Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. H. Warner, Toowoomba South) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

- Proclamation under the Forestry Act 1959-1982
- Order in Council under the Forestry Act 1959-1982

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Remarks by Member for Chatsworth about Queensland Housing Commission

Hon. C. A. WHARTON (Burnett—Minister for Works and Housing) (11.2 a.m.), by leave: I refer to remarks made in the House yesterday by the member for Chatsworth (Mr Mackenroth) regarding the Queensland Housing Commission. He must surely realise that any system under which rents are subsidised and based on the income of a household requires complete honesty on the part of the individuals in the houses.

The overwhelming majority of tenants are honest, and it is the small number who cheat and do not declare income or unauthorised occupants who gain a financial advantage that is denied to, and is at the expense of, the honest tenants. Surely some measure of control through investigation must be necessary if these people are to be found and are to pay their proper rent based on the correct income on the house.

There is no fairer way of charging rent than using the income-based rent for public housing in Queensland. The honourable member knows this but appears dedicated to its replacement by some other method that could not possibly be as generous. It is difficult to decide whose side he is on. From his current outburst, he is certainly not on the side of the honest public housing tenant.

The honourable member for Chatsworth should realise that investigation applies only to a very small percentage of persons. Both the commission and I would be very happy to drop all these controls and investigations if we could rely on the integrity of all tenants. But experience has shown this would probably be an impossible