in the project with the Gold Coast City Council. It would not be reasonable for the council and the ratepayers of the Gold Coast to pay for a project that not only services them but also services south-east Queensland. I think that the arrangements are very fair. The facility will be funded by a combined equity injection of about \$360 million, with the remainder being funded through debt. To date, the state has already provided \$94 million and the council has contributed a further \$31 million.

Desalination is a very critical part of the water grid. I am pleased that the people of the Gold Coast have been so supportive of the project. It is on track. I want to clarify the progress of this project, reported in the Water Commission report that I tabled earlier this week. The project is on track to be completed on the date that was originally set for it. The building will actually be complete. The engineer's advice is that we should not commission the full water load in one phase. The advice is that we should phase the commissioning in three phases, with about 30 per cent capacity to start with, and then over an eight to nine week period we will take it to full capacity. The progress on that project is very good and I am pleased with it. I hope it continues at that rate.

Flood Mitigation Modelling

Mr GIBSON: My question is to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure. On Tuesday, included in her so-called good news for the people of Gympie was the announcement that the flood modelling based on the 1999 flood indicated that the proposed dam at Traveston Crossing would have significant flood mitigation impacts on Gympie. Is it not true that this same modelling showed that in the major floods of 1968, 1974 and 1989, this proposed dam would have no mitigating effects on Gympie and only a minor impact on the flood of 1992? I wish to table the flood modelling data.

Tabled paper: Table (1 page) containing data relating to predicted flood mitigation effect of proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

Why does the minister continue to treat the people of Gympie with contempt with her misleading and selective propaganda?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question. There has been quite a bit of debate about this issue in the Gympie community. The *Gympie Times* discusses the flood modelling and questions that are being raised in relation to it. I can assure the House of the status of the flood modelling upon which I based my comments on Tuesday.

Flood modelling for the stage 1 operation was done on the basis of the full dam, that is, a worst case scenario, and impact upstream no higher than the identified stage 1 buffer area. The flood modelling employed is specifically designed to take into account the dam design, including the operation of four gates on the dam which would flatten out the flow. The modelling measures the stream flows at 10 minute intervals. Therefore, it is significantly more accurate and more reliable than the work being touted by some of the proponents in the debate quoted in the *Gympie Times*. The Traveston design includes stream gauges to identify when water flow is coming. That allows the dam operators to operate the dam in a way that anticipates flow and mitigates the flood.

The methodology employed by the Queensland Water Infrastructure Company has been utilised and applied on dams such as Wivenhoe, which successfully mitigated a major flood event in 1999. The modelling done by the QWI engineers was supported by SunWater, which operates Wivenhoe Dam. The whole modelling exercise was peer reviewed by nationally recognised flood modellers. The methodology is recognised around the world as world's best practice in flood modelling.

I do not expect the people of the Mary Valley to see flood mitigation effects in Gympie as a complete justification for the dam. Nobody does.

Mr Copeland interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I did not.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gympie has asked a very serious question on behalf of his constituents. I would ask that the Deputy Premier be allowed to give a serious answer.

Ms BLIGH: It would be nice if the member for Gympie's leader would let me give the answer, Mr Speaker. I do not for one minute expect the people of the Mary Valley to see flood mitigation effect of the dam as some justification for the dam or a reason for them to feel less distressed about it. But I think it is important to put on the public record that the dam will have a flood mitigating effect. It will not be a total prevention—the dam is not going to stop rain falling from the sky at some stage.

Mr Robertson: I hope not.

Ms BLIGH: Yes, we hope not, but it will have some mitigating effect. I do not resile from my comments that that is good news for the businesses and residents of Gympie.

ecoBiz

Ms NOLAN: Before asking my question of the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism, I want to say 'hi' to students and staff from Silkstone State School and welcome them to the parliament. My question is to the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism. Recently the Queensland government and the Ipswich City Council launched a partnership to promote the ecoBiz program to local business and industry. Would the minister please outline to the House how the ecoBiz program will result in significant savings to business and deliver major environmental benefits?

Ms NELSON-CARR: I thank the member for the question, and I have to say that I really enjoyed the company of both the member for Ipswich and the member for Ipswich West at a breakfast in Ipswich last week. On 24 October we joined Ipswich Lord Mayor, Paul Pisale, to launch an alliance to promote

the ecoBiz program, which will result in huge cost savings to Ipswich business and industry, and help the environment. More than 100 business representatives attended the launch which shows that Ipswich business is absolutely serious about using water and other resources efficiently.

Several Ipswich businesses are already participating in the ecoBiz program and investing in a sustainable future. For example, Ipswich company Sunfresh Linen is expecting large savings under the program. The company recently installed improved washing and drying equipment which has doubled its production and will reduce chemical, energy, gas and water costs by \$120,000 a year. Sunfresh Linen estimates that it will reduce its water use by 73 per cent, which is significant given that Queensland is experiencing its worst drought in 100 years.

EcoBiz is about more than water efficiency; it is also about better use of material resources and energy. The program provides companies with a simple methodology to improve efficiency in energy and other material inputs. Good environmental practice is good business. It means smarter and more efficient ways of doing business and it also means larger profits. It also means less impact on the environment, less pollution, less energy consumption, less wasted materials and less precious water drawn from our dams.

EcoBiz is about partnerships between the state government, councils and business. Another seven councils have pledged their support—Noosa, Redlands, I am pleased to say Townsville, Mackay, the Gold Coast, Toowoomba and Logan. More than 200 businesses across Queensland are part of this program—13 of these have received ecoBiz rebates and collectively in just 12 months will save 530 megalitres of water, which is equivalent to 11,000 backyard swimming pools; 50 million megajoules of energy, which is the energy consumed by 2,000 homes annually; and it will reduce solid waste by 15,000 tonnes. Through the ecoBiz program, this government, councils and businesses are showing how we can help save energy and water.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Tablelands, I welcome to the gallery the teachers and students from Sheldon College in the electorate of Redlands, which is represented in this House by John English.

Public Housing

Ms LEE LONG: My question without notice is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology. I refer to the critical shortage of public housing in my electorate and surrounding areas in the far north, where there are up to five-year-long waiting lists for accommodation. Mareeba has a particular shortage due to a considerable migration to that town from the cape, which has resulted in multiple families sharing houses and some are now living in parks and under bridges. I ask the minister: what is the Queensland Department of Housing doing to relieve these unacceptably long waiting lists and to provide more public housing to alleviate this serious shortage as a matter of urgency?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for her interest, even though it is a bit skewed in the wrong direction. The reality is that we have approximately 2,500 homes in far-north Queensland, and the waiting lists in that area are far less challenging than they are elsewhere in the state, but they are still challenging. In far-north Queensland the waiting list is about 2½ years. Of course our waiting lists are increasing, as they are all over the state. What the honourable member has done, though, is fall into the trap that so many people do in relation to why people are on waiting lists.

The reason people are on waiting lists, as I indicated yesterday, is that there has been an absolute collapse in the private rental market. Many of the people who are knocking on the member's door complaining that they cannot get public housing would never, ever have considered putting their name on a public housing waiting list because there was a private rental market to accommodate them—and that is the wish of the federal government. It believes that by underfunding public housing, as it has—in other words, putting less money into the state and, instead, diverting that money into rent assistance; that is, the privatisation of public housing—it is doing the right thing.

I suggest to the member that she use her good office to challenge the federal government to find out how many people in her electorate are entitled to rent assistance but who are not currently getting it because they cannot find a house to rent. That is what the federal government believes is the best option. I do not agree with it and nobody in the Labor Party does. If the Hawke-Keating government had still been in power, we would not have this problem, but the incremental increase in public housing that was happening under Labor governments has dissipated under tory governments. That is what they always do. They semi-privatised our education system. They have certainly done the same with our universities. They have done the same to health. But they have done this quite cleverly. They have incrementally taken money away from the states and put it into private pockets—\$2 billion around Australia is going into the pockets of private landlords, and the member's constituents do not get a sniff of it.

Of course one of the other reasons people are on waiting lists is that rents have gone up by 50 per cent in the last six years and rent assistance has gone up by around 15 per cent, which is about the same as the increase in the CPI. In other words, there has been no net increase to deal with the

escalation in rents, so people are still worse off. We have raised this issue on many occasions with the federal government but to no avail. It has no housing minister. There is nobody here in the opposition in Queensland who is in their little pink ear telling them about the devastating effects the federal government's policies are having in Queensland. The opposition knows full well that the private rental market that the federal government is promoting has collapsed around its ears. People like Jan Jarratt from Whitsunday and Andrew McNamara from Hervey Bay are dealing daily with people in that situation. We heard from the member for Ipswich West yesterday about the same situation.

Obesity

Mr BOMBOLAS: My question without notice is to the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport. Why is the state government committing to \$10 million in grants to community groups for obesity initiatives?

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport. We would all like to hear the answer to this—some more than others possibly.

Mr FRASER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like the opportunity to clear up for all members of the House just why we are spending \$10 million on this program. I thank the member for Chatsworth for the question. As it happens, recently the Premier and I joined the member for Chatsworth at the Belmont State School to launch the Community Partnerships Grants Program—a \$10 million program and a key outcome of the Obesity Summit held earlier this month in parliament. We are providing \$3 million this financial year for community groups, for schools, for Indigenous councils, for other local governments and for people to join together to come up with proposals to help address obesity in our society. It is a fact of life, and one that is often talked about by the Minister for Health, that obesity leads to a great number of many diseases. He often refers to the tsunami of chronic diseases that are emerging, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and respiratory diseases.

The fact is that obesity is the biggest challenge in terms of the long-term sustainability of the delivery of health services given the context of an ageing population. That is why we, as a government, are doing everything we can to provide funds to join together with community groups, schools and people in the community to provide innovative ways to tackle obesity. It is a flexible program that is not very prescriptive. The reason for that is there are no easy answers. There is no magic bullet. This is a program that provides funding for the community to come up with innovative ways to address the challenges of obese and overweight people in our community.

In Queensland these days two in three males are overweight and one in two females are overweight. As a society and as a community we have to make sure that we have a mantra that we need to make the healthy choice the easy choice. This money is available now. I have written to all members of parliament about this program. The document looks like this document that I am holding. Members would have received a copy of this. Money is available until 15 December.

I urge all members of parliament from both sides of the House to work with their local communities to come up with applications to submit to this program because a significant amount of money is available. This was a significant outcome from the Obesity Summit held earlier this month. Obesity has to be at the forefront of any government committed to addressing the longer term health issues in our society. Providing opportunities to attend sport activities and recreational activities in our society is a key aspect in the promotion of wellbeing and health in our community. It is a great program, and I urge all members of the House to provide a submission before 15 December so that we can work together to address this long-term issue.

Banning of Unsafe Products

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is directed to the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women. Is the minister aware of the banning yesterday by the ACCC of the Woofaz dog leash after a 10-year-old Queensland girl lost her eye when a Woofaz brand dog leash broke? Given that this incident occurred in January this year, what knowledge did the minister's department have of concerns over the product? What tests did the department conduct on the product after the incident occurred? Finally, why was it left to the ACCC to ban this product when the Queensland department would have been able to do so itself?

Ms KEECH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I congratulate him on asking his first question in his role as shadow spokesperson for my portfolio.

When it comes to product safety for products in the marketplace, I am very proud of the role the Office of Fair Trading plays, in particular the Product Safety Unit within the Office of Fair Trading. I have not had a chance to discuss in full the particular product that the member has raised with me with the Commissioner for Fair Trading or with the director-general of my department. However, when it comes to the banning of unsafe products the Office of Fair Trading, through the Product Safety Unit, takes its role very seriously.

Unfortunately, every year in Queensland there are products in the marketplace that cause damage and injury to young people in particular. I am particularly concerned about that. That is why the Office of Fair Trading does regular spot checks, whether it is in shopping centres or through individual suppliers, to ensure that the products that are in the marketplace are safe. In particular, the member may be aware that I recently launched a summer safety campaign and will be following that up soon with an audit of toys in the marketplace to ensure that they are safe.

With respect to the ACCC declaring that the product is unsafe, the Office of Fair Trading has a very strong record in working collaboratively with the federal government. I will always give credit where credit is due, unlike some members on the other side of the House. The state government, through the Office of Fair Trading, works very well in collaboration and partnership with the ACCC and ASIC on a whole range of issues, whether it is to do with product safety or other financial regulation issues.

I thank the member for the question. I will be seeking a full briefing from the commissioner regarding this product. I will be very happy to pass on comments and details of that briefing to the member.

Mining Industry

Mrs KIERNAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Mines and Energy. As a representative of the most important mining region in Queensland, I was most concerned to hear the federal Treasurer say that the mining boom is over. I ask the minister to clarify the real state of play in Queensland and inform the House what steps the state government is taking to ensure that measured development in the mining industry is sustained.

Mr WILSON: I thank the member for the question. We all well understand the importance of this industry and the issue that the member for Mount Isa has raised not only to her constituency but also to all of Queensland.

The mining and petroleum sectors in Queensland contribute about \$16 billion a year to our economy. The industry represents 25 per cent of total capital investment in Queensland. While individual mines have a finite life span, it is important that all industry stakeholders do everything they can to encourage new discoveries to ensure new projects come on line.

There are still a number of highly prospective, underexplored areas in Queensland. The government, through its Smart Exploration program, which is a \$20 million program being introduced over four years, has made a big step forward in identifying and progressing the opportunities for mining exploration in Queensland. This program has targeted high-priority regions such as the north-west mineral province, Charters Towers, the Claremont gold province and the Surat energy resources province in southern Queensland. These regions are known to have the greatest potential for new discoveries.

The initial analysis of data from these areas indicates that there are a number of previously undetected geophysical anomalies, particularly west of Mount Isa. I am pleased to be able to inform the member for Mount Isa that, through my department, we have created a further five restricted areas in the member's region, bringing the number of restricted areas in Queensland to a total of 12. These restrictions, applied by this mechanism called the restricted areas, through a call for tender process enables prospective miners to commit to producing a bid that is seen as the best outcome for the development of this mining potential. Later in the year we will announce the successful tenderers.

Following upon the success of the Smart Exploration program, the state government has taken another initiative through our \$29 million Smart Mining—Future Prosperity program. This is about attracting new investment capital to the mining industry in Queensland. Through these initiatives we play an important part in ensuring that the mining sector has a bright future. The Queensland government is doing its bit to contribute to the sustained development of the mining industry in Queensland.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Hinchinbrook, I recognise in the public gallery school leaders and a teachers from the Varsity College in the Burleigh electorate, represented in this House by Christine Smith. I also recognise in the gallery student leaders from Bribie Island State High School, Caboolture State High School and St Columban's, all in the electorate of Pumicestone represented in this House by Carryn Sullivan.

Cyclone Larry

Mr CRIPPS: My question without notice is to the Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations. I refer the minister to the Regional Business Development Scheme and the Cyclone Larry Special Program. When this program started businesses were told that applications for business recovery plans would be accepted until 31 December 2006. Why is this stage of the program now being closed without any prior consultation with local businesses, leaving many businesses without support? Can the minister confirm that stage 2, which is supposed to fund the projects identified in the recovery plans, will only provide less than \$700,000 when the preparation of the plans has cost about \$1.4 million?

Mr MICKEL: Cyclone Larry round 1 funding was to help businesses who were affected by Cyclone Larry in the first instance to get on their feet immediately. Six to seven months later we took the view that if businesses that were immediately affected had not applied already—and those round 1 forms to the best of my knowledge are still being assessed—then was it not fair enough that the department therefore consider what assistance we should give in the medium term? That is why round 2 is being considered.

When one looks at the assistance that has been provided by all departments to victims of Cyclone Larry it has been a wonderful response.

Mr Purcell: A blueprint!

Mr MICKEL: I thank the minister very much. Of course it has been a blueprint. It has been a wonderful response in terms of unemployment assistance and assistance to help get those people and businesses get back on their feet with round 1 and round 2 funding. I will give members the drum about this: if they are worried about business, then they should worry like heavens next Tuesday after the Melbourne Cup has been run and they see what the federal government does with interest rates.

If people think small business is going to be affected at all they will worry like heavens when interest rates go up and ruin their investment climate. Have a think about this if you are in the Cyclone Larry area, whether you are a farmer or a small business: are you going to be better off with the fourth increase in interest rates under the Howard government? Does anybody really think that interest rates going up under the Howard government is going to be better for small business in areas affected by Cyclone Larry? Do any members opposite think that? That is exactly what they voted for federally. I have heard those on the other side of the House continually get up and say that it is only the Howard government that has delivered economic outcomes. Next Tuesday the Howard government is going to deliver its fourth interest rate increase. The members opposite should ask themselves: is that going to be better for businesses in their areas affected by Cyclone Larry? Of course it is not! Next Tuesday is the day the piper will be paid for those people on the other side who supported the Howard government and its interest rate rise.

The members opposite should have a look at the cumbersome regulations small business has to overcome with WorkChoices. As I demonstrated this morning, they are bigger than the *White Pages*. When it comes to small business I will back what we have done in terms of round 1 and round 2 for the victims who were affected by Cyclone Larry every time. Next week will see interest rate increases and cumbersome regulations when it comes to WorkChoices.

Mealing, Ms A

Mr O'BRIEN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. Can the minister please update the House on the status of police investigations into the suspicious death of Angela Marie Mealing?

Ms SPENCE: I can. I thank the member for Cook for the question. Today I am announcing that the government will provide a reward of up to \$250,000 for information that leads to the conviction of the person or persons responsible for the suspicious death of Angela Marie Mealing.

This is a death that has mystified north Queensland for the past six years. Angela Marie Mealing was just 17 years old when her body was found beside Behana Creek near Gordonvale in far-north Queensland on 15 May in 2000. She had been missing for over a month. In November 2001 the Cairns coroner held an inquest into Angela's death, concluding the inquest with an open finding in 2002.

This \$250,000 reward is aimed at encouraging people to come forward with vital information to help police solve this case. Sometimes people may hear or see things that relate to criminal activities; however, they are not always reported to police. New information like this can help the police put together the pieces in mysteries such as this.

I know that Minister Pitt is very close to Angela's mother and that he taught Angela when she was at school. I know that the family are still going through a lot of anguish in this sad case. The reward will certainly prompt people who may not otherwise have come forward to assist police with this investigation.

It has not yet been established that this was murder, but the police never close the book on cases such as this. That is why sometimes after the event rewards are posted. Earlier this year we paid out the biggest single reward ever in Queensland when we gave \$100,000 to an informant whose information was central to the police investigation that led to the arrest and conviction of prostitute killer Francis Michael Fahey. We are very happy to pay out this kind of money if information does help police solve these cases.

As I tabled the police statistical review this morning, it is timely to remind ourselves that we do have a fairly low murder rate in this state. Last year 55 people were murdered and 52 of those cases were cleared up by police. As I said, investigation of unsolved cases is always continuing and I would remind people that if they have any knowledge of any murder case, no matter how long ago it was, they should come forward and assist police because they will be looking for that information.

Ambulance Service

Mr MALONE: My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. On 28 September a woman collapsed in a suburban Brisbane gym at Bellbowrie suffering severe head pain. Gym staff phoned 000 immediately and twice more during the 80 minutes it took before the ambulance arrived. The woman subsequently underwent emergency surgery for a brain aneurysm.

Jessica Williams, who was at the gym and waited with the woman, phoned the minister's office to inquire about the Ambulance Service and I table a statutory declaration of her notes of a conversation with the minister's staff. Why was Miss Williams told to—and I will abbreviate for the sensitivity of the House—'F off' by your office? Does the minister condone such unbelievably rude and arrogant behaviour? Will the minister apologise unreservedly for this unacceptable behaviour? Will the minister also explain why it took nearly an hour and a half for the ambulance to arrive?

Tabled paper: Statutory declaration dated 12 October 2006 by Jessica Williams relating to her contact with electorate and ministerial staff of Hon Pat Purcell.

Mr PURCELL: I thank the member for the question. I will not comment on what comments have been made, but I will certainly look into the accusation that the member has made. I have been made aware of that Bellbowrie incident in relation to the response time.

On 28 September 2006, at 10.19 am, the Brisbane Communication Centre received a call for assistance to a 50-year-old who was suffering from the onset of severe headache. The medical priority dispatch system classified the case as a code 2A, which requires immediate response without lights and sirens.

At that time the Queensland Ambulance Service workload region was experiencing a high demand in that area. As a result of this high demand an ambulance vehicle was dispatched at 11.12 am. While the ambulance was on its way there was a doctor from the local medical surgery in addition to three registered nurses on the scene treating the patient. At 11.14 am AFcom received a second call from the scene advising that the patient now had an altered level of consciousness and was complaining of severe pain. At this time the AFcom team leader immediately upgraded the case to code 1, lights and sirens response, and the ambulance vehicle arrived on scene at 11.37 am. The ambulance crew treated the patient at the scene and departed for the Royal Brisbane Hospital at 11.56 am, arriving at 12.27 pm.

In keeping with the Beattie government's commitment to continue to provide Queenslanders with a world-class Ambulance Service, I have asked the commissioner to review this incident and investigate any opportunities to improve the procedures that were undertaken in regard to that matter.

Mr SPEAKER: I again welcome to the gallery today students and teachers from the Vienna Woods State School—what a lovely name for a school—in the electorate of Capalaba represent in this House by Michael Choi.

Unemployment

Mr MOORHEAD: My question is directed to the minister for employment and industrial relations. While Queensland is currently enjoying the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, I am sure that this government will not stop working to ensure that it continues to go down even further. Can the minister advise the House what the government is doing to assist the most disadvantaged workers in the community getting into the paid workforce?

Mr MICKEL: As the member for Waterford indicated, unemployment is at a 30-year low but we are just as committed to a number of programs to assist the long-term unemployed. Let me begin by pointing out the \$1 billion Queensland Skills Plan, which is a new initiative. Skilling Queenslanders for Work is building on the excellent work of its predecessor. Like the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle, the programs are being targeted in electorates that have the most disadvantaged job seekers—the long-term unemployed, young people who have dropped out of the system, the mature aged, those from a non-English speaking background and Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Skilling Queenslanders for Work gives individual job seekers the right blend of training, vocational skills and assistance to help them find jobs. I am pleased to advise the House that we have achieved an important milestone, helping more than 113,000 job seekers statewide to get back into the workforce.

Let me give a couple of examples. In Toowoomba, 112 refugees and migrants mainly from the Sudanese community will benefit from a \$459,500 grant for training and paid work experience so they can develop careers instead of taking low-paid, seasonal or casual work. In north-western Queensland, a \$161,000 grant will help the Mount Isa Skills Association to coordinate projects which will give local job seekers skills in landscaping or information technology. The first project will have participants help to redevelop the gardens of the Mount Isa PCYC, and the second project will help meet Mount Isa's identified need for workers with information technology skills.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Annual Reports

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.31 am), by leave: I tabled this morning the annual report of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, and I want to make some comments about that. I did not want to rush things this morning. I was aware there was a private member's bill to be introduced, and I wanted to ensure that appropriate attention is given to this annual report.

The annual report reflects the first full year of operation of the commission's new systemic monitoring and review responsibilities and the expanded Community Visitor Program. The changes have enabled better monitoring of the child safety system and strengthened the commission's ability to promote, protect and report on the rights, interests and wellbeing of Queensland's most vulnerable children and young people.

During the year, the commission established the Strategic Policy and Research Program to focus on prevention and targeted early intervention strategies for at-risk children and young people. In 2005-06, the commission conducted a major statewide advertising campaign to raise awareness of the expansion of categories of regulated employment and business requiring a blue card. The commission issued 219,886 blue cards in 2005-06, an increase of 24 per cent from 2004-05. During the year, the success of the blue card system was demonstrated by the fact that 175 applicants were issued with negative notices and therefore prohibited from working with children and young people. The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2006 was also enacted, requiring regulated businesses and employers to have written risk management strategies in place from 1 January 2007 and further streamlining and expanding the blue card operations.

Mr Speaker, as you would know, this is the second year that the commission has produced an annual report of the Child Death Case Review Committee and a *Report on the Deaths of Children and Young People Queensland*. The Minister for Child Safety has already referred to this, but I want to emphasise its importance.

The Child Death Case Review Committee is required to conduct external reviews of the Department of Child Safety's child death case reviews when the child who died was known to the Department of Child Safety in the three years before his or her death. The committee has reviewed 40 of the 46 internal reviews conducted by the Department of Child Safety, examining 51 deaths. The committee made a series of recommendations based on these reviews. As at 30 June 2006, the department's responses to 12 of the 40 reviews had been assessed and accepted by the committee. The remaining 28 responses are currently under review by the committee, with no significant concerns identified to date.

The *Report on the Deaths of Children and Young People Queensland* examines child deaths in Queensland and makes recommendations to minimise risk factors associated with deaths that may have been preventable. The report notes progress being made with the implementation of recommendations contained in the 2004-05 report and makes a number of key recommendations based on its work during 2005-06 which will be considered by the government in consultation with key stakeholders. The report also notes that, during the period, the number of child deaths registered in Queensland had decreased by 11 per cent from 2004-05.

This is an area of enormous sensitivity. We have worked as hard as we can to improve this system. This is an area that has been neglected under successive governments for most of Queensland's history. My government has been the first to tackle it head-on, as you would know, Mr Speaker, being a former minister of that department. All ministers who have occupied this portfolio since I have been Premier have been responsible for significant reform and significant achievement, and I congratulate and thank all of them. But this is not a matter for the government to be praising itself on. Far from it, and I do not do that.

I want to highlight, however, that we are a government with compassion, and we are determined to improve in this area. We know it is an area of enormous difficulty. It is one of those areas that is at the raw edge of human behaviour. This matter is concerning and the *Courier-Mail* has reported on it appropriately. I have no criticism of that reporting; the *Courier-Mail* should keep the government on its mettle in this area, and I have no criticism of that.

The point I make, however, is that everyone in the community and everyone in society has an obligation to protect children. We would not need a Department of Child Safety if there was not abuse of children. There is no excuse for abuse—no excuse—and those who are the abusers in the community should not only hang their head in shame; they should rethink their behaviour.

We are wearing white ribbons today to highlight our opposition to domestic violence. We have to continue to change the culture of our society so that violence is not acceptable. Violence is not acceptable in a domestic situation and it is never acceptable against children. If we can change people's

attitude towards how children are treated, we would not have the level of abuse that we have now. I know that the state inevitably ends up with caring quite appropriately and quite rightly for the most endangered children—many in high risk and across the spectrum in terms of health and abuse. What we need to do, though, is change people's attitudes.

There are some other matters relating to other annual reports that I would like to highlight, and I seek leave to incorporate the last few paragraphs in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Major Sports Facilities Authority portfolio consists of six venues, representing over \$913m in assets. Key achievements of the Authority during 2005-06 include:

- more than \$12m of upgrades to Dairy Farmers Stadium, increasing seating capacity to 26,000 and developing this facility into a world class, regional Stadium; and
- completion of the sixth and final stage of the \$40m redevelopment of the Gabba, increasing capacity to 42,000 and providing more function and corporate spaces.

Twelve athletes who train at The Sleeman Centre won a total of 21 medals, including ten gold, at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. This is a wonderful achievement which is testament to the excellent facilities available to help Queensland's elite athletes excel.

The Authority will be focussing on improving these facilities in 2006-07, with the construction of the a \$10m state of the art rehabilitation and hydrotherapy facility at the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre; and the \$160m, 25,000 seat rectangular stadium at Robina, Gold Coast scheduled for completion prior to the commencement of the NRL 2008 season.

Mr Speaker, these reports are indicative of the work undertaken by the Government over the past year. I commend these reports to the House.

Transport Infrastructure

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.36 am), by leave: I want to report to the House on the government's investment in transport infrastructure in south-east Queensland which has been delivered under my government. I want to list them, because I do not want there to be any misunderstanding. We spent \$63 million on the Nundah tunnel on Sandgate Road; that was finished and opened to traffic in 2001. We spent \$171 million on the Port of Brisbane Motorway; that was opened to traffic in 2002, six months ahead of schedule and \$20 million under budget.

We spent \$17 million on the Stewart Road interchange on the Gold Coast; that was finished and opened to traffic in 2004. We spent \$52 million on the four-lane upgrade of the Mount Lindesay Highway; that was opened to traffic in 2005. We spent \$32 million on the Linkfield Connection Road; that was finished ahead of schedule and opened to traffic in February this year, with the distinguished local member for Aspley—

Ms Barry: My favourite road.

Mr BEATTIE: It was a top project. The member for Kurwongbah, Linda Lavarch, was there as well. They are just some of the south-east Queensland projects, and they are in addition to what I mentioned before, including the Goodwill Bridge and so on.

What we are planning and building right now include the following. There is the Gateway upgrade project, where we have allocated \$1.9 billion for a duplicated bridge and the upgrading of 20 kilometres of Gateway Motorway. The airport link and northern busway is a major public transport and road tunnel link that will take traffic on northern suburbs roads and will cost around \$3 billion. The minister for transport is absolutely obsessed by this, and I know it will be delivered accordingly.

The Tugun Bypass on the Gold Coast is getting \$543 million to relieve the worst bottleneck on Gold Coast roads. There will be a new interchange on the Logan Motorway, with \$33.5 million spent this year for work on a new interchange at Larapinta to help heavy vehicles access nearby commercial areas and reduce traffic on residential roads. The Boundary-Kelliher roads interchange upgrade will reduce bottlenecks at Darra. This is a project worth more than \$30 million and is being conducted in conjunction with the Brisbane City Council. We also have the duplication of the Houghton Highway between Brisbane and Redcliffe. There has been a total of \$71 million worth of work this year alone spent on four major projects on the Sunshine Motorway. Indeed, the member for Maroochydore has been complaining about the amount of work happening on the Sunshine Coast at the moment. That is a nice change.

What Queensland spends on our roads is this: this financial year Queensland will spend a record \$3.98 billion on transport infrastructure, including \$1.98 billion on building Queensland roads. That is a boost to road spending of \$727 million or 58 per cent in just one year. Queensland spends more than twice as much per person on roads than either New South Wales or Victoria. Per capita road spending for 2006-07 in New South Wales is \$249 per person, Victoria is \$218 per person and Queensland is \$495 per person—that is twice New South Wales and 2.25 times Victoria. I provide that information to the House. The Leader of the Opposition asked me a question this morning to which I provided

information. I wanted to be fulsome in the material as part of my obligation to fully answer questions and to provide the House with the full information. The final point I want to make is this: we as a state are seriously neglected by the Commonwealth. There is more money going into New South Wales and Victoria. We are not getting our fair share in Queensland. I know—

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I take that interjection. The minister for transport, Paul Lucas, is not only driving these projects; he is continuing to pursue the Commonwealth for our fair share. If the Leader of the Opposition is serious about road funding and projects in Brisbane and the south-east corner, let him come on board with us and Campbell Newman to get more of our fair share from the Commonwealth when it comes to road funding.

Mr SPEAKER: Before I call the Deputy Premier, I welcome to the public gallery teachers and students from the Silkstone State School in the electorate of Ipswich, which is represented in this House by Rachel Nolan.

Traveston Dam

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (11.40 am), by leave: I rise to inform the House of the circumstances involving Pauline and Blair Price as raised by the opposition leader in a question this morning. I am able to inform the House that the Queensland Water Infrastructure Company does propose to purchase a part of the property owned by these residents for a water storage easement. I stress that this is like other easement acquisitions in other projects and it would allow the owners to retain title on the land. It is essentially an offer by the state to purchase a right of way to part of the property or a right to use the property for certain designated purposes—in this case, a water storage area in the event of a flooding incident. It is completely up to these landowners if they want the Queensland Water Infrastructure Company to acquire the easement or not. It is also up to the owner if they want to sell the land identified or all of the property. That is an option that we have given to all affected landowners.

I am also able to advise the House that other areas where easements are needed for some purpose are marked on the map with small black dotted lines. In this small area in Imbil those dotted lines do not appear on the map and in my view, having re-read the letter that was sent to these residents, the fact that part of their land may be required for an easement as opposed to a purchase could have been and should have been made clearer. If that has caused some distress to these residents, then I apologise for that. In the context of 1,000 letters and 1,000 maps, I think it is a small mistake. But for the people who are concerned, it is obviously a very big issue and I recognise that. I regret any discomfort or distress that has been caused and can advise the House that the individuals concerned have been personally rung this morning and had those issues explained to them. I understand they now have certainty about the issue.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 11 October (see p. 72).

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (11.43 am): Today we are debating the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2006 which takes in eight separate acts. The bill incorporates the Agricultural Standards Act 1994, the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001, the Brands Act 1915, the Drugs Misuse Act 1986, the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, the Grain Research Foundation Act 1976, the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936 and the Grain Industry (Restructuring) Act 1991. We are supporting this bill today. It is an omnibus bill that addresses a number of changes in the legislative framework of these acts. We support the many mechanical and technical changes that are involved. At the outset, I want to thank the staff of the department of primary industries who showed us courtesies during our detailed briefing with regard to all of the different parts of this bill and thank the minister for arranging that briefing.

Whilst we are discussing an omnibus bill and many technical and mechanical changes, there are a number of major issues affecting primary industries at the moment and I will touch on those as we go through. I want to start by mentioning the all-pervading drought that is affecting the state at the moment and the dreadful effect that that has had. I have already called for the department of primary industries and the minister to have a very strong and substantial look at the drought relief that is provided in Queensland. For many years that assistance has been the same; it basically provides some assistance to primary producers to make application for the Commonwealth assistance—that is, exceptional circumstances. However, in recent years much of that application and assistance has had to be undertaken by organisations like AgForce and QFF because of the shortage of staff within the DPI as the cutbacks have continued and the DPI does not have the complete wherewithal of people to attend to

that and the drought unit itself was dismantled. The direct assistance provided by the state through DRAS—the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme—is mainly involved with providing low-interest loans through QRAA. Of course if people are in a droughted situation, very often it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to take on more debt when they are simply drowning in debt and getting further and further into debt. It also provides for assistance in the cartage of fodder and assistance in the cartage of cattle to agistment—that is, assistance one way only.

Recently Victoria and New South Wales have both brought in innovative additional drought assistance schemes which have been tailor-made to the particular needs of the farmers in those states. In Victoria it particularly applies to the relief of fees on irrigators. In Queensland we see many irrigators who are paying fees and levies for fresh air, because there is no water and they have no water to draw upon. Nevertheless, they are paying these charges—the charges are at different levels—when they do not have any water. Fundamentally, that is wrong. People can understand some basic payment towards the maintenance of the facilities and so forth, but when there is no product—no water—and these people are paying for nothing, that is morally wrong. In a time of drought, that should be addressed, as it has been in Victoria.

Whilst it is perhaps more in the domain of DNR, it behoves our minister as the leader of primary industries to speak up on behalf of our primary industries producers both publicly and around the cabinet table to see if a new drought scheme can be brought in. New South Wales has addressed the issues of the disastrous flow-on effects of drought to contractors and small businesspeople. The other day I heard a young man with two kids on talkback radio who had bought a semitrailer to cart grain. The work has just simply vanished. He has payments on that truck. He is paying his house off. He has to make payments on the truck. I think he had borrowed \$180,000 or something like that for the truck.

Mr Wallace interjected.

Mr HORAN: I take that interjection. The reason he can buy the truck is that he is not paying the 22 per cent interest rates that were there when Labor was in power. Now that the member opposite is the newly made minister for DNR, he might like to consider this: when those interest rates of 18 per cent or 19 per cent were in place, there was another two per cent added to that on rural lands because of the risk involved. People were paying 21 per cent and 22 per cent interest. Business was paying that as well. Just remember that and just think what it was like to try to pay interest rates at that amount—in the double figures and more than 20 per cent. If they missed one payment they were on the slippery slope to oblivion. If the member opposite is now the new minister for DNR, he would do well to remember that interest rates were once 20 per cent and the crippling effect that that had under a Labor government. We have had sustained lower interest rates well under 10 per cent under the Howard government—down as low as six per cent, seven per cent and eight per cent in recent times. That has been a driving force in having a sound economy.

Those needs in a time of drought should be considered in a new package. Small-business operators in country areas should receive relief on payroll tax and other people involved in primary industries should receive relief on the fees, levies and taxes that are charged. Also, in cases of extreme hardship the New South Wales government is assisting people in the payment of bills, particularly bills relating to utilities that provide the necessities of life, such as electricity. I wanted to open my remarks today when speaking to this Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill by talking about that issue. It is a humanitarian need, a social need and an economic need.

Another issue that needs leadership from the department of primary industries and the minister is what the farmers are being paid for their product. Intensive industries such as dairies, piggeries, poultry farms and feedlots are experiencing enormous difficulty in being able to make ends meet. The price of their key commodity—grain—has gone up from about \$180 a tonne to \$350 a tonne, and that is if they can get it. Most of the feedlots in Queensland have supply contracts to next May, but then they end. From there on they do not have any supply, unless there is good rain throughout Queensland or somewhere else in Australia this season to produce some more grain. Summer crops are not going to be harvested until next May, April or June at the earliest. So it will be touch and go as to whether there is enough feed. No feed can be imported from Western Australia and South Australia, as occurred in previous droughts, because the drought has spread right across Australia.

The drought has also hit businesses. Businesses in Toowoomba that make grain-drying equipment have lost major contracts in the Atherton Tableland because of the cyclone. The corn could no longer be dried, because it was flattened. Those businesses have nowhere else to look for new business, because the grain crops throughout the rest of Australia have just not come through this winter. These are the sorts of things that are happening to intensive industries.

When we were in government from 1996 to 1998, the dairy industry was regulated and we were able to bring in a modest increase in the price per litre of milk to cover the feeding that had to be undertaken by dairy farmers during a drought. But under deregulation there are simply dairy contracts with the major retail chains or milk sales to strip shopping centres. How do the dairy farmers get a better price for their milk to help offset the major cost of not only grain but also fodder in this time of drought? Some of the dairy paddocks on the downs are just brown dirt. The dairy farmers are handfeeding their stock at a massive cost.

If we want to maintain the source of the milk supply in Queensland, I think the minister and the department should show leadership and bring the retailers, the processors, the dairy organisation, or the other industry organisations around the table and ask, 'What can be done to ensure that the price the farmer receives is reasonable so that they can keep their heads above water and that any price increase that is received flows through to those who are drought affected, that is, the primary producer, not the processor?' I will continue to push for that to happen. I know it is difficult to do that in a commercial world, but if we want to look after our own primary producers and if the commercial world wants the clean, fresh, high-quality produce that is on the tables of Queensland families continued to be produced in Queensland rather than overseas—which involves increased cartage costs and how cleanly the product is produced is unknown—or interstate then the commercial world will have to consider ways of helping these people through this very difficult time.

During an adjournment debate speech the member for Hinchinbrook raised a number of problems occurring with sugar harvesting in the CSR mill areas and the number of harvesting days and hours that have been lost owing to breakdowns. That has had a big economic impact upon areas of Queensland. The member for Hinchinbrook referred to the Herbert area. That is another example where leadership can be provided by the department to ensure that efficient harvesting procedures are in place. The department should meet with commercial operators to ensure that those operators have all the good gear and equipment in place so that the harvesting takes place properly, that the window of opportunity for achieving a good c.c.s is met and that everyone gets a fair go.

This bill makes amendments to eight acts, the first of which is the Agricultural Standards Act 1994, which provides for the making of agricultural standards and for other agricultural matters. This bill changes the power to seize animals, plants or other things from properties if there is evidence that an offence has been committed against the act or if there is a warrant to seize evidence. We on this side of the House agree with this amendment. We acknowledge that it is a relatively minor issue in comparison to the huge biosecurity issues that face agriculture in Queensland. Nevertheless, these changes are necessary and we will look at them in more detail in the consideration in detail stage.

During the last election campaign, as part of the coalition's policies, I announced the implementation of a special biosecurity unit within the department of primary industries and the provision of more stock inspectors. We were going to provide 50 more stock inspectors and extension officers. Whether they are called stock inspectors or biosecurity officers—I was criticised for calling them stock inspectors and not the new, flashier term of biosecurity officers—to people in rural Queensland, stock inspectors mean people who are the eyes and ears of their district. Those people provide advice so that primary producers can plan properly and have systems in place so that there are no problems but, if there are problems, then there are people to whom rural producers can go to have them dealt with straightaway.

We also need more vets involved in biosecurity in the department of primary industries. Whereas the New South Wales government has the same number or more vets than it had at the beginning of the 1990s, in Queensland the number of veterinary surgeons within the department of primary industries has declined by 30 per cent. I think that really points the finger at the Labor government and the way in which it has not understood the real purpose and reason for the department of primary industries and the key people in the key professions that are needed within a department of primary industries. When it comes to biosecurity, veterinary surgeons and stock inspectors are essential. I know that the vets have real issues with the department when it comes to pay rates. They have been negotiating for some two or three years to try to get some parity with vets who work interstate. There is no point in saying, 'Those vets live in Sydney where it costs more to get a house.' Most vets who are employed in country New South Wales face a similar rate in the cost of living as do those who live in country Queensland.

If we do not have vets and other trained professionals to lead biosecurity and a problem arises, we will not have the professionally trained staff that we need. North Queensland and the Northern Territory will have the biggest problems if there is an incursion of an exotic disease. Those areas need a good number of veterinary surgeons, yet, as I said, since 1991 our vet numbers have declined by 30 per cent.

I wish to point out a couple of issues on biosecurity that the Agricultural Standards Act looks at. Under Labor, the Rockhampton Veterinary Laboratory was closed. The laboratory was a critically important link in the biosecurity chain of Queensland. As you come from central Queensland, Mr Deputy Speaker, you would be well aware of the strength of the cattle industry. Central Queensland is the cattle capital of Australia. In the early 1990s, the laboratory employed three veterinarians and 12 technicians and ancillary staff. It established an excellent record for disease diagnosis. It was closed by attrition and subterfuge, despite assurances made in 2001 by both the Premier and the department of primary industries minister of the day that the facility would not be closed. Rockhampton sits at the very heart of the largest beef producing region in Australia. The Rockhampton Veterinary Laboratory, which was established by the coalition government, was in a key position to protect this extremely valuable industry against endemic, exotic and newly emerging industries.

Secondly, the Queensland government maintains two veterinarian diagnostic laboratories in south-eastern Queensland. They employ a total of 11 experienced and semi-experienced veterinarian diagnostic pathologists. In spite of the fact that Queensland is one of the largest states in the world with a diverse range of livestock raising enterprises and systems, there are now no experienced veterinary pathologists employed north of Brisbane.

The Oonoomba Veterinary Laboratory in Townsville once employed at least two highly experienced land animal pathologists. It no longer has any experienced pathologists servicing the production animal industries of north Queensland. It is disgraceful that that has happened to the important rural areas of central and north Queensland under the Labor government. It is an almost criminal run-down in biosecurity in central and north Queensland, at a time when diseases such as avian influenza, Hendra virus infection, the bat lyssavirus infection and the potential bioterrorism disease of anthrax are constantly being talked about in the popular press.

I will speak a little about the run-down in biosecurity in Queensland under Labor. As I said earlier, there has been a decline of about 30 per cent in the total number of government vets employed in Queensland since 1991. In 1991, the Queensland department of primary industries employed 91 vets. In 2004, that number had fallen to 64. The reference for that statistic is the Veterinarian Surgeons Register of 1991 and 2004, and the QDPI staff lists. While the Queensland government has allowed this to occur, since 1981 the New South Wales government has maintained its vet numbers at a substantially higher level. New South Wales has a system where the Rural Lands Protection Board does part of the work and the agricultural department does part of the work. In 1981, those two organisations employed 130 veterinarians. In 2002, the number of vets employed was 116. Thus, the number of government veterinarians within the New South Wales agricultural system has remained steady over the past 20 years.

In spite of the insistence of the Queensland government, particularly through QDPI, that this decline has been due to the rundown in the brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication scheme, this is not the case. Some of the most intellectually gifted and capable of our veterinarians have gone of their own volition to higher paying, more stimulating positions within the Commonwealth public service and academic institutions both in Australia and overseas. A number of Queensland centres that employed veterinarians in 1991 no longer have vets or, as in the case of Rockhampton, the number of field veterinarians has been halved.

The Rockhampton veterinarian laboratory has played a critical and highly important role in animal health and biosecurity in central Queensland. It was involved in the diagnosis of anthrax, a disease never previously seen in central Queensland. The centre has been closed in spite of assurances by the then minister, Mr Palaszczuk, and Premier Beattie, quoted in the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin*, that this would not happen.

The Rockhampton laboratory, which was closed by the Labor government, once employed three experienced veterinarians and about 12 experienced technicians and ancillary staff. The record of excellence of this laboratory is second to none. In 1992 the laboratory diagnosed anthrax, which had never been seen previously in central Queensland. That is a well-documented example of the excellence of the laboratory. Some argue that if there is to be only one laboratory in Queensland, it should be located in central Queensland, which is the heart of the greatest cattle producing state in Australia. However, because of the size of the state and the different types of industries that we have, it is important that those laboratories be spread strategically around the state. For example the Darling Downs has intensive industries such as piggeries, the thoroughbred industry and the feedlotting industry. North Queensland has the cattle industry, and cane and horticultural industries.

North Queensland is in a critical position. It is at the interface between what might be described as clean Australia and other areas of south-east Asia that have substantial disease. We need to be serviced by a veterinary laboratory that has a number of experienced pathologists on staff and that gives time to research, thus providing the barrier that we need. Sometimes it is said that if bioterrorists had their wits about them and they wanted to introduce a destructive disease into Australia, they would target the sparsely populated north of our nation, yet we have no effective laboratory presence north of Brisbane. That illustrates how serious the situation is.

This is a wake-up call to the Beattie Labor government. It must take a strong look at the department of primary industries and the need to employ additional stock inspectors and veterinarian officers. It must provide veterinary officers with a pay scale that is equivalent to what they could get interstate or elsewhere. The government must look at truly decentralising the state. For its size, Queensland is the most decentralised state in the world. The government must ensure that we have a professional biosecurity presence spread not only throughout southern Queensland but also central and north Queensland.

Recently in the Peachester area, a case of Hendra virus arose. As a result, the minister ordered an independent review, which stated that the response by the officers of the department of primary industries was substantially in line with their requirements. However, I have an issue with what

happened in the 10 days leading up to that particular response. I refer to the support provided to young veterinarians working in the field, who have to make critical and professional diagnoses of important diseases. They need support and the owners of the affected animals need help, advice and support.

People get very attached to their horses. It is extremely distressing to watch a horse die from a disease like Hendra virus. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to put the best biosecurity practices into place. The officer has to try to keep people away from a horse that they are emotionally attached to. There can be serious problems with the horse thrashing around and so on.

As a result of the review that the minister ordered, a number of recommendations were made. I could read them out, but basically they refer to communications, guidelines, web sites and response. We can have all the practice events in the world. Indeed, a few months back in Toowoomba, a practice event was held based on the scenario of a possible disease outbreak and everyone got quite alarmed. The theoretical event was a particular disease outbreak in Millmerran, and they realised that they no longer have a DPI stock inspector in Millmerran which put a spanner in the works. It was an expensive and comprehensive role play or practice of a major event.

Hendra virus can be alarming. It is an exotic and dreadful disease because it comes from bats, similar to lyssavirus. In layman's terms, it could be described as a meltdown of the brain. During the 1990s, there were some human deaths as well as horse deaths from this virus.

This young vet at Peachester made a brilliant diagnosis and she deserved support, advice and assistance from day one not only for what she was doing but in helping the family who owned the horse. A number of arrangements are supposed to be put in place in relation to a suspected case of Hendra virus. Some of the recommendations were that the web site be updated and that the guidelines be the one critical thing that everybody goes by so that certain procedures are put in place in relation to a suspected case of Hendra virus.

Just the other day there was another suspected case at another veterinary practice in the same area. Again, it was in an area where there are fruit bats, which are the potential carriers of lyssavirus. They carry it in their urine and other discharge. That puts animals, particularly horses, in that area at risk—for example, they may be standing underneath a tree that is home to a colony of bats and so forth. In this instance, again another young vet had a horse with a suspected case of Hendra virus. The vet rang the DPI, and the DPI officer said that they did not think it was the virus. That was on a Tuesday. The horse died on the Wednesday, and the family who were emotionally involved were told by the young vet to keep away from the horse. But you can understand how people feel about horses they are very strongly attached to. It was on the Wednesday that the horse died—I think it was late in the day.

Listed on the web site are three numbers that could be rung to notify the authorities of a suspected case of Hendra virus. It is important that these numbers work. If someone is going to ring about a case of avian influenza, Hendra virus or mad cow or something like that, they need to get an instant response, particularly when the people are extremely concerned—even if the response is a reassuring one where they say that they will be out there first thing or they will do this, that or the other. Of the three numbers that were listed, two of the numbers went straight to message bank—and I acknowledge that when the vet rang them it was after 9 pm. On ringing the third number, which is called a LINX system, it took some 10½ minutes to get through. And then it was only after the vet used pretty strong words to get some action that they eventually got some action. But they had to ring the person who did the independent review, Dr Nigel Perkins, to get some action. They rang him, then the LINX person rang back and then they got communication happening and they said that they would be out the next day. I am not sure what time they got out there the next day, but it was certainly after 10.30. That meant that the horse had been dead for the best part of three parts of a day.

Then there are all the biosecurity issues—what materials you wear when you are doing the autopsy, where the horse is buried, the EPA is supposed to be consulted. These were all the lessons that were learnt from the last event. As I understand it, these things did not happen. It is not good when the government has spent taxpayers' money having an independent review and then things work less than perfectly in the very next instance. I hope that by raising this issue we can get this sort of thing fixed up. When it comes to exotic diseases, responses have to be immediate. Where there are phone numbers listed—in this case, there were three different numbers—there has to be someone who answers or someone on call.

Vets have to be given the correct advice about what particular tissue has to be taken for the autopsy. In a suspected case of Hendra virus, it is very important that lung tissue and blood are taken, for example. The advice has to be correct as to what is to be taken. Whilst we are looking at some technical issues in the legislation to do with agricultural standards, biosecurity and so on, they have to work on the ground. It is one thing to dot the i's and cross the t's in legislation, but that head of power has to flow through the management structures, and the discipline and direction that is provided by the department so that we can be proud of the response that occurs and the team that responds can be proud of the professional way in which they acted. We have to get these things 100 per cent right because exotic disease is such a big issue for our primary industries in Queensland.

The next amendments in the bill are to the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001. This act, as it states, looks after the welfare of animals. I think every one of us in this House abhors cruelty to animals, and we support industry, primary industry and the department developing guidelines for the responsible care and use of animals, and protecting them from cruelty. I want to refer in particular to a decision of ARMCANZ which was made in August 2000 regarding the layer hen housing legislation. This was done to ensure that layer hens have a more comfortable life—that the space of the pens is larger, that the drinking nibbles are sufficient and that, at a certain height, the cages are front-opening cages and a number of other things.

To its credit, Queensland has abided by the ARMCANZ decision of August 2000. A space of eight years was given for the decision of ARMCANZ to be complied with, rightly to allow people the time to get capital together—it is extremely costly to replace sheds and layouts. I know that organisations and industry in Queensland have spent \$80 million to \$100 million making these changes. That capital cost has to be added to the cost of producing the eggs, but Queensland has complied. I think the ACT and Tasmania are the only other states that have complied. Victoria has not done it yet, and South Australia will probably walk hand in hand with Victoria. New South Wales is simply talking about it.

The disadvantage that Queensland egg producers will have is that, because they have complied with this decision of ARMCANZ—because they have spent tens of millions of dollars in improving the capital structure and the welfare of the hens—they are going to be extremely disadvantaged when competing with egg producers from other states that have not complied. As I said, I give credit to Queensland because Queensland has complied. I think that is something that has been well done by the minister's predecessors. The important thing is for Queensland, as one of the states that has complied, and Peter McGauran, the federal minister, to ensure that the other recalcitrant states do the right thing and comply with the decision that was taken by ARMCANZ.

Apart from the economic consequences, the other consequence is that the states, the federal government and animal welfare organisations all agreed to this ARMCANZ decision. If the other states do not live up to their responsibilities and to what was agreed, then this industry could once again face attacks from animal welfare organisations because it has not complied with a decision that everybody agreed with. As I said, Queensland has done the right thing. I would like to see, for the reasons I have outlined, more pressure applied to the federal minister and to the other states to fix this anomaly.

The next amendments dealt with in the bill relate to the Brands Act. Whilst the amendments here are technical, they extend stock inspector status to all police officers rather than only to those police who have a direct involvement in rural industry or who have training in relevant fields.

This is something that I think we need to look at. Police officers are often used to doing a whole range of things because very often they are the only person there. I hope that this is not being brought in because the department is getting short of stock inspectors. We need to be sure that all police, if they are automatically a stock inspector, have the training and the expertise to undertake the duties that may be asked of them or, of necessity, forced upon them. Police in areas where they may have to do stock inspection duties must receive the correct training so they know and understand what they are doing. There is a duty of care on those police officers that they know how to handle stock because, if there is a young police officer from the city who does not know how to safely get into yards with large livestock, they may get injured. That is what I have some concern about.

I know the wide-ranging duties that police have. My father and grandfather were police officers. My father was in charge of the Inala Police Station, you might like to know, Madam Deputy Speaker, being the member for Inala.

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr HORAN: My father loved his time looking after the Inala Police Station. I know the wide range of duties that police officers do. Some of the duties crop up at a moment's notice. There could be an injured animal or a truck that has fallen over and police are called in.

Whilst police have always been stock inspectors, they have been appointed stock inspectors in specific instances. Now we have a major change where all police will automatically be stock inspectors, I presume, from the moment that they are sworn in. I am concerned about the amount of training that police have received to be stock inspectors.

There are some minor changes to the Drugs Misuse Act 1986. That mainly involves forcing licensees and researchers to have photo identification. The Drugs Misuse Act sets out to consolidate and amend the law relating to the misuse of drugs and to make further provision for the prevention of the misuse of drugs.

A large amount of this legislation deals with the establishment of a hemp industry from the growing of industrial hemp. This legislation does not support or encourage the growing of this versatile product. It does not say anything about its benefit as a viable alternative to broadacre crops. It is really simply about some of the technical matters that relate to the growing of hemp.

When legislation was put in place to allow hemp to be grown, by the very nature of the crop it had to have significant guidelines and licences and so forth so that this crop could be grown for the purpose of industrial products and not for the growing of marijuana. It is a rotational crop that can have significant benefits over other rotational crops such as soybeans, maize or forage sorghum.

I have gone to Dalby to look at the growing of hemp and cannabis. It has a lot of potential, particularly in some of the broadacre, black soil plain areas. Whilst we have to maintain strict guidelines as to how hemp is grown, we need to encourage this crop. In some of the sugar areas of the state when, in recent years, sugar prices were not good and farmers were looking at possible alternatives, they looked at the possibility of using hemp as a rotational crop or for industrial products.

It would be well worth the department looking into the use of hemp or the seeds as a food product. I understand that it is a very rich source of vitamins and amino acids. When the Queensland industrial hemp farmers first met to form a farmers' group in 1998, there was a lot of government legislation, and laws had to be changed to allow for the growing of industrial hemp. As I understand it at the moment, hemp can be grown for industrial purposes but it cannot be grown as a food. In the crops that I have inspected, I have been told of the potential that hemp has as a food. Again, people have to be very careful as to how hemp is grown and the supervision that is required.

Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the minister, I think the problem that has come about in allowing it to be grown as a food has been that some of the other states, maybe New South Wales in particular, have not been keen because of the potential for misuse. That probably has to be the primary thing we look at. We do not want to see the farming of a product expanding and it getting misused. If there is a positive side to using hemp seed for food purposes, as it is used in other parts of the world, and if it can do good things for our primary industry, then we should look at it.

I would like to ask the minister to look at something that I have heard of, and that is the extremely high charges that are applied by the DPI for the testing of what is called the THC levels in trial blocks. It is \$650 per test, and many tests may be required for a block. The tests may not arrive back until after the hemp has been harvested, which of course would be useless. I understand that there is a company called Agri Fibre in the Bundaberg/Childers area. It has developed a test that costs approximately \$1. It seems a very, very significant difference. I think it would be well worthwhile looking at this test because cane farmers in that area are interested in growing hemp.

Industrially hemp can be used to make paper, textiles, geotextiles, structural reinforcement of building materials, fibreglass replacement products, light-weight sandwich boards, composite boards, absorbency products such as kitty litter, potting mix, nappies and fuel. But the hemp seed that I mentioned, whole or crushed for oil, is used in food products such as muesli bars, cakes, breads, biscuits, butter paste, non-dairy milk, tofu, cheese and ice cream. The seed is a superior cosmetic oil. Both the essential and cold-pressed oils are used in many cosmetics such as shampoos, soaps and moisturisers. The cold-pressed seed oil has nutritional qualities similar to evening primrose oil, cod liver oil, flaxseed oil and soybean supplement. It sounds like the answer to everything. It obviously has a lot of potential.

The Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981 is an extremely important piece of legislation. It is involved in the prevention of exotic disease in animals, the compensation of owners for loss or destruction of animals on property during outbreaks of exotic diseases, the establishment of an exotic diseases expenses and compensation fund, and for any other related purposes. One of the main changes to this legislation is removing the words 'fowl plague' because that is old terminology and is now replaced by more modern words such as avian flu.

I have talked about the Hendra virus, veterinary surgeons and biosecurity issues. They are the sorts of things that also come under this bill. I will not go over them again, but I think they are very important.

I also mention smut. It has been a real disaster for the Childers area. We have supported what the department of primary industries has been doing from the start but as time has gone by, there have been some concerns.

I give credit to the government for the \$16 million-odd that it has put into combating smut in that area. It was hoped originally that it would be in the order of about \$42 million. Under the planned emergency deed arrangement, which involves the Commonwealth government and every other single state government, along with the state government that is having the particular problem, if those parties can be convinced that the disease can be contained then they are to provide funds towards the containment.

In this case Queensland was not able to convince the other Labor states or the coalition federal government that that could be done. I know that there is a review of that decision underway and I hope that the work that has been undertaken can convince those other governments that containment can be successfully and practically undertaken.

In the meantime there is a big problem in the area. It has taken many months to get the management plans in place. The approach of the hot weather has created a better environment for the smut and more and more smut has been found in that particular area with the result that crops have had

to be ploughed out. That has meant that people have lost first and second return crops. Sugar, being about a five year rotation, means that it can be extremely costly to plant a sugar crop. The \$200,000 a hectare being provided by the government has been well received and I give it credit for it.

Growers are facing some very serious problems. Not only have they had to plough out the crops and will go back to a large number of new crops, which will have some effect upon production volumes; they are having to source cane from north Queensland that is smut resistant or hopefully still smut resistant in the different climate of the Childers area. It may have been bred in the north. One problem that can sometimes arise is that the production of the smut resistant cane may not be as high in terms of volume or CCS as the cane that has been ploughed out.

They also have some real problems of volume through the mill. Fortunately the mill is a cooperative mill—a mill we all admire for its management, cooperative structure and success over many generations. One of the things that I have pushed for that will be a real boost to the area, and I believe is within the realms of what the government can achieve, is in relation to a block of forestry land which is called block 779. It is planned to grow trees on this block of land. Many places can be found to grow trees, but not many blocks of land of this size can be found that have a cane tram track through them, an irrigation channel on one side and an irrigation pipeline on the other side and are in the cooperative mill area. Everything is logical and right about this block of ground being provided to the industry and fortunately in this case it is a cooperative mill so something can be done for the benefit of everybody in that mill.

I believe this is a very sensible solution. Trees can be grown elsewhere. This land is too valuable and well located, with its irrigation and cane tram tracks, to grow trees on. It should be growing cane. Still plant the trees, but plant them elsewhere. If that land can be provided to the mill, that will be a big boost to that area. It will provide something in the order of 1,250 hectares of additional caneland. This would be a real answer. I would urge the minister give that every consideration because it would be of enormous benefit to that area.

The Grain Research Foundation Act legislation takes the Grain Research Foundation out of the hands of government and puts it back in the hands of industry. It is a natural historical progression of the foundation. It has done some good work over a period of time. It has the support of industry and is another part of this act that we will be supporting.

There are quite a number of changes to the Veterinary Surgeons Act. There are a number of clauses regarding the keeping of the role of the Veterinary Tribunal. The major issue with veterinary surgeons has been the industrial problems that I mentioned previously. The log of claims that was lodged with the DPIF and QIRC in July 2004 aimed for wage parity with interstate vets. Negotiations with the Beattie Labor government for better pay have continued to be unsuccessful. The government has said that it is part of the whole Public Service package that was negotiated in an EB some three or four years ago. It might be a three- or five-year EB. There have been many instances where particular parts of EB packages have been plucked out for specific professions or specific classes of officers. This is too important an issue when we are dealing with exotic disease and those sorts of issues. Biosecurity is so important. We must have enough vets and they must be adequately and fairly paid in comparison to their interstate colleagues. The difference in salary shortfall is up to \$30,000 compared to New South Wales and Victorian vets.

A spokesman for DPIF said that the matter concerning veterinarians was currently subject to negotiations under the core agreement for the state government, noting that the department had already responded to the union's claim with a 10-point plan; the public can be assured that DPIF has contingency plans in place and disease protection is their highest priority and will not be compromised. If there are no experienced vets it will be compromised.

We are seeing vets withdrawn from centres such as Mount Isa, Cloncurry, Kingaroy, Dalby, Gayndah, Gympie, Bundaberg, Chinchilla and Hughenden. Vacancies that cannot be filled include a senior position at Biloela that was vacant for four months, a position in Charleville and a vet scientist position in Rockhampton which has been advertised for more than a year. This is an issue that needs addressing as a matter of urgency.

The final act that we deal with in this legislation is the Grain Industry (Restructuring) Act 1991. I may have to declare some type of interest because I had shares in Grainco. Anyone who grew grain automatically received shares in Grainco. This is part of the historical development within the grain industry. This act provided for a Queensland review of the wheat marketing arrangements following a national review of the wheat single desk export arrangement. This was the act that set up Grainco Ltd, the former grower owned and controlled grain handling and marketing body. This is a technicality to repeal what has become a redundant piece of legislation because we have moved on from the days of Grainco.

In the time left to me I want to address the importance of having experienced staff in the department of primary industries. One thing that concerns me is the number of temporary and casual staff within the organisation. When referring to veterinary surgeons I pointed out the importance of having a stable, professional and fairly remunerated staff. If one looks at the figures for 2006 for the

department of primary industries, 68 per cent were permanent staff; 20.9 per cent—almost 21 per cent—were temporary staff, that was some 793 people; and 11.98 or nearly 12 per cent, or 431 staff, were casual. I know that some of the casual staff might well be the remnants of staff brought in on a casual basis to perform infield inspections and works in relation to outbreaks of fire ants, citrus canker and smut.

The fact that 21 per cent of DPI staff are temporary and only 68 per cent are permanent is of concern. I would like to think that a large number of DPI staff feel they are highly valued and that their job is permanent. I would like them to feel that they always have a good opportunity to get training and use different skills within the work they do so they can be proud of working for the department of primary industries and want to stay there and obtain that corporate knowledge which is so essential when it comes to biosecurity or industry matters. It takes years to get the knowledge that is required in Primary Industries and Fisheries.

I got a briefing only yesterday from a couple of officers regarding fishing and I was quite amazed at the depth of knowledge they had. The thought went through my mind that it takes years and years and years to get that knowledge. We need the staff at primary industries to have that permanency, stability, enduringness and good job satisfaction to ensure that that corporate knowledge is retained and is passed on to the next lot of people who come through.

As I have said, the opposition will support this bill. We can never underestimate the importance of primary industries. When the Prime Minister of Australia recently announced a new \$560 million drought assistance plan, he talked about primary industries as being part of the essence of Australia. Many people from the city or elsewhere have aspired at times to go on to the land. It is there for the recreation of people. Many people are now involved in primary industries through lifestyle blocks, but they also combine together to make a significant contribution. It is part of the decentralised nature of Queensland. Many of our towns and cities spread along the coast and in inland Queensland depend upon primary production. Many of the issues I have talked about today—like biosecurity and drought—are essential to the fabric of our Queensland society.

We do support this bill. I hope the comments I have made during this debate—particularly about drought, biosecurity and the staff at DPI—are of assistance. We will support anything that the minister or the department wants to do that we think advances primary industries in Queensland and provides support to the people who work within them.

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (12.24 pm): I am very pleased to speak in support of the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill, an omnibus bill that makes amendments to a number of acts and repeals another act that is no longer relevant. Madam Deputy Speaker, could I take the liberty to point out to the House that this is my first opportunity since the election to speak in support of a bill before the House that pertains to primary industries. In doing so, I would like to say that it was an enormous pleasure and a great delight for me to be appointed the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries. It was a great delight because the minister is a long-time friend of mine, is in a neighbouring electorate and is a person who I know has an enormous passion and vision for primary industries.

Mr Pearce: And he's in north Queensland.

Ms JARRATT: Being neighbours, we are from regional Queensland—not north Queensland, I hasten to add. The minister was a long-time friend of and was mentored by the legendary Edmund Casey, who was another great primary industries minister in a Labor government in this state. Having had a brief opportunity to work with the minister and see how he works, I know that primary industries in this state are in very fine hands. He has a great vision to take the field forward into the 21st century, to restructure the department and the industry for a 21st century approach and to take care of the primary producers in this state who do face enormous and unprecedented challenges at this time. I just wanted to put that on the record, with your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am really excited about a few of the areas that the minister has asked me to work in and become familiar with. One is the emerging forestry industry in this state, so it was a great pleasure for me to have recently represented the minister in Gympie on the occasion of the launch of a new hybrid spotted gum which we hope will be a star in the emerging hardwood plantation industry. We hope that the *Corymbia* hybrid will, after some years of research and monitoring, provide a form of plantation timber that will be suited to the subtropics and will lead the way for this emerging industry.

Most notably on that day, I was able to announce on behalf of the minister that the Beattie government has become a core partner in the Cooperative Research Centre for Forestry, which provides research and development investment in hardwood projects. We have a \$750,000 commitment over some five to six years in partnership with the department of state development. I was very proud to be able to do that. It is an emerging industry and one which has great potential for the future.

Another area that the minister has asked me to familiarise myself with is animal welfare. The bill before the House will amend the Animal Care and Protection Act. The amendments clarify that an inspector has the power to re-enter a property to care for an animal which has been seized in situ. This

is an important amendment because, as we can imagine, animals that are to be inspected are often quite weak or in poor condition and it is not appropriate to move them in this instance. So the appropriate form of attention could be to rehabilitate the animal in situ, which necessitates the inspector re-entering the property to undertake these duties. These amendments just clarify that that right does exist.

The bill also amends the Agricultural Standards Act. These amendments are required to assist the compliance auditing program in controlling BSE, otherwise known as mad cow disease. This is very important. We are well placed here in Queensland and Australia with our reputation in primary industries as being clean and green, and we want to keep that reputation intact. Indeed, a lot of work is happening with this issue. I know the minister is very, very passionate about establishing the biosecurity centre to address these very issues. There are quite a number of potential diseases and conditions lurking out there which could do enormous damage to our beef cattle industry, in particular.

We are fortunate that we have not had a case of BSE notified in this state. However, we need to be vigilant, and the amendments in the bill go some way to ensuring that we can monitor what we believe to be the source of BSE in cattle—that is, the injection of animal tissue containing the BSE agent. These amendments are required to clarify entry powers and enable seizure of evidence where entry is made to monitor the ruminant feed ban. This is very important if we are to maintain the level of vigilance that will be required to keep our BSE free status intact.

The shadow minister has outlined in great detail the various acts to be amended, so I will just mention them briefly. There are amendments to the Grain Research Foundation Act to enable the Grain Research Foundation to convert from a statutory body to an industry owned company, limited by guarantee and operating under the Corporations Law. I do not think this or any other of the amendments contained in this bill are controversial. This has the support of industry and is a timely amendment. Finally, I want to mention that the Grain Industry (Restructuring) Act is to be repealed. This act has no operative provisions at the moment except for the review clause, which is no longer appropriate or necessary. With that brief contribution, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (12.49 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill. At the outset I have to say that many people are not aware just how important the department of primary industries is to the general wellbeing of our state and the income-earning capacity of primary industries in our state. In his contribution to this debate the shadow minister for primary industries identified that there are eight different factors which this legislation covers. Despite those eight factors, the issues I want to touch on are biosecurity, drought and the changes within the department over the last few years.

We recognise that, whilst the department of primary industries is a department that covers all corners of the state and all different facets of agriculture and primary production, at the same time it is absolutely paramount that there are qualified and specially trained people to uphold the positions available in the magnificent primary industries department. Earlier the shadow minister spoke about veterinary services, stock inspectors and biosecurity. I want to talk firstly about the drought and the impact of drought on our rural communities. This morning many of us went to St John's Cathedral to pray for rain. This morning the Premier mentioned the stress that the farming industry and the agricultural industry are under. No truer words have been said in a long time. Our rural people are on their knees. It is not just the small farmers; it is the major operators.

This morning I received a phone call from a roo processing operator in Longreach to say that the quota has been cut and people will lose their jobs before the end of November because the quota has been exhausted, and I want to speak to the minister for natural resources in relation to this issue. The fact is that these quotas are creating employment and are an important part of the wealth generation capacity of those regions. Common sense has to prevail here. If the quota could be extended for, say, two weeks or three weeks this year to let those people get by over Christmas and maybe start a bit later next year, we could give those people an opportunity to see their way clear. That is exactly what it is about—that is, there needs to be flexibility with the departments in order to get genuine outcomes which benefit the people concerned. I have spoken with the minister over the course of the last 48 hours in relation to exceptional circumstances. Again, this is an issue that is hurting many primary producers because the process has not been expedited in some areas. The minister has informed me today that he has made the necessary arrangements in relation to some of the issues in my area. I urge the minister to work closely with his federal colleague, Peter McGauran, and I know that he does that. This is an issue that we have to assist our primary producers with.

While talking about exceptional circumstances—and I have written to my colleagues in the federal government in relation to this matter—I want to mention the people who are connected to rural production because under the rules relating to exceptional circumstances payments they do not get the same outcomes as rural producers. They are the ones who are affected just as much as the farmers, the graziers and the pastoralists because they rely 100 per cent on rural production for their income—whether it is livestock transport operators, whether it is shearing contractors, whether it is fencing contractors, whether it is earthmoving contractors or whether it is crop spraying operators. All of those

people are directly affected. I call on the federal government to change those guidelines now so that we do not see more people going to the wall as a result of that policy. I urge the Queensland minister for primary industries to support us in this and play his part in order to get that anomaly addressed. This is a very important function of keeping our rural producers and rural businesspeople viable. There has been five years of drought now and, please God, it is not going to go too much longer. But the fact is that it is happening and we have to do something about it.

The most important function of primary industries is biosecurity. Biosecurity has been an issue on the lips of many people for a long time. Just a couple of years ago we witnessed that awful disaster in the Central Highlands where citrus canker wiped out the whole of the citrus industry in the Emerald and Central Highlands area. Whilst citrus canker destroyed the citrus industry on the Central Highlands, we can feel grateful and blessed that it did not move into the Gayndah-Mundubbera area and ultimately further south into the MIA and into the Riverland area of Victoria and South Australia.

I heard the member for Toowoomba South, the shadow minister, make reference to the fact that we have to have fully trained professional people to administer this operation. I know that the minister is going to make some statements in relation to biosecurity in the not-too-distant future, but biosecurity starts by having those trained professionals not just in Emerald, not just in Longreach and not just in Cloncurry but in all major centres right across the state. It is absolutely paramount that we do not see a reoccurrence of what happened at Emerald where we had to pull animal husbandry people out of Longreach and those sorts of places to go and work in an area where we should have had an agronomist and those types of people to look at the effects of citrus canker. We did not have the properly trained people in that situation.

I mention in particular Paul Walmsley, who is a stock inspector from Longreach who is now a regional director in Rockhampton, and Garry Pidgeon from Longreach. These people did a magnificent job—an absolutely magnificent job—in trying to keep the lid on something which could have been a national disaster. When I say a ‘national disaster’, it could have wiped our citrus industry out not just in Queensland but nationally for the next six or seven years. As a result of this outbreak, we have a situation now where we are not going to see the planting of citrus trees in Emerald until July 2007. From July 2007 it will be five years or six years before those producers become a fully commercial viable operation. It might be all right to say that, yes, they can sustain that, but they cannot sustain that. Nobody can sustain that. What about the impact on the towns and the impact on the people who come to pick fruit? It has a flow-on effect. That is why biosecurity has to be ridgy-didge. It has to be the best.

I refer to Canada, and I heard the member for Whitsunday mention BSE. Look what BSE has done in Canada! Canada relies on the United States in that 85 per cent of its farmed produce goes across the US border. I was over there on a trade delegation with the police minister last year and one transport operator in British Columbia did not move a beast for 24 months. How would that be, trying to run a transport operation across the US border if those cattle cannot be carted? Where are they going to go? Those farmers are in dire straits. I say to everybody in this House: we are unique in that we live on an island continent and we have to make absolutely certain that our borders are protected against these things. Biosecurity is not just a state responsibility; it is the responsibility of every jurisdiction around the Commonwealth, including the federal government. I know the work that Peter McGauran, the federal minister, is doing and I know the work that the state minister is endeavouring to achieve. It is so important.

I come back again to stock inspection services. That is another matter—a totally different matter—in terms of BSE or citrus canker or foot-and-mouth disease. How would it be if we had a foot-and-mouth outbreak in the north? Minister, I do not know how we would ever control it, especially in the Wet Tropics, when we do not have the resources. Wild pigs are running rampant through some of those gulf areas and peninsula areas, and other parts of the state for that matter. They would be the greatest carriers of foot-and-mouth disease and would wipe out our livestock industry overnight. We have the best livestock industry in the world. That goes without saying. We have the best cattle, the best sheep, the best horses and the best pigs. We are quality farmers; we are quality producers. It is very important that we recognise that we have to protect those producers.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

Mr JOHNSON: I want to canvas the important issue of biosecurity. The shadow minister referred to the issue of stock inspectors. I have already spoken to the minister about the need to retain the presence of a stock inspector in Alpha. It is absolutely paramount that Alpha be retained as a fully operational stock inspection area because of the clearing dip that is there and because of the need, when we return to normal seasons, to have cattle scratched there. They are scratched there now whether or not we have normal seasons. It is certainly not an area to be covered by a part-time operative and somebody who is not trained specifically in the art of stock inspection or in the business of scratching tick-infected cattle.

I believe that the issue of livestock movement has been overlooked by this government and governments of the past ever since the Move Easy livestock permit system was brought in back in the days of the late Ed Casey. Although I support the concept in general, we have to look at the format and

the pitfalls in it—and there are certainly a lot of pitfalls in it. We are never going to have a problem with the good, honest people in the industry. Although we have the National Livestock Identification System, I know that the crooks will always be around. Those good people are always going to have their hands tied while the crooks are at work. Under the National Livestock Identification System, it is quite easy to remove the ear chip. People who want to steal stock can quite easily put in their own ear chips.

I am pleased that the minister for Minister for Police and Corrective Services is present in the House today, because, when it comes to the movement of stock, I believe that the two most important people in rural and regional Queensland are the police and the stock inspector. Back in the days when I was trucking a lot of stock, if you could not get a permit from the stock inspector, you went to the local police station and got a permit from the police. That way the police knew what was going on. On most occasions the police were housed in the same building or very close to the stock inspector. If the stock inspector did not know that a permit was issued, the police did. There was always a duplicate or a triplicate copy of that permit. But I have to say to the minister that I think there are a lot of flaws in the Move Easy system and that the system has to be reviewed.

On numerous occasions I have spoken with Senior Sergeant Terry Hanley, who is the Stock Squad coordinator for central Queensland. I can say to the minister today that people such as Terry and officers of the minister's department are worth talking to in an effort to iron out some of the flaws in the Move Easy system. I know that the National Livestock Identification System is here to stay. It is certainly going to assist with the monitoring of disease and the monitoring of the movement of stock. But we do not need to compound the problem that the police face with livestock theft. The good old system of the fire brand—the well-branded cattle—has been in existence since about 1870 and I hope that it will stay forever, because it is the best way to identify cattle. Regardless of where those cattle are moving, that brand is registered.

It is absolutely paramount that every possible avenue is covered to make certain that the DPI and the police are able to work together in the best interests of maintaining honesty within the livestock industry. We see the police going through the saleyards. Although they may need more training to be able to identify cattle through this new system, they do a magnificent job with the resources that they have available to them. I say to the minister today that we have to consider upgrading the powers of those stock inspectors so that they are given more of an opportunity to be able to address this issue.

In the past, the minister and other members have touched on the issue of biosecurity. The theft of cattle is also an issue. We have to be honest and accept that there are problems in the system and that we need to address them. A good bullock can fetch anywhere between \$1,000 and \$1,200 at the abattoirs or the saleyards. So you are looking at \$20,000 or \$25,000 worth of cattle on a deck. You can move \$100,000 worth of cattle like that without too much scrutiny. I really think that we should not give our police and our stock inspectors a bigger job than they have already.

I also refer to the issue of the extension services in the department of primary industries. Those people who are involved in those extension services out in Longreach, Charleville and Emerald do a magnificent job. Just before lunch I touched on the issue of citrus canker. Whether we are in opposition or in government, we have to look at the best way of getting the best outcomes for the industry as a whole.

Mr Mulherin: You have got to look at the cost to industry.

Mr JOHNSON: Absolutely. Cost is a factor, but the bottom line is retaining people in those positions and making certain that we have that expertise in place so that people on the land can access that knowledge and find out exactly where they are going.

Before lunch I also touched on the issue of biosecurity. None of us can go to sleep on that issue. We must keep our eyes open and we must keep our hands on the wheel, because some of the grubs that we have on the international scene today will be out there looking at ways and means of infiltrating our good network of government agencies. At the same time, it is absolutely paramount that we protect our livestock and our horticultural and agricultural industries in every way possible. We are in a situation where we can do that. Last year, Australia's income from agricultural exports alone was something like \$30 billion. When we factor in the number of jobs et cetera that are generated by that \$30 billion throughout the nation, we realise that biosecurity plays a big role in the lives of all of the people in question.

In Queensland, we are in a very good position. As I said earlier, we have the best livestock, we have the best horticultural and agricultural industries, and we have the best farmers and graziers in the world. Let us keep it that way. Let us work together to make sure that we keep out the people who want to pose problems for us and for our industry.

Debate, on motion of Mr Johnson, adjourned.

SUMMARY OFFENCES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (2.40 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Summary Offences Act 2005, 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. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (2.40 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The objective of the Summary Offences and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2006 is to amend the Summary Offences Act 2005 to strengthen existing antigraffiti laws by banning the sale of spray-paint cans to minors—persons aged 17 years and under. The amendments will require retail outlets to display prohibition signs and for employers to take standard prevention measures towards their employees who sell spray-paint cans. The amendments will also provide offences relating to sellers generally and to employers and employees in specific circumstances.

The amendments will widen section 27 'Forfeiture' to authorise courts that find persons guilty of the new offences under section 23B 'Sale of spray paint (cans) to minors' and section 23C 'When employee of seller liable' of that act to order spray-paint cans to which either offence relates to be forfeited to the state.

The amendments will prohibit a person, including a corporation, in trade or commerce, from sending a message over the internet, or by a SMS text message or by any other message that may be heard, read or viewed by a person using a mobile phone to inform another person of the location of a police traffic enforcement site for the purpose of, or that has the effect of, enabling the other person to avoid, or be prepared for, a check made at the site. I seek leave to have the remainder of my second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

- the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 to update the definitions of "officer-in-charge" and "holding cell" in the Schedule "Dictionary";
 - the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 (the PPRA) to:
 - widen section 30 "Prescribed circumstances of searching persons without warrant (under section 29)" and section 32 "Prescribed circumstances of searching vehicle without warrant (under section 31)" of the PPRA to provide police with the power to stop, detain and search persons and vehicles without warrant and to seize spray paint cans as evidence of the proposed new offences under sections 23B "Sale of spray paint to minors" and 23C "When employee of seller liable" of the Summary Offences Act 2005.
 - These search powers will be identical to those currently provided to police under sections 29 and 31 of the PPRA for searches of persons and vehicles without warrant for graffiti implements, including spray paint cans, that may afford evidence of an offence under section 17 "Graffiti instrument" of the Summary Offences Act 2005;
 - remove any doubt that section 43 "Unlawful supply of smoking products to children" of the PPRA applies to minors;
 - insert a new section 43A "Unlawful sale of spray paint to minors" in the PPRA to empower police officers to ask suspected minors who are observed being sold, or who are reasonably suspected of just having been sold, spray paint cans to show acceptable evidence of age and to produce the thing sold to them. A police officer may seize the spray paint can if the suspected minor either refuses or is unable to comply with the request or shows acceptable evidence of age that they are a minor and the police officer reasonably suspects the spray paint can is evidence of an offence against sections 23B and 23C of the Summary Offences Act 2005. These powers will be the same as those currently available to police officers under section 43 "Unlawful supply of smoking products to children" of the PPRA;
 - omit section 608 "Expiry of ss 604-607" that is located in Division 1 "Potentially harmful things" of Part 6 "Miscellaneous powers" of the PPRA. This amendment will provide for the ongoing operation of sections 604, 605, 606 and 607 of the PPRA. Currently these sections have to be extended by regulation for 6 monthly intervals. They set out police powers and duties and safeguards in connection with the detention of a person whom a police officer is satisfied is affected by the ingestion or inhalation of a potentially harmful thing, e.g. glue, paint or solvent, in a declared locality prescribed in Part 2B of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Regulation 2000. The person may be taken to a place of safety and be released into the care of a suitable carer;
 - remove any doubt that section 697 "Cost recovery for animal held by commissioner under order under s 696" of the PPRA applies in relation to an animal seized by a police officer and held in the possession of the Police Service whether or not an order has been made under section 696 "Orders issuer may make in relation to seized thing" of the PPRA;

- remove subsection (3) from section 705 "Destruction of drug matter soon after it is seized etc" because it has been incorporated into a new section 705A "Disposal of things used for administering etc. dangerous drugs" of the PPRA. The new section will authorise the Commissioner, and any class of Police Service member delegated the Commissioner's authority, to destroy drug matter, including pipes and utensils, that is no longer required as evidence in a proceeding without having to first obtain a court order to do so. This will reduce the number of court orders issued for minor purposes;
- correct minor drafting irregularities in sections 747, 755, 756, 758, 770, 785 of Chapter 22 "Provisions about evading police officers" of the PPRA. These provisions were included in the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Acts Amendment Act (No. 26) 2006;
- insert a new section 859 "Declaratory provision about renumbering" into the PPRA to validate any instrument, document or order made after the PPRA was recently renumbered that shows an outdated PPRA section number;
- insert two new sections 860 and 861 into the PPRA to acknowledge minor drafting corrections to provisions in the PPRA that were the subject of recent amendments in the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Motorbike Noise) Amendment Act 2005 and the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Acts Amendment Act 2006; and
- omit or replace outdated provisions and correct other minor drafting irregularities in a number of sections of the PPRA that are set out in Schedule 1 of the Bill;
- the Police Service Administration Act 1990 to update section 5A.3 "Persons to whom pt 5A applies" of that Act by replacing subsection (c) to refer now to a watch-house officer. The outdated terms "assistant watch-house officer" and "assistant watch-house manager" have been removed. This will ensure that Part 5A "Alcohol and drug tests" of that Act applies to watch-house officers who are staff members. The heading of section 10.28 "Regulations" of that Act is to be amended for drafting consistency. Schedule 2 of the Bill sets out these two amendments;
- the Prostitution Act 1999 to expand section 64K "Appeals by applicants" in Part 4 "Development approvals for brothels" of that Act to allow an applicant for a development application to now appeal to the Independent Assessor against:
 - matters set out in section 64K(1)(a)-(e) of that Act after an assessment manager decides that the development application requires code assessment under the Integrated Planning Act; or
 - a statement in an acknowledgement notice under the Integrated Planning Act that as aspect of the development applied for requires impact assessment; and
- the Weapons Act 1990 to correct drafting irregularities. These minor amendments are set out in Schedule 2 of the Bill.

Mr Speaker, I will now outline the reasons for, and details about, the two significant amendments in this Bill.

- amendments to the Summary Offences Act 2005 relating to the prohibition of the sale of spray paint cans to minors:

Over recent years, State Government entities, local governments, private industry and the general public have spent millions of dollars repairing graffiti damage in this State. Lord Mayor Campbell Newman recently estimated that graffiti vandalism costs the Brisbane community an estimated \$10 million every year and significantly reduces the amenity, perceived safety and livability of the City. It is estimated that Queensland Rail will spend about \$2 million this financial year removing graffiti from carriages and from other railway property. The primary cause of such damage is the misuse of aerosol spray paint cans by offenders to produce 'tags' and multicoloured words and symbols in public and private places.

Queensland Police Service records show that graffiti offences in this State are committed predominantly by minors and young adults.

A number of retailers in the State currently have voluntary codes of practice restricting the sale of spray paint cans to minors. However, their staff may be reluctant, if challenged by a customer, to adhere to them for fear of being accused of discrimination.

To more effectively combat spray paint graffiti crime, five new sections will be inserted into the Summary Offences Act 2005, namely:

- section 23A "Seller must take prevention measures in relation to spray paint"—This section will require sellers, who are employers, to take prevention measures in relation to each of their employees who sell spray paint cans. A maximum penalty of 40 penalty units will apply to a contravention of this requirement. The prevention measures are set out in subsection 23A(3) and provide that an employer must instruct or warn their employees on a number of matters, for example:
 - not to sell spray paint cans to minors in any circumstances, even if the sale is for, or claimed to be for, an adult;
 - to sight acceptable evidence of age for a person before selling spray paint cans to the person, unless satisfied the person is an adult; and
 - that if the employee disregards the instructions and sells spray paint cans to minors, they commit an offence against section 23C "When employee of seller liable" of the Summary Offences Act 2005;
- Section 23B "Sale of spray paint to minors"—Subsection (1) provides that a seller of spray paint cans must not sell such items to a minor. The maximum penalties are (a) for a first offence—140 penalty units; (b) for a second offence—280 penalty units and (c) for a third or later offence—420 penalty units for a contravention of this prohibition.

Section 23B(2) provides that an employee of the seller who sells spray paint can not be prosecuted under this section.

Sub-section 23B(3) provides defence grounds to a charge of an offence against subsection 23B(1) for a seller to prove, namely:

- that the seller, or an employee of the seller, required the person to produce acceptable evidence of age that is defined in sub-section 23B(4) and includes a driver licence, a proof of age card or an Australian or foreign passport; and
- the person produced acceptable evidence of age showing the person was not a minor; and
- the seller or employee had no reason to believe that the evidence was false.

Sub-section 23B(4) provides to the effect that section 46 "Discrimination in goods and services area" of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 does not apply to a seller who refuses to sell spray paint cans to a minor because of the ban on the sale of spray paint cans to them.

Sub-section 23B(5) sets out a definition for "acceptable evidence of age";

- section 23C “When employee of seller liable”—Sub-section (2) provides that the employee of a seller must not, in the course of their employment, sell a spray paint can to a minor.
Maximum penalties apply to a contravention of this provision, namely:
 - (a) for a first offence—20 penalty units; or
 - (b) for a second or later offence—40 penalty units.
 Sub-section 23C(1) provides that the offence under sub-section 23C(2) is contingent on the employer having taken the required prevention measures under section 23A(3) before the employee sells the spray paint can to the minor. It does not matter whether the prevention measures taken in relation to the employee were taken by the same or by a different employer;
- section 23D “Seller of spray paint must display prohibition sign”—This section requires sellers of spray paint cans who are employers to display, as prescribed under a regulation, a prohibition sign at each point of sale at their retail outlet.
A maximum penalty of 20 penalty units is provided for a contravention of this provision; and
- section 23E “Provision about definition of sell for ss 23A-23D”—Sub-section 23E(1) provides that this section applies for the application of the definition “sell” in the dictionary to sections 23A to 23D. Section 23E(2) provides to the effect that a seller does not offer or expose spray paint for sale to a minor only because the seller displays spray paint for sale to the public generally.

These new provisions in the Summary Offences Act 2005 will be supported by the previously mentioned amendments to sections 30 and 32 of the PPRA and by the new section 43A that is to be inserted into the PPRA.

The new provisions will operate in conjunction with the existing section 17 “Graffiti instrument” of the Summary Offences Act 2005 that contains offences in connection with the possession of a graffiti instrument, including a spray paint can, that a police officer reasonably suspects has been used for graffiti, or was being used for graffiti, or was about to be used for graffiti.

- Amendments to the Summary Offences Act 2005 to prohibit persons engaged in trade or commerce from sending SMS, Internet, etc messages that include information about police traffic enforcement sites:

In January 2006, a business named Road Spy commenced operations on the Gold Coast. Road Spy is an Internet service that sends SMS text warning messages to the mobile phones of subscribers about the locations of police traffic enforcement sites (primarily where radars and mobile speed cameras are operating) and also about general traffic delays and road hazards in its area of operations.

Its subscription fee rates include \$149.00 for six months and \$280.00 for 12 months. Road Spy elected to stop providing warning alerts about police random breath testing (RBT) sites to new subscribers from 12 January 2006. However, at that time Road Spy elected to continue to send RBT warning alerts to those subscribers who had previously paid to receive them until their current subscriptions ended.

Road Spy’s message centre receives its information principally via SMS text messages from contracted reporters and from other informants. Its website states that Road Spy currently has over 300 contracted reporters on the Gold Coast. Anecdotal information indicates that taxi drivers are included among the contracted reporters.

Road Spy uses modern computer and telecommunications technology, in conjunction with its extensive and organised reporting network, to provide precise, comprehensive and almost instantaneous SMS text alerts to their subscribers. It is understood the alerts are relayed to subscribers at any time of the day, 7 days a week, immediately after they are received at its message centre.

Currently, Road Spy’s traffic warnings are restricted to the Gold Coast area where suburbs have been categorised into regions. Subscribers may select up to 6 of these regions with every subscription. They may also select the type of alerts they wish to receive and when they want to receive them.

Road Spy’s website states that it is primarily a road safety warning service and that it does not condone or encourage driving above road speed limits or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The website also states that Road Spy strongly recommends that drivers pull over before sending or reading an SMS message.

Conversely, the website also states that Road Spy can help subscribers avoid traffic delays, costly speeding fines, accumulation of points on their licenses or worse.

The Beattie Government believes Road Spy’s SMS text message alerts about police traffic enforcement sites seriously threaten the safety of other road users because of the real risk that ‘hoons’ and other persons who routinely break the traffic laws by speeding, drink driving, driving dangerously, driving when unlicensed or disqualified or by driving un-roadworthy vehicles will subscribe to its services for the sole purpose of avoiding, or being prepared for, police traffic enforcement sites in their area. These are the very persons who should be put off the State’s roads. The threat to road safety may be further increased by those irresponsible subscribers who read incoming SMS text messages about police traffic enforcement sites on their mobile phones while driving their vehicles.

Neither Queensland legislation nor the Australian Road Rules currently prohibit persons and businesses in trade or commerce from sending such warning messages about the location of police traffic enforcement sites.

The Government considers the proposed legislation is timely, particularly in light of the strong possibility that Road Spy may expand its services to other areas in the State and that other businesses similar to Road Spy may commence operations in the State at any time to provide motorists with traffic alerts that include RBT sites.

Consequently, the Bill will insert into the Summary Offences Act 2005:

- a new section 24A “Unlawful SMS messages etc.”—Sub-section (1) states that a person must not provide, in trade or commerce, in Queensland or elsewhere, a service of informing another person of the location of a traffic enforcement site for the purpose, or that has the effect of, of enabling the other person to avoid, or be prepared for, a check made at the site. A maximum penalty of 100 penalty units will apply to a breach of this sub-section.

Sub-section 24A(2) states that for subsection (1), a person provides a service of informing another person of the location of a traffic enforcement site if the person makes information about the location of a traffic enforcement site available to the other person by a relevant message.

Sub-section 24A(3) states that subsection (1) does not apply to the provider of a telephone service or an internet service provider only because another person uses the provider’s telephone or internet service to inform someone else of the location of a traffic enforcement site.

Sub-section (4) states that in this section:

“internet message” means a message that may be viewed by a person on a website.

“message” includes information in any form, whether or not for a particular person.

“relevant message” means any of the following that informs a person of the location of a traffic site:

- (a) an internet message;
- (b) an SMS message;
- (c) another type of message that may be heard, read or otherwise viewed by a person using a mobile phone.

“SMS message” means a text message sent using the mobile phone service known as the short messaging service.

“traffic enforcement site” means a place being used by a police officer to perform random or systematic checks of compliance by drivers with the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995.

This definition includes examples of traffic enforcement sites, namely:

- the site of a speed camera;
- a random breath test site; and
- a vehicle safety check site.

The proposed legislation will not prohibit commercial radio stations from broadcasting the general location of police radar and speed camera sites to their listeners during the day. These limited, random and delayed traffic alerts do not pose a similar level of threat to road safety that is currently posed by Road Spy or potentially by any other similar business that may provide traffic alerts about police traffic enforcement sites to Queensland motorists in the future.

In conclusion Mr Speaker, all of the proposed amendments in the Bill are essential to ensure that police officers may more effectively combat graffiti crime, that road safety is maintained on Queensland roads and that the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989, the PPRA, the Police Service Administration Act 1990, the Prostitution Act 1999 and the Weapons Act 1990 remain current and effective.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Flegg, adjourned.

POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (2.42 pm):

I present a bill for an act to amend the Police Service Administration Act 1990. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (2.42 pm):

I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Police Service Administration Amendment Bill 2006 amends the Police Service Administration Act 1990 to remove any doubt about the legal basis on which the Queensland Police Service discloses certain types of information in the following specific circumstances: the disclosure of criminal history information, with the written consent of the relevant person, to the CrimTrac Agency or another police service for subsequent release to third parties, under a commercial or other arrangement for employment screening purposes; the disclosure of police dispatch information to media organisations; and the disclosure of criminal history information to an entity for the purposes of assessing prospective participants in government sponsored diversion programs. I seek leave to have the remainder of my second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

National Criminal History Record Checking (NCHRC)

The purposes for which QPS information is being sought by the community has over time extended to matters which may be considered by some to be beyond the scope of traditional law enforcement functions. The CrimTrac Agency in Canberra has expanded its NCHRC service to the private sector (including criminal history brokers) on a commercial basis for employment screening, and asks for QPS and other jurisdictions' criminal history information to provide the service.

QPS provision of criminal history information to CrimTrac for such purposes is considered justified on the basis that the community now expects that persons engaged in financial and other positions of trust, including in the private sector, should be properly screened for previous criminal behaviour for the overall protection of the community.

Notwithstanding that all criminal history checks conducted in these circumstances are only done with the written consent of the relevant person, there is some uncertainty as to whether the existing legislation allows for this extension to occur lawfully.

Media Access to Computer Aided Dispatch (MatCAD)

On 9 December 2004, Mr Brendan Butler SC, (then) Chairperson of the Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) presented a report, *Striking the balance: an inquiry into media access to police radio communications* (the Report) to Parliament

containing 14 recommendations for the Government. On that same day, I announced that the Government had accepted all 14 recommendations contained in the Report.

Whilst the QPS does not believe that there are any legislative impediments to the commencement of MatCAD, out of an abundance of caution, the amendments will remove any doubt about this.

The amendments support the Government's commitment to implement all 14 recommendations.

Diversion Programs

For some time now, the Government has been busy working on the implementation of a range of diversion programs. Programs that have commenced recently include:

- The Cairns alcohol remand rehabilitation program operating out of the Cairns Magistrates Court;
- The homeless persons court diversion program operating out of the Brisbane City Magistrates Court; and
- The Queensland Magistrates Early Referral To Treatment Program (QMERIT) pilot operating out of the Maroochydore and Redcliffe Magistrates' Courts.

The amendments will support the continued operation of these important programs by once again removing any doubt about the legal basis on which the QPS discloses information in these circumstances. Whilst these current programs are court based, the amendments allow for the future inclusion of a range future diversion programs.

The proposed laws will:

- allow for the disclosure of criminal history information, with the written consent of the relevant person, to the CrimTrac Agency or another police service for subsequent release to third parties for employment screening purposes where there is, or is likely to be a benefit to the community from the disclosure;
- allow for the disclosure of police dispatch information to media organisations;
- allow for the disclosure of criminal history information, with the written consent of the relevant person, to an entity for the purposes of assessing prospective participants for government sponsored diversion programs;
- ensure that existing statutes prohibiting, restricting, regulating or requiring the disclosure of information in the possession of the QPS will continue to apply;
- be retrospective in so far as they apply to the release of criminal history information to CrimTrac or a police service for employment screening purposes and MatCAD, to remove any doubt about the legality of past releases of information under the Commissioner's discretion; and
- The Bill will include an offence provision to protect against inappropriate use of criminal history information disclosed for employment screening purposes and government sponsored diversion programs

Limited retrospective application of the proposed amendments

The provision of information to CrimTrac for employment screening purposes as well as MatCAD will be retrospective in nature to remove any doubt about the past release of information under the Commissioner's discretion in these circumstances. The retrospective validation is considered reasonable, necessary and justified.

Privacy Implications

The general right to privacy by individuals is recognised by Government and the QPS. This right is supported by the introduction of the Information Privacy Principles (IPP) as an administrative scheme pursuant to Information Standard 42 (IS 42), under the authority of the Financial Management Standard 1977. As an administrative scheme, IS 42 is subject to any overriding legislative authority.

IPP 11 is relevant to the disclosure of information in the possession of the QPS for the purposes of NCHRC arrangements, MatCAD, and government sponsored diversion programs. IPP 11 prohibits the disclosure of records containing personal information to a person, body or agency, other than the individual concerned unless certain circumstances exist, in particular where:

- the individual concerned has consented to the disclosure; or
- the disclosure is required or authorised by or under law.

An individual's criminal history record would clearly be considered personal information and thus, subject to disclosure requirements under IPP 11. However, there is justification for displacing this right. These restrictions have to be balanced against the community benefit that flows from ensuring that persons who are engaged in positions of trust are adequately screened for previous criminal behaviour, through an efficient and cost effective process.

Further, under the proposal, the current national criminal history checking guidelines and the accreditation contract, criminal history checks can only be undertaken with the consent of the relevant person. The legislative requirement for consent to be provided by the relevant person as well as the legislative authorisation for the disclosure will reinforce this policy, and will accord with the disclosure of personal information pursuant to IPP 11.

In relation to MatCAD, the CMC sought to achieve a balance between the competing considerations of operational safety, public safety and individual privacy. The CMC ultimately formed the view that providing the media with access to police communications, with certain private information excluded, was an acceptable and desirable balance between the public interest in disclosure and accountability, and the public interest in protecting the privacy of some categories of vulnerable individuals. As the IPP currently do not recognise the public interest as a ground for disclosure, the proposed amendments will provide legislative authorisation for the disclosure of police information via MatCAD.

In relation to diversion programs, the displacement of a participant's right to privacy concerning their criminal history is justified by the community benefits that will flow from the reduction of participants' levels of re-offending. The consent of each participant is required before they are considered for the program and assessment of their criminal histories is a prerequisite entry condition. The proposed amendments to provide legislative authorisation for such disclosures will operate in the best interests of the individual participants in the program and those of the wider community.

In terms of QPS information provided to third parties, they are also required to comply with the IPP (in the case of private agencies, the National Privacy Principles) within their respective State or Territory. In the case of criminal history records, this requirement is recognised in the national criminal record checking guidelines.

The amendments are a reasonable, legitimate, and necessary extension of the law in this area.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Flegg, adjourned.

POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (2.43 pm):
I present a bill for an act to amend the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, 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. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (2.43 pm):
I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The principal objectives of the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006 are to amend the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 by renaming the existing (hoon) vehicle related offences as type 1 vehicle related offences and incorporating type 2 vehicle related offences within chapter 4 'Motor vehicle impounding powers for prescribed offences and motorbike noise direction offences' of the PPRA; extending the liability of the driver to pay costs associated with the initial impoundment of any vehicle impounded under chapter 4 of the PPRA; and enabling the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service to administratively forfeit any vehicle impounded under chapter 4 of the PPRA, in circumstances where the vehicle has not been recovered by the owner or driver within 30 days after the expiration of the impoundment period.

This bill will also amend the Maritime and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2006 (No. 21 of 2006) to modify a number of Immediate Driver Licence Suspension Scheme provisions covering persons charged with high risk drink driving offences. This bill will also amend the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to complement the amendments in this bill to the Maritime and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2006 relating to immediate driver licence suspensions. I seek leave to have the remainder of my second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006 implements important road safety initiatives arising from the February 2006 Road Safety Summit and Commitment Number 74 of the Beattie Government's 100-Day Action Plan.

The Road Safety Summit was held at Parliament House. The objectives of the Summit were to:

- (1) identify key aspects of road safety in the Queensland road toll, including discussion of issues arising from the 2005 road toll; and
- (2) identify a suite of potential road safety measures for Government to consider in order to reduce the road toll for 2006 and beyond.

Following the Summit, the Premier announced a range of new road safety initiatives. Together, these initiatives were collated into the 2006-2007 Queensland Road Safety Action Plan.

Arising from the Summit were the impaired driving initiatives. These initiatives include the introduction of legislation enabling police to impound vehicles of repeat drink drivers (.15% or more), disqualified or unlicensed drivers and drivers of unregistered vehicles.

The Commitment Number 74 extends these initiatives to include repeat drivers of illegally modified cars.

QPS Statistics indicate that:

- (1) during the 10 months from January to October 2005:
 - 5,100 drivers were caught more than once driving an unregistered vehicle; and
 - 10,611 drivers were caught more than once driving while unlicensed;
- (2) for the whole of 2005:
 - 1,864 drivers were caught more than once driving disqualified; and
 - 1,041 drivers were caught more than once drink driving;
- (3) approximately 106 offenders repeatedly illegally modified their vehicles.

It is anticipated that approximately 18,000 vehicles will be impounded under the new provisions over each of the next several years.

The Bill renames the existing vehicle related impoundment scheme as type 1 vehicle related offences and incorporates type 2 vehicle related offences. The Bill provides for a type 2 vehicle impoundment scheme. This scheme provides that a repeat offender is the driver of the vehicle who commits the same kind of the following offences:

- (1) driving under the influence of alcohol (.15% or more);
- (2) drive disqualified;

- (3) drive unlicensed;
- (4) drive or permit to drive an uninsured motor vehicle and drive or permit to drive unregistered; or
- (5) drives an illegally modified motor vehicle.

Overview of the Bill

The type 2 vehicle related offence impoundment scheme will commence on 1 July 2007.

The scheme applies when a person is charged, by arrest or notice to appear, with having committed a type 2 vehicle related offence on at least two occasions and has, within 3 years (the relevant period), been charged with, or found guilty of, another type 2 vehicle related offence of the same kind.

The key components of this Bill are:

- (1) the incorporation of the type 2 vehicle related offence impoundment scheme into the existing provisions of the PPRA that deal with vehicle related (hoon) offences;
- (2) extending the liability of the driver to pay costs associated with the initial impoundment of any vehicle impounded under Chapter 4 of the PPRA. Currently, the State is liable to payment the costs of removing and keeping a vehicle for the initial impoundment period (first 48 hours). Processes associated with the current requirements have been identified as being ineffective; and

To address this ineffectiveness and reduce the financial impact of the impoundment schemes on the State, the Bill makes key amendments to Chapter 4 to clearly provide that the State is not liable to pay any costs of removing and keeping a vehicle impounded under Chapter 4 of the PPRA. However, the Bill provides limited circumstances when the State is liable to pay the costs of removing and keeping a motor vehicle impounded under Chapter 4 of the PPRA. These circumstances are that the State will be liable for payment of costs associated with the initial impoundment period, when:

- (a) the driver of the motor vehicle is a child. This approach is consistent with the existing provisions of Chapter 4 which enables a police officer to seek an order for the payment of costs by the child driver or the parent of the child (through a show cause process) when a child is found guilty of a motorbike noise or 'hoon' vehicle related offence; or
- (b) the driver of the motor vehicle is found not guilty of the type 2 vehicle related impoundment offence which triggered the impoundment of the vehicle for 48 hours and the making of an application for a three month impoundment order or if proceedings for the offence are withdrawn. This is consistent with the existing liability provisions that provide that the State is liable if the person is found not guilty of the offence for which the vehicle was impounded;
- (3) enabling the Commissioner to administratively forfeit any vehicle impounded under Chapter 4 of the PPRA, in circumstances where the vehicle has not been recovered by the owner or driver within 30 days after the expiration of an impoundment period. Currently, the existing provisions within Chapter 4 enable the Commissioner to administratively forfeit a vehicle after two months from the end of the period of impounding.

The reduction of the existing period moves to address concerns that may be made by towing/storage facility operators in relation to the large number of vehicles that may be unclaimed.

A brief example of the application of the scheme is:

First offence

A driver is charged with a disqualified driving offence and is later found or pleads guilty to the offence.

Second offence

Two months later the driver is charged with another disqualified driving offence. The vehicle may be impounded for 48 hours (the initial impoundment period) following charging the person with the offence

Third offence

Two months later the driver is charged with a third disqualified driving offence. Following charging, the vehicle may be impounded for 48 hours. If the vehicle is impounded, a police officer must prior to the end of the initial impoundment period make an application to a court for a further three month impoundment order. This order will not be determined until the third charge is determined by a court and the driver is found guilty of the offences for which the driver has been charged. If the driver is found guilty of the three offences, the court may make an order that impounds the vehicle for up to three months.

Fourth offence

Two months after the end of the court ordered impoundment period, the driver is charged with another disqualified driving offence. Following charging the driver, the vehicle may be impounded for 48 hours. Prior to the end of the initial impoundment period, a police officer must make an application to a court for a forfeiture order. This order will not be determined until the fourth charge is determined by a court and the driver is found guilty. If the driver is found guilty of the four offences, the court may make an order that forfeits the vehicle.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the transport amendments relating to immediate suspensions in the Bill.

In May this year, the Maritime and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2006 made a number of amendments to the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 relating to drink driving.

Specifically, those amendments provided for the immediate suspension of the driver licence of a person charged with certain "high-risk" drink driving offences. Those offences are:

- firstly, a drink driving offence involving a blood alcohol content, or BAC, of 0.15 or more;
- secondly, a failure to provide a specimen of breath or blood for testing when required by police;
- thirdly, a low level drink driving offence at a time when an earlier low level drink driving charge is still pending; and
- and finally, dangerous operation of a motor vehicle under the Criminal Code where a high level BAC is involved.

Under the current provisions, the immediate suspension of the driver licence starts when the person is charged, and remains in force until the charge is either finalised by the court, withdrawn, or otherwise discontinued.

The May amendments also provided for certain drivers faced with an immediate suspension of their licence to be able to apply to the court for an order allowing them to continue to drive. Such orders will be available where, for example, a person needs their licence for work purposes or to drive a sick relative to hospital for regular medical treatment.

A person who is successful with their application to the court will not have their full driving privileges returned, but instead only be authorised to drive in restricted circumstances—for example, to and from the hospital.

These May 2006 amendments have not yet been proclaimed.

The amendments in the current Bill propose to:

- firstly, extend the application of the immediate suspension provisions where dangerous operation of a motor vehicle is involved; and
- secondly, provide for a number of amendments to clarify and strengthen the process by which a driver applies to a Court for an order to drive during a period of immediate suspension.

Presently, in relation to dangerous operation of a motor vehicle, an immediate suspension would only be invoked where the high alcohol limit of 0.15 or more was alleged.

The present Bill extends this category to cover situations where the person charged with dangerous driving may not be over the high alcohol limit but is over their permissible alcohol limit. For an open licence holder, their permissible limit is 0.05, while provisional and learner licence holders under 25 are subject to a zero BAC limit.

To illustrate the need for these amendments, in April of this year a 4 year old boy was tragically killed at Norwell, south of Brisbane, when a car crashed into the yard in which he was playing. The driver of the vehicle was charged with dangerous operation of the motor vehicle following the crash. He was allegedly driving with a BAC of 0.092.

A driver in this situation would, under the current provisions, not presently have his licence suspended. Rather he could continue driving until the matter is finalised by the court.

I am sure members of the House would agree with me that, from a road safety perspective, this situation is unsatisfactory.

The Bill proposes to address this situation and to apply the immediate suspension provisions to any driver charged with dangerous operation of a motor vehicle who is over their permissible BAC limit.

As mentioned earlier, certain drivers whose licence has been immediately suspended may be able to obtain a court order allowing them to continue to drive until their drink driving charge is finalised. This Bill will clarify the restrictions that apply to a person who obtains such an order.

Firstly, they will not be able to resume driving until they have obtained a new licence from Queensland Transport that indicates they are driving under a court order. This will assist police in identifying those drivers whose licences are subject to Court-ordered restrictions.

Secondly, they will be subject to a zero BAC limit.

And finally, they will again have their licence immediately suspended should they be charged with another drink driving offence.

These are important amendments that recognise that, while people might need to continue to drive because of their circumstances, they have an obligation to other road users to do so responsibly.

The amendments also provide that a regulation can specify who is and is not eligible to apply to the court for an order allowing them to continue to drive.

It is proposed that these orders will only be available to the holders of open Queensland driver licences and not, for example, to drivers with an interstate licence or those who hold only a learner or provisional licence.

Drink driving presents a highly significant safety risk on our roads. In 2005, 77 Queenslanders died as a result of drink driving so nearly one in four of our road deaths were due to drink driving. And the devastating effect of each one of those deaths is felt by that person's immediate family, their extended family and the broader community.

In view of these terrible statistics, I welcome the present important road safety amendments.

The proposed amendments within the Bill are reasonable, legitimate, and a balanced extension of the law which will, in conjunction with other road safety initiatives being progressed by the Beattie Government have a positive impact on road safety in Queensland.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Flegg, adjourned.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF QUEENSLAND

Report

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (2.46 pm): I lay upon the table of the House the 2005-06 annual report of the Electoral Commission of Queensland.

Tabled paper: Electoral Commission of Queensland Annual Report 2005-2006.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (2.47 pm): I move—
That government business order of the day No. 1 be postponed.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2) APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed from 31 October (see p. 246).

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (2.48 pm): I note that this debate for the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) and Appropriation Bill (No. 2) is a cognate debate. These are supply bills as such and naturally the opposition has no issues with the fact that they are supply bills. I just want to note a few items in relation to Appropriation Bill (No. 2) in particular. The obvious aspect of Appropriation Bill (No. 2) is the size of the expenditure. It is significant to note the size of this unforeseen expenditure in terms of the state budget, which the government is supposed to put forward a bill to cover expenditure. This bill essentially is for unexpected expenditure in the state budget.

The opposition does have some concern about the increasingly upward trend in the size of supplemental appropriation bills, especially for last year. The level of supplemental appropriation has grown fivefold on historical levels. The supplemental appropriation bill for this year is for \$1.87 billion. If we go back over the term of the present government, last year's Appropriation Bill (No. 2) was for only \$77 million. In 2004, it was for \$2.375 billion. In 2003, it was for \$1.529 billion. In 2002, it was for \$371 million. In 2001, it was for \$295 million. In 2000, it was for \$326 million. In 1999 and 1998, there was no Appropriation Bill (No. 2).

If I have a particular concern, it is with the way the government introduced this legislation. It provides for significant variations on the original appropriations but with little or no explanation. In fact, if we look at the minister's second reading speech, it is literally only a matter of a few paragraphs—a matter of lines—to explain the appropriation of \$1.87 billion of taxpayers' money. I do not think for a moment that there is anything untoward with any of that expenditure, but I think when a sum of money of that magnitude is dealt with it would be reasonable to expect that the government would give an explanation as to why it needs to appropriate \$1.87 billion of expenditure above and beyond what was in the budget. I think this comes under the heading of accountable government. It is a large appropriation of government funds. I think it would be reasonable to expect that the government would give a detailed explanation of where this money went. In particular, I would like to see an explanation of the reasons this particular budget required additional appropriations of \$1.87 billion.

Perhaps it indicates a degree of complacency on the part of the government that it would introduce a supplemental appropriation bill of this magnitude with little explanation as to why this extra appropriation was required beyond breaking it down to expenditure within different departments. There is little or no explanation of the reasons why each of these departments overran their funding.

This morning we heard that \$200 million was injected into the health department to reduce waiting lists. The end result is that not one single extra operation has been performed. The waiting list funds, through the health department, of \$200 million produced no extra operations. We on this side of the House know that the government may well have a big majority, but it should be no less accountable to the people of Queensland for this large sum of money for which Queenslanders would expect to get good value.

I said earlier that it is a supply and appropriation bill that we will be supporting. The cognate bill in association reflects the expenditure within the parliament. That expenditure is towards matters such as the funding of the Parliamentary Service. I would now like to record our thanks to the parliamentary staff and the Parliamentary Service for the job that they do in parliament. I think this is an appropriate occasion to recognise that this is a demanding job. Working in this environment is not the easiest of jobs. People on our side of the House appreciate the work done by the Parliamentary Service. I would like to place that on the record.

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (2.52 pm), in reply: I thank the opposition for its support of the bills that are before the House. I note the concern expressed by the shadow Treasurer about an alleged lack of detail regarding the spending. It has not been outlined in the bill because some four weeks ago the Consolidated Fund financial report was tabled in the House. I would refer the member to that document.

That document spells out, for every single department, the additional appropriations that were required during the year. By way of example, the additional \$100 million to the Department of Education, Training and the Arts reflects a one-off payment to the non-state school sector for the Tomorrow's Schools program to improve school facilities that was outlined in the budget. In the department of energy, for example, additional administered items relate to a higher than anticipated community service obligation payment under the uniform electricity tariff arrangements. The department of primary industries required extra funding to deal with the citrus canker program when there was an outbreak of

citrus canker. The list continues. I would suggest to the shadow Treasurer that when the Consolidated Fund financial report is tabled in the parliament he and his officers examine it because he will find there all the information he could possibly need.

I repeat my thanks to the opposition for its support of these supply bills. They are important. I join with the opposition in recognising the work of the parliamentary staff. I am pleased that we are in a position to support that work with these bills.

Question put—That the bills be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2)

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Appropriation Bill (No. 2)

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading (Cognate Debate)

Question put—That the bills be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Long Title (Cognate Debate)

Question put—That the long title of the bills be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 496.

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (2.57 pm): I wish to deal with one particular part of this bill. It is an omnibus bill under the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Act. I thank the minister and his staff for the work that they have put into covering the various aspects of his portfolio.

I would like to deal with the area that relates to the amendments to the Grain Research Foundation Act. The amendments are the basis for restructuring the Grain Research Foundation. The original act was passed in 1976. That is to be amended to facilitate the dissolution of the actual research foundation, which is presently a statutory body, and replace it with a not-for-profit industry owned company limited by guarantee. The replacement company will be known as the Grain Research Foundation Ltd. The assets and liabilities of the foundation will be transferred to the replacement company on a transfer day which is yet to be fixed. Once that day is fixed, the act is then repealed when the restructure is complete.

The grain industry, which is a major industry in Queensland and Australia, has demonstrated quite a progressive and innovative approach over a number of years in moving its structures away from a statutory basis where it was satisfied that the advantages were apparent. Those advantages really were for the benefit of the grain industry. In the early 1990s industry supported that move, in particular in relation to single item boards such as the State Wheat Board, the Barley Marketing Board, Central Queensland Grain Sorghum Marketing Board and Bulk Grains Queensland.

Prior to 2003 the industry actually formed the grower owned and controlled Grainco Ltd that merged with New South Wales and Victorian groups in 2003 to form the large grain listed trading company GrainCorp, which now operates across the entire east coast of the country.

A similar principal is reflected here with a move proposed away from a restrictive statutory body to a more flexible and responsible industry controlled company. The current Grain Research Foundation actually initiated and conducted a public consultation process during the second half of 2005 and its restructure proposal was actually received widely and has received wide industry support. The replacement company will carry on the functions that the current foundation undertook to advance grain industry research.

The foundation has had a history of assisting grain industry research and was initially established in 1976 to complement the then Queensland Wheat Industry Research Committee in the development of the Queensland Wheat Research Institute now known as the Leslie Research Centre. In 1992 the act was further amended to increase membership of the Grain Research Foundation and provide for wider grower and research representation. At this time the foundation took on responsibility for the charter of joint operation and administration of the Queensland Wheat Research Institute. This ended in the mid 1990s with the formation of the Farming Systems Institute Board within the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. The foundation has continued to work closely with the DPIF and will continue to work with the department on grain industry research issues.

In 1992 the foundation recognised the need for a more structured way for the grain industry to provide advice to research providers and funders on grain production priorities. Four research advisory committees have been formed to represent the regions of central Queensland, south-east Queensland, Darling Downs and Western Downs-Maranoa. These advisory committees will continue to be operated by the new replacement company and will continue to play a prominent role in shaping the ongoing grains research program for the northern region.

There does not appear to be any good reason to restrict the foundation to remaining as a statutory body given that the industry has contributed its funding and no statutory powers are exercised by the foundation. The foundation currently holds in excess of \$1 million of industry contributed funds, and I am sure that all members of the House would believe that the foundation controlling those funds on behalf of the industry would still continue to act on behalf of the industry.

This amendment follows a number of successful processes sanctioned by the government for conversion of a statutory body into an industry owned corporate entity. This has happened in recent times with a range of bodies, including Queensland Sugar Ltd, Bulk Sugar Terminals Ltd, BSES Ltd, Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation Ltd and Queensland Cane Growers Organisation Ltd. All of those organisations were previously statutory bodies, but because of industry's requirement to work on their own behalf they are now industry controlled companies. The model chosen by the foundation is, in fact, quite similar to the amendments made to the Forestry Act 1959 in the year 2000 to successfully incorporate the Timber Research and Development Advisory Council, which now forms part of Timber Queensland Ltd.

The foundation has recognised the need for change in its discussion paper which was publicly released in late 2005. The paper notes that due to changing industry and government environments a review was needed aimed at moving away from being a statutory body. That is the end result of what we are debating today. The paper also noted that the foundation has had some recent experiences where the constraints of the current legislation actually limited its ability to do business. With the foundation looking to move forward and explore new initiatives to benefit the Queensland grain industry, it is looking to introduce more flexibility and commerciality into its arrangements and to provide more certainty for the capital base contributed by Queensland grain growers. They are a major industry within Queensland and this will give them more flexibility in their operations.

The research foundation's initiatives in developing the restructure proposal are to be commended and these amendments will provide the Queensland grain industry with the flexibility and commerciality it is seeking, bearing in mind that the company that will be formed will be overseen by ASIC. I support the bill.

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (3.05 pm): This bill covers many issues. The shadow minister got across it very well. However, I would like to touch on the impacts of the drought that we are currently facing and to tie a few things in with this bill.

The report that came out today from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries states that wheat production is down 24 per cent; barley production is down 44 per cent; cotton is down 37 per cent; international price movements and the drought's impact on cattle quality are expected to reduce the GVP of cattle and calf disposals to \$3.175 billion, 14 per cent below 2005-06 levels; a lower pool price and a smaller crop are expected to reduce the GVP of sugarcane to \$920 million, eight per cent below 2005-06 levels; and cattle in feedlots have increased in Queensland by approximately 50,000 head—they have been forced into feedlots because of the drought. We need to be very aware of the impact that the drought will have, and I will touch on that later.

Japan had around 20 cases of mad cow disease, and we all learned a hard lesson in gaining and retaining markets. Domestically beef imports are carefully scrutinised to exclude any possibility of bringing in contaminated products. US-sourced beef, which traditionally dominated, was first banned in 2003 and only re-admitted after the introduction of strict US protocols. However, the discovery of banned backbone material in a shipment of US beef in Japan early in 2006 caused another suspension.

Even with the US once again allowed to sell beef in Japan it is not expected to quickly regain its previous market share. Surveys reveal that Japanese customers have become distrustful of US beef and once that market is hurt it is very, very hard to regain. I will touch a bit on our NLIS and what is happening in that area in a moment. Of 1,741 people polled by a Japanese newspaper, 45 per cent would not eat US beef, 43 per cent would need to think about it and only 10 per cent had no

reservations. So 90 per cent of the people have been removed from the market. That is the impact of a food disease contamination scare in our Japanese markets. The poll revealed that 90 per cent of the population wanted mandatory country-of-origin labelling of meat products even in restaurants. Not surprisingly, as at the middle of 2006 only one of 20 of the Japanese food marketers surveyed was planning to use US beef again. This example underlines the importance of developing and maintaining an image of absolute reliability if the Australian beef industry is to retain its increased share in key Asian markets.

Over the last 12 months or so we have seen the introduction of NLIS, the National Livestock Identification Scheme. It has had its hiccups. We have had to do all our cattle with it. There is pain involved.

An honourable member: For the cow!

Mr HOPPER: For both the cattle and us, you reckon. There have been some adverse reactions to this. If by chance we did have a disease outbreak—and I am sure the minister is aware of this—we could then identify the disease area. We can trace a cow right back to birth. That is the whole idea of this program. It is simply brilliant.

When I have sold cattle, sometimes one or two ear tags are lost in the truck, and this program has worked very well. I notice that a farmer was prosecuted the other day at Warra for shifting eight head of cattle that did not have ear tags or a bolus in their stomach, which is the NLIS identification. So we have to come down hard and make sure that this is implemented and policed well. Our industry must continue to have this protection mechanism, and we on this side of the House absolutely support the use of NLIS.

I want to get back to the other areas of the bill and the DPI cutbacks that our shadow minister spoke about earlier today. We have to be aware of what is happening there, including the dismantling of the drought services. The drought is having a massive impact—it is beyond belief. I do not know how long I will have my cattle before I truck the lot into town and sell them. If we do not get rain this weekend, we will be destocking our property. We will probably sell 100 breeders, or whatever number we have, simply because we cannot access hay. The only hay we can access now is baled sorghum stubble, and a lot of that sorghum stubble is from last year's crop. Cotton seed costs over \$400 a tonne, and grain has now gone to more than \$350 a tonne. It is just impossible to buy feed for cattle.

Before the property boom, a lot of farmers had debts that they may have been able to service. With the drought and the property boom, their debt-to-equity ratio has now gone through the roof. They have gone to the bank and said, 'I am 30 per cent equitable,' and then they have been able to borrow more and more money. They have borrowed money on the value of their property with the property boom, simply because a lot of them are fourth and fifth generation farmers who do not want to lose their property. There is a lot of pride involved.

Mr Mulherin: This is the issue about interest rates. What they were borrowing back in the early eighties and early nineties—

Mr HOPPER: So we are going to talk about interest rates? Let me talk about interest rates. I bought my first farm on an interest rate 21½ per cent under Keating. That is what I paid under Keating.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jones): Order! Please stay relevant to the bill.

Mr HOPPER: Let us get back to the bill. We simply need more drought assistance from the Queensland government. Look at what Victoria did only last week with water charges. If farmers want to buy water but the state cannot supply that water because of the drought, they are going to abolish the first \$5,000 of those payments. If those payments are higher than \$5,000, they will be allowed to repay those payments, interest free, at the end of the drought. We have to start seriously implementing measures like that through the DNR and the DPI to help these people who are in crisis.

We have heard statements that one in four farmers in New South Wales are committing suicide. This is devastating. These people are in dire straits. We hear people say, 'Let us have supply and demand. Let us clean the farmers out. If they go broke, they go broke.' What are we going to eat? Are we going to import all of our food? That is what this amounts to.

In the dairy industry at the moment, I believe we could put a 10c a litre price rise on milk for the consumer. How could that work under a deregulated market? Well, when the manufacturers pass the milk on to the shops or the supermarkets, there could be a charge involved on the sale of that milk where they have to pass that 10c a litre on. It could be on white milk sold, which would average about 3c or 4c across-the-board for farmers for every litre of milk they produce. That 3c or 4c a litre would pay for the cost of cotton seed and grain that they are now faced with.

The bill also talks about vets. My daughter is at uni at the moment studying to become a vet. The wages paid to vets in Queensland are about \$20,000 below what vets in other states get. Queensland vets get about \$20,000 less than New South Wales vets. Vets do enormous amounts of study. When doctors do their training, they ask their patients what is wrong with them, but a vet cannot talk to an animal. They also have to study every sort of animal, from fish right through. It is an immense course and it is very hard on them.

You may think that is funny, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I think this is very, very important. This is to do with the bill; this is to do with vets and the training of vets. Our rural vets at the moment are coming out of university, but there are no big animal vets in western Queensland whatsoever. My daughter is going to be a big animal vet, simply because there is a lack of supply there. Most vets do their training and they come to Brisbane and work on cats and dogs and have an easy life down here.

Let me tell members what is happening with rural vets in the drought. When they are called out to do a job—it might be to stitch a horse or to calve a cow—they are often not being paid. Some of those vets have \$400,000 and \$500,000 on their books, but they are not willing to call that in and use legal action to get that money because they know those farmers simply cannot pay. These vets are hoping that this drought breaks or that the farmers get some assistance so that they can get paid.

The bill talks about the care of animals. Over the last 10 years, our farming and rural industries—the dairy industry, the beef industry, the pork industry—have become accredited and have been given different quality assurance measures. They have cleaned their industry up beyond doubt. In the *Country Life* today, there is a story about an Australian record of one bull being sold for \$300,000. That shows what these people are doing with their animals, with the breeding, the care they take and the immense pride they have in what they do.

There is a summary in here about costs. It says that buying the *Country Life* to read for the sale preview costs \$3.20; filling up the car to attend the sale, \$70; lunch for four men at the sale, \$60; buying Lancefield Burton Manso, \$300,000; the honour of breaking the Australian all-beef auction record for a bull—priceless. No price can be put on it. What a great article. Here are some young Australians who have got their stud together. They know what they are doing and they are willing to pay \$300,000 for that bull.

Do members think people in the beef industry would not care for their animals? It is an absolute. We lock up our medicines and those things now and we police that side of it. We write it all down in a book. We know exactly what we have given what cattle. We can tie that in on the computer with NLIS now. So farming has become a very elite enterprise. When it is done properly, it is extremely good.

The other thing I want to mention is the fact that all police will now have the power to become stock inspectors. That has its good side and its bad side. I recently moved cattle from a block in Toowoomba out to a block at Bell. To shift those 80-odd head of cattle, we had to take them through the dip in Toowoomba and a stock inspector had to come and check each one of those cattle for ticks. They are put in a crush before they are dipped, and we call it scratching cattle. The tick line has been established for over 100 years, and we are now charging our farmers to use a stock inspector. This was a free service under us, and it was a free service under this government for a while, until the last minister recently removed that free service. There are now massive charges for farmers. If a farmer lives on each side of that tick line, is he going to pay \$300 or \$400 to have his cattle scratched or is he going to shift them at midnight? This is going to move the tick line further west. It is very important that we never take the emphasis off our stock inspectors.

At the last election under our shadow minister, Mike Horan, we said that we would put 50 new stockies on if we won government. I think the minister has to seriously look at that. So the police have the powers of a stock inspector; they become instant stock inspectors. How are we going to train our city based policemen in the livestock industry? Years ago under the old permit system, we had a stock inspector in every country town. I could go into the DPI office in Jandowae, my local town, and he would tell me everything. He knew the movement of stock. He knew exactly what was going on in his district. All that has gone now. We have centralised our stock inspectors to our major centres and cut their numbers way back. Now we will put an impost on the police force and say that they have to do the job of stock inspectors. I ask the minister to explain in his summing up exactly how this will work.

In conclusion, I ask the minister to take on board what I have said about the drought and the Queensland government's position towards funding for drought assistance. I ask the minister to be solid in cabinet, to be a strong voice and to push the point for assistance and get some help for our farmers.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (3.19 pm): It gives me much pleasure this afternoon to join the debate on the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. This is a very wide-ranging and broad-ranging bill and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the latitude that you have given to some members opposite because I will be seeking to take advantage later of that same latitude. However, let us deal with some aspects of the bill. The amendments clarify that inspectors do have the power to re-enter a property after initially searching and seizing animals. As other members have said, there are times when inspectors go to a property and there are hundreds of sick and injured animals on that property. In some cases it is actually more stressful or logistically impossible to transport the livestock from that site. It makes more sense to leave the animals in a familiar habitat and to give them veterinary care in situ. As a result, inspectors and vets need powers to re-enter the property to give that aid—that is, to feed the livestock or to give any medical attention that is required. I do not think any member of this House would have problems with the clarification of that re-entry power.

Many members opposite have spoken about the financial risk that a biosecurity threat would pose to Australia. This bill certainly seeks to amend the Agricultural Standards Act to assist compliance auditing in relation to mad cow disease. However, there are parallels between many of the comments made by members opposite in this debate and members on this side of the House. They are right: if there is a mad cow outbreak or some other major biohazard or biosecurity outbreak in Australia, it has the potential to totally destroy the Australian economy. We are a significant primary production nation, and one significant outbreak could seriously destabilise the Australian economy. That is why we are putting so much effort into our biosecurity mechanisms. The NLIS, as many members have said already, is one of the stand-out provisions and steps forward that Australian primary producers have taken to minimise the fallout from any biosecurity risk.

I find it confusing that those opposite understand the argument when it comes to primary production but that some of their colleagues in the federal arena do not see the same parallel when it comes to global warming. Yes, there is a financial impact. To primary producers now there is a financial impact in rolling out the NLIS. No-one disputes that there is a financial impact on primary producers in doing that, but it is a cost that they are prepared to put up with because they know that the risks would be greater if there were an incident. The same argument can be used when it comes to global warming—that is, yes, there will be a financial impact to governments and to businesses by taking steps now that we need to take, but as the Stern report has outlined the risk to the global economy of not doing anything is far worse than a little bit of financial pain now. I would like to take John Howard by the shoulders and give him a shake and try to get his head out of the sand when it comes to the issue of global warming. Our colleagues opposite certainly understand the argument when it comes to biosecurity. I just wish we could get the Prime Minister to understand the same argument and apply it to global warming.

There are amendments to the Drugs Misuse Act to correct a few errors when it comes to the renewal of licences for the growing of industrial cannabis plants. Hemp has a wide range of uses which many members have spoken about this afternoon, but it is important to ensure that sufficient scrutiny is given to people getting involved in this industry—that is, the industrial hemp industry. It is important that we do the security checking to make sure that what is a good viable industry with low THC level plants does not become something closer to legal drug growing. There is no suggestion that that is what anyone wants, but where there is a will there is a way and no doubt organised crime could be looking at this as an avenue to try to step up cannabis production. It is important that we remain vigilant on this issue.

A number of members opposite have spoken about the situation with regard to Queensland vets. I agree with Mike Horan when he talked about the shortage of vets. We face a number of skill shortages as a result of the federal government's incompetence in funding training places at universities. We have spoken about the doctor shortage for the last two years. In 1975 we were training 200 doctors a year in Queensland, with a population of under two million; now in 2006 we have a population approaching four million and we are training roughly 250 doctors a year. The federal government has not kept pace in the area of doctor training. The federal government has not kept pace in the area of tertiary education for nurses. The member for Toowoomba South is correct: the federal government has not kept pace when it comes to funding training places for vets. There is a vet shortage in Queensland and in Australia. There is also a shortage in relation to dentists. We occasionally see articles in the paper regarding dental waiting lists. I do not think that anyone on this side of the House is disputing that there are significant issues with dental waiting lists here in Queensland. However, we have the same problem with dentists as we do with doctors, and that is that there are not enough being trained.

I again implore the federal government to pull its head out of the sand, to sniff some smelling salts and to start looking at this shortage of funded training places, particularly doctors, nurses, vets and dentists. I know that there are many members who wish to speak to this exciting piece of legislation. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (3.28 pm): I rise to speak to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill. I commend the minister for the changes to the Animal Care and Protection Act. I think all of us are horrified at some of the scenes that we see on TV in relation to animal care. Whilst there are instances where perhaps zealous animal protection officers intervene in situations without proper consultation with the owners of animals, in those extreme cases where animals are neglected—where it is obvious that owners have far more animals than they can properly care for or afford to feed, in fact—intervention is necessary. Those already traumatised animals need the ability to be fed and nurtured properly, and perhaps a move is not the best way for that to be achieved. The ability of the inspector to attend to those animals on the property without further trauma is welcome.

This bill deals with a number of issues, and I want to deal with one that is ancillary to the contents of the bill with your forbearance, Madam Deputy Speaker. The fishing industry in Queensland has undergone a significant number of changes. Many of those changes were at the hand of the state government. However, the GBRMPA changes were orchestrated by the federal government and the compensation payments or the restructuring payments were paid to fishing families through the Queensland Rural Adjustment Scheme.

I would like to place on record an incident that, although managed through QRAA, is certainly a problem of the federal government. Rachel and Craig Dean are a fishing family in my electorate. In Rachel's words, Craig knows no other line of work. When the effort allocation was made, their allocation was significantly reduced. In order to be able to buy more nights, they borrowed a significant amount of money. When the GBRMPA rezoning took place, quite a number of areas that they fished were closed. They applied through QRAA for a structural adjustment. I would like to read into *Hansard* parts of a number of letters from QRAA and the federal minister. On 4 May, the family received this letter—

As was stated at the recent port meetings, this information is provided by the Australian government Department of the Environment and Heritage to help you demonstrate the impacts that the rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park has had on your fishing operation taking into account the effects of the licensed buy-out.

That was the initial information that QRAA provided for the federal government. This family subsequently lodged an application for a structural adjustment package and they were successful. Again, QRAA, acting on behalf the federal government—GRMPA—wrote to the family on 20 October 2005. That letter states—

The rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park came into effect on 1 July 2004. In accordance with the Australian government's marine protected areas and displaced fishing policy, the government is providing a structural adjustment package to ensure the fair and equitable treatment for those fishers, fishery related businesses, employees and communities that can demonstrate that they have experienced or will experience negative impacts due to the rezoning. Business restructuring assistance is available to eligible licensed fishing operations, lessees and fishery related businesses to help them restructure their business so that they can manage the negative impacts they will experience as a result of the rezoning.

This is a very important piece of information. The problem is not with QRAA; the problem is with the federal government because QRAA administered the conditions of the package in accordance with the directions from the federal government. The letter goes on to state—

Upon your acceptance of this offer—

and the offer was granted on the basis of a formula—

QRAA will place the amount of ... into your nominated bank account. Please note the authority will only pay the GST exclusive amount of any invoices and receipts supplied.

This is very important—

QRAA will correspond with you in relation to any further grant moneys in respect to taxation when these details are made available to QRAA from the Commonwealth.

That letter goes on to refer to applicants obtaining their own independent professional advice. However, clearly, that sentence in the minds of fishermen indicated that taxation was a separate issue. Exemption may be part of the process from the federal government and, if it were not tax exempted, consideration would be given to these fishing families in relation to the tax part of the payment.

These families are already stressed. They have been restructured as they were not viable because of the GBRMPA changes. These packages were supposed to help them. On 13 June, the office of Ian Campbell wrote to the family and stated—

On 26 May, the minister for environment and heritage, Senator Hon. Ian Campbell, announced on behalf of the Australian government that all applicants provided with a full business restructuring assistance grant would be awarded an additional 20 per cent on top of the amount required to restructure the business.

There is no indication of what that 20 per cent was other than it was a top-up. In my words, there were no strings attached. It was a top-up payment. There was no mention of tax top-ups. In fact, in my meeting with the family they told me that they were advised that it could be used for whatever purpose.

The business plan that the federal government required cost thousands of dollars—in this instance \$8,000. This family's accountants wrote back and said—

As part of our role, we assisted some clients in applying for the business restructuring assistance package and helped them restructure their business to continue in the industry and maintain a viable business. During this process, we liaised with the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority who administered this assistance on behalf of your department. We raised the issue of taxation of assistance received under the full business restructuring assistance grant. We were informed at that stage that this was unclear but, upon determination of any taxation consequences, we were led to believe no businesses would be disadvantaged.

So the family was told by GBRMPA, by the relevant minister and in negotiations with QRAA that these fishing families would not be disadvantaged. The letter from the taxation company goes on to state—

Recently, the client received a letter of offer in relation to an additional 20 per cent grant of \$29,638 for additional business restructuring. No mention was made of this amount being a grant to assist with payment of taxation liabilities.

The letter goes on to refer to the grant. So QRAA, acting in good faith on behalf of the federal government, is assisting these fishing families to try to claw back a living from the fishing industry that has been significantly affected by state and federal government claims. Yet the federal minister and the federal government, through the department of environment, is making it incredibly difficult for these families to survive. They have given these people these grants, left it unclear about these people's taxation obligation, and are now coming back to say that the fishing families have a taxation obligation.

I know that this issue does not fall within the minister's area but, under this, it relates to an area of the minister's responsibility. I call on the federal government to show some compassion in relation to these fishing families and waive the tax obligations on these grants.

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (3.36 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill and, in particular, the amendments to the Animal Care and Protection Act. The Animal Care and Protection Act was enacted in 2002 after many years of government collaboration with animal welfare groups and the community. It replaced the Animal Protection Act 1925 and reflects the society's contemporary attitude to the protection of animals and their welfare.

Under the act, everyone in charge of animals has a duty of care to provide for the needs of their animals in terms of food, water, veterinary attention and shelter. This is in addition to a prohibition on animal cruelty. The act provides for significant penalties for breaches of duty of care and for animal cruelty.

In response to possible animal welfare offences being committed, the act enables animal welfare directions to be given, the seizure of animals and their forfeiture to the state. The latter is undertaken only in serious instances where the transfer of ownership to the state is necessary to secure the animal's welfare. The first line of response is an animal welfare direction. This is an educative approach to an animal welfare problem rather than a punitive one. Animal welfare directions enable the department or the RSPCA to advise the person in charge of the animal what the proper course of action is for the care of that animal. In many instances, this enables a resolution of the issue. Only in instances where a person does not comply with such a direction is the next step of seizure taken.

The amendments made to the Animal Care and Protection Act by clause 10 of this bill ensure that, under the Animal Care and Protection Act, inspectors are in a position to maximise the welfare outcomes of animals by ensuring that they can re-enter properties to provide feed and care to animals that had been seized owing to someone having breached their duty of care.

The amendments made by clauses 11, 12 and 13 of the bill also ensure that the state has every capacity available to secure the welfare of animals by enabling the owners of animals to voluntarily forfeit an animal for its own welfare. Previously, an animal could be voluntarily forfeited only if it had been seized already for animal welfare purposes by an inspector.

The amendments to the act made by this bill will ensure that the act continues to reflect community expectations with respect to animal welfare and cruelty. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (3.38 pm): I rise to speak to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill. I have no particular concerns about this bill. This bill is one of those that is commonly known as an omnibus bill. It contains amendments to eight acts that relate to agriculture and makes non-controversial changes, thereby obviating the need to amend each act by separate bills. The bill also repeals the Grain Industry (Restructuring) Act 1991, as it is no longer relevant.

As the minister stated in his second reading speech, this bill makes key changes to three acts by amending the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001, the Agricultural Standards Act 1994 and the Grain Research Foundation Act 1976. The bill also contains minor amendments to the Drugs Misuse Act 1986, the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936, the Brands Act, the Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966, the Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988, the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Act 1994 and the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981. As members can see, every facet of agriculture is covered by this bill. Therefore, members could speak to almost any aspect of agriculture when speaking to this bill.

As I have no real concerns about any of the amendments that this bill makes to the acts that I have referred to, I would like to speak about agricultural related topics. Firstly, I congratulate the minister on his re-election and on retaining the portfolio of primary industries. One of my concerns at every election is that the minister in charge of a portfolio might be changed. Often the primary industries portfolio is given to new ministers. It seems to be used like trainer wheels are used when people learn how to ride a bike. I think that is a totally unfounded assumption. Primary industries is a major portfolio and should be treated that way.

I am really pleased that the minister is going to stay a little longer in his portfolio as his knowledge will increase the longer he is there. Agriculture is a very diverse field and, even if the minister were here until the day he died, I still do not think he would understand a quarter of it. I do not think anyone, even if they have lived it, would understand a quarter of it because there are so many facets to it.

The saddest aspect of primary industry is the fact that it does not hold a place of importance in the world or in the governments of the day. I know the minister is very well aware of the drought and the impact it is having on all forms of agriculture. Animals are going through a particularly stressful time. That is relevant to the bill with regard to animal cruelty. It is not necessarily the way animals are treated in times of drought that is the issue but, because of the drought conditions, animals do come off very poorly at times.

The fact that feed is so very hard to get contributes to those conditions. In my own area you could buy round bales of hay relatively cheaply a few months back. Now there are absolutely none available. You have to go further afield to get any feed at all, even the little square bales that have been in storage

for a long time. The price has tripled and in some cases is six times what it was a few months back. So the impact on people's pockets is exorbitant. People are hurting and struggling to survive. People on the land have a lot of issues to contend with, with drought and everything else. I think most people would admit that this drought is one of the worst they have ever seen.

This bill amends the Animal Care and Protection Act. Although the majority of people on the land abhor animal cruelty, there are some cowboys within the industry. Some overstock their properties before a drought and then they fail to reduce their stock when a drought hits so that the land can accommodate them. Most people in times of drought or for other reasons are forced to sell their stock. We often hear of people shooting their stock because they cannot get good prices. At this point in time that is not the case, but I have seen it happen in the past. I do not expect it to never happen again. Having to destroy livestock breaks the hearts of those who own animals. It ruins families financially and emotionally, and often plunges them into deep depression.

The land's stock carrying capacity during drought, and even locating feed for the stock, is affected greatly. Sometimes through depression or through the sheer frustration and worry of trying to keep food on the table for your family, your judgement can be affected to the point that it is not as clear as it used to be. In those circumstances, the animal cruelty provisions become a necessity. People do need to have an insight into what causes this, but people on the land have to know that they have a responsibility to look after their livestock. Sometimes protecting animals from cruelty through legislation—in particular, by allowing authorities on to properties to inspect—is the only way that that can be done.

Suicide on the land has been stated as being as high as one in four. I heard that only two days ago. I do not know whether people who are not associated with rural industries can ever really understand the grief experienced by the loss inflicted by drought. Generational farming may often evolve to meet changes in climatic conditions, market trends or even simply fad farming—such as growing olives or another crop that is popular for a short time. Whether farming crops or livestock, it is a demanding lifestyle. The days of the 'landed gentry', as they were once called, is long gone.

I have so often seen people on the land sitting in my office crying because they have done everything they possibly can but the bank interest rates are killing them. They cannot do anything else. They have to get off the land. When the land has been in your family for generations, it is a devastating blow. Even if it is a property that you have fought tooth and nail to acquire and then you have to sell it because the interest rates beat you, because you have had no crops for seven or eight years or because you cannot stock the property to its conceivable carrying capacity, then losing the property becomes a devastating blow for the husband, wife and family.

Where once a farmer would have one or two people helping him, he can no longer afford to have help because of the high wages. For instance, in the mining sector, the wages are just so far above what any farmer would ever be available to pay that they are just not even in the race.

Minor amendments in the bill in relation to chemical use remind us also that other associated industries suffer in times of drought because the landholder cannot do the work that he might have done in the past. That includes people who do the harvesting and people who operate the ground rigs and aerial sprayers—my husband being one. Unlike many, we have other strings to our bow. But those who do not have other strings to their bow are in dire straits and are in a very desperate position. It costs a lot to keep an aeroplane in the air just in case someone needs you to spray. It also costs a lot to keep ground rigs just in case they are needed. It is comforting for them to know that the federal assistance package has spread to assist associated industries impacted by the drought.

A bone of contention in rural industries is the cutbacks to DPI staff. It is very disheartening, especially in areas where, because of fads, climate change and many other things, people choose to change the kind of agriculture they are involved in. The South Burnett, for instance, was once synonymous with peanuts or navy beans. It now has a diverse array of crops—dairy and beef cattle, pigs, grapes, olives. You name it, we have just about everything needed to survive. As most members would know, the South Burnett has even branched out now to timber plantations. All of these people need guidance and help when they are trying a new form of agriculture. The majority of people look to the DPI staff for that and sometimes that help is not just there.

We have a tick line that has been established for 100 years, as the member for Darling Downs said. I have been fighting almost from day one since coming into this place to make sure that the tick line remains and perhaps is extended. It is heartbreaking to see cattle become infested by ticks and suffer from redwater fever or anything else. It is the most crippling and heartbreaking disease you will ever see, and it is preventable. Yet, over the past few years, there seems to be less inclination on the part of the DPI to monitor the tick line. I cannot understand why that is. I do not know if it is one individual or a lot of individuals who think the tick line is not worth keeping. I have not been able to get to the bottom of that. I have mentioned it often in this place. If cattle can handle being covered in ticks, that is fine. In areas where the cattle are not used to ticks, it will kill the cattle in no time at all. To me, that is the ultimate cruelty. Anyone who even thinks about removing the tick line should be dealt with under the animal cruelty legislation.

With regard to the tick line, we have the dip at Coolabunia in Kingaroy. The minister might remember that during the last sitting I spoke about the dip at Coolabunia and the possibility that we might lose that without government assistance to maintain its operation.

There are a lot of areas of agriculture that get hurt. Every single bill that is introduced—even though it may contain minor amendments—relates to just about every single thing on the land. We have seen many negative impacts on our rural industries in the fairly recent past. We have seen dairy deregulation. The bottom fell out of the milk prices. We were all told that milk was going to be cheaper, but that did not happen. In reality, the supplier gets almost nothing for their milk and the consumer did not necessarily win out either.

Sadly, over the past four or five years I have regularly met dairying families in the street or seen them somewhere else and they have said something along the lines of, 'We just came to tell you we sold the farm. A couple of the cows went to a neighbour's dairy, but the majority of the herd went to the abattoirs. Hubby got a job driving a truck in town and we've never been better off; we even have the weekends off now.' It is terrible that the situation on the land is so bad that people cannot make a living out of agriculture. A lot can be said about agriculture and there are many issues that I could raise, but I think I have conveyed how desperate the times are on the land during the drought and how difficult the situation is even in good times. Without any further ado, I will leave it at that.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (3.52 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill. I congratulate the shadow minister for covering all of the issues quite well. There are a few things that I would like to talk about that I have an interest in.

Of course, for anybody on the land now the drought is of the biggest interest to them. Members have spoken very eloquently about the effects of the drought right across Queensland. In my electorate we are fortunate to have two water schemes—the Kinchant scheme, or the Eton scheme, and the Teemburra scheme. The Kinchant water irrigation scheme is based on an off-stream storage dam. Water is pumped from the Pioneer River whenever the water is flowing at a certain level in that river. Fortunately, this year there were enough showers and rain in the valley that there was a good window of opportunity to pump into the dam. Finally, most of the pumps that are installed in the river are running.

The Kinchant scheme is very healthy. The dam, from my last trip there, is almost full. That is not the case with the Teemburra Dam, the latest dam that was built on the Teemburra reach of the Pioneer River. It has zero allocation for the farmers who are connected to it. As members would know from comments by the shadow minister for natural resources in the House today, farmers still face extremely high costs in terms of the part A portion of the irrigation charges that are still allocated to them even though they are receiving no water. At this time of the year farmers are looking to irrigate the ratoon crops and the young plant cane to establish a crop for next year. They are paying out very substantial amounts of money and have zero water allocation. In Victoria some consideration has been given to irrigators in that respect, but that is not so in Queensland. That needs to be looked at very quickly because it is impacting on farmers across Queensland.

The minister was with me last Saturday when CRRISG, the Central Region Rural Innovation and Support Group, had a field day. Basically, that amounts to a group of interested people getting together to form an incorporated body to look at alternative crops and perhaps alternative ways of doing things, and perhaps even looking back into past practices that farmers had participated in many years ago. One of the areas they are working on is the handing down of seeds et cetera from previous generations instead of using seeds that are generated through breeding programs by the seed companies, particularly in the vegetable group.

One of the interesting tests that were done on some of the products that they had on display there was a refractometer test on tomatoes. A refractometer is a very simple mechanism that measures the Brix levels in products. Brix is basically a measure of sugar and nutrients in a product. With sunlight going through a product, people can pick up a measure somewhere between zero and 25. Interestingly, tests done on tomatoes bought out of a supermarket returned a Brix level of around four. Generally, it is considered that anything below about five means that there is very little nutritional value. They then tested tomatoes that were grown naturally with seeds that have been handed down over a period of time. They were not necessarily grown organically, but they were the older style bushes. The Brix level in those tomatoes was 14 or 15. We need to be concerned about some of the products we are buying through our supermarkets and through our distributors of food throughout Queensland.

It is interesting to go on to some of the vegetable farms where product is being prepared for companies such as Woolworths or Coles. The companies are looking for a product that will stay on the shelves for a week and up to two weeks. My father grew tomatoes when I was a young bloke, so I know quite a bit about them. Basically, farmers pick green tomatoes and leave the ripe tomatoes on the ground simply because the green tomatoes last on the shelves longer and do not rot. By doing that, the farmers are truncating the ripening process that comes about naturally from sunlight and water. There is a product that looks like a tomato, and it probably even shines a bit like a tomato after two weeks on the shelves, but it is totally useless in terms of nutrition. I think that would apply to a lot of other products on our supermarket shelves.

It is no good blaming the farmers for that; it is simply because the bigger retailers of our fruit and vegetables are demanding that product from the farm. If the farmers do not supply that product they will never sell another product to the supermarket. It is beholden on our consumers to become a little bit more educated in terms of the nutrition that is available to them through the fresh food market, and perhaps even think a little bit about supporting the farmers by going to market days or buying goods from farmers on the side of the road. People should look at the product that is available to them under that regime rather than following everybody else and lining up at the supermarket and picking product off the shelves that really has very little nutritional value. I sometimes wonder about our nutriment and energy levels. We are probably not accessing the best types of foods that we can. We really should be looking at that.

The field day will also showcase some very innovative issues. Joe Muscat has been working with the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations over a long period of time in the production of sun hemp and kenaf. They are products that have a high fibrous content and are able to be harvested with a modified cane harvester. The products that can be produced out of those two plants are quite unbelievable, as the shadow minister indicated; they can be anything from bumper bars on cars, to food, oils and cloth. There is a whole range of products that we are currently not producing. Indeed, when members look back at the old sailing ships they will see that the ropes were made out of hemp. It is basically the same product. It has a multitude of uses and is easily produced.

Looking at the two different crops of cotton and kenaf or sun hemp, sun hemp and kenaf are basically impervious to diseases and have no great need of chemical sprays. The problem we have, of course, is getting an industry established and getting manufacturers involved, which is quite difficult. Joe has been working with those products, as others have, for three or four years now.

The Central Region Resource Group has as its chair David George with John Ross as its secretary. John has always been a very innovative farmer and certainly thinks outside the square. One of the interesting products at the field day was a diesel tree that was unveiled by Mike Jubow. The trees are currently small seedlings which were imported from Brazil. As the trees grow and become larger they are able to be tapped for a product that will run a diesel motor without any modification at all. It will take a number of years for a tree to mature significantly enough to get any amount of fuel out of it. The fuel is produced in the hardwood. With a stainless steel pipe tapped into the hardwood and the product harvested every few months, the intention is that over a hectare of land a mature crop could produce 5,000 litres of diesel every year. I understand that this crop is being grown quite substantially in Brazil. We will keep an eye on that. That certainly will be one of the alternative fuels sometime down the track.

The other initiatives that were demonstrated were a tree planter, a grass mulcher, a yeomans shakeaerator and keyline farming principals. In the afternoon there was a macadamia nut demonstration. Macadamia nuts are not normally grown north of Rockhampton but there seems to be a need to look at experimentation in terms of perhaps a macadamia nut plantation in the central Queensland region.

At this stage I congratulate Paul and Bridget Feneck for the very successful second sale that they held at Sarina last Saturday. Paul and Bridget have set up a magnificent complex outside of Sarina and with innovative breeding they are producing world-class cattle. Buyers from all over the world have visited to bid and look at the cattle. The sale was very successful with more than 800 people attending.

Others today have spoken about biosecurity. Quite frankly, from the point of view of primary industries that is probably one of the most important things that primary industry can be aware of. Others have talked about the BSE situation in America. With the identification of one or two cattle the American and Canadian beef industry was stymied. The export of meat out of America and Canada was totally banned and its markets were totally tied up.

If we were unfortunate enough to ever have a BSE identification here in Australia it would absolutely ruin the cattle industry in Queensland. With the introduction of the NLIS program we are able to produce an instant trace back to cattle. If ever we were in a situation where that might happen we would be able to identify the property almost instantaneously and then take steps to eradicate the situation.

The other issue that is of threat to primary industry is the woody weeds issue. It does not necessarily come under primary industry, but it is certainly an impediment to primary industry. When one looks at the spread of the giant rat's tail weed around the country and looks at properties that have been devastated by that weed one realises the extent of economic loss. It is almost impossible for cattle to feed in a paddock that is heavily infested with giant rat's tail. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate, particularly in inaccessible country. It has migrated into areas that are very difficult to get equipment into. Giant rat's tail totally takes over the property and, as I said, it is almost impossible to manage.

The other emerging issue, which has been around for some time, is dingoes crossing with domestic dogs and, more particularly, pig dogs. This is having a real impact on not necessarily only rural areas but urban areas that stretch out into rural areas where dogs are now moving into the outskirts of

town attacking domestic dogs. There does not seem to be any real mechanism to control those dogs. Obviously in a populated area shooting becomes problematic and, more importantly, poisoning is problematic as well. We really do not have an efficient way of disposing of those dogs.

The situation in relation to pigs is similar. The growth and the extraordinary number of pigs coming out of national parks and state owned forests is amazing. I have seen groups of up to 100 pigs in caneland. The other night I was riding down to feed cattle molasses and I could feel something running quite close to me in the middle of a paddock. Thinking it was a dog I looked down; it was quite a large pig, almost a metre high. With those few words I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (4.09 pm): I am pleased today to speak to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill. There are many acts amended by this very important legislation. A lot of the issues in the bill have already been canvassed today. The shadow minister, the member for Toowoomba South, summarised the issues that are important to us and I will not go over those again.

I want to raise with the minister today an important issue—that is, the tick eradication line. I have a group in my area called the Auburn Tick Eradication Committee. They have been trying for some time to get the tick line extended north and east starting in 2007. I have written to the minister and passed on their letters. They believe that, if they can shift that tick line, it will greatly enhance their ability to increase their production and it will save them money and chemicals as well. The minister wrote back to them and said that DPI was working with them but that some of the producers in the area were not cooperating. I think that is probably right in that sense.

Since then, they have reduced the area that they were talking about to now include an area around Auburn-Mundubbera-Eidsvold. In their letter, they stated—

In our area we actually have 100% producer support and we are very close to representing our case with The Tick Eradication Implementation Committee.

They have since done that. An email with further information on this matter stated—

The Tick Eradication Implementation Committee have approved unanimously the proposal from the Auburn Tick Eradication Committee.

Queensland Tick Management Group who are an advisory group to the Minister for DPI have also advised the Minister verbally that they approve of the proposal.

So they have approved it. If that is the case, I ask the minister to look at that and possibly speed that up for them. That would be appreciated, because they are an eager and strong group up there in the Auburn area. They are good people who have worked very hard to improve their industry, so I would really appreciate it if the minister could look at that.

I want to canvass a number of other issues. The shadow minister also spoke about the part of the bill which extends the powers of police to seize 'an animal and other thing' under the act. Currently, the act only mentions a stock inspector. These changes clear up an anomaly in the system to allow police the same powers to seize.

It is very important that the police are qualified to do this. They need to ensure that they get some sort of exposure to a lot of these rural issues when they are in the academy. I am concerned that the academy is pushing them through without giving them a lot of community skills, and I would hate to see the police go out there and aggravate the situation because they are naive about these livestock issues. I think it is important that the minister talks to the police minister to ensure that the police who do take on that role have had some training of some manner or form and are up to speed.

I will quickly move on to a number of other issues. Drought assistance has been raised today, and I want to touch on a couple of issues. People are concerned with the fact that they are not eligible for drought assistance because they have brought stock onto their place. We understand that they do not go out and buy stock, but in many instances they have studs—cattle studs or sheep studs—and if they have, say, a cattle stud and buy a bull, they are no longer eligible. I think that is pretty unfair. They may buy just one or two bulls but, because they have actually brought an outside beast onto their property, the whole place is knocked out and is not eligible. I ask the minister to look at that because it does not make sense. Even if producers in a commercial operation do go out and buy five or 10 bulls, that should not make a difference. They have to buy their sires. They might leave them at home and feed them and they may have another 500, 1,000 or 2,000 head away on agistment, but they have to be able to keep their sires going and have them ready to go when it does rain—or maybe they have to take the sires from home to the place of agistment.

I know in our particular case—and I obviously have a pecuniary interest in this as well, and I have some knowledge about it—all our cattle are gone. They have been on the road and they are now on agistment. Our cows in this case are all joined so that does not affect us in relation to the bulls, but we have had to buy bulls recently as well. People are finding that situation difficult.

On another matter of interest, the cost of agistment has increased because we have to go further and further away for agistment. In our case, we wanted to send about 4,000 sheep away on agistment and we found that it would have cost us \$60,000—that is, \$30,000 away and \$30,000 to bring them back—and we would have got half of it back when they did come back. Farmers used to send stock 300,

400 or 500 kilometres away and they would be fine, but they now have to go 1,000 kilometres. This is a real problem that we have got, so we have to look at being fairly sympathetic with those assistance programs.

We are coming to a time now when hopefully it will rain. There were some good storms out in the west yesterday and today, so there is a bit of hope that things will turn around. If the rains come, we will not have to worry about these other things now, but we do have to be prepared for next time. So it is important we get this right.

Lastly, I ask the minister to talk to the new minister for natural resources in relation to fodder harvesting. Those fodder permits are still not being approved, and it is frustrating for farmers. I have had two instances in the last few weeks where people have approached me about this. They find that the applications are impractical; they believe that the guidelines are so impractical that they just cannot be done properly. The permits are not coming through and the farmers are getting frustrated. As the minister would be aware, farmers have to start feeding early. I am just letting the minister know that the fodder permit situation has not been finalised and we do need to work a bit harder to try to see if we can pick it up.

The Borland report has been out for quite some time; in fact, I think it was launched at the AgForce conference. While the Borland report is not 100 per cent either, the reality is that it is better than what we had. I would certainly appreciate it if the minister could talk to his colleague and see if these things could be sped up a bit. With those few comments, we support the bill.

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (4.16 pm): In speaking to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill, I would like to add that these changes do not address the serious problems faced by rural communities serviced by the underresourced and understaffed department of primary industries. I must acknowledge that the changes are minor in comparison to the huge biosecurity issues that face rural industries in Queensland. In July, the government announced that an additional 10 staff would work in biosecurity. However, in October, a stock inspector at Alpha finished work, and as yet no announcement or replacement has been made. Her duty—to safeguard the tick line and protect the western communities from an outbreak—has been passed on to inspectors 200 kilometres away.

In effect, the industry is worth billions of dollars to the Queensland economy and it has been put at risk. The issue of stock inspectors is a priority. I would like to say to the minister that, along with the member for Gregory and other members, I have been pushing for a stock inspector at Alpha. We received a stock inspector after lobbying for about 14 months. This stock inspector has since moved on or relocated, and we do not want to come down here again and lobby and push and ask for another stock inspector. I believe that person needs to be replaced. That position is a priority.

I also question the changes to the Brands Act 1915, which sees the extension of stock inspector status given to all police. Apart from diminishing the role of the stock inspector, it will also create an additional workload for rural based police officers. Police officers in rural and regional areas are already continually doing the work of a dozen departments—mental health officers, domestic violence counsellors, traffic controllers, drug investigators, learner driver examiners, security personnel and liquor licence enforcers, as well as attending accidents, fires, break-ins and call-outs. Add the role of the stock inspector and it will be impossible to recruit police officers to rural and regional areas.

With this change, can rural areas expect to see the number of police officers in the area increase, or will the existing staff just have to add the role of a stock inspector to the never-ending list of departmental responsibilities? I just cannot see this possibly working even though it might seem to be a wonderful idea. We have been pushing for a police officer for Tieri for nearly 1½ years but cannot get a full-time police officer for that station. This has been an ongoing issue. In relation to turning police officers into stock inspectors, if we cannot get police officers now I cannot see how this can possibly be logical.

The minister in his second reading speech spoke about Queensland's exemplary biosecurity status. I suggest that our biosecurity status has been mostly due to the good management by landholders themselves who deserve to be congratulated for their thankless work to rid the countryside of noxious weeds, feral pests and to protect the industry that their livelihood depends on.

In its June 2002 report the Productivity Commission examined the potential social, economic and environmental consequences of an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in this country. The commission reports that the worst case scenario would involve key beef and lamb export markets being closed down for 15 months, that the cost of a foot-and-mouth disease incursion would be between \$8 billion and \$13 billion of gross domestic product, and that its consequences would be felt for nearly 10 years after the event. Even an isolated outbreak that was brought rapidly under control was estimated to potentially cost \$2 billion to \$3 billion of gross domestic products. Not replacing stock inspectors after they have been relocated or turning police officers into stock inspectors without the necessary training is a recipe for disaster.

The slow response by the department to the possible Hendra virus outbreak is a worrying concern. An independent review has recommended that the state government pick up its act when responding to potential disease outbreaks. The urgency with which the department responds when alerted to a possible incident is nonexistent. Racehorse owners in the Charters Towers area are alarmed and very concerned that they face a real and deadly threat, knowing that they could alert only an answering machine when contacting the department. That is of great concern to racehorse owners. As members would know, Charters Towers has a big problem with flying foxes. When pregnant flying foxes drop their young the placenta falls down on to the ground. I have been informed that that placenta has the potential of carrying the lethal Hendra virus. When there are thousands of virus-carrying flying foxes roosting above people's homes and above horse stables, it is worrying. The department of primary industries can play a role in Charters Towers with the bat issue. I would like to see those bats tested, because it is a big concern for horse owners and Charters Towers in general. They are the issues that I wanted to bring to the attention of the House.

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (4.23 pm), in reply: I want to thank all members who have contributed to the debate of the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. The bill amends a number of acts within the Primary Industries portfolio and repeals another act which is no longer relevant. The amendments are necessary for the ongoing process of assessing the operational effectiveness of primary industries legislation. It is not unusual to bring an omnibus portfolio amendment bill before the parliament so that non-controversial changes can be made to a number of acts without the need to amend each act via a separate bill.

The 2006 omnibus bill makes key changes to three acts by amending the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001, the Agricultural Standards Act 1994 and the Grain Research Foundation Act 1976. It also repeals the Grain Industry (Restructuring) Act 1991. Other amendments in the bill include those to part 5B of the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 dealing with the cultivation of low drug content industrial hemp and to the Veterinary Surgeons Act. The bill also proposes a number of minor machinery amendments to the Brands Act 1915, the Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966, the Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988, the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Act 1994 and the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981.

Just before I move to specific aspects of this bill, I want to thank all those opposite and government members for their support of this bill. I also want to take the opportunity to address very important issues of drought assistance raised by a number of members, including the member for Toowoomba South and the member for Gregory. Let me summarise what this government has done and offered not only to our producers but to small businesses dependent on our primary producers. As well as maintaining the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme, this government has invested more than any other state or territory into drought preparedness programs to help producers to better prepare for drought. The drought carry-on finance and drought recovery loan schemes were established in February 2003 and both schemes have been extended until June 2007. Since the creation of these schemes, the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority has approved loans totalling more than \$11 million. Additionally, the DRAS has provided eligible primary producers with freight subsidies for fodder and water during drought and for restocking and returning from agistment during the recovery phase. Since 1 January 2002 more than 17,600 claims have been paid to the value of \$31.3 million. Since the start of the current financial year, 1,157 claims have been lodged worth almost \$1.7 million. The rate with which these claims are being received is rising and my department is adjusting its resources to meet demand.

The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries has provided significant resources to the development of exceptional circumstances applications and a review of partnership approaches with industry organisations. Just this afternoon I signed off on a letter to the federal minister, Peter McGauran, in relation to exceptional circumstances for Longreach, Winton and parts of Boulia shire. The department has put in an agricultural economist to work with AgForce to get this application up. A dedicated drought hotline has also been established. Feedlink has been established to create an electronic trading site for producers and fodder suppliers seeking to buy or sell feedstock.

The Rural Assistance Information Network also draws together the resources of major drought information and support providers to one web site. DPIF farm financial counsellors are using financial analysis to help producers with financial problems to understand their financial position and assess options for improvement or, in more serious cases, adjust from agriculture. DPIF workshops, information programs and products include managing for climate workshops, drought information workshops, climate modelling and research. Other forms of assistance available for drought-affected primary producers include electricity tariff relief for irrigators who use electric pumps and subsidies for school transport.

On top of that, last week the Premier and I announced that nine severely drought-affected western Queensland centres would be the focus of a series of state government initiated meetings providing assistance ranging from financial information to social impacts and small business advice. More are likely to follow in the new year. Emergency assistance is also available through QRAA for locally owned small businesses that have been affected by drought conditions as exceptional

circumstances to assist in meeting operating and other essential costs. The business does not have to be directly located within the drought declared area. It can be adjacent to or dependent upon the areas affected by exceptional circumstances. Small businesses may be eligible to receive an interest subsidy of up to 50 per cent payable on new or existing loans with a maximum interest subsidy of \$10,000 per year for a period of two years.

The interdepartmental drought committee ensures that there is a whole-of-government approach to the drought. As well as what I have outlined today, yesterday in this House my colleague the former Minister for Natural Resources and Water spoke of steps taken by his department to relieve the burden of drought. As was pointed out by the former Minister for Natural Resources and Water, this government is determined to work with stakeholders, especially in this very difficult period, on the issues of rental payments on property dams and fodder harvesting. There is no doubt that the government is very aware of the difficulties being faced by our primary producers. We have not and will not abandon them.

I turn to, firstly, the amendments that this bill makes to the Grain Research Foundation Act. This act is to be amended and then repealed to facilitate the dissolution of the Grain Research Foundation, which is a statutory body, and its replacement with an industry owned company. The assets and liabilities of the foundation will be transferred to the replacement company. As members would know, the grain industry has been particularly hard hit by the drought, but over a number of years it has proved to be progressive in moving its structures away from a statutory basis. The current foundation initiated and conducted a public consultation process during the second half of 2005. Its restructure proposal has received industry support. In fact, I am not aware that any opposition has been received or expressed to the concept.

The main reason the government is supporting the incorporation is that it would provide the industry with the options to use the funds that are now restricted by legislation. In recent years there has been a trend for governments to support the introduction of commercial flexibility for previously statutory research bodies rather than attempt to expand their specific legal charters. There does not appear to be any good reason to restrict the foundation to remaining a statutory body, given that the industry has contributed to its funding and does not exercise any statutory powers. Currently, the foundation holds in excess of \$1 million of industry contributed funds.

This amendment follows a number of successful processes sanctioned by this government for the conversion of statutory bodies into industry owned corporate entities. This has happened in recent times with a range of bodies, including Queensland Sugar Ltd, Bulk Sugar Terminals Ltd, BSES Ltd, the Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation Ltd and Canegrowers Ltd, all of which were previously statutory bodies but are now industry owned companies. At this juncture I also point out that the transfer of the function of a statutory authority to a corporation will not have any financial implications for the department as the government has not supplied any financial support to the Grain Research Foundation. All the assets and liabilities of GRF will be transferred to the replacement company, leaving the state of Queensland free of any kind of liability.

All members of this House would be aware that Queensland is a prominent player in grain industry research. Queensland's grain industry research capability has benefited from the current foundation's recognition of the need for a more structured approach to providing advice to research providers and funders regarding grain production priorities. Four research advisory committees have been formed to represent the regions of central Queensland, south-east Queensland, Darling Downs and Western Downs/Maranoa. While these structures are to be continued with the proposed new company, Grain Research Foundation Ltd, in its discussion paper that was released late in 2005 the current foundation recognised the need to change. It notes that, due to changing industry and government environments, a review is needed aimed at moving away from being a statutory body.

The foundation has some recent experience where the constraints of the current legislation have limited its ability to do business. With the foundation looking to move towards exploring new initiatives to benefit Queensland's grain industry, it is looking to introduce more flexibility and commerciality into its arrangements and to provide more certainty for the capital base contributed by Queensland grain growers. These amendments provide the Queensland grain industry with the flexibility and commerciality that it is seeking.

I refer now to the amendments that this bill makes to the Agricultural Standards Act 1994 in relation to entry and seizure powers. This amendment is particularly necessary and provides that inspectors may seize animals or things where entry is made to monitor the ruminant feed ban. This is important in supporting the compliance auditing program in monitoring restricted animal feeds, therefore supporting vigilance against mad cow disease—a step against which no responsible person could argue.

Clause 5 of the bill amends section 2 of the Agricultural Standards Act 1994 to clarify what powers of seizure an inspector has after lawfully gaining entry to a place under section 20 of the act. Section 25 enables the seizure of an animal or things where an inspector has entered a property under section 20. For the sake of completeness and to ensure operational certainty, the amendment to section 25 confirms that each of the five kinds of lawful entry under section 20 are cross-referenced as a precondition to seizure.

Section 25 outlines the different ways an inspector can legally enter a place, such as with a warrant or with consent, or it may be a public place. Section 21 specifies the procedures that an inspector must follow to obtain consent to enter a place. This includes advising the occupier of the reason for the entry and explaining that there is no requirement that they consent to the entry. This amendment clarifies that section 21 applies only to where an inspector enters a place with the consent of the occupier. In other cases of entering a place under section 20, consent is not an issue. Therefore, the requirements under section 21 of obtaining consent are not relevant. Put simply, an inspector may enter a property, with consent or with a warrant. Where the place is a public place, an entry is made when it is open to the public or, where the place is a public place, an entry is made at a reasonable time to check compliance with the act or to prevent or control the spread of exotic diseases. Again, no responsible person could argue against that.

The government and the dedicated DPI staff take biosecurity extremely seriously, as can be seen by the independent report of the recent Hendra case at Peachester, which was raised by the member for Toowoomba South in this debate. That independent report found that the DPI veterinarians acted appropriately and they were commended for their actions. In regard to a recent incident, DPIF senior vets responded to a late-night call to the hotline. The call was from a private veterinary practitioner who was concerned about a horse at a Nambour farm. The DPIF's short response time of 30 minutes from the disease watch hotline call and advice to the attending veterinarian, post-mortem and quarantine procedures were well within the acceptable performance standards.

The results of the initial animal health laboratory test received by DPIF were negative to the Hendra virus. The quarantine was subsequently lifted. The department has reacted appropriately in this case, just as it was found to have done so in respect of the case at Peachester. The government and the dedicated DPIF staff take biosecurity extremely seriously and will continue to do so.

DPIF biosecurity inspectors facilitate the delivery of biosecurity programs such as animal welfare, chemical use and food safety, animal biosecurity, plant biosecurity and fire ant eradication. The number of biosecurity field positions that perform inspector duties fluctuates depending on work requirements. The number, excluding fire ant eradication, has remained static—around 120, including approximately four to six temporary positions. The distribution of field positions, once again excluding those in the Fire Ant Eradication Program, occurs in the 56 locations throughout the state. Currently, they represent a split across the following programs: 57 per cent to animal biosecurity, 19 per cent to plant biosecurity, 14 per cent to animal welfare and 10 per cent to chemical use and food safety. In 2005-06 the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries recruited new biosecurity inspectors at Toowoomba, Yeerongpilly, Bundaberg, Biloela and Mareeba. They were funded under the enhanced \$2.2 million biosecurity funding for 2005-6. The successful pilot of the third-party provider system for the delivery of cattle tick inspection services has alleviated some of the workload on staff, freeing them up for higher-priority activities in biosecurity.

As members would be aware, during the recent election campaign this government gave a commitment that a single biosecurity agency would be established to ensure that Queensland is best prepared to deal with exotic pests and diseases. It has since been announced that Biosecurity Queensland will be a Public Service office under my Primary Industries and Fisheries portfolio. It will be responsible for all matters of biosecurity affecting Queensland and will administer all relevant pieces of Queensland biosecurity legislation. An implementation strategy of Biosecurity Queensland is to be developed by a cross-agency team with a view to having the agency operational on or about 1 March 2007.

With regard to vets, I must agree with the member for Toowoomba South. They play a vital role, along with inspectors and biosecurity officers, in ensuring our biosecurity. The DPIF has biosecurity veterinary positions located at 16 regional locations throughout Queensland. The department's biosecurity veterinary capability is supported by three departmentally operated veterinary laboratories located at Townsville, Toowoomba and Yeerongpilly; the tick fever centre at Wacol; access to Australian government laboratories; and by contracting private veterinary practices throughout Queensland. The department maintains a flexible approach to providing biosecurity veterinary services delivery throughout the state, depending on priorities.

When a veterinary officer position vacancy occurs, it is addressed using an approved process. This process has enabled the department to successfully advertise and fill seven veterinary officer vacancies in the past four years, with two at Townsville, one each at Longreach, Rockhampton, Caboolture and Charleville—now relocated to Roma—and Toowoomba. One senior veterinary officer position that will focus on intensive livestock is currently advertised for placement in Toowoomba, and the department will continue to use approved recruitment and selection processes to make an appointment.

With specific regard to the veterinary laboratory at Rockhampton, which was raised by the member for Toowoomba South, decisions are not made on an ad hoc basis. I am advised by the department that its primary function during the late eighties and early nineties centred on the brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication campaign. With the closure of the facility in 2002, the service was not

diminished in any way but rationalised on a statewide basis. For example, the previous manager of the Rockhampton Veterinary Laboratory relocated to the Animal Research Institute in Brisbane and is playing a key role in our statewide surveillance program in animal diseases. Changes to the aforementioned acts, combined with work already being done by this government and spearheaded by DPIF, will further ensure our responsiveness is swift and decisive to any perceived threat.

Continuing on the subject of animal care and protection, the bill also proposes a number of amendments to the Brands Act 1915. The enforcement of the Brands Act is the responsibility of both the DPIF appointed inspectors and Queensland police officers. This reflects the fact that, due to the large area in which the act operates, the combined resources of two agencies are necessary to adequately support the objectives of the act. Clause 16 of the bill amends the act to include definitions of both 'inspectors' and 'appointed inspectors'. An 'appointed inspector' refers to a person appointed to be an inspector under the Brands Act and an 'inspector' refers to either an appointed inspector or a person who is an inspector by virtue of being a police officer.

The distinction between appointed inspectors and those who are police officers is necessary because all Queensland police officers are automatically appointed as inspectors under the Brands Act 1915, while appointed inspectors are restricted to being of a particular class of person. An appointed inspector must first satisfy the chief executive that they are qualified for appointment because they have the necessary expertise or experience.

The training of police officers in the exercise of powers and the operation of the Brands Act is the responsibility of the Queensland Police Service. I note that the member for Gregory raised this issue while the minister for police was in the chamber, so she is aware of the issues that he has raised. Training under the Brands Act 1915, as I said, is provided by the Queensland Police Academy through training modules selected by students and through the Stock Squad training package. Inspectors who are DPIF officers appointed under the act are required to complete approved training and competency assessment in the exercise of powers and the operation of the Brands Act 1915 as a prerequisite to an appointment as an inspector under the act.

The bill also makes changes to the Drugs Misuse Act specifically in relation to licences for growing industrial cannabis plants. Section 65 of the Drugs Misuse Act provides for a person who is applying for a licence renewal to provide a photograph of themselves. The act does not explicitly require a person applying for a new licence to provide such a photograph. Clause 25 of the bill will amend the act to make this an explicit requirement of the application process in line with the current photograph requirements for licence renewal. Photographs are an important requirement as they are considered vital for the department, as the regulatory agency, to be able to identify industrial hemp licensees and properly enable the department to strike a balance between facilitating commercial production and preventing any kind of misuse of industrial hemp.

The Veterinary Surgeons Act is also to be amended to remove references to the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950. The Veterinary Surgeons Act currently provides that the Veterinary Tribunal of Queensland is a commission of inquiry. The relevant provisions will be replaced with provisions similar to that in use in the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999 to ensure that the tribunal continues to have access to necessary powers and procedures as appropriate for a professional disciplinary body. The changes, in essence, ensure that the tribunal is able to function in a contemporary manner without being unduly restrained by formality. As is the practice of this government, a significant number of organisations were consulted in regard to these amendments including RSPCA Queensland, the Grain Research Foundation, AgForce and the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Queensland.

I would also like to thank the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries officers who have worked tirelessly on the bill. A lot of issues not relevant to the operational nature of this bill were raised by members. I take up some of the points in relation to biosecurity. I have made the offer to the member for Gregory and the member for Toowoomba South to sit down with them and with my director-general to discuss those issues. In relation to the issues raised by the member for Warrego about the tick line at Auburn, I look forward to receiving further correspondence to move forward on that. He also mentioned the issue of police training. I have also outlined, as a whole-of-government approach to drought, what the government is currently doing.

Question put—That the bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—

Mr HORAN (4.49 pm): I gave notice of some of these issues and the minister has covered some of them his is summing-up. So I will be brief and I might drop a couple. Clause 4 applies if an inspector intends to seek the consent of an occupier of a place to enter a property. The change is only applicable if the property's occupier consents to the entry. What happens if he does not consent?

Mr MULHERIN: To understand section 21, members have to go back to section 20, and that is one of the problems with this omnibus legislation; that we have to go back into the main body of the act to understand it.

During the briefing I asked the same question of my departmental officers. Section 20 outlines the different ways an inspector can legally enter a place with a warrant or with consent. They may enter a public place such as a retail outlet. Section 21 specifies the procedure that an inspector must follow to obtain consent to enter somewhere. This includes advising the occupier of the reasons for entry and explaining that there is no requirement that they consent to entry. This amendment clarifies that section 21 only applies to where an inspector enters a place with the consent of the occupier.

Under other cases of entering a place under section 20, consent is not an issue. Therefore, the requirements under section 21 of obtaining consent are not relevant. Without consent a warrant is needed, but in some cases it is not warranted.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—

Mr HORAN (4.51 pm): This is the clause about the power to seize something that is prohibited by the act. I think this really applies to the ruminant feeding ban only, which is there to protect against BSE—bovine spongiform encephalopathy. I ask the minister: is that the only reason for this particular clause? Is it only about powers to seize in relation to that particular ban or can it be used for other bans that might apply? For example, there might be bans on swill feeding to pigs or other types of bans.

I understand that this is about ensuring that animal products are not fed to cattle. This is to ensure that meat meal products or anything that might contain bone or any part of the vertebral column are not in feeds that are given to ruminants.

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the member for Toowoomba South for his question. The question in relation to ruminant feed bans is only an example that was given. Clause 5 of the bill amends section 25 of the Agricultural Standards Act 1994 to clarify what powers of seizure an inspector has after lawfully gaining entry to a place under section 20 of the act, which we spoke of previously. Section 25 enables the seizure of animals or things where an inspector has entered a property under section 20. For the sake of completeness, and to ensure operational certainty, the amendment to section 25 confirms that each of the five kinds of lawful entry under section 20, which I reiterated earlier, are cross-referenced as a precondition to seizure. An inspector may enter a property with a warrant to seek consent where the place is a public place and entry is made when open to the public, or where the place is in a public place and entry is at a reasonable time, to check compliance with the act or to prevent or control the spread of an exotic disease. We used the example of ruminant feed. This amendment is particularly necessary where it provides that inspectors may seize animals or things where entry is made to monitor the ruminant feed ban. It is important to support the compliance auditing program in monitoring the restricted animal feeds, therefore supporting vigilance against mad cow disease and things such as that.

Mr HORAN: So under this particular clause an inspector could go in, for example, and seize animals and remove them from the property.

Mr MULHERIN: That is correct.

Clause 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr HORAN (4.55 pm): This is a pretty simple clause that changes reporting requirements so they are in line. It changes the dates of reporting to a different start and finish of the reporting year. However, I wanted to ask: what are the types of things that this state government has to report to the federal government, and under what requirements does it have to report? Is there some particular contractual obligation or legal obligation to report? What are the things that have to be reported? Could the minister give us some detail on that.

Mr MULHERIN: My staff is checking on that. But the member is right: it is to bring some consistency into reporting periods. As the member knows, the reporting period under this section is being changed from 1 May to 30 April to 1 January to 31 December. This is being done to bring the Queensland reporting period into line with that of the Australian government. This will reduce the reporting burden on scientific users.

Under Division 6 of the 'Miscellaneous provisions' of the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001, clause 87(2), states—

For subsection (1), an annual report must state—

(a) information prescribed under a regulation about—

(i) animals the person has used, or allowed to be used, for scientific purposes; and ...

So rats, mice, chickens or whatever—

- (ii) complaints, enquires and grievances about the use of animals for scientific purposes; and
- (b) another matter prescribed under a regulation about scientific use of animals by the person.

A good example of that, which had to be reported, was a recent complaint about one of the universities doing some research on chickens. The chickens were obtained by someone in the community, and they complained about the condition of the poultry when they received them. That sort of information has to be contained in that report. We are happy to get one of the officers from DPIF to provide further advice on this matter. We do not have all the information.

Mr HORAN: I thank the minister. It looks like it is mainly reporting on animals that have been used for scientific experimentation or investigation of any reports of the maltreatment of animals. There has been some research at UQ at Gatton into pregnant mares and whether the abortions in mares are caused by Hairy Mary caterpillars. Some people contacted me. They were concerned whether the mares were being aborted deliberately or whether that was occurring naturally. I would be interested in whether that is the sort of thing that goes in an annual report so that those who are interested in the welfare of those horses and so forth would know that it is in a public report.

Mr MULHERIN: I take the member's point. That is an area of research that the facility at Gatton is looking at. If the member would like, we can arrange for him, on his way back to Toowoomba one day, to call in and speak to them and ask them how they report their research. That is fine by me.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 8 and 9, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10—

Mr HORAN (4.59 pm): This clause allows an inspector to go back onto a property to care for an animal rather than have immediate removal. The inspector might go back for an extended period and feed them rather than taking them away. I presume that is what this clause deals with. Do inspectors get a blanket approval to be able to go back and forth or do they have to advise the owner that they are going there? The owner may or may not live there. I would like some clarification as to whether there is a separate approval each time and what information or notice has to be given to the owners.

Mr MULHERIN: Clause 10 of the bill amends section 148 of the Animal Care and Protection Act to clarify that following the seizure of an animal on a property—so therefore they would have to go through the procedures outlined in sections 20 and 21 of the act—an inspector has the power to re-enter the property to complete actions such as providing ongoing care to the animal. Experience has shown that it is not always possible or desirable to move animals off the property immediately after they have been seized. In some instances transport of animals must first be organised or the animal may be too injured or sick to be moved from the property. This means that an inspector must then re-enter the property to transport animals or to continue the care which, as a result of the seizure, has become the responsibility of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, the police or the RSPCA. This amendment will confirm that inspectors have the power to properly fulfil their role under the act by ensuring that the welfare of animals in such circumstances is maximised.

I will go through what must be followed under section 125. Section 125 of the act states—

Procedure for other entries without warrant

- (1) This section applies if—
 - (a) an inspector is intending to enter, under section 122(1)(d) to (g), a place; and
 - (b) the occupier of the place is present at the place.
- (2) Before entering the place, the inspector must do, or make a reasonable attempt to do, the following things—
 - (a) comply with section 120 for the occupier;
 - (b) tell the occupier the purpose of the entry;
 - (c) tell the occupier the inspector is permitted under this Act to enter the place without the occupier's consent or a warrant.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—

Mr HORAN (5.03 pm): This is one of the clauses, and there is another clause further down, that deals with the definition of a stock inspector and extending it to police. Clause 11 extends powers to police to seize an animal or other thing. At the moment the act only mentions a stock inspector. I would have thought it would have covered police because the current act talks about appointed stock inspectors and they were police who were appointed.

This extension of the powers obviously now goes to all police to seize an animal or other thing. It gets back to what the minister and the minister for police were talking about across the chamber in relation to the training provided to police. There could be cases where experienced police and stock inspectors would well and truly know what they are doing but if it was an inexperienced police officer

who had not had experience with stock and they had to deal with an animal in pain with a broken leg that could charge, it could be a hazardous task. Normally in those circumstances there would be other people around who would know how to handle those sorts of animals.

Our concern is that police have adequate training amongst all the other things that they do. The member for Charters Towers ran through a pretty good list. It was probably not complete, but it was an extensive list of what police have to wrap their head around and know how to do. Anything can happen and Murphy's law probably applies on many occasions. Our concern is the training that police would have. To seize an animal sounds pretty simple but out there in the real world it could be a fairly hazardous task to undertake.

Mr MULHERIN: The member is right. The police in their training at the academies are trained under this provision and the Stock Squad also have modules for officers who go into that area. Training is imperative. The act also provides these powers for forfeiture for animals seized under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. Currently the act states that the chief executive can agree to the forfeiture of animals seized by an inspector. This amendment really ensures consistency in the application of the forfeiture provisions for both inspectors and police by clarifying that in addition to inspectors police can seek the chief executive's agreement to forfeiture of a seized animal where it is in the interests of the welfare of the animal. As I have said, police already have this power. It is not really an extension of the power; it is merely a clarification that there are two categories of officers who can exercise these powers, that is, police and appointed inspectors under the act, who are departmental officers or officers who are engaged by the RSPCA and are appointed by the chief executive of the DPI who has those powers. This position really clarifies the current operational understanding of the act.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 12 to 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—

Mr HORAN (5.07 pm): This clause changes the heading from 'Officers and districts' to 'Officers'. Could the minister explain what this is all about. Does this really mean that stock inspectors are not being assigned to a particular district? What is the reason for removing the districts altogether? Why is that? Is it because the department now has the police as an automatic appointment? Is it because stock inspectors are not assigned to a particular district? Or is it because of a shortage of stock inspectors?

Mr MULHERIN: I will get further clarification from departmental officers. I know when I was elevated to this position back in December I had a number of letters to sign for Executive Council regarding the appointment of DPI officers under the act as inspectors as they moved from one part of the state to another. I thought it was a bit odd that every time someone had to move from one area to another we had to get them reappointed to another district with a new appointment and it had to come to the minister and then go on to Executive Council to be signed off. My understanding is that it is really conferring the power back on to the chief executive officer, which would be more administratively efficient. The advice I have here is that there is no change to the operation of the section. We are not changing the process regarding the creation of districts; it is just that districts can be created by the chief executive officer with the approval of the Governor in Council. That is that issue I raised where they go from one area to another and it comes to the minister and the minister has to send it to Executive Council and wait for that advice. All we are doing now is bringing in an administrative order which makes it a lot more efficient to administer staffing arrangements and transfers around the state.

Clause 17, as read, agreed to.

Clause 18, as read, agreed to.

Clause 19—

Mr HORAN (5.10 pm): This is a pretty important clause because it deals with the appointment and qualifications of inspectors. It qualifies that the chief executive officer appoints the inspectors and in doing so deems that the qualifications of those who can be appointed are appropriate. The clause lists a number of people. It states—

(a) a public service officer or employee—

I presume that is the actual stock inspectors. It continues—

(b) an employee of the Commonwealth or another State;

(c) an employee of a local government;

(d) a veterinary surgeon under the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936*;

(e) an individual included in a class of persons declared under a regulation to be an approved class of persons for this section.

The disclaimer is then added, and it says—

However, the chief executive may appoint a person as an inspector only if satisfied the person is qualified for appointment because the person has the necessary expertise or experience.

This gets back to the issue of the automatic provision that all police are stock inspectors. Previously, particular officers were appointed as stock inspectors after they had received the necessary training or direction about their job.

This shows that stock inspectors hold pretty important positions. They need a substantial amount of training and the chief executive must be satisfied that they have the necessary expertise or experience. This again highlights our concern that a young police officer will be automatically made a stock inspector by virtue of the fact that he has graduated from the academy, whereas previously the chief executive officer of the department had to be satisfied that he had the necessary experience and expertise. The bill then states—

The chief executive must issue an identity card to each appointed inspector.

Also, particular inspectors or police officers will use their police identity card. Most people in the country would not really know or understand that a police officer is automatically a stock inspector. Well, maybe they do because they are used to the ones out there being appointed.

My real concern is that, again, this gets back to the fact that we will have stock inspectors who are appointed by the CEO only if they have the necessary expertise and experience and we will also have police officers. We are hoping that when they come out of the academy they have enough experience or expertise to be able to do, in many cases, a similar type of work.

Mr MULHERIN: Under the Brands Act 1915, training is provided by the Queensland Police Academy, as I said in my summing-up of the second reading debate, through training modules selected by students and also through the stock training packages. Inspectors appointed by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries under the act are required to complete the approved training and competency assessment in the exercise of the powers under the Brands Act, so the chief executive officer has to be satisfied. As I said, I have raised this issue with the police minister, who was in the chamber when this issue was raised by the honourable member for Gregory. We have indicated that police will get the appropriate training. We were really referring in this area not to stock inspectors but to brand inspectors.

Mr HORAN: The minister said that police cadets may select modules when doing their course. Is it compulsory for all police cadets to undertake those stock modules when they do their course? Will that mean that, when they all graduate and they are all automatically made stock inspectors, they have all done that particular module?

Mr MULHERIN: I could not give a 100 per cent guarantee but I understand that, when they graduate from the academy, they have provisions under this act. I will get back to the member for Toowoomba South on this. I will check with the police minister and follow that one up.

Clause 19, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 20 to 23, as read, agreed to.

Clause 24—

Mr HORAN (5.16 pm): I was going to ask the minister about clauses 24 and 26 but he has probably covered those. With regard to clause 24, I want to know about this concentration in the leaves and the flowering heads of the cannabis seed being not more than 0.5 per cent. I presume the reason for that THC level is simply so they are not the variety of plant that can be used for the production of marijuana. I note that industrial cannabis plants may have a THC concentration in their leaves and flowering heads of not more than one per cent and that there is now a difference there for the variations that may occur in the crop. That is the reason for this clause. So, if there is a variance from the 0.5 per cent, then a 0.5 per cent tolerance, if you like, is allowed when the crop is harvested. The tolerance takes it from 0.5 per cent up to one per cent.

Mr MULHERIN: My advisers tell me that it is two different things. We are talking about the crop itself and the seed, so it is just the clarity with the crop. It is a 0.5 per cent THC level for seeds and one per cent for the crop. This is really about increasing the clarity for the licensees under the act.

Clause 24, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 25 to 43, as read, agreed to.

Clause 44—

Mr HORAN (5.19 pm): This is the last clause I want to speak to, because the other clause I wanted to speak to—clause 47—was covered by the minister earlier. This is the clause known as the 'Dr Harry' clause. It stops a person calling themselves a name that might suggest that they are a vet. I know people often say that vets suggest that they are doctors by calling themselves doctors, but there have been rulings or legislation that allow vets to call themselves doctors. So most vets now are 'Dr So-and-so', hence I guess the 'Dr Harry' name for this clause. How does this affect people? There are a number of people now who do, if you like, chiropractic, particularly in the equine industry, the thoroughbred industry, campdrafting and generally that sort of industry. Many people do that. Does this mean that they can put an ad in *Queensland Country Life* and call themselves 'Dr So-and-so specialising in electronic

messaging'? There are a lot of specialists now in equine dentistry who rasp horses' teeth. These people are probably going to call themselves something or other. Is that what this is aimed at—they have to call themselves an equine physio? Will they be prosecuted if they happen to put 'Dr' in front of their name?

Mr MULHERIN: I cannot give the member an exact answer on that, but this just relates to the veterinary body. People cannot call themselves a vet or use titles that would indicate they have veterinary qualifications. Someone who does not have veterinary qualifications cannot call themselves a vet, but I would need to get some further guidance and get back to the member for Toowoomba South as to whether they can call themselves a doctor if they are a chiropractor. We might have some more information here. I will just check with the advisers. It is an honorary title for people who call themselves doctors. It is an honorary title given to people who have the appropriate qualifications as a vet. So one cannot really call themselves a doctor without having the appropriate qualifications under the Veterinary Tribunal.

Clause 44, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 45 to 48, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Question put—That the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Long Title

Question put—That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 11 October (see p. 76).

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (5.25 pm): Before speaking to the Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Bill, I firstly thank the minister's officers who briefed us today and obviously during the last parliament. This bill was on the *Notice Paper* before the election and it consequently has been brought forward onto the *Notice Paper* this term. We have been dealing with the bill for quite some time and, as I said, I thank the departmental officers for their briefing.

The opposition will be supporting the bill. We have no concerns about the bill. Indeed, there has been little correspondence or few concerns raised in the public arena in respect of the bill. We can only assume that there are no outstanding issues with the bill. Certainly, the overriding issue of the bill is reasonably straightforward—that is, that it makes it compulsory for fire alarms to be installed in all existing homes. The bill also seeks to improve public safety of licensed premises that have an unacceptable risk of overcrowding and makes various other amendments to the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990. As a background, in 2004-05 the Department of Emergency Services conducted a review of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990. The review identified a range of improvements for the safety arrangements in Queensland. This bill incorporates those improvements.

There are four basic areas that the bill addresses, and the first of those obviously is smoke alarms. There is currently no legal requirement for most pre-1997 homes and units to have smoke alarms installed. This bill seeks to amend this situation. The bill requires an alarm that meets the applicable Australian standard to be installed in locations in the home that are currently specified for new homes under the Building Code of Australia. There will be a maximum fine of \$375 for failing to install alarms by 1 July 2007, and that is when this requirement will actually kick in.

The bill contains ongoing smoke alarm maintenance requirements for lessors and tenants. Lessors of rental properties are required to replace smoke alarms before the end of their service life which, under normal circumstances, is 10 years. Lessors have to check smoke alarms and carry out routine maintenance at the beginning of the tenancy and tenants are responsible for routine maintenance during the tenancy. To facilitate compliance, the bill requires the vendor to notify a purchaser on the sale of a property that that property contains smoke alarms. The vendor is also required to lodge a form with the Queensland Land Registry stating that smoke alarms have been installed, similarly with electrical safety switches. For manufactured homes, the bill requires that the smoke alarm notice be given by the seller of the home in the form of assignment used for the transfer of the home.

An issue that arises is responsibility while leasing. There is a concern regarding the responsibility placed on tenants. Landholders and even some tenants would well recognise that sometimes tenants are not quite as responsible as we would like. Under the bill, tenants must test smoke alarms once every 12 months and change smoke alarm batteries that are spent or that they believe are almost spent. Tenants must also advise the lessor if smoke alarms fail or are about to fail. During the tenancy, the tenant must also clean the smoke alarms once every 12 months. The responsibility is particularly troubling in light of the impact on insurance.

During the debate on the clauses of the bill, I will raise the fact that compliance refers to both the lessor and the tenant. Who then ensures that every 12 months fire alarms are cleaned and/or the battery is changed?

I have some lingering concerns about the bill in terms of its impact on insurance payouts in cases of fire. The advice is that there will be no impact on insurance payouts, but the issue could still be raised if, for instance, a tenant did not comply with the act and the fire alarm was inoperative at the time of the fire. I am concerned that that could create a liability situation, in which case the insurance company may not pay all of the insurance money or, indeed, may not pay any of it. I believe that situation raises some issues. The departmental briefings indicate that in other parts of Australia that issue has not been raised, but I wonder how long before it becomes an issue.

I am concerned about the types of alarms that are installed. Research indicates that photoelectric alarms are far more effective than ionisation alarms. In fact, groups within the community say that ionisation alarms have about a 75 per cent failure rate because they are heat detectors and not smoke detectors. Therefore, if a smouldering fire fills the house with smoke but has no heat in it, the ionisation alarms will not activate. The residents of the home could be asphyxiated by smoke before the ionisation alarms are activated. I am concerned that the legislation does not indicate a requirement to install photoelectric alarms. The explanatory notes highlight that the QFRS prefers photoelectric alarms, but the legislation makes only the minimum smoke alarm mandatory and that is, of course, the ionisation alarms. We need further public consultation, and certainly the public needs more education, on this issue.

The bill gives the commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service the power to require licensed premises at risk of overcrowding to set and manage a specified minimum safe occupancy level. The QFRS will assist operators to assess maximum occupancy numbers in those premises over a 24-month period. I think that that is reasonable. I believe that the general public is concerned about nightclubs and such places because, from time to time, the numbers that crowd into those places are almost beyond belief. As we have seen in the past, a fire in such a place can be very tragic.

The bill raises the issue of unwanted alarms or QFRS call-outs to deal with situations that are not actually life threatening. The vast majority of call-outs—96.6 per cent in 2005-06—that the QFRS attends from monitored automatic alarm systems, which make up approximately one-third of all call-outs, are false in that, upon investigation, the cause of alarm activation is not an emergency that requires a fire service. That has a huge impact on the QFRS and also on the residents and owners of commercial buildings. There is a substantial cost for the QFRS in attending call-outs, and for the residents or owners of the buildings in terms of the fees that are charged for an unnecessary call-out.

The bill places an obligation on occupiers to maintain alarm systems so that they do not exceed an unacceptable level of unwanted alarms. Unwanted alarms are primarily the result of a lack of alarm suitability, inappropriate location and type of detectors, occupier activities, system malfunctions, lack of ability of detectors and alarms to distinguish between fires and normal conditions, and lack of appropriate design features and managerial procedures.

I would like to highlight an issue that has come to light in Townsville involving a popular self-contained holiday apartment. The *Townsville Bulletin* of 14 October 2006 states—

The manager of one of Townsville's most popular self-contained holiday apartments has been stunned by the bureaucratic catch-22 which is costing her thousands of dollars in operating costs through no fault of her own.

In the past four months, six false automatic fire alarm call-outs to the Ocean Breeze apartment complex on the corner of Mitchell and Kennedy streets just behind The Strand have cost the block owners \$5160.

'It's ridiculous. We know these alarms are a necessary safety measure, but it is one that is set at such a sensitive level that even steam from a shower has set it off,' Ms O'Connor said.

On other occasions, cooking fumes and burnt toast have turned into expensive call-outs.

I have some concerns in respect to that matter. I would hope that the department or the QFRS can work with building occupiers to overcome some of the problems. Alarms are set to Australian standards, but environmental conditions and perhaps even weather conditions can cause quite an amount of concern, not only for the department but, as I said, also for occupiers of commercial and domestic buildings.

The bill introduces a number of other amendments. The bill imposes a sliding scale of significant penalties for contraventions, ranging from \$150,000 or three years imprisonment for contravention resulting in multiple deaths, to \$7,500 where there is a contravention with no adverse consequences.

Contraventions include failure to maintain a means of escape from a building, failure to maintain prescribed fire safety installations, failure to maintain a fire and evacuation plan, failure to prepare a fire safety management plan and failure to update the plan after a change of circumstances. It is very comprehensive.

The bill removes protections offered in the Criminal Code under sections 23 and 24 that relate to offending acts or omissions requiring intent and excuses acts done in an honest and reasonable, but mistaken, belief in the existence of facts. The removal of these protections is balanced by the inclusion of the defence that the contravention was due to causes over which the person had no control and that the person took reasonable precautions and exercised proper diligence to avoid contravention.

The bill also clarifies the power of fire officers to enter premises for investigative and preventive purposes. In addition, the bill updates fire prevention and investigative powers in relation to the collection of evidence, the conduct of inquiries into fires and hazardous materials emergencies. The bill gives persons affected by fire safety enforcement actions the right to have their grievance aired by providing a right of merits appeal to particular occupants who are the subject of a requisition under section 69. It achieves this by allowing persons to apply to a panel for a stay of notice.

The bill allows the QRFS to provide building fire safety information to the owner. That has been an issue for quite some time. I have received many calls from people who have been deemed to be in breach of the act, but the QRFS has not been able to provide them with the information that would enable them to rectify the situation so that they can comply with the act. Currently, the act does not allow that to happen. So this amendment is certainly a step in the right direction.

The fees and charges provisions of the act are amended to clarify the intent of the charging provisions. This includes to clearly provide that the owners of properties who pay a fire levy are liable to be charged for attendances at unwanted fire alarms and to clearly recognise that the chief executive is able to waive a charge where it is reasonable in the circumstance to do so. So there is certainly flexibility in respect of that amendment.

The bill amends section 137 of the act to extend to building certifiers the requirement to provide fire safety inspectors with records where these records are not available from local government. Previously, local government was the sole provider of a building certifier's documents. Currently, we have an open system in place where private certifiers can undertake that work. So a local government no longer holds all the records for all of the buildings. This amendment extends the provision to apply to private certifiers as well.

The bill amends section 216 of the Building Act 1975 to overcome the recent decision of the District Court of Queensland in Goldfox Investments Pty Ltd v Paul Evans. In this decision the court decided that it was necessary to prove that the accommodation was used for the purposes of providing budget accommodation, rather than there being the mere existence of it, to fall within the definition. Basically, not only does the building have to provide the accommodation but also the accommodation has to be used. This amendment clears up that point. If there is a provision for accommodation, the building comes under the act.

The bill makes a range of other improvements to the fire safety regulatory framework to make the laws operate more efficiently. In terms of enforcement of the new laws, as I said earlier in my speech, we need to consider how some of these enforcements are going to take place. I imagine that there would be thousands of houses throughout Queensland which were built before 1997 and which now come under the act. People could face penalties for not complying with the act. I am concerned that we are creating a situation that is not enforceable, particularly in terms of the maintenance of fire alarms. Quite frankly, unless somebody writes on a battery when it was last changed to show that it could be 12 months overdue, who is going to be able to tell whether a battery has just been changed?

The risk of death from fire in a home is up to three times higher in homes without fire alarms compared to homes that are fitted with fire alarms. In Queensland, 78.1 per cent of all home fire deaths occur in homes without fire alarms. So there is a very strong basis for installing fire alarms in houses. Since June 2004 in Queensland, 19 people have died from house fires in homes that either did not have fire alarms or had smoke alarms that did not work. That was usually because the batteries were either removed or dead. The Department of Emergency Services and Queensland Treasury estimate that if Queensland were to achieve 100 per cent coverage of working fire alarms in domestic residences, there would be a saving of up to 106 lives and a saving of approximately \$70 million in property losses and injury costs over 20 years.

The introduction in 1997 of mandatory mains connected smoke alarms in new or significantly renovated housing has seen smoke alarm coverage increase from 38.7 per cent of homes in 1996 to 84.2 per cent of homes in 2005. The minimum smoke alarm requirement is a nine-volt battery-powered smoke alarm in which the battery requires replacement annually. Smoke alarms are compulsory in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. As I said, the coalition has no real concerns with the legislation and will be supporting it.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (5.46 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Bill 2006. This bill makes it compulsory for fire alarms to be installed in all existing homes. The minimum acceptable level of smoke alarm is a one-year battery-powered alarm that meets the Australian standard. Batteries must be replaced regularly and the alarms tested and cleaned. It is important to note that the testing and cleaning procedures must be in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

I would like to talk about an icon in the Ipswich community, Ron Smith, who is the senior fire education coordinator for the Ipswich and district region. He is a veteran firefighter who started his career at the Ipswich station in 1972. Ron's role is to educate senior citizens of the Ipswich region in fire safety practices. Seniors are considered to be at risk due to their lack of mobility. Some seniors have sight difficulties and many seniors have hearing problems. Mr Smith attends numerous seniors meetings. He also goes to respite centres and attends meetings held by church groups and legacy groups.

Recently, there was a tragedy in Dinmore where two icons of the community passed away in a house fire. These elderly residents were much loved by the local Dinmore people. I understand that there were no fire alarms installed in the house. However, security bars were used extensively on all the windows. That is why this legislation is so important. We need to have fire alarms in all our houses.

Ron Smith's message to the Ipswich community is that, firstly, people must have working fire alarms. It is no good having fire alarms without batteries in them. Secondly, every household should have an evacuation plan. People must know how they are going to get out if the fire alarm is set off. Thirdly, people must have a broad awareness of fire issues, including those relating to kitchen and household fires.

Ron has been talking in my community about a recent innovation called the vibra alarm. That alarm consists of a strobe lamp and a vibrating pad that is hooked up to a compatible photoelectric smoke alarm or smoke detention unit. It is an important innovation, particularly for hearing impaired people. Many people who are hearing impaired take out their hearing aids when they go to bed. If smoke is detected, vibrations come through the pillow and the lamp starts strobing to wake up the residents. I am sure the vibra alarms will save many, many lives in our community.

Ron Smith is passionate about these programs. He can be contacted by visiting local fire stations in Ipswich or contacting 1300369003. I would like to thank the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service for its continuing support of this program for our senior citizens, especially the area director, Bruce McCoist. Five alarms save lives, and that is why it is so important that everyone in this House should support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (5.49 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak to the Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Bill 2006. I support the sentiments of the shadow minister for emergency services, the member for Mirani. On reading the minister's second reading speech it is not hard to see why this piece of legislation is so important. When we look at the statistics of fatalities in Queensland as a result of fire—and it is the same in New South Wales and no doubt in other jurisdictions—we see that out of everything bad comes something good. I think back to the horrific fire at the backpackers hostel at Childers a few years ago and the tragic loss of life because of a scum element in society—and we do not know when that is going to happen. But the important aspect about that is that it has made us aware of the situation not only in relation to public housing and community housing—whether it be hotels or motels—but also in relation to our own private homes.

This bill makes it compulsory for smoke alarms to be installed in all existing homes. Homes built since 1 July 1997 are already required by the Building Code to have mains-wired smoke alarms installed. I congratulate the minister: this is a good piece of legislation because it is going to save lives, and that is what it is all about. It is about not only saving lives but also saving the taxpayers of this state. Fire alarms can be installed in the home for a few dollars and lives could be saved as a result of that.

It is ironic that we have this legislation before us today because I just replaced the batteries in the smoke alarms in my home at Longreach on Saturday. That is the other issue that I wish to draw to the attention of the minister this evening. When those batteries do die and the alarm system goes off with the intermittent beeping, people pull the batteries out and say, 'I'll replace those batteries.' But we have to instil in people's minds that those batteries must be replaced straightaway. It is so important to remember to do it at the time instead of saying, 'I'll pull the old batteries out because the beeping is annoying me,' but then a month later replace the batteries. When I bought my batteries on Saturday morning, the local chap in the store said, 'That reminds me that I have to put one in my smoke alarm, too.' I think it comes back to discipline. Similar to having to pay for vehicle registration each year, we need something to remind us that we have to replace the batteries every year.

The minister mentioned in his second reading speech that, in Queensland, 78.1 per cent of all home fire deaths occur in homes without smoke alarms. That is why smoke alarms have to be compulsory. This legislation is so important, and it is important that we go out and sell it in our electorates now. I was talking to my colleague the member for Bundaberg about how I am going to do that in my electorate. I write a fortnightly column for the local newspapers. I am going to ask all

members to make this an important highlight in their announcements in their electorates, because a lot of people do not hear about this. It is so important that everybody in this House joins with the government in making certain that this legislation is sold to Queensland. To those who think that this is pie in the sky stuff, we have to drive the message home to them.

The one issue that I do have a few problems with—and maybe the minister will address this in his summary—is penalties. There are considerable penalties for not installing smoke alarms, ranging from \$150,000 or three years imprisonment for a contravention that results in multiple deaths to \$7,500 if there are no fatalities. The minister for transport is in the House. When I was minister for transport and read some of the transport legislation, I saw that there were huge fines in relation to shipping and malfunctions that can occur in the marine environment. When I think of those horrific fines, I wonder whether people are capable of paying those fines. I am not in favour of inspectors, but at the same time I am certainly in favour of saving lives. I think we should have some sort of routine to remind people to check the batteries in their smoke alarms or to install alarms if they do not have them. I have also read with interest the recommendations in relation to where these alarms should be placed.

Members might think this is a trivial matter to discuss and debate here in this House, but what price can you put on human life? As has been said, most times when human life is lost as a result of fire it is children who have lost their lives due to smoke inhalation. Before they know where they are they are dead because the fire was out of control and nobody could save them. Smoke alarms are a condition of some insurance policies and it is something that has to be drummed in. If people do not have smoke alarms and do not abide by the regulations set down in this legislation, maybe the insurance companies will get tough and double premiums or say, 'If a smoke alarm is not installed, there will be no payout.' I think we have to get firm with some of these people. At the end of the day it comes back to being responsible.

The other aspect I want to touch on very quickly is that people who do not install smoke alarms are putting their neighbours' property at risk, too. A lot of our homes in Queensland are weatherboard and we live in a very hot environment. Unfortunately, most fires occur in summer. If a weatherboard house is only a few feet away from a house that is already on fire, because fire creates its own wind and fans its own flames, before you know where you are the house next door has caught fire, the paint is gone, the timber is on fire and somebody else has lost a property.

I believe that this is a very important piece of legislation. I urge everybody in the parliament on both sides of the House to go out there and sell it to the electorate. We should inform the electorate of the consequences if they do not uphold the provisions in the legislation that has been brought before the parliament today, and we should make certain that everybody in Queensland—and I mean everybody in Queensland—has smoke alarms installed in their houses hopefully before Christmas. There are a lot of people who hoo-ha the idea—they think it is too difficult. But, as I said, what price can you put on human life? Let us support the minister, the government and the department on this issue and make sure it happens.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (5.58 pm): To me, the Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Bill is about common sense. It is about saving lives. Reports indicate that the risk of death in a house fire is reduced by more than half if a properly maintained smoke alarm is installed. Smoke alarms alert and wake people, allowing valuable time to get out of a house during a fire. When you go to sleep, your sense of smell also goes to sleep so if there is a fire toxic fumes may overcome you before you wake up.

Apart from the most important feature of a smoke alarm—that is, saving lives—smoke alarms also assist to minimise damage to properties. Houses are a large financial investment, so it makes sense to minimise the risk of damage by fire. In other words, smoke alarms are a low-cost investment to protect your most valuable asset.

The briefing note from the Queensland Parliamentary Library informs us that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service reports that nearly 80 per cent of deaths from fires in Queensland homes are in dwellings without smoke alarms and around 50 per cent of deaths occur between midnight and 8 am while people are sleeping. To me, those statistics make it very clear that everyone should install a smoke alarm at home. It clearly is just common sense. To me, it is common sense to test your smoke alarms and to change batteries as necessary. It amazes me that anyone can install a smoke alarm and then forget about it and not maintain it in working order. I am not quite as nice as the member for Gregory, who said that people need to be disciplined and that maybe we need to go out and educate people more. I feel it is just common sense. If you have a smoke alarm installed, test it and make sure you look after it.

No matter how many pieces of legislation there could be on installations of smoke alarms, there will always be people who will not do something as simple as changing a battery. I call on those people to use common sense, think of their loved ones and, as we heard, think of their neighbours, visitors and the loss of life or the damage that could happen through a fire occurring. Changing a battery is not that hard.

While we talk about smoke alarms, it is important to note that while many people do a fire alarm drill at work many of them forget to do one at their home. They forget to discuss and plan a fire evacuation drill with their family. Children and young people are an identified at-risk group for death and injury within their own homes. When I was growing up, we installed a small fire extinguisher in the pantry in the kitchen. We also discussed a fire escape plan.

The fire service runs a terrific program for schoolchildren to discuss fire safety. Recently I attended Slacks Creek State School for a special assembly. The assembly was to close off Crime Prevention Week lectures and to celebrate World Teachers' Day. Senior Constable Glenn Ryder, from Slacks Creek Police Station, addressed the school assembly to finish off a week of classes on crime prevention and personal safety. The school also had the local fire service attend to give a fire education lecture. I am sure the fire service personnel gave out some of Blazer's fire safety tips while the kids were getting a close and personal look at the fire truck. These valuable messages were given by both the police and members of the Fire and Rescue Service. They are something those kids can carry throughout their life.

It is not only schools getting this great fire education program. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has programs for seniors, the Safehome program, and other community safety education programs. I have taken advantage of the Safehome program. I had the fire officers come out to my house. I entertained the whole neighbourhood with the fire truck in the front yard. I found out where the water pump closest to my home is, and that is very valuable information for me. The fire officers also gave me some other hints on how to make my home much safer. I really appreciated the time and effort those guys took to do that. That program is free. It is very easy to do. I encourage everyone to go out, like the member for Gregory said, and sell these wonderful programs to our community. Hopefully, with the education and this new legislation on smoke alarms, we will see fewer house fires and fewer deaths from house a fire.

I am also pleased to see that the bill addresses improved control of overcrowding in licensed premises. I know that for parents with kids who like to go nightclubbing this is an improvement they are going to welcome. With schoolies coming up, it is something on the minds of parents.

This bill gives power to the commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service to require licensed premises at risk of overcrowding, such as nightclubs, to set and manage a specified maximum safe occupancy limit. The bill also gives a fire officer power to ask people to leave premises and to stop people from entering premises if they know or suspect the occupancy number is being exceeded. To me it is again common sense. People's safety should always be at the forefront of these establishments' proprietors.

While the minister is in the chamber, I take this opportunity to tell him that the Cornubia-Carbrook area is a growing area. Like the member for Redlands, we would like to see some forward planning to build a fire station to service this growth area.

I want to place on record tonight my thanks to the fire officers who do a wonderful job in educating our community. Next week I will be attending local high schools for schoolies talks. My local high schools actually encourage the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service to come out and do a role-play of a car accident scene with students. I am sure that the role-play has an impact on the students and assists them into thinking more about road safety. It is a very valuable, important message that they send to those kids. I thank the fire officers for the difficult and dangerous job that they do in keeping us safe. I especially thank them for the dangerous and courageous acts that they do when they attend fires. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (6.03 pm): I am delighted to add my support to the Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Bill. It is rare that we get an opportunity to support legislation that can, and will, save lives. This legislation will do just that. The Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act 1994 and the Building Act 1975. It addresses a number of areas of concern including public safety in licensed premises and unwanted automatic alarms in buildings that are monitored by Fire and Rescue Services.

The key objective I wish to speak about is one that is most likely to have the greatest impact on ordinary Queenslanders. I refer to the amendment that will ensure that, from July next year, smoke alarms will be compulsory for all Queensland homes. The amendment plugs the gaps for houses and units built prior to 1997, ensuring that they, too, will require smoke alarms.

I often talk with the fires across my electorate because that is the way it is in rural Queensland. If people go into Rockhampton, they come in contact with fires on quite a regular basis. In Queensland, 50,000 firefighters have been pushing for this change for some time. That is because they know smoke alarms can, and do, save lives. The Department of Emergency Services estimates that without smoke alarms the risk of dying in a house fire increases threefold. It has been proven time and time again that smoke alarms can make a difference between living and dying.

Since 2003, more than 30 Queenslanders have died in fires in homes without an effective smoke alarm. Half of those were elderly people or children under five. In Queensland between 1997 and 2005, 78 per cent of all fire deaths occurred in homes without smoke alarms. Most Queenslanders recognise the benefits of smoke alarms.

As the local member, and as other members in this House would do, I go to different houses around the electorate. When I go to meet constituents or when I am doorknocking, I get to sit and talk to constituents and have a look at their houses. I am surprised at the number of houses that do not have smoke alarms. It is a shame because people need to understand that smoke alarms do offer a greater chance of being saved in a house fire than if there is not a smoke alarm in the house. I think education by the Queensland fire service has been very good and a lot of effort has been put into it. We have to try to find other ways of getting the message through. We hope that through this legislation, and the publicity that it gets, it will alert more people of the need to make sure that they install smoke alarms in their houses.

Last year's Queensland household survey indicated that 84.2 per cent of households—the figure is 82.6 per cent in central Queensland—have a smoke alarm installed. I am surprised at that figure, given the comments I have just made, because I am sure that the number of houses I have been in without fire alarms would be a lot greater than that figure would indicate. That still leaves a significant number of households unprotected by what is a simple and inexpensive warning device.

While previous measures have proven effective in bringing the rate of households fitted with smoke alarms up to the respectable 80 per cent, the only way we can achieve the 100 per cent coverage is for this legislation to make smoke alarms compulsory in all households. The Department of Emergency Services believes that 100 per cent coverage of working smoke alarms in domestic residences could save 106 lives in 20 years. That has already been stated today. That is 106 good reasons why this legislation is so important.

Smoke alarms will not stop fires from occurring, but early fire detection can save lives and property. Therefore, I am delighted that smoke alarms will be compulsory from July next year. However, hand in hand with these legislative changes is the need for the government to put in place an extensive public education campaign to ensure that all Queenslanders are focused on household fire safety. There needs to be a particular focus on ensuring that smoke alarms are maintained in good working order and that families have effective fire escape plans in place.

Recently I have been into a number of homes, probably a dozen to 15, and for my own interest have raised with the owners the point about having a fire escape plan. People do not really understand the importance of that. There are not too many houses one could walk into where they actually have a fire escape plan. When I drive around the older suburbs of Brisbane and see some of the houses with bars on the windows, I wonder what sort of a plan those people would have in place with regard to getting out of their house in an emergency situation. It scares the living daylights out of me when I see those houses all barred up. Obviously people want security and privacy in their own home but I would say that most of them would not have in place a decent escape plan to get out of the house. I believe that that in many cases causes the deaths that occur when there are house fires.

There was a study carried out in 2005 by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. It was reported in the *Sunday Mail*. It highlighted the importance of ensuring that smoke alarms are well maintained. The study revealed that more than a quarter of all smoke alarms fitted in Queensland homes do not work because their batteries are flat or have been removed. The study revealed that of 80 per cent of all residences with smoke alarms 28 per cent were considered useless. That is pretty scary on its own. Again it is not only about educating the community to have a good common-sense approach to putting the alarms in but also to have in place a means of making sure that the batteries are replaced and if there is any requirement for maintenance that that maintenance is carried out.

I seem to recall that April Fools' Day every year is the date for getting the message out there to change batteries; is that right, Minister?

Mr Purcell: A date that you will remember, whether it is your birthday, April Fools' Day, Melbourne Cup Day, Anzac Day.

Mr PEARCE: That is a great way of getting the message across through the electronic media, newspapers and schools to make sure that those batteries are changed. That is one way of ensuring that we maintain a high level of effective alarms in houses. In making smoke alarms compulsory government has an obligation and responsibility to educate the public. I have just been talking about that. I am sure that the minister is taking on board the things that I and other honourable members are talking about. If we do not get it right we run the risk of householders becoming complacent about fire safety.

As a former miner working in underground mines, I know why coalmine safety is so important. If there are no incidents complacency sets in and that is when disasters happen. It is about keeping people focused on safety. We, as members of parliament, have an obligation to do what we can to make sure that the public is reminded about the need to maintain their fire alarms and change batteries on time. We need to be vigilant and check our alarms on a regular basis.

The importance of alarms cannot be underestimated but fire escape plans also have a crucial role to play. I have talked about that. How many of us sitting here today have appropriate plans in place with our own family? How many people in this chamber would have sat down with their family and told them a way of escaping from the house, particularly where young kids are involved?

Mr Purcell: When schools invite the fire service to visit them they are taught how to 'get down low and go, go, go', what escape routes are, what to do when they get out of the house and where they should congregate.

Mr PEARCE: One has to be involved in these dangerous situations to really appreciate the training. As an underground miner I had to go through that. It is the training and the systems that are in place to remind you that save your life.

Mr Weightman: And you have to practise.

Mr PEARCE: And you have to practise. I still think of myself as a miner, even though I am not there anymore, and we did those things. If you do not do them you do not perfect your methods of escape. The fire, ambulance and police services all carry out these exercises so that they can upskill themselves in readiness for a disaster when those skills are needed. The important message that I am trying to get across is that we need to alert people to have these plans in place and to practise them, especially where kids are involved. Kids are the first ones to panic. We need to get the message through about keeping calm and following the plans that have been put in place by the people who know what they are doing—that is, the fireies when they come around and give advice. We have to do what we can to improve the figures that we have in Queensland. We are doing that. This legislation is going a long way to fixing the problem of houses that do not currently have smoke alarms installed.

One of the ways that the service is guiding and educating the public about fire safety is through its Operation Safehome program. Under Operation Safehome local firefighters visit householders to conduct safety and fire awareness inspections in their homes. That has to be a great thing. A key aspect of the program is the provision of guidance and support with regard to the correct positioning, location and installation of smoke alarms, advice on how to get out of a house when it is on fire and the sensible things to do.

Under Operation Safehome 861 smoke alarms were fitted to homes in central Queensland last financial year. That is a good thing. From June to October this year another 60 have already been installed. With smoke alarms compulsory in all homes from 1 July next year I would encourage more householders to take advantage of Operation Safehome to ensure that they are putting in place appropriate fire safety practices in their homes.

In conclusion, I am pleased to support the legislation before us and take this opportunity to remind members of a suggestion made by the minister this time last year that a smoke alarm would make a perfect Christmas present for a family member or work colleague. I am getting a silent interjection from an honourable member at the front who says that it is probably a good idea to buy the calendar as well. Personally, I am not interested in looking at sparsely clad firefighters, but it is for a good cause and I encourage members to purchase one and make a great contribution.

Before I finish I pay tribute to the men and women of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service for what is an ongoing, outstanding commitment to their job. In particular I congratulate and thank those members who are active in road trauma rescue. I have on a number of occasions in the Rockhampton district and across central Queensland witnessed the professionalism of highly skilled, very committed people working for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service who are out there pulling injured and deceased people out of motor vehicles. One of the worst things that can happen is to turn up at a road crash site—we do not use the word 'accident' anymore because they are road crashes; most accidents can be avoided—and to see people badly injured. The greatest relief I get is to see those lights flashing just up the road which means that the good men and women with the skills are coming to rescue these people.

It makes me very proud as a Queenslanders, a member of parliament and a member of the government to stand by and watch—I hate to say stand by and watch, but the best thing to do is step back out of the way and let these people do their job—but I tell members it makes me bloody proud to see the way that these people go about their job. They are very committed, highly skilled and dedicated to their job.

The people in the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service work with the ambos, who are equally highly skilled in the way they deal with victims. Watching these people do their work makes me feel fantastic and really proud to be associated with them. I know that the minister feels the same way about the courageous men and women we have within the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. On behalf of the people of central Queensland and the electorate that I represent, I want to sincerely thank the minister for the work that he does, and I hope he passes that on to these men and women. I support the legislation before the House.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Cunningham, adjourned.

STATE DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (6.19 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971, 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. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (6.19 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill delivers on a key election commitment for the Beattie government. This bill is about providing more certainty to development and investment, and in particular for critical infrastructure, but not at the expense of appropriate checks and balances. In doing so, this bill takes an important step towards meeting Council of Australian Governments, or COAG, reforms to streamline the development approval process.

The bill also provides for a number of minor administrative changes to the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971 which aim to streamline the role and functions of the Coordinator-General and his office. Most importantly, this bill is about maintaining the objectives and the role of the Coordinator-General who, through the act, has played a significant role in the economic development of Queensland.

Originally introduced in 1938 by the Forgan Smith Labor government as a mechanism to provide employment and to develop infrastructure for Queensland, the act has evolved over the last 68 years to meet changing and at times challenging economic circumstances. Despite the passing of years—and successive Labor and conservative governments—the objects of the act have stood the test of time; the act remains the cornerstone to orderly development of Queensland. The act facilitates the development of vital infrastructure and other development, both public and private, and the act provides measures to ensure that proper account is taken of the environment in development of these projects.

Since the election of the Beattie government in 1998, the role of the Coordinator-General has been re-energised and contemporised to meet the economic and social circumstances of the 21st century. As a means to meet these changing circumstances, the government made significant changes to the act in 1999 which recognised and facilitated the evolving private sector investment in public infrastructure. We also overhauled the environmental coordination sections of the act to ensure relevancy with contemporary planning legislation.

In 2005, we made further amendments which strengthened and enhanced the role of the Coordinator-General in relation to his environmental and project development roles. In August 2005, the public sector entity known as the Coordinator-General was established by the government to accelerate the provision of priority infrastructure and coordinate its implementation on a whole of government basis. The formation of the Coordinator-General as a stand-alone entity signalled the strong intent of the government to focus on both the planning for and delivery of infrastructure to meet Queensland's current and long-term growth needs.

This government is very proud of the legacy of the Coordinator-General that it has inherited and now safeguards. This is a legacy created by great Queenslanders who have served as coordinators-general since 1938, like Sir John Kemp, Sir Charles Barton and Sir Sydney Schubert. Much of the infrastructure that we take for granted today was created due to the collective vision and achievements of the Coordinator-General's department.

This legislation and the functions of the Coordinator-General are the envy of other Australian states which never had the courage, vision or motivation to produce legislation that provided for an orderly and coordinated system of public works. But today we live in a very different environment to 1938, where government is now not necessarily the deliverer of public infrastructure, and where competition for investment in development of this infrastructure is not necessarily fought out on a local, state or national basis, but very often on an international level. Increasingly, investors seek greater certainty from government at all levels in relation to the length of time taken for decision making associated with these projects.

In view of the time, I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my second reading speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

As we also know, society's knowledge of and expectations on development outcomes are more sophisticated and demanding on Government; rightly, our communities seek assurances that development does not unreasonably impact on the environment, or their health and well being.

To meet the community's social and economic objectives, the legislative obligations on project assessment and impact mitigation are not insignificant. While this obligation is now an acceptable cost of doing business in any modern economy, it is regrettable that, sometimes, statutory decision making within Government at all levels for industrial and infrastructure projects becomes bogged down and unreasonably delayed.

Such unreasonable delays do not send a great signal to investors in this State and may, at times, result in lost investment and resultant lost employment opportunities. This is clearly not acceptable where such investment is vital in the delivery of critical infrastructure to service the rapid growth being experienced across this State.

The Bill before the House today recognises and addresses the balance between ensuring proper and reasonable environmental account is taken with industrial and infrastructure development, and the need for investor confidence that these projects will not be unreasonably delayed. The amendments are not about overriding either the community's or project proponents' expectations. Rather, it is about harmonising the expectations of these diverse but interconnected interests.

I can assure the House, Mr Speaker, that this Bill is not about cutting corners for project proponents; appropriate environmental assessment and impact mitigation must still be undertaken for any major project. In fact, in most circumstances, appropriate levels of environmental assessment would already have been completed for many of the projects covered by the proposed amendments. As outlined later, the Government is proposing to enhance the environmental outcomes from developments which are the subject of these particular amendments.

In terms of the specific provisions to achieve this objective, the amendments proposed within this Bill provide a means to increase confidence and to minimise unreasonable delays in decision making for certain projects, in particular critical infrastructure, which the State considers are of strategic or economic significance.

These developments, to be known as "prescribed projects", must first meet a range of criteria, to be assessed by the Minister, which in effect will gauge the significance of the proposed project to the state or region within which the project is to be located. Prescribed projects may include a project within a State development area, or approved as 'works', an infrastructure facility, a significant project under Part 4 of this Act, or another project which the Minister considers is economically or socially significant or affects an environmental interest of the state or region.

It will be the decision of the Minister, on the advice of the Coordinator-General, to decide whether or not a project meets this criteria.

The Coordinator-General may intervene in a number of ways to ensure that the prescribed project is not being unreasonably delayed by decision makers.

A decision maker may be a State Government department, local body or local government which has legislative responsibility for provision of various approvals, permits or authorities, but does not include those circumstances where decisions would be made by Ministers or the Governor in Council, or decisions outside the jurisdiction of the Queensland Government.

Initially, early in the assessment of a decision for a prescribed project, the Coordinator-General may issue a decision maker for a prescribed project with a "Notice to Progress". This Notice is intended to ensure that a decision maker is on notice to progress procedurally without unnecessary delay in the assessment of a decision for a prescribed project.

While the Coordinator-General would not expect the decision maker to proceed with undue haste, it will be expected that the decision maker will not stall consideration of projects due to, for example, delays in bureaucratic processes. If the project proceeds toward a decision without unreasonable delay, there may be no further intervention in the assessment of that decision by the Coordinator-General. Should the project be delayed then the Coordinator-General may step in to progress the project.

If a project is being assessed in accordance with the Integrated Planning Act, it passes through the Integrated Development Assessment Scheme, (IDAS) which has numerous stages including; Application, Information and Referral, Notification and Decision. If a prescribed project is being assessed in accordance with IDAS, the Coordinator-General may only issue a Notice to Progress after obtaining the Minister's approval and observing the statutory timeframes of the IDAS process (that is, the Coordinator-General may only issue a Notice to Progress 10 days after an application has been received, or at the conclusion of the information/referral stage of IDAS).

There may be other instances where the Coordinator-General has not issued a Notice to Progress in the earlier stages of IDAS but a decision maker for a prescribed project has failed to make a decision and the application has progressed to the decision stage. This may have occurred either within a statutory time period for making that decision, or where there are no statutory timeframes and the decision maker has failed to make a decision within a reasonable period. In those circumstances, the Coordinator-General may issue a "Notice to Decide" to that decision maker requiring it to make the decision within 20 working days, or within the time prescribed in the relevant legislation under which the project is being assessed.

If the Coordinator-General's Notice of Decision is not complied with by the decision maker, the Coordinator-General may issue a Step in Notice which allows him or her to take over the decision process.

The Coordinator-General would seek all relevant information on the prescribed project from the original decision maker, including its assessment and recommendation, within a time prescribed by a written notice from the Coordinator-General.

The Coordinator-General's decision, once he or she has reviewed and assessed the material relating to the decision, including any recommendations, will then be taken to be the decision of the decision maker in terms of legislative compliance and enforcement.

In making a decision, the Coordinator-General will consider the legislation administered by the original decision maker, the provisions of this new Part of the Act and matters which may be prescribed under a Regulation. As with Notices to Progress, for applications made under the Integrated Planning Act, the Coordinator-General may only issue a Step in Notice after obtaining the Minister's approval and observing the statutory timeframes of the IDAS process. However, once the Step in Notice is issued, the Coordinator-General will become the decision maker for the particular application.

For any decision being assessed, a Step In Notice may only be issued if the Coordinator-General has previously issued either a Notice to Progress or a Notice to Decide to the decision maker.

Under existing provisions of the Act, for any prescribed project, the Coordinator-General may also delegate the responsibility to make the decision to an appropriate person, such as, for example, the Chief Executive of the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation. The delegation may occur at any time after a Step in Notice has been issued by the Coordinator-General.

In recognition of community expectations in relation to environmental impacts from major project development, the Bill also contains a provision which allows the Coordinator-General to impose conditions on a prescribed project to control, mitigate or prevent detrimental effects or alternatively restore or enhance those environmental aspects impacted by the project.

To meet this important environmental objective, the Bill includes a provision that outlines the terms that might be contained within a "voluntary environmental agreement" to be entered with the applicant of a prescribed project where the Coordinator-General has issued a Step in Notice. The voluntary environmental agreement must be recorded with the registrar of titles, and will be binding on the successors in title to the registered owner of the land subject to such an agreement.

Taking all these matters into account, the applicant of the prescribed project will have confidence that if there are unreasonable delays in making certain decisions related to the project, the Coordinator-General has the ability to either direct that a decision be made by the decision maker, or that the Coordinator-General may, with the Minister's approval, step in and make the decision.

I expect that the Coordinator-General will work with all decision makers in the development assessment and approvals process for major projects, including prescribed projects; and that the issuing of a Notice to Progress, a Notice to Decide or a Step In Notice will only be used as a last resort to ensure that appropriate and timely decisions are made.

On the basis that, having been approved as a prescribed project, and in recognition of its strategic importance to the state or region, the Bill provides that there are no appeals on the decision notice or a decision made by the Coordinator-General (or his delegate) under this new Part.

Also, in recognition of the strategic value of critical infrastructure that has been approved as a prescribed project, and the need to ensure investor confidence in that infrastructure's development, the Bill provides that the Judicial Review Act does not apply to decisions made by the Coordinator-General in relation to critical infrastructure projects. I repeat: this exemption only applies to critical infrastructure approved as a prescribed project, and not all prescribed projects.

Critical infrastructure is that infrastructure considered by the Minister to be critical or essential for the State for economic, environmental, or social reasons.

The Bill does not remove the inherent jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to review any decision related to the prescribed projects.

The Bill provides that a report will be tabled in this House if a Step in Notice has been issued relating to a prescribed decision. Consistent with the provisions of the Integrated Planning Act, that report will be tabled in the House within fourteen (14) sitting days.

The Bill also provides for a number of other administrative amendments, which include:

- Provision for more than one Deputy Coordinator-General, as a means to ensure that the Coordinator-General has appropriate administrative and operational assistance and resources to meet the increased workload related to the State's immediate and long term growth requirements;
- Inclusion of a new section to allow the Coordinator-General to seek remuneration from proponents of a prescribed project for the direct costs incurred for technical advice associated with the assessment of that project;
- Updating and clarifying provisions in relation to works approved under the Act;
- Amendment to s77 to clarify the purposes and other matters considered relevant by the Governor in Council for the declaration of a State development area;
- Provision of an additional subsection within s82 of the Act, to take beyond doubt that the process for compulsory acquisition by the Coordinator-General for a State development area mirrors that for compulsory acquisitions under s125;
- Amendment to s140 to contemporise the section referring to the repealed Harbours Act and expired sections of the Transport Infrastructure Act 1992, to allow for a regulation to be made in respect of tidal works by the Coordinator-General;
- Consequential amendments to the Land Act 1994 and Land Titles Act 1994 which recognises infrastructure corridors (as defined within s82) of the SDPWO Act as a public utility easement for the purposes of registration under those Acts; and to provide that a public utility easement may be registered for a right of way for the public only if the use of the easement is limited to include cyclists;
- Amendment to the Water Act 2000 to clarify emergency provisions related to the undertaking of works pursuant to Part 6, Division 3 of the SDPWO Act; and
- Amendment to the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* to allow proponents to make a development application under that Act without landowners consent if the Coordinator-General has issued notices of intention to resume the subject properties.

Mr Speaker, the major amendments contained within this Bill are designed to facilitate certain, strategic or what will become known as prescribed developments, to ensure that critical infrastructure, investment and job opportunities are not lost for Queensland.

These amendments fulfil a 2006 election commitment made by the Government to provide measures which would increase project certainty and therefore underpin investment—and therefore jobs—in this State.

These amendments take a significant step to meet COAG's commitment to streamline the development approval process for major developments, and in particular critical infrastructure, by providing a framework for whole of government consideration of certain decisions for projects that have been approved as prescribed projects.

I understand that other States may have amended assessment and approval processes for critical infrastructure. We need to make sure that Queensland is not left behind and be at a disadvantage to any other State.

I expect that these new provisions would be used sparingly to break deadlocks in decision-making, and then only in circumstances where there is potential that further assessment delays may see that project lost from Queensland.

These are sensible amendments which give further emphasis to Queensland's pre-eminence as the place to invest and to do business.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Malone, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.24 pm to 7.30 pm.

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 533.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (7.30 pm): I rise to speak to the Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Bill 2006 and, in doing so, acknowledge the wonderful work done by our full-time firefighting crews at Gladstone as well as the auxiliary and rural firefighters. They have a position that is called on at the most inopportune times—the most difficult times. As other speakers have said, they rise to the occasion and fulfil their responsibilities wonderfully. The full-time fire service is now the first response in many emergency situations and they are a great asset to the community and a group of people whom the community respects and admires.

Over time smoke alarms have been shown to be a major factor in the survival of families and individuals when a fire breaks out. There have been difficulties with the hard-wired fire alarms in that—and I know that they have become a requirement in recent times—often times the call-outs are not genuine fires and that incurs a cost to the home owner if indeed it is a false call-out. However, I do not think that many families would have a genuine reason not to have an approved fire alarm in their home, because there is a broad cost cross-section of approved fire alarms available in most retail outlets. If a family cannot afford to buy enough alarms for every room or every area of their home in one hit, a family can certainly over a short period of time purchase cost-effective alarms that will afford them a great measure of protection.

One of the real benefits of portable fire alarms—the ones people can get at the shop—is that they are reasonably cheap and they are effective. The member for Fitzroy was having a discussion with the minister earlier about the replacement date for batteries. The minister's attitude is a very positive one—that is, that people should pick a time during the year when they will remember to change the batteries. If we pick a date and make it the mandatory date, there will no doubt be families for whom that will be a very expensive time of the year. But they can pick a date where their regular bills are not as heavy, because the reality is that purchasing four or five batteries for alarms is a budget item for a normal working family. So they can pick not only a date in the year, as the minister said, that they will not forget but also a time when their bills are not perhaps at their highest in order to replace those batteries.

One thing with fire alarms is that when the batteries are flat it gives this horrible beeping sounds that reminds you very directly that the batteries need to be replaced. A lot of people would be compelled to replace the batteries just to get rid of the annoyance, and that is a plus as well. The member for Fitzroy also mentioned his concerns about people in the suburbs with bars on their windows, and it is a quandary for residents because so many people, particularly the elderly, feel very threatened in the community now—their neighbourhood—and they secure themselves so that nobody can get in. But the corollary is that they are not able to get out. There is a balance between people in the community, particularly older people, establishing a sense of self-safety but also bearing in mind their ability to exit a building if they need to in the case of a fire.

The advertising campaigns on TV relating to this issue have been very effective, especially the campaign, 'If there's a fire, what do you do? Get down low and go, go, go.' Also effective have been the campaigns showing that if an alarm has gone off and a child comes to a door they should test the door to see if it feels hot and if it does feel hot they should not open it but identify another form of escape. Ours is very simple: you just jump out of the closest window. But if you are in a two-storey building that might be a little bit unacceptable. Certainly, it is important for families to sit down and discuss escape plans.

The fire brigade is very responsible in that it goes around all businesses to ensure that escape plans are in place. It has been to my office to ensure that we have an escape plan. I carry the budgie out and we meet out the front.

Mr Johnson: Don't forget the budgie!

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: No, you cannot have barbecued budgie. The fire brigade has checked to make sure that we have an escape plan for either the front or the back of the office, and I have to commend it for its conscientiousness.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee raised a couple of concerns. It raised one concern in relation to the quantum of the penalty provisions of section 149—the significant offence creating section—and it substantially increases the maximum penalties associated with breaches of certain provisions. These include that the occupier of a building must maintain a means of escape from the building; the occupier of a building must maintain the prescribed fire safety installations; the occupier must have a fire and evacuation plan; the obligation to prepare a fire safety management plan; and other obligations about fire safety management plans. In relation to those five provisions, the maximum penalties range now from 2,000 penalty units or \$150,000 or three years imprisonment down to 750 penalty units or \$56,250 or one year's imprisonment.

They are very hefty fines. However, when they are put in the context of some of the fires that we have seen in this state and interstate where a significant number of lives have been lost—and in some instances merely because the owner or occupier of a building has closed a fire exit by putting a filing cabinet or a cupboard in front of it or closed the exit off permanently to allow for one extra bed or bedroom to be available for hire—it puts those hefty fines into perspective. It is the old adage: what price do you place on a life? Another concern that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has raised is in relation to the removal of protection against self-incrimination. Clause 10 of the bill omits section 58 of the act which provides a general exclusion of the rule against self-incrimination where a person under the provisions of part 6 of the act is required to answer a question or give information. Clause 11 amends section 58A of the act which outlines reasonable assistance to be provided, principally to re-enact an existing exclusion of the self-incrimination rule where a person is required under section 58A to provide assistance to an authorised fire officer.

However, clause 11 provides a form of use and derivative use immunity where the person required to provide assistance is an individual and the requirement is to give information or produce a document. I think the derivative use protection is very important for people who are obligated to give information which is self-incriminating. If it is to be used in relation to investigations of a fire or other matter but there is no derivative use, there is an element of protection.

The view of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee was that denial of the protection afforded by the self-incrimination rule is only potentially justifiable if the question, information or documents concern matters that are peculiarly within the knowledge of the person to whom they are directed or by whom they are to be supplied and which would be difficult or impossible for the Crown to establish by an alternative evidentiary means, and that the bill prohibits the use of the information obtained in prosecutions against the person—the derivative use protection—and the use indemnity should not require the person to fulfil any conditions before being entitled to it. Whilst the protection against self-incrimination is being removed, there are protections that enclose that removal. This would normally be enacted in tragic circumstances, and I believe that it is fair and reasonable.

We have a wonderful fire service whose members put themselves at significant risk. I commend those members Queensland-wide and I also commend those of my electorate, both the full-time auxiliary firefighters and the rural firefighters. I look forward to them having an absolutely boring summer. I hope that we have significant rain, which will reduce the fire hazard. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (7.40 pm): I rise to speak to the Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Bill. The bill will mandate that from 1 July 2007 all homes in Queensland, no matter when they were built, must have installed in them at least one nine-volt, battery-powered smoke alarm. Currently, it is compulsory to have hard-wired smoke alarms installed in Queensland residential homes built or significantly renovated after 1 July 1997.

I echo the sentiments of the honourable member for Mirani, the shadow minister for emergency services, and some of the sentiments expressed by other members about hard-wired smoke alarms and nine-volt battery alarms. The research brief on this bill states that the state government has already installed hard-wired smoke alarms in all public housing, referring to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service as its source. That is commendable.

The member for Gregory and the member for Gladstone talked about how, in the middle of the night, it is extremely annoying to hear the chirping of a battery smoke alarm that has suddenly given out. When it continues to chirp even after the battery has been changed it becomes extremely frustrating. Often people just take the batteries out and never replace them. That is a problem with the nine-volt battery smoke alarms. I do understand that it is much more expensive to install hard-wired smoke alarms, although I have chosen to install them in my house, which was built in 1993.

The bill is a significant step up in regulation with regard to fire safety, following the mandatory suits of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. At the end of May it was reported that this year seven people had already died in domestic fires where alarms were missing or not working. Since 2003 fires in homes without an effective alarm have killed 31 Queenslanders, half of whom were elderly or children aged under five. On 9 August the Premier released a statement saying that seven lives had been lost in fatal fires since 30 June, which is a very disturbing statistic.

This is not an issue that the Gold Coast is exempt from. In mid-June, the *Gold Coast Bulletin* reported that one-third of Gold Coast residents do not have a fire escape plan for their homes and 20 per cent say that their home is a fire risk. Those figures come from the 2006 AAMI survey, published in its annual Firescreen Index. Queensland fire service area director Bruce Byatt said that the results indicated that Gold Coast residents had a relaxed attitude to fire safety. In commenting on the results, several experts said that the figures illustrate a distinct lack of fire preparation in some homes on the Gold Coast. In fact, the overriding conclusion of the survey was that Australians are fire confident but underprepared. One in six Gold Coasters admitted to not knowing how to use a fire extinguisher and more than one-third do not leave keys in deadlocked doors for easy escape. The member for Fitzroy mentioned his concerns about people escaping when they have locked themselves in for security reasons. The trends on the Gold Coast were almost the same throughout the country.

Overregulation is never a good thing, but the threat fire can pose to the lives of Queenslanders calls for appropriate regulation to be in place, and I feel that this bill aims to achieve that. With specific regard to this bill's provisions relating to fire alarms, the alarm must comply and be in accordance with specifications relevant to the particular type of dwelling, section 104RB. A person must not remove the alarm or battery or do anything to reduce the alarm's effectiveness, section 104RH. That is a very salient provision as we have recently heard how the operator of the Childers backpacker hostel had removed a fire alarm from the room where the blaze began because cigarette smoke continuously set it off. Fines of \$375 attach to offending persons in both those cases.

The bill also deals with tenancy situations and liability, section 104RC to 104RG. These mandatory requirements for fire alarms to reduce loss of Queensland lives, injuries and homes by fires are welcome improvements. If personal safety is not enough of a justification for this legislation, the government has pointed out that cost savings are also achieved in emergency services departments as a result of fewer fires.

The bill will also provide new powers for the Commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service to require occupiers of identified at-risk licensed premises to establish and implement a safe limit on the number of people who may be in the premises at any one time, which is new part 9A, division 3A. After reading this, the potential for serious injury if a fire were to break out in an overcrowded Surfers Paradise nightclub sprung immediately to my mind. That has happened in other parts of the world. Of course, Surfers Paradise has an extremely high number of nightclubs and this is something that we hope never happens.

Nightclubs and licensed premises are already regulated against the absence or inadequacy of fire prevention equipment on their premises, the number of patrons they can have and the availability of entrances and exits. This may be just a rehash from the Liquor Act and the Building Fire Safety Regulation, but giving the Fire Commissioner a say is common sense. What is new is the requirement for occupiers to establish and not exceed a particular occupancy number.

Further obligations of occupiers of at-risk licensed buildings include ensuring that staff are aware of the occupancy number, implementing a counting system and displaying signs stating the occupancy number. Not that it is problematic here, but this House must remain vigilant that mirroring regulations are exactly that—they mirror—and are not inconsistent or conflicting to take away from the regulations' effect.

The bill includes new provisions imposing an obligation on occupiers of buildings with an automatic alarm system that is monitored by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service to ensure that the alarm system does not signal an unacceptable number of false alarms. This provision aims to ensure that emergency services are at hand and are not occupied with false alarms when actual emergencies require attention. This provision goes to curb instances where false alarms are caused by alarm systems not being suitable for the type of building or due to the activities of the occupier, section 104DA.

Other new provisions are welcomed, including higher penalties in cases where a breach of fire safety obligations results in death, injury or significant property damage—for example, obligations for occupiers of certain buildings to maintain adequate means of escape from buildings, to maintain prescribed fire safety installations and automatic alarm systems, and to update fire safety management plans—and provision for a right of objection to a requisition notice issued under section 69 requiring a reduction of fire risk, which objection can be taken to a panel established under the act. All in all, the aim of this bill is sound and has my support.

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (7.49 pm): I wish to speak in support of the legislation currently before parliament and, in particular, the section on unwanted false alarms. The number of unwanted false alarms and the safety concerns surrounding unwanted false alarms are an issue for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. On a regular basis, unwanted false alarms cause complacency among occupants and also responding agencies. We have all heard the story about the boy who cried wolf. Unwanted false alarms require two fire appliances to attend the alarm and, of course, it is not just the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service that attends; it is also the Queensland Police Service.

Mr Reeves: You had to put that one in, didn't you?

Mr WEIGHTMAN: Of course. Unwanted false alarms cost businesses time and money. The member for Gregory alluded to this issue in his contribution to this debate earlier. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service attends to more than 22,000 monitored alarm call-outs every year. That is a huge number. But only just 1.4 per cent of these are call-outs to actual fires. In real terms, that is about 320 call-outs out of 22,000 call-outs.

Currently, programs are underway to educate businesses and stakeholders about the dangers of unwanted false alarms. These are very important programs. However, the bill provides an additional means to reduce the number of unwanted alarms in Queensland by imposing obligations on the owners and occupiers of all buildings that require alarms to maintain their alarm systems so that they do not cause an unacceptable number of unwanted alarms. This is a huge step in the right direction.

Currently, fire officers work cooperatively with owners to address unwanted false alarm problems. That remains the best way in which to deal with this problem. As members will recall, in 2004-05 the Department of Emergency Services reviewed the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1991. That review included the release of a public discussion paper and extensive consultation with the public, stakeholders and other agencies. In terms of cooperation, that is as good as it gets. This bill will increase the capacity of the service to act where serious unwanted alarm problems cannot be fixed by cooperative means. Again, the key term is 'cooperative'. The powers that are provided in this bill will be utilised for buildings that have significant levels of unwanted false alarms and where there is an unwillingness on the part of the owner to work cooperatively to address the problem. In other words, those powers will be as a last resort, not as a first resort. The attempt to work cooperatively will be the initial means of dealing with such problems.

This is a serious issue for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and, as I said earlier, the Queensland Police Service. This bill is one important measure to make businesses aware of their responsibilities to ensure that their occupants are safe. That is paramount for the Queensland government and for the Fire and Rescue Service. For that reason, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (7.52 pm): I rise to commend this bill to the House. This bill will save the lives of Queenslanders. It will also save the property and valuables of Queenslanders and it will save people from the trauma of a fire tragedy. The government has a strong track record of improving fire safety for Queenslanders. This legislation builds on the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Act, which was developed in response to the Childers tragedy and the Sandgate boarding house fire, which occurred in my electorate.

I recall vividly the night of the Sandgate boarding house tragedy. I can tell members that many of my constituents will also never forget it. Three people died that night. I remember vividly lying awake in bed and hearing the sirens as they approached. It was quite frightening. They would be getting louder and louder and then they would stop suddenly just a couple of streets away from where I live. I started counting the number of sirens as they approached. With a pounding heart and a growing realisation that something awful was going on, I got to at least 10 sirens. We started seeing a glow in the sky and we could smell smoke. It was a very distressing situation. Although I counted at least 10 sirens, one thing that nobody heard that night was the sound of a smoke detector going off. There were no alarms of any sort.

Promotion campaigns that have been conducted by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service have already been successful in increasing the number of smoke alarms in Queensland homes. Now in Queensland, up to four out of five homes have smoke alarms. That is more than double the number of Queenslanders using smoke alarms than there were 10 years ago. However, with 78 per cent of all fire related deaths occurring in homes that do not have smoke alarms, there is still much more work to be done.

Earlier this year, there were three separate fatal fires in south-east Queensland which resulted in the deaths of six people. Fire investigators who attended those fires reported that there were no smoke alarms installed. Since June 2004, fire investigators have reported that 19 people have died in house fires because those homes either did not have smoke alarms or had smoke alarms that did not work, usually because the batteries had been removed or they were dead and needed replacing. That is why this bill is so important. We want every Queenslanders to have a smoke alarm installed by 1 July 2007. Under the Building Code of Australia, smoke alarms are compulsory in homes built after 1 July 1997. Smoke alarms are installed in 51,000 Queensland public housing homes.

Recently, during Fire Awareness Week the honourable minister visited my electorate and helped spread the message about smoke detectors. On that morning a constituent raised the problem of oversensitive smoke alarms and how annoying false alarms can be. There are a range of smoke detectors on the market and many consumers will be able to choose some of the high-tech or the hard-wired models. This bill ensures that installing smoke detectors will be simple and affordable for all people. The battery-only models must be tested regularly, but they are easy to install and, surely, any annoying beeping to warn that batteries are getting low can be tolerated if it is going to save lives. Fire and Rescue Service staff can advise on the best place to fit a detector so that it does not go off too readily.

I offer a big congratulations to our amazing Queensland Fire and Rescue Service because they have been providing this sort of advice for a very long time. I recall as a child—and I will not tell members how long ago that was; it was not very long ago—the fires came to our house and did a full evacuation plan. At the time I had bars on my bedroom window. We changed those permanent bars to the type of bars that you could unlock and the grille would swing out.

Mr Purcell: Smart move.

Ms DARLING: It was a very smart move. My mother was protecting me. There were also some wonderful stickers that the Fire and Rescue Service used to give out that said, 'Fireman, save my child'. You would stick them on the windows of the bedrooms where children slept. I remember having one of those on my window. That was not a bad idea. I encourage people to take up this free advisory service.

Smoke alarms are important, but they are not the full story. We should all develop an evacuation plan and practise it with the family or other residents who are in the dwelling so that they all know what to do in the event of a fire. It is also important for residents to balance security needs with fire safety considerations when installing security. People should not lock themselves in and not be able to get out quickly in the event of a fire. There is a range of security options available, such as that lockable security grille to which I referred, and hiding the key. People have to strike a balance between having security and being able to escape pretty quickly. People should also make sure that their kids know how to get out of the house quickly. This bill is designed to save lives. I commend it to the House.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (7.58 pm): I am very pleased to rise in the House tonight and speak in support of this wonderful piece of legislation. Quite frankly, this legislation will save lives. It is immensely important to our state. One of the most saddening and, I think, tragic experiences in my time as a member of parliament occurred just prior to my first Christmas as an MP. I was coming home from an event and when my taxi turned into my street—which at that time was Strong Avenue in Graceville—I found that one of my neighbour's homes was well alight. Fortunately, no-one died in that fire, but I can imagine how traumatic it was for that family with young children who, three or four days away from Christmas Day, had their home destroyed totally by fire. It was just a really unfortunate event for them.

From memory, I recall that those people had had fire alarms fitted to their house, but unfortunately no-one was home when the fire took hold. I remember speaking to the owners of the property at the time. I actually found them sitting across the road on the veranda of their neighbour's home. Whether it was as a result of the shock or whether it was because of the surreal experience that was befalling them, they were just sitting there. They said, 'All we can do is sit here and have a glass of wine. It is all we can do. The house is gone.' It was in the hands of the fires at that stage. The fire was contained to just that property.

I remember feeling incredibly sad at what had befallen that family, but at the same time I felt a great sense of admiration for what I thought was the very sensible way in which they dealt with that experience. Their view was, quite simply, 'There is nothing we can do at this stage. None of the family are hurt. At least all that is gone is property and that can ultimately be replaced but loss of life simply cannot.' This piece of legislation will save lives. I am very pleased to be able to support it in the House tonight.

What concerns me, though, is the obsessive nature of some members in our community about security. They are worried that people are going to break into their homes, steal their property and take their money. But they are creating a much worse situation for themselves because they lock themselves in. On the one hand, they are doing everything they can to make sure their property is not stolen by thieves but, on the other hand, they are creating preconditions for their own doom in a sense. If a fire did take hold and they did not realise it—if an alarm failed or for some reason they could not hear it, and this is particularly so with our older citizens who when they go to bed at night remove their hearing aids—by the time they become aware that the house is ablaze, it takes them so long to actually get the doors open. When I was doorknocking the homes of elderly constituents during the recent state election campaign, I was absolutely amazed at the lengths some people go to to make sure that you cannot get into their homes.

Mr Lawlor: Sure it wasn't just you, Ronan?

Mr LEE: I am sure it is not just an experience unique to me. The point is that, when you knock on the door and they ask who it is and you say who it is, I can literally hear them opening three, four or five of those old-style latches. If someone is determined to break into your home, those latches are not going to make any difference ultimately. All they do is create a real problem when you need to leave in a hurry. I think that people, particularly our older citizens, need to be a lot more conscious of the reality of their own safety and security. Just because you feel safer and more secure does not mean that you actually are. That was made very clear to some of my constituents when the minister attended my home safety seniors morning tea not so long ago. I want to thank the minister for that.

Mr Purcell: Great morning.

Mr LEE: It was a wonderful morning. We had a couple of hundred older folk at the Indooroopilly senior citizens hall. I want to thank our good friend who also attended—and the minister will smirk because he remembers that friend who, I understand, works for Queensland Fire and Rescue. Blazer Bear made an appearance. My senior citizens were delighted to see Blazer. It is often said that when it comes to spreading a very important message about fire safety the best person to do it is a bear. And what a great name for a bear—Blazer. I thank the minister for his attendance and I also thank Blazer for his assistance. It was very hot that day and I know that it was a significant experience for the person who assisted in Blazer's appearance on that day. It was a very hot day, and I am very grateful. The seniors who attended had a wonderful time. I am told that people learned lots of things—

Mr Purcell: They were wiser when they left.

Mr LEE: I think they were. I think they did learn the important message that just because you think you are more secure does not necessarily mean that you are and that there are some very simple things you can do to make sure that you are not just feeling secure but that you are genuinely safe and secure, whether it is from risk of property theft or from the risk of having a bad experience of a house fire.

I am delighted that some steps have been taken in this legislation to deal with the pain that can occur when alarms go off unnecessarily. I know that some of my residents at the Forest Place Retirement Village in Taringa have a great concern with one or two residents who have a unique experience when making toast. They have an ability to burn the toast almost every time they make it and that sets off the fire alarm. I am glad that some of the issues that are the cause of that have been addressed in this legislation.

I know that the member for Mount Coot-tha will join me in thanking the minister for the upgrade of the Taringa Fire Station. The station is in the member for Mount Coot-tha's electorate but is less than 10 metres away from my electorate and it does a great deal, if not most of its work, in my electorate. The station has been completely rebuilt, and it is now in great shape. It was in great shape when St Johns College at the University of Queensland was in need of assistance some time ago. I know that the hardworking staff at that fire station are thrilled with the new half a million dollars worth of Scania fire appliance that they are currently driving around in. I beep the horn every time I see them. It is a great fire appliance, and I know that people are very pleased to see it on the streets of Taringa. I am pleased with the resources the minister is putting into my community, and I am delighted with this legislation.

Mr Purcell: \$650,000.

Mr LEE: It is well worth it. I thank the minister.

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (8.06 pm), in reply: I rise to thank everybody here tonight for their support of the Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Bill. If I have heard it once I have heard it every time a member spoke how important the bill is in saving lives and that smoke alarms do save lives. If everybody leaves this House with that message and gets that message out to their communities, we will certainly be carrying out the intent of this legislation, which is to save lives by having smoke alarms installed in everybody's homes by 1 July 2007.

I would like to thank everybody who has taken part in the debate—the members for Mirani, Bundamba, Gregory, Springwood, Fitzroy, Surfers Paradise, Gladstone, Sandgate, Cleveland and Indooroopilly. I would also like to thank my own staff for the work that they have done on this bill, the DG, the fire commissioner and all the staff who have worked so hard on this bill to make sure that this legislation would be enforceable and that it would save lives in Queensland. We are not the first government to have done this. We are following other states. After the horrendous fires we have had in Queensland, we have made sure that our legislation in relation to domestic dwellings is the best possible in order to save people's lives.

The member for Mirani raised concerns about the responsibility on tenants to test alarms and replace batteries. A large amount of consultation has been done with the community, the tenants association and landlords on this matter. It is fair legislation in that the landlord has to make sure that the smoke alarm is fitted to the dwelling and is in working order and, while the tenant is living in the dwelling, the tenant has to make sure that the smoke alarm works. It is a significant responsibility on the landlord to make sure that their property is fitted with a smoke alarm. We are informed by the tenancies authority that the turnover of most tenancies is about 11 months, so the onus will probably fall back on the landlord at the end of the day to have the smoke alarms tested and to replace the batteries.

As members have said, in your own home you have the responsibility to do that. When someone rents a property, for all intents and purposes that is their home and that is their property. People should do something to make sure that they and their family and possibly relatives or people who sleep over are safe.

Concerns about insurance were also raised. There had been some discussion in the community where we had taken it up. The Insurance Council of Australia was consulted. We talked to the council about the impact that the failure to comply with the mandatory smoke alarm requirements might have on people's insurance. The Insurance Council of Australia would not come out and give guarantees on behalf of its members that no smoke alarms would not affect the insurance. It said, 'From our experience it is unlikely that an insurer would decline a claim in these circumstances.' The council said that it would be a good idea for insurers to check with their own insurer to see if that was the case.

We have also made inquiries in Victoria and South Australia, where it has been mandatory for smoke alarms to be in dwellings for the past six and seven years respectively. Neither jurisdiction was aware of any instance where an insurance claim has been declined as a result of a failure to install a mandatory fire alarm. People should check with their insurer to make sure that they are covered.

The member for Mirani was also concerned about photoelectric, as opposed to ionised, smoke alarms. We do work to an Australian standard. The Australian standard allows both of those types of alarms to be used within Australia. The fire service does have a preference, of course, for the

photoelectric alarm to be used. Obviously we would urge people to put that alarm in. We would also urge people to buy the sealed unit that has a 10-year battery and a life of 10 years, so there are no worries for the 10 years. It would still need to be checked on a 12-monthly basis. People still need to make sure that the alarm is clean and operable. It is the cheapest way to go over a 10-year period. We did not want to make it out of people's reach to put a smoke alarm outside their bedrooms. There must be at least one smoke alarm outside every sleeping compartment on every floor. I would urge people to go for the Rolls Royce alarm, the photoelectric alarm. People will find that will give them good value and protect them well.

The member for Mirani had no concern about licensed premises. That is good because we have concerns about them and the number of people who can attend such premises. That is why we are introducing the legislation. The fire service has spoken to us about the number of people who go to nightclubs.

Mr Malone: I raised concerns about the fact, hoping this legislation will fix it.

Mr PURCELL: We are going to work with those nightclubs to see if we can fix that. If the member for Mirani remembers, the worst nightclub fire in Australia is still the Whisky Au Go Go fire where 15 people died. Those people were not asleep. Those people were very active and dancing in a place where they thought they would be safe. Their egress was blocked and they could not get out. We want to make sure that that never happens again. I am pleased to see that people are very much in favour of what we are doing with nightclubs.

Several people have brought up concerns regarding the sensitivity of fire alarms. The member for Mirani spoke about one establishment in Townsville that had such concerns, which I do know about. We did get some news up there in the paper. We have had a number of motels and nursing homes speak to us and make it known to us that they are getting a lot of unwanted fire alarm call-outs. We do work with those companies. However, these places are required to have the fire alarms because of the people that are in those dwellings. They are required to make sure the alarms are in working condition. A lot of the alarms are improperly placed. Some of the alarm systems are probably faulty. They are probably not the best quality alarms.

Sometimes it is very difficult when someone buys a building and inherits a system that does not work very well. They spend a lot of money on it, and they continue to spend money on it and get very frustrated when they cannot get the result that they want so we do not continually get call-outs because of faulty alarms. What members have said here is true. I think the member for Cleveland said that we do get concerned if there are a lot of call-outs. It is like crying wolf—people will hear an alarm and not respond to it if there are so many false alarms. We need to continue to work with those businesses and operations to make sure that they do get the alarms working right.

Part of this legislation also relates to the private certifiers who work in the building industry regarding alarm systems. We have been having some difficulty getting their records to see if the alarms have been installed and it has all been approved. It is sometimes difficult to explain to an owner that the alarm has been incorrectly installed, that it has not been up to scratch and that is why they are having a problem and they should spend more money to fix it. We make no apology for saying to landlords and businesses, 'You must get your smoke alarms up to scratch because they do save people's lives. You must stop false alarms and you must work at it to make sure that happens.'

The member for Gregory thinks this is a good bit of legislation. I thank him for that. He also urges the education of people in regard to smoke alarms—the installation and checking of them. He spoke about his own smoke alarm that needed a battery changed. Did the member for Gregory take the battery out to stop it making the noise or did he go down and get the battery straightaway and not sleep in his dwelling until he put the new battery in?

Mr Johnson: You want me to be honest? I took the battery out to stop it making a noise.

Mr PURCELL: I thought the member would have; I think most people do. When people are getting near their anniversary date—whether it is a birthday, Melbourne Cup day, 1 April or whatever it is—they should put on their shopping list a reminder to get a new battery and to have the new battery there so that they can change it on that anniversary, irrespective of whether the alarm makes a noise or not. Do not wait for the alarm or battery to run down. Just replace the battery every 12 months if that is the type of smoke alarm installed in the house.

The member was quite concerned about the penalties for noncompliance with the installation of smoke alarms. The member should have read down a little further. The penalties are not up around the amounts that he was talking about. The penalty of \$150,000 and three years jail are for commercial premises that do not comply with the legislation. When one considers the number of people in nightclubs and so forth, it is not a large fine if there is loss of life involved. The penalties are very small. How much money can be put on people's lives?

The member for Gregory went on to talk about making sure that we educate people and tell them about the legislation. The department and the fire service will be running an extensive campaign to inform people about the legislation to make sure that people know about it. We may even come out to

members' electorates if they so wish. We will put on events and make sure that we can get as much publicity for it as we possibly can. The member for Fitzroy was also concerned in relation to the advertising of the legislation and the education of the community.

People here have spoken about the number of call-outs that the fire service receives and the percentage of them that are not fires but false alarms. The service conducts a lot of education with young people in our schools. That takes them away from those duties of inspecting hostels and aged care premises. The member for Fitzroy spoke about road rescue. Half the work that firefighters do these days is road rescue. We do not want to have firefighters called out on false alarms. Firefighters are very busy and have much work to undertake. Much of it is informing the public but also, of course, as members here have said over and over, it is the deadly business of putting out fires, putting themselves at risk to save people's property and lives, and going out to road accidents and extracting people as fast as they possibly can from vehicles so that the QAS can pick them up and get them to hospital as quick as they possibly can.

Question put—That the bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 36, as read, agreed to.

Clause 37—

Mr MALONE (8.23 pm): Clause 37, which is quite extensive, talks quite a bit about the impositions on lessors, tenants et cetera. It also talks about penalties in terms of penalty units. We are here to set legislation in place that can be enforceable. I would like to get some understanding of how the QFRS would enforce legislation in terms of a battery running out. That would be almost impossible to enforce. Is it realistic to have penalties on something that cannot be enforced?

Mr PURCELL: What we are not about is making lawbreakers out of honest citizens. There is only so much that a government can legislate for. We think we have it covered off where we make it compulsory that when people move residences they know about the legislation. But we will not be going into people's homes and testing their alarms to make sure that they are working and, if they are not working, fine them. We believe that people have a responsibility to look after themselves in that regard. If the manufacturer's instructions are followed for smoke alarms, then a person has carried out everything we require under the legislation. There are many things that can be done for people but people cannot be forced to do things. We are going to make it as easy as we possibly can for people to install smoke alarms, and although we have the power to go in and check smoke alarms we will not be doing that unless we find that there is noncompliance in an area, and then we will do some education for a start and reassess the situation. I have just been advised that we do not have power to go in and check on smoke alarms so that is something we will not be doing. We do not have the power to do it.

Mr MALONE: Continuing that line of thought, under what conditions would a penalty be imposed? If the service is not going to enter the house and is not going to impose fines, why do we have penalties in the legislation in terms of domestic dwellings?

Mr PURCELL: That is mainly there for the landlord who will be required under this legislation—

Mr Malone: It is not only landlords; it is right across.

Mr PURCELL: It will be the landlord who will be fined if he does not comply with the legislation in relation to every new tenant. He has to make sure he has a working smoke alarm in there. If he does not install smoke alarms in the dwellings that he rents, he will attract the penalty. When dwellings are sold, there will be a penalty if there is noncompliance with the legislation. When premises are sold they must have working smoke alarms in them. This is the same as legislation that is in effect in Queensland at the moment in relation to safety switches in homes. It is compulsory when you sell a dwelling that within three months it has to have a safety switch installed. It will be the same with smoke alarms.

Mr MALONE: I hate to be picky, it is late at night, but the reality is that 104RE(3) states—

During a tenancy in the dwelling, the tenant must replace, in accordance with the information statement, each battery that is spent or that the tenant is aware is almost spent.

Maximum penalty—5 penalty units

That has nothing to do with the landlord. How are you going to enforce that?

Mr PURCELL: I have to reiterate that that penalty is mainly there for the landlord. We will address the one with tenants by education. We do not have the power to go into people's homes to check if they have a working smoke alarm, but under the legislation landlords will be required to make sure that there are working smoke alarms in every dwelling every time they buy and sell and every time a tenant changes.

Clause 37, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 38 to 56, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Question put—That the bill, as read, be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Long Title

Question put—That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (8.31 pm): I move—

That government business order of the day No. 4 be postponed.

Motion agreed to.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Resumed from 31 October (see p. 295).

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (8.32 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak in the address-in-reply debate in the 52nd Parliament and to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land. I join with other members on congratulating the Speaker and Deputy Speakers on their election.

I extend my sincere thanks to the people of Springwood for electing me for a third term to be their voice in the Queensland parliament. Tonight I rise in this place as the longest serving member for Springwood ever. No other member has ever been elected for a third term to the seat of Springwood. It is very humbling and a great honour to have the people of Springwood place their faith and trust in me. I assure the people of Springwood that their confidence will not be misplaced.

I will continue to hold mobile offices throughout the electorate. I will also continue grant-writing seminars and I will provide information for sporting and community groups. I will continue holding seniors information morning teas and deliver Meals on Wheels. Also continuing will be my regular segment with our local community radio station, FM101, and I will continue to keep the electorate informed through the regular newsletter—*Barbara Stone's Springwood Update*.

Attending as many meetings and community events in the local community as I possibly can is still a priority for me, as the most important job I have is to consult with the people of Springwood, to listen, to respond to their concerns and to put their representations forward in government. I am strongly committed to putting Springwood first and to ensuring that our local issues are at the forefront of government decision-making and policy development.

Recently, at the opening of the 52nd Parliament, Her Excellency the Governor outlined a number of initiatives of the Beattie Labor government that will certainly benefit my electorate of Springwood. The Beattie government has delivered a strong economy. We have delivered Queensland's best economic management in decades through consistent, strong budget surpluses and by maintaining the state's AAA credit rating.

Queensland has the lowest unemployment in three decades. Economic growth has outperformed the nation's growth for 10 consecutive years. The Beattie Labor government is encouraging high rates of business and household investment. We are locking in our future prosperity by diversifying our economic base beyond our traditional industries. I am pleased to inform the people of Springwood that their government is building the education and skills of Queenslanders so they can compete in the modern, global economy. I know this is extremely important to them.

Expanding the number of Queensland exporters is a priority for our government, and we only have to look at the participants in the recent Logan-Redlands regional awards for exporting to see the evidence that government programs are working and it is our local businesses that are making a great name for themselves throughout the world. A strong economy will bring benefits and rewards to our state and therefore to the people of Springwood.

An area that I know is very important to the people of Springwood is health. The Beattie government has delivered by far the largest health budget in Queensland's history, injecting a massive \$6.65 billion into our health system in 2006-07. In addition, a record health capital program totalling \$594 million will fund the infrastructure needed to support the new and improved services sweeping through our public hospitals.

The state government is pouring an extra \$9.7 billion into health over the next five years to transform the health system, employ more doctors and nurses and treat and care for more Queenslanders on time. There is more to be done and the government is getting on with the job. The

Health Action Plan will improve our hospital emergency departments, open more hospital beds and provide funding for more cancer, heart and kidney surgery. Locally, a \$7.4 million upgrade of Logan Hospital's emergency department is underway. The government has also provided \$5.2 million to trial a place based chronic disease strategy in the Logan-Beaudesert Health Service District, liaising with GPs.

The government has also committed \$1.4 million to community organisations in Springwood under the Home and Community Care program. These commitments are starting to turn our health system around and the government will continue to focus on health.

The Beattie government is fast-tracking projects to secure water. At present, the state's south-east is in the grip of the worst drought on record, and climate change is making rainfall less reliable and less predictable. Across the state, the Beattie government is working with local communities to help secure water supplies, not just for immediate needs but for decades to come. In the south-east, where the problem is most pressing, a range of projects is underway to provide water security for at least 50 years.

A series of two-way pipelines are being built between dams to ensure that water can be moved from full dams to empty ones. The water grid will work just like our present power grid, providing security for the entire region. In addition, two new dams are being built and four other water storages are being expanded or created. I am pleased that the Hinze Dam is to have an increased capacity.

The government is also building a pipeline to send recycled water to industry, and it has provided more than \$90 million towards the construction of a desalination plant on the Gold Coast. The Beattie Labor government is working hard to help households and business in the drought stricken south-east to save water and money through the Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme and water-saving programs being funded to help businesses save water.

The Beattie government has the strong, stable leadership that is needed to deliver on the \$1.3 billion statewide water grid. We will invest \$496 million to secure water for future generations, because we know that, if we do not act now to address this vital issue, future generations will pay a high price.

I have a message for the young people in the Springwood electorate. Some people tell me I should not bother talking to young people about politics; that they are just not interested. I say to the youth of Springwood that I do not believe this statement to be true. While I understand that young people are busy and might not have time for politics, as your local member of parliament, your views are important to me and I want to continue working with you. The decisions we make in this place are important to you and your future. The Beattie Labor government believes the best start young people can have is a secure job. As a government, we have invested heavily in programs to skill young Queenslanders, spending record amounts to assist the training and development of young people—and this will continue.

I also have a message for the more mature constituents in Springwood. While talking with my mother and grandmother the other day, they told me how many of their friends were worried about John Howard's new unfair industrial relations policies, the rising cost of petrol and the ever-increasing interest rates. While they are feeling the pain from these federal Liberal policies, they are more concerned about the impact these policies will have on our young people, on our future generation.

I am not surprised that we had this conversation because, as I travel around the electorate, I hear the same concerns being repeated by people of all ages. I want to give my electorate the assurance that we will continue to fight the Liberal's industrial relations policies that take away hard-earned working conditions. While the Beattie government can only keep up the pressure on the federal government in relation to these matters, here in Queensland we are focused on getting things right for all Queenslanders.

Good quality transport is a key issue in Springwood, and that is why I have worked hard to secure 1,600 new bus services per week since 2001 and was very happy to announce recently an additional 110 new services per week. In addition, we have completed the \$23 million Springwood bus station and I recently opened the upgraded Logan Hyperdome bus station. I want to thank everyone for their patience and cooperation during the Hyperdome bus station construction period. TransLink held talks with bus users, local bus operators, Logan City Council, Logan Hyperdome management and Loganholme police on ways to improve the bus station and to come up with a design that best suits local needs. I am pleased to say that the upgraded improvements provide better seating, shelter, information, accessibility and safety to make bus travel an even more attractive option for the Logan community.

The state government through TransLink is committed to delivering convenient, accessible and reliable public transport. However, there is more to be done. The patronage on our buses in the Springwood electorate is growing at an enormous rate. It is true to say that this massive growth in patronage has made it difficult. Although there has been a huge increase in buses and in bus services, the success means that growth in patronage is still continuing to rise. Today once again I call on the minister for additional buses and for more bus services for the Springwood electorate. It is obvious that the people in Springwood want to support a good quality transport system, and we need to support

them. When I was first elected I said that I would work hard to get an affordable and effective bus service for the people of Springwood, and I can remember saying that the day I have to call for more buses would be a good day. Well, that day has come and it is a good problem to have because our bus service is doing a really wonderful job for my community. I once again call for more buses and bus services for this wonderful community.

I also call on the Logan City Council to provide a safe pedestrian crossing for those residents east of Mandew Street and other pedestrians travelling to the bus station to safely cross Mandew Street to access the bus station. I know the people of Springwood are pleased that the government is committed to extending the South East Busway between Eight Mile Plains and Springwood—a very important project for the electorate and for Logan City. The Pacific Motorway Transit Project is planning for improvements to 15 kilometres of the motorway through Rochedale South, Springwood, Daisy Hill, Shailer Park and Loganholme. These plans have already taken into account the in-depth planning and consultation that took place between 1997 and 2002. Consultation with local community groups and project stakeholders through a series of reference group meetings has provided Main Roads with valuable feedback. It is also ensuring that we achieve the best planning outcome for this important link in Australia's road network.

It is a complex project with many improvements proposed along the motorway, including widening to accommodate the new bus and transit lanes, improved on- and off-ramps and the final link of the V1 bikeway. There is no doubt that the feedback that has been given from the community reinforces that the improvements are urgently needed through Logan. This is an extremely important project for residents, businesses and visitors to Springwood. A key feature of the draft plan is a motorway access in Springwood. The draft plan proposes the closure of the Sports Drive on-ramp and replacement with the new Lexington Road on-ramp. This change proposes to significantly improve traffic safety and operation in terms of Springwood access to the motorway by reducing the volume of traffic using the congested Springwood Road and Sports Drive intersection.

I have asked the project team to go back and have a look to see whether it is possible to retain the Sports Drive on-ramp without having a major impact on traffic flow at the intersection of Springwood Road and Rochedale Road. My concern is that if the on-ramp is upgraded then that will shorten considerably the queue of traffic on Springwood Road. This will lead to a very congested Springwood and Rochedale roads intersection that could not cope with traffic volumes and predicted growth in the area. This certainly would not be of any benefit to Springwood residents or to the businesses in the area. However, I have also heard the residents' concerns about the closure of the on-ramp. So once again I am calling on the project team to go back, have a look at this decision, keep those concerns in their minds and keep maintaining public consultation.

Of course safety is of paramount importance to all, and I am aware that too many on-ramps within a short distance of each other is not the best design for a motorway. But I do urge the project team to work with the community on finding a practical and safe design. Much has been said about who is committed to upgrading the Pacific Motorway through Logan City, and anyone who drives along that stretch of road knows that it needs to be upgraded now. I was pleased to announce that the Beattie Labor government has a fully costed and funded plan to upgrade the Pacific Motorway. We have \$392 million ready to go for upgrading the road. But the federal Liberal Party will not match our funding and give Logan residents their fair share.

Mr McNamara: They just don't care about the safety of Logan.

Ms STONE: It does not care about the Springwood electorate. I urge Logan motorists to send a message to John Howard's Liberal government that the money for this project is urgently required and to give us a fair share of our road funding. I will continue to work towards securing money from the federal government for this important road project. Regardless of who is in office in the federal government I will stand up for the residents of Springwood.

Since my election to the seat of Springwood in 2001 we have seen millions of dollars invested in local school improvements. These include \$1.6 million for a middle years building at Shailer Park state primary and high schools and \$2 million for the establishment of prep year in local schools. More than \$522,000 has been committed for important projects and school improvements for the state schools in my electorate. This money is for school communities along with P&Cs to invest in what they identify as their priority projects. This is a fantastic opportunity for parents to get involved and have a direct say in the improvement of their local schools, and I look forward to continuing to work with the P&Cs and school communities to progress and complete their projects.

Our great state schools are ensuring that children are receiving a world-class education. I am very pleased that this year's budget alone committed a record \$1 billion to rebuild our schools, including \$100 million for Queensland's Catholic and independent schools. I have great private schools in my electorate, and I look forward to continuing to work with them and their P&Fs.

Queensland's economy has never been stronger. Premier Peter Beattie along with my parliamentary colleagues form a united Labor team that delivers stability in government. That stability ensures continued economic growth and enables us to deliver record levels of funding for local schools

in Springwood. There is no doubt that school maintenance is an important and ongoing issue for many of the schools in the Springwood electorate. They are at an age where maintenance is a high priority for them. I will continue to work hard to secure improved funding for schools in our local community.

I have many people to thank, but due to the limited time available to me I cannot mention everyone. To my campaign organiser Mark Ward and his wife Fiona: thank you once again for making the campaign a success. Both of you are very dedicated and committed to the ALP. You are a young couple with strong Labor values. I value your advice and your friendship very much. One only has to look around the parliament today to see that the ALP has great young people and has a great future ahead of it. To the Springwood and Loganholme ALP branch members: we did it! Thanks for your support and your assistance.

To Graham and Barry I say a big thankyou for all the time and effort to ensure that our EV PV campaign ran well. The Springwood campaign had the three Rs, especially when it came to election signs: there was Rita, Rex and Ross. Thank you for all of your assistance. Sue-Anne, thanks for all of your hard work, especially the early mornings and late nights and for doing anything asked of you. I have had fantastic supporters who have helped me since my election, and I am very nervous about mentioning you all individually in case I accidentally forget a name. So I thank all of those people who have helped me in a variety of ways and I look forward to working with you over the next three years.

Thank you to the supporters who attended to mobile offices, handed out how-to-vote cards, put signs in their yards, letterboxed, folded and enveloped letters. I have many volunteers in the community who have assisted and supported me throughout the last 5½ years and during the election campaign. They come from sports organisations, community organisations, P&Cs, P&Fs, local businesses and residents. I thank all of you. To Dan and Roy, thanks for being my chauffeurs on election day. Your inspirational and jovial remarks made it an even more memorable day. To my Nanna Gwen, who once again fed the troops on election day and has worked on all my three campaigns along with my mother Gloria doing a multitude of jobs: I love you dearly and appreciate all of your assistance. Thank you to my Uncle Keith, Colin, Llew and other family members and friends who have also assisted me on all of my campaigns.

I want to thank my electorate staff for the hard work and effort they put into the office: Margi, Lynette and Melissa—a fantastic result from a huge effort. I also thank your families for all of their support and assistance. I also want to thank my family in the UK for their words of support. I now look forward to the next three years and continuing working with all levels of government to ensure that our local community promotes individual, family and community vitality that respects diversity and is at the forefront of government decision making.

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (8.50 pm): It is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to speak in this address-in-reply debate. Firstly, Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate you on being chosen as Deputy Speaker. I would ask you to also pass on my congratulations to the Speaker of this parliament. I have known him since 1976 when we first met in Townsville. I am sure that both he and you will do a very good job in your respective roles.

I take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge the support for the Australian Labor Party, and for me as its party representative, within the electorate of Kallangur. I have had the honour of representing this district in parliament since 1986, that is, continuously for 20 years. The Kallangur electorate covers parts of the Pine Shire comprising Kallangur and Dakabin, and parts of the Caboolture Shire comprising Narangba, Burpengary and Morayfield. It is an area experiencing enormous population growth, with the consequent demands for private and public infrastructure.

I take this opportunity to recognise the people who worked in my campaign team during the last election, particularly my campaign manager, Ian Burgett, who yet again demonstrated a tireless commitment to the Labor Party and the Labor movement. The election of 9 September 2006 was the eighth time I have been elected and Ian has been my campaign manager in every one of those campaigns, beginning in 1986. Again, I take this opportunity to thank Ian.

I thank all of the campaign team, party members and supporters for their hard work during the last election. The election was tough and the result for my team was very satisfying. Previously I have said in the parliament—and I think all members who have been returned would agree—that elections are not necessarily won during the campaign itself but by the work that is done in the three years leading up to them. As many members of this House know, much of the judgement about a local representative is determined by the contact and efficiency of that local representative's electoral staff. How hard the member is working is often determined by the efforts of the electoral staff.

I take this opportunity to thank my staff, Kevin Van Katwijk, Michelle Kennedy and Joy Seiffert, for their support and commitment. I take the time of the House to thank my previous electorate officer Colleen Hughes, who retired 12 months ago. She had worked for me since I was elected in 1986. Her experience, problem-solving abilities and contacts were very much appreciated by local residents. She had wanted to retire for years, but I convinced her not to do so. Finally, she stayed firm and retired.

I take the time of this debate to thank my wife, Janet, for her support and particularly for her work over the years in the electorate and during the most recent campaign. Last Saturday, she did the presentations at the Burpengary Jets netball club while at the same time and in a different place I did the presentations at the Burpengary Jets junior rugby league club. I thank her for her commitment to our local area. For example, on Tuesday night she represented me at the Dakabin State High School speech night as parliament was sitting.

During the state election, I campaigned on a number of issues in the Kallangur electorate. The first was the need for a police station at Burpengary to service the Burpengary and Narangba districts. In my speech in the previous address-in-reply debate I made a commitment to work towards the provision of a police beat for the Burpengary area. That was delivered during the last term and it has been a tremendous success. Land for the new station has been purchased in Station Road, Burpengary. The new station will take on many of the day-to-day activities of a police headquarters for the new Caboolture police district which has been established. The station will be a base for the policemen and women in uniform. I thank the local progress association, Neighbourhood Watch and local residents for their support for this project. I have met with local senior police officers and we have had the opportunity to tour and inspect the site.

After the last election I made a commitment to work towards the construction of an ambulance station at Narangba. That has been completed. I look forward to attending the official opening by Minister Pat Purcell, which is set for 6 December. That will be a great day for our district.

During the campaign I committed to work for a fire station to be located in Burpengary. Like the ambulance station, it will improve response times in this fast-growing area. I also made a commitment to work towards providing two primary schools to relieve the pressure in Burpengary and Narangba respectively. The Narangba Valley State School has opened and has been operating successfully in the Narangba community. The new Burpengary Meadows State School will be open for the 2007 school year.

I have often spoken in the parliament about and supported the need to upgrade the Bruce Highway, which is occurring. I acknowledge that the funding for this project comes mainly from the Commonwealth government with the support of the state government. During the campaign I committed to work to ensure the upgrading of Morayfield Road from Gaffield Street to the Bruce Highway at the Uhlmann Road connection. Morayfield Road is a major arterial road connecting Caboolture with the Bruce Highway. I am pleased to see that already the second round of consultation with residents about the configuration of that new road is occurring. Draft plans are available for public display in my office and the Burpengary library. As with the Bruce Highway, I urge patience from road users when the construction commences. When the Morayfield Road upgrade is completed, traffic flows in the district will be greatly improved.

I take this opportunity to thank the people of the Kallangur electorate for again showing confidence in me and returning me as their local member on behalf of the Australian Labor Party. As always, I will do my best to represent the people from my electorate not only in this chamber but also, and as importantly, in the local area.

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (8.56 pm): It is with a real sense of privilege and pride that I rise to participate in my third address-in-reply debate in this the 52nd Parliament and the fourth term of the Beattie Labor government. I would like to start this address by extending my congratulations to the Speaker on his appointment to high office. Mr Speaker has always been a great supporter of mine and the electorate of Aspley. I am particularly pleased to see his success. I know that honourable members and the staff of this parliament will do well under his stewardship.

Of course, I am incredibly humbled and honoured to be returned to this place for the third time as the member for Aspley. I am hoping that this re-election will put pay to the commentators referring to Aspley as a 'leafy Liberal seat'. Of course, it is always a tough race and this election was no exception. I would like to congratulate all members on their electoral success and, in particular, I congratulate new members. We have seen the election of another exciting, talented and diverse group of people to the parliament. I look forward to getting to know them better, working with them, occasionally fighting with them and serving the people of Queensland with them. There is something incredibly rewarding about standing in and winning a marginal seat. Everyone in this place works really hard regardless of their margins, but in a marginal seat each and every day's work makes a difference to one's continued success. Therefore, in particular I congratulate marginal seat members. They will be kept very busy, but they will find the challenge rewarding. As a seasoned marginal seat campaigner, my only advice is that they work hard every day for the next three years. It is the only way to stand a fighting chance for re-election and it is what the electorate demands and deserves.

Mr Johnson: They are all marginals.

Ms BARRY: I take that interjection from the member for Gregory. They are all marginals, with a difference of about 16 per cent I think! Every one is marginal at some time.

I thank the good people of Aspley for again charging me with the honour of representing them. I would like to thank them for their amazing support during the last term, and particular during the past 12 months. Their support gave me the faith to stand at the last election. I received a very clear message from many local people that they wanted me to get back up on my feet, and get on with my life and my job. I have listened to them.

I have listened to the messages and the concerns of the people of Aspley. They want access to timely and safe health care; they want security of access to water; they want our schools and education institutions to deliver quality and equitable education for life to our children and job seekers, and to do so in amenities that facilitate that learning; they want us to continue to manage and build upon our strong economy, delivering a strong Queensland now and into the future; they want the south-east corner's growth to be well planned and managed with an emphasis on ensuring our roads, services and care of the environment are managed with a close eye on the quality of life of the citizens who are affected by that growth. That is particularly important in Aspley. As the gateway to north Brisbane, the Aspley electorate is the entry point and destination for tens of thousands of people every day.

In the past, managing issues like traffic, environmental impacts on beautiful watercourses in the area and ensuring services are adequate for booming populations has been a priority for this government. The development of the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan at a strategic level, opening such projects as my favourite road, the Linkfield Connection Road, the Aspley and Bald Hills police beats and spending over \$11 million on our schools are just a few of the local projects that demonstrate our commitment to managing the huge growth in the south-east corner. Equally, this term we will continue our commitment to the people of Aspley. We will build the police station on Gympie Road at Carseldine right on the road where 60,000 cars travel each day.

Schools in Aspley will benefit from the \$1 billion statewide Tomorrow's Schools funding to rebuild many of our older schools. We will fund sporting organisations that encourage people to play sport. We will prioritise roadworks on major roads such as Strathpine Road and include the continuation of the Inner Northern Busway.

The redevelopment of the Prince Charles Hospital will turn this fantastic hospital into a general hospital for Brisbane north. That is well underway. It will make a real difference to our community's access to quality health care. All in all, over the next three years we will have a busy schedule of work that will deliver real benefits to our community. I look forward to ensuring that the work takes place.

At this time I would like to thank the many people without whom my success at election time would not have been possible. To my amazing electorate staff, Kerry, Noelene and Bonnie Olive, thank you. Their amazing service to the people of Aspley in their loyal partnership with me is a significant factor in my electoral success. Quite frankly, I could not have managed to work and undergo the rigours of my recent medical treatment without them. I am very lucky to have their friendship and, the people of Aspley, their service. I would like to welcome Jenny Wald, our newest member of the team.

To the local Aspley Labor team, I give my sincere thanks. The Aspley SEC is a great team. We are cross-factional, of all ages and of all walks of life. We are lucky to have among our ranks some of the longest-serving Labor Party branch members in the country. Blokes such as Kev O'Leary, Les Thorpe, Terry Hampson and Michael Duffy and great women such as Ann Hampson, Maree Maurer, Faith and Loretta Fanning and Shirley Prideaux are among them. They are my inspiration and I am pleased to hold Aspley as a representative for Labor in their honour.

Among the campaign team ranks I had so many volunteers, amazing party members and supporters and just a huge number of local people who just wanted to help with my re-election. So to each and every one of them, I thank them for their tremendous effort and support. To my union comrades, and in particular to my beloved Nurses Union—to Gay, Amanda and Jude—I thank them for their support. To my many comrades from the Left, their solidarity on tough campaigns is always appreciated and vital to the success of the team. To the Left Union secretary and the Queensland Teachers Union secretary, my thanks for their help, their leadership and commitment to working people. In particular, my mate Damien was a champion. I give thanks to Meg, Catherine, Rob, Clare and the team—Jeff, Penny, Denis, Jillian, Tony, Gavin, Peter, Vicki, Heather, Robyn and Tom just to name a few—and to the many members of the Young Labor Left and so many individuals that I guess I have made my first mistake by starting to name them. To the many businesses that helped my campaign, Australia Post—goodness me, they were great—Ashraf and Avis, I thank them. They went beyond the call.

To the central campaign team—to the Premier, the Deputy Premier, to the campaign director, Milton Dick—who is my favourite campaign director—and his team, in particular Chris, Jackie, Terry, Mark and Anthony, they were brilliant strategists and a fantastic team. One thing about a campaign that I have always learned from them is to keep the faith and hold your nerve. They were and always are a steady rock in the tumultuous campaign, and I thank them.

I thank EMILY's List for its mentoring. I commit to striving to achieve the goals of EMILY's List once again in this parliamentary term. I know that EMILY's List will be pleased to see so many wonderful women elected within the Labor caucus.

My beautiful husband, Lloyd, is a man who works hard as a nurse up at the Royal Brisbane every day and then fronts up nights and weekends to attend dozens of political events that he is very interested in. He keeps the kids on track—or at least makes sure that they are not standing in the middle of the road. He also finds time to be the best first-aid person every Saturday for the mighty Strathpine Swans, all on top of living through the most difficult time that a husband could over the past 12 months. He is my sweetheart and, as I always say in my address-in-reply, a man among men. I thank him.

My amazing kids, Alex, Liz, Jerry and Phil, are all young adults. Three of them are of voting age. I would like to thank them very much. My children and their friends made great booth workers. I do not think that I would have been able to staff half of my booths without my teenage children and all their mates.

An honourable member: Did they vote for you?

Ms BARRY: One of them did. The other two are still too young to have voted this time, but I feel confident of their votes, yes.

A government member: Do the numbers, Bonny.

Ms BARRY: I am doing the numbers. Phil is my 15-year-old. He is the only one left at school and at home. He is the young fellow who has to do all the washing up.

Mr Reeves: The Phil faction.

Ms BARRY: The Phil faction. He has to do all the washing up and the coffee making. During my expose on having breast cancer, I told the entire press that Phillip had to do foot rubs for his mother. For the past 12 months he has been asked by so many people how those foot rubs are going. I would like to say, 'Little man, you are a champion kid.'

Like all our children, my children have made sacrifices. They have been incredibly patient with their mum's political life. They have been on their best behaviour for years and my kids are in for another three years in the spotlight. I want to say how much I love them all and I know that it has been a tough year for them. I have never forgotten how tough it has been. But we have made it, and I say thank you.

To my parents, Val and Stan, and my sister, Susie, who was my incredible campaign manager, and her Malcolm, Brent and Scott, I am once again proud to stand in this place on their shoulders. They keep me upright no matter what craziness I suffer from. Few people can surely be as lucky as I have to have been to be born into such a strong and supportive family.

To my friends the Hervey Bay gang—who are a bunch of nurses I have known for 30 years—I say thank you. They have stuck with me. To my Brisbane north comrades, in particular Terry Sullivan, Gordon Nuttall, Liddy Clark, Neil Roberts, Faith Hopkins and Wayne Swan, I think they are an amazing team to work with. Comrades, I want to say thank you. I welcome Stirling, Lillian and Vicki to the great team of Brisbane north. To my friend and comrade Linda Lavarch, girlfriend, I send my strength to you as you did for me through my tough time. I look forward to Linda's return to this place.

Finally, I had to think long and hard about standing again for this term as the member for Aspley. I will be honest: when I was diagnosed with cancer I was faced with the reality of an uncertain future. As many people do when faced with a health crisis such as mine, I had to think about the demands of political life from a personal and health perspective. When I first came to this place I did so because I believed an ordinary woman, a nurse, a mother and a trade unionist such as I had a real role to play in our democratic process and important things to say and do. I think that having become a breast cancer survivor is just another important perspective that I bring to my role as an MP. It is a challenge that many people face in all walks of life. I still have lots to offer, perhaps just a little bit more now than before.

I have stood for re-election in good faith and I intend to proceed at full throttle at life and in work. My promotion to parliamentary secretary to the Hon. Rod Welford is part of that journey. It is something that I am really looking forward to. I thank him in anticipation of his role as a mentor and a teacher. With those thoughts, I would like to say thank you. I look forward to the term with enthusiasm and determination.

Debate, on motion, Ms Barry, adjourned.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.07 pm): I move—
That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 28 November 2006.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.07 pm): I move—
That the House do now adjourn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! Before calling the next member, I note that Lesley Lindsay, one of our Hansard editors, is celebrating 30 years of public service tonight. Congratulations, Lesley. I am sure all members in this chamber here thank her for her 30 years of service.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Infrastructure, Compulsory Acquisitions

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (9.08 pm): An article in today's *Courier-Mail* states that a water official allegedly told a Kandanga grandmother that she should 'go into an old people's home' if she did not like the compensation offered for her property, which is wanted for the proposed Mary River dam. The article states further—

When she protested, Mrs Randle said she was told by the same official that she could pool her finances with neighbour and friend, Tom Logan, to buy one house and move in together.

I think any member reading that article would feel a great deal of sympathy and a degree of anger at anyone who would give that sort of advice to a person, particularly to an elderly person who has been put in such a position.

But it is not an isolated incident. In my electorate a number of developments have impacted on residents, such as the purchase of land at Targinni not only by the Department of State Development but also by the Coordinator-General and, more recently, Queensland Rail talking to landowners who will be affected by the rail loop and duplication into the port.

Whilst I am sure that the ministers would not have this same attitude, because in the article in today's *Courier-Mail* the Deputy Premier expressed her concern about these sorts of statements, I have noticed that there are those within departments who probably fail—and I am being kind—to understand the depth of impact compulsory acquisition has on landowners, and their dealings with landowners are at times totally insensitive—and I am being kind. In Yarwun-Targinnie people were offered valuations by the government valuer that were subjective at best. One objected to the valuation put on a shed, and the valuer said to that person, 'I've looked at your farm and you don't need a shed this big.' That is not the job of a valuer. The valuer's job is to value what is there, not what they, as valuers, think should be there.

More recently, there are a couple of old established residents whose houses will be compulsorily acquired by Queensland Rail for the rail duplication. At the first visit by Queensland Rail representatives, each of the couples' houses had every room measured and a comment was passed about the modest condition of the houses, and it was not put as politely as that. These couples are incredibly upset. They have not been dealt with sensitively. It is critically important that departmental officers, whoever they are and whatever department they are from, deal with residents going through compulsory acquisitions or partial acquisitions of properties with sensitivity, with dignity and with the recognition that they are being imposed upon for the greater good of the community but that they are people who deserve respect.

Glamorganvale State School, Community Merit Awards

Mr WENDT (Ipswich West—ALP) (9.11 pm): It is with a great deal of pride that I rise tonight to advise the House of the achievements of one of the schools in my electorate. Specifically, I give due credit to a number of teaching staff at the Glamorganvale State School who were granted community merit awards as part of World Teachers Day last Friday, 27 October 2006. These awards are sponsored by the Australian Scholarships Group and are part of the National Excellence in Teaching Awards.

What is so outstanding is the fact that three teachers were nominated by the Glamorganvale P&C Association—Mr Robin Webcke, the principal; Ms Kirsty Lindley, a years 4 and 5 teacher; and Ms Amanda Sheppard, the years 1 to 3 teacher. These three teachers were nominated for keeping the 'schools community spirit alive' through involving the students and the community in activities such as Grandparents Day, Anzac Day, the annual CWA International Day, and Under Eights Day. In addition, the school's initiative in gaining permission to use the Woodlands of Marburg function centre for swimming lessons and its project to help plant 700 trees at Woodlands itself as part of the rehabilitation of the Black Snake Creek catchment area were also included as part of their nomination.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to give you some idea of the significance of these awards, 1,717 nominations were received across Australia for awards this year, with only 69 teachers actually receiving an award. In Queensland specifically, 811 teachers were nominated with only 18 teachers receiving awards from 10 schools. Of these teachers only nine primary school teachers from five schools across Queensland were lucky enough to receive an award. I am pleased tonight to announce the fact that the Glamorganvale State School received three of these nine awards, which surely highlights the significance of their achievement.

A lot has been said at different times in rather disparaging terms about the limitations and shortcomings of small country schools. However, the outcomes that the Glamorganvale State School has been able to achieve just goes to prove the quality of education that is currently being provided by the Beattie government.

The principal, Mr Robin Webcke, is a strong proponent of the philosophy that it takes a whole village to raise and educate a child and, as such, the Glamorganvale school community has adopted a whole-of-school approach to the teaching of phonics—for example, using a recognised commercial based system, which has resulted in a marked improvement of the spelling and writing of all students at the school. The Glamorganvale State School is also justifiably proud of its academic record. Three of its year 7 students from 2005 are now achieving high distinctions in high school, with two of these students being listed as year 8 outstanding scholars for 2006. In addition, the school captain of the Lowood State High School for 2007 is a past student of Glamorganvale State School.

I am happy to stand here tonight and take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Webcke, Ms Lindley and Ms Sheppard on their community merit awards and to recognise the valuable contribution that they make to the education and personal development of the students in their care. At the same time I would like to pass on not only my thanks and appreciation but also those of all of the parents and friends of all students who attend this outstanding school.

School Chaplaincy Funding

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (9.14 pm): I wish to bring to the attention of the House my intention to call on the government to deliver on its promise to provide \$3 million in funding to assist state schools in providing chaplaincy services. Currently school chaplaincy services are being funded by the generosity of individuals, churches, businesses and local councils. I believe it is time for the state government to support this vital service for the benefit of our youth.

Without this promised \$3 million from the state government, many schools will not be able to provide this service for their students. More often than not it is the schools located within low socioeconomic and rural areas that are unable to provide this service, and these are the very schools that are most in need of this service. School chaplains support and encourage children and teenagers to work through issues ranging from family breakdown, loneliness and bullying to drug abuse, depression and suicide. The work provided by chaplains in our schools is invaluable. Existing chaplaincy services are successfully addressing the needs of our youth.

The results that are being achieved throughout these programs are outstanding to say the least. Our youth need this type of service, and I have been informed that these young people are independently seeking out this assistance and are responding extremely well to the program. This particular program is accessing these vulnerable children at their most critical time and encouraging them to make informed and appropriate choices in their time of need. There is an increasing level of pressure on today's young people.

In addition to striving for success with their academic work, many face other struggles such as fitting in with their peers, avoiding the traps of drug and alcohol abuse and dealing with complex family dynamics. Chaplaincy provides an avenue for these young people to explore their issues in a safe and supportive way. While chaplaincy is often provided for by church groups, the role of a chaplain is one of pastoral care rather than as a religious educator. These young people feel safe and they have a need for those outside of their family environment to show an interest in their lives.

There are few other services available that are in such a unique position as school chaplaincies. I am fully supportive of this program and I would like to see it expanded for the benefit of the young people who find themselves in need of assistance. Let us all remember this type of service may assist a member of our own family.

Only last week the school captain of Downlands College in Toowoomba took his own life. How tragic is that? Imagine the devastation of that family. These school chaplains get into the lives of these young people. I was watching Channel 7 the other morning and the three commentators were running down Howard's plan to put \$90 million into school chaplaincies, and God forgive them. They have no idea. They have not got a clue. These chaplains get involved with the lives of these young kids. They express support. They express friendship. They break down peer pressure.

Mr Reeves: That's why we are giving them \$3 million.

Mr HOPPER: What have you done? You have offered \$3 million and given nothing. That is what this adjournment speech is about tonight. It is to call on the government to make its election promise fair dinkum.

Time expired.

Goodna RSL Jacaranda Festival

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (9.17 pm): Last weekend the RSL Jacaranda Festival was held in Goodna. It started at 4 pm on Friday and went through to 2 pm on Sunday, and approximately 50,000 people were in attendance. Forty floats participated in the parade and many groups marched through the streets of Goodna. I had a Jo-Ann Miller float in the parade with a 'Your rights at work' slogan. We had a 'Greg the Combat' car. I would particularly like to thank our unions who supported the 'Your rights at work' float, particularly the mighty metal workers and the great Queensland Teachers Union representatives.

In Evan Marginson Park there were several displays, including the Navy cadets from *TS Ipswich*, church displays, veterans support and advocacy, and an educational reptile display including snakes and a baby crocodile. Of course the Queensland government display was the largest display at the jacaranda festival. It included the Bremer TAFE, child safety, communities, corrective services, disability services, education, employment and training, housing, legal aid, police, the public trustee, public works, Queensland Fire and Rescue, TransLink and, of course, Queensland Health.

This evening I would like to pay tribute to Allan Jones, the chairman of the Goodna RSL Jacaranda Festival Committee. He passed away suddenly last Friday. He was also vice-president of the Bundamba Naval Association of Australia. He was an inaugural committee member of the naval association, which formed five years ago. He was also an executive member of the Goodna RSL sub-branch and the assistant community support officer. He was a member of the Dinmore Neighbourhood Watch group and also a member of the Bundamba Anzac Memorial Committee.

Allan was a very close friend of mine. He was always there to help me, and I was always there to help him in his community roles and in his veterans advocacy. Vivienne Stanbury, the president of the Goodna RSL sub-branch, described him as her 'rock'. Allan was a sailor. He loved the Navy, and the Navy loved him in return.

Our community loved Allan. He was dedicated to our community. He loved life, he loved people and he loved his beloved 'crab pot', which was the bar at his home. It was named the 'crab pot' because people could get in but they could not get out. It was truly his bar. He loved and adored his wife and his family.

We said good-bye to Allan yesterday at his funeral in true Goodna style, which only our community knows how to do. With love, sadness and compassion for his family, we say, 'Vale, Allan Jones.'

Hamilton By-election

Mr NICHOLLS (Clayfield—Lib) (9.20 pm): It would be remiss of me to let the week go by without discussing the outcome of the Hamilton ward by-election and the incredible duplicity of the ALP team in relation to that by-election. Firstly, I would like to congratulate David McLachlan, a dynamic local candidate with young children, who won that ward quite easily with 64.5 per cent of the vote.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: Nearly as good as me. I take that interjection. It was nearly as good as me because I received 67.5 per cent the last time round. I was very happy to see Mr McLachlan achieve that result. He was not daunted by the negativity, the whingeing and the nastiness of the ALP campaign and the ALP councillors. They all turned out on the Saturday to help him with the exception of one man, who did not turn out to help him on that campaign. Who was that one man? That man was the Deputy Mayor of Brisbane, deputy councillor David Hinchliffe. It was the opportunity for Councillor Hinchliffe to put his alternative vision forward to the people of Hamilton. Where was Councillor Hinchliffe? He was holidaying in Venice. He was having a great time at the time that the people of Brisbane were looking for an alternative vision. Did he choose to put that vision forward? No, he did not. He did not show up at the by-election. I wonder if the ALP strategist said, 'You're on a hiding to nothing here, son; stay away. You don't want to be part of it.'

Is Councillor Hinchliffe going to be the candidate? That is the next big question. What did the ALP choose to do? It took the dodgy, negative, snaky option. It wanted to stop the airport link. It wanted to stop the second runway. It wanted to stop the Albion master plan. Why does the ALP want to do that? It is because these projects are all supported by the people in this place. The council colleagues in this place support each of those items.

I feel that the state ALP members in this place would be ashamed at the council tactics. My good friend Milton Dick and I have spent a little bit of time together. I seek leave to table this banner. It is the 'stop overdevelopment' bunting that was used in the Hamilton ward campaign. I table that bunting.

Tabled paper: ALP Election Bunting

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! The member will table it, not display it.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am happy to table that because that will be going out to every member of the Urban Development Institute and the Property Council of Australia. We know what the ALP members in council want to do. We know what the ALP agenda is. It is a shame that the ALP council team has moved in the way that it has.

The Liberals' positive plan for Hamilton, the Liberals' plan for Brisbane City Council, was overwhelmingly endorsed. I congratulate David McLachlan and his team.

White Ribbon Day

Hon. DM WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (9.23 pm): Today many members are wearing a white ribbon to support the United Nations International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women. The card the ribbon came on said, 'Wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge not to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and children.'

Violence against children is always wrong, and there are no exceptions. While this is intuitively obvious, it is hard to get agreement to it because most people have either themselves suffered corporal punishment or administered it to their own children. The proposition that corporal punishment is wrong is very confronting to most people because to accept it they have to invalidate part of their own life experience.

The evidence that corporal punishment is harmful is overwhelming. The New Zealand parliament is wrestling with this issue at the moment. The 2005 New Zealand study of 80 children, selected because they had no history of known or alleged child abuse, found that nine out of 10 were familiar with corporal punishment. Some reported being hit over the face and head and being hit with implements. They told the researcher their parents were often angry when they were smacked and that hitting was often the first thing their parents did and it was not done as a last resort. The children said smacking did not work; it just made them angry, upset and afraid.

Corporal punishment has been banned in Sweden since 1979. The ban correlates with low levels of violent crime in that country and a decline in convictions for rape. An American study that used an international database of 38,000 children showed corporal punishment correlated not only with increased immediate compliance by the child but also with a statistically significant increase in delinquent behaviour, an increased risk of physical abuse, an increased aggression in childhood and later adulthood, decreased parent-child relationships and increased mental illness.

In Queensland it is a defence to a charge of assault that the striking was for the purposes of domestic discipline. If someone were to lay into a passer-by in George Street with a razor strap or a switch rod, they would be arrested and charged with assault. If that person were to do exactly the same thing to their own child, they are acting lawfully. This cannot be right. In 2004, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child said that it was not right. On White Ribbon Day we should note that our law does not adequately protect our children.

Amalgamation

Mr DICKSON (Kawana—Lib) (9.26 pm): I rise to speak on an issue that is being discussed on the Sunshine Coast by our local media—amalgamation. Some people are very strongly in support of this, and some people are very strongly opposed to this. I personally believe the debate needs to be had. There are many people on the Sunshine Coast who have talked about this for a long, long time.

At this point in time the state and local governments are going through a process called size, shape and sustainability. This process should give the people of the Sunshine Coast the ability to understand what the benefits and the negatives will be; for instance, the savings that can be made and the costs that it may cost the community. We do not know what they are going to be, but we need to get it out there amongst the members of our community and find out what they are thinking.

The only way to move forward is to start this discussion regarding all of those positives and negatives. This issue has been around for a long time on the Sunshine Coast. We need to come to a decision not too far down the track. The only way that we are going to do that is by having a referendum. I hope that referendum is pushed forward by this government to give the people of the Sunshine Coast the opportunity either to go for amalgamation or to kill it once and for all.

Amalgamation has been around for some time. I want to see the people of our area have the opportunity to take it apart or make it happen. I will support them. We always give the people on the Sunshine Coast the opportunity to have their say. I would never like to see this government force amalgamation on the people of the Sunshine Coast, which we hear so much about. I know that it has happened in the past on the Gold Coast. The government pushes, pushes, pushes. We will not be pushed. The people of the Sunshine Coast will have their say, and it will only happen by a referendum. I will make sure that that happens. I am sure that the members of this House will want to support the people of the Sunshine Coast, and they will want to treat them fairly.

I will not talk too long tonight because I think we all need to go home and have a sleep, and a few people may need a cold shower. I would like to finish tonight on a very light note. I want to congratulate my son. He is another winner in politics. He is 19 years and two months old. He has put his hand up to fight on behalf of the people of the Sunshine Coast. I am sure that he will follow a very strong family tradition as my grandfather, my father and myself have done. I am sure that he will do a good job. One day he might be seen in this House.

Provision of Town Water

Mrs SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (9.29 pm): It is time to set the record straight about water. In this state, unlike other states, it is the local councils that collect the money for the provision of town water—yes, that is right. For years the council has been reaping the rewards every time ratepayers turn on the tap. I read with interest the local mayor of Caboolture Shire Council's latest veiled attack on the state government's attempt to provide water infrastructure. In the *Caboolture News* dated 1 November 2006 the mayor, when talking about the government's water grid, states that the state may be passing on a levy to residents. It seems that she does not believe that her council is responsible for, or even at least partly responsible for, the lack of water infrastructure.

Let us take a look at some facts. The 12 south-east Queensland councils, since the introduction of the National Competition Policy, or NCP, have profited from the money gathered from their water and sewerage funds. It equates to about \$600 million over seven budgets. A previous mayor and councillor of 30 years, Councillor Tom McLoughlin, speaks with some authority on the subject of the Caboolture council and its water charges. I would like to quote some information and figures he has researched through previous council documents. Since 2000, when the Liberals took over the numbers in the council under the current mayor, over \$85 million has been taken from the water and sewerage funds and has been spent on anything but water and sewerage—this year over \$17 million, last year over \$13 million and \$10 million the year before that.

The Caboolture shire water and sewerage funds were debt-free in 2000. Then the current council was elected. When Councillor McLoughlin was mayor, water cost 34c per kilolitre. The price today is almost double that and much more expensive if you go over the council's limited allocation. The Caboolture shire holds over \$58 million in the water and sewerage reserve fund. Last year this figure was \$46 million.

Since 1970, those people who had been connected to a reticulated water supply have paid for the cost of the extensions in the price of land purchased and have contributed millions by way of headworks charges towards the upgrading and construction of additional water and sewerage facilities. It is also a fact that the state government has contributed to the construction of water and sewerage facilities with varying subsidies from 25 per cent to 40 per cent. The most recent contribution was a 10-hectare parcel of land that the state government practically gave away to the council to use for its new sewage treatment plant to sewer Donnybrook. It was sold for \$250,000. No-one else can buy 10 hectares anywhere in that area, and all other landowners who were willing to sell council land did it but it was going to cost no less than \$1 million. The state government, through its generosity, has ensured that the Donnybrook project has land to progress. Surely ratepayers should be entitled to a percentage of the profits now being taken from the water consumers. Why should the council be talking about us paying more for water?

Councillor McLoughlin believes that council should only take the administration and maintenance costs from profits from water and sewerage, just as they were prior to John Howard's introduction of the NCP. Councillor McLoughlin states that the profits from the water and sewerage operations should be used to help state government to fund more water infrastructure. Then there would be no need to increase the price of water to ratepayers. Of course, over the years while council has been using water as a cash cow, it has allowed rapid subdivisions. We constantly hear the mayor skite about the huge increase in population in the Caboolture shire.

Time expired.

Longreach, Macropod Processing Plant

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (9.32 pm): I rise to speak to the House tonight on an issue of great importance not only in my electorate but also in western Queensland as a whole. I had a phone call this morning from the manager of the Longreach macropod processing plant to say that that plant will be closing down in a fortnight because its quota has been reached. The industry will grind to a halt in Longreach. Some 30 people will be thrown out of work.

I did try to ring the minister's office this afternoon. I understand that he has been away and I will be getting a phone call tomorrow. This is a situation where I will be seeking assurances from the minister that the harvest process can continue for another two or three weeks to let these people work up to Christmas and maybe bring the harvest process for 2007 back a little bit so that we can get these people to the festive season.

The industry is worth something like \$40 million to western Queensland. When we received a shortfall in the shearing industry through the demise of the wool industry the void was filled by the kangaroo industry. It is very important that these people continue to work. The fact of the matter is that we see now many of the roos that have been shot that are brought into the Longreach plant are brought in in boxes in adjoining towns and many are being transported through to South Australia. That is taking the carcasses away from the central plant in Longreach to be processed in South Australia, which is an impediment on our industry in western Queensland.

Whilst we have magnificent set-ups in Charleville and St George, it is paramount that common sense prevails on this issue in the interests of the working man. These are working men who are professionals in their field. They have spent tens of thousands of dollars on good plant. They have up-market Toyotas with stainless steel backs. They have to have vehicles which meet regulations set down by the department and the industry because they are dealing with human consumption meat which is an export earner for our country and, more importantly, a wealth generator for western Queensland.

I call on the members of the government, especially those members who may be a part of the EPA committee, to show common sense and leadership on this issue so that we can see that industry once again survive through to Christmas and then again pick up the mantle and show the professionalism that these people do as we progress into the season in 2007.

Cleveland Electorate, Patient Transport Services

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (9.34 pm): I rise to speak to the House on a matter that has been of great benefit to the people of the Cleveland area. The changing demographics of the Cleveland area have seen an increase in average age of the constituency. This generational creep has in itself placed additional pressure on certain facets of our emergency services in the area. One of these services that is feeling the ever-increasing pressure is the patient transport section of the Queensland Ambulance Service.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Emergency Services, Pat Purcell, for recently visiting the Cleveland electorate. The minister graciously presented the Cleveland community with a transporter ambulance vehicle, which will be a welcome addition to the patient transport section at Cleveland and, indeed, for many local residents. The vehicle represents, amongst other things, the Beattie government's commitment to reducing emergency response times in our area and throughout Queensland. Not only is this vehicle capable of transporting more patients at the same time; it is safer to operate and more user-friendly.

As I have stated earlier, the bayside community is home to many elderly residents who need to access health facilities both locally and in Brisbane on a regular basis. In the last financial year alone the patient transport officers at Cleveland Ambulance Station transported 3,244 non-acute cases—I repeat, 3,244 non-acute cases. That does not include the emergency transportations. That, in any terms, is a noteworthy achievement.

I have no doubt that this new vehicle will be embraced by these residents and many more in our community. It will go a long way to alleviating some of the burgeoning workload of the officers of the patient transport section in Cleveland. In fact, I believe this vehicle is, in part, a fitting acknowledgment for the hard work of the officers at the Cleveland Ambulance Station.

In my past life, I was a police officer—yes, I was a police officer. I spent many years working in and around the Cleveland area.

Mr Finn: You are not a bad bloke, though.

Mr WEIGHTMAN: I will take that interjection. I am not a bad bloke.

Mrs Sullivan: And the other two police officers.

Mr WEIGHTMAN: And the other two police officers, that is correct. I have witnessed firsthand the men and women of the Queensland Ambulance Service of that area in action and I can tell members that they do a fantastic job, often in the face of adversity. They are not only highly professional but also extremely competent and compassionate. They are as dedicated a group of people as members would find anywhere. I am both pleased and fortunate to have them working in the Cleveland area.

I plan to work closely with the ambulance officers at the station as well as the dedicated volunteers of the Cleveland Local Ambulance Committee to ensure that the needs of our community are met now and in the years ahead. Once again, I thank the minister for taking a further step towards meeting the needs of our growing community.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.38 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Barry, Beattie, Bligh, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Copeland, Cripps, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Dempsey, Dickson, Elmes, English, Fenlon, Finn, Flegg, Foley, Fraser, Gibson, Gray, Hayward, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, Horan, Jarratt, Johnson, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Knuth, Langbroek, Lawlor, Lee Long, Lee, Lingard, Lucas, McArdle, McNamara, Male, Malone, Menkens, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Pratt, Purcell, Reeves, Reilly, Reynolds, Rickuss, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Seeney, Shine, Simpson, Smith, Spence, Springborg, Stevens, Stone, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson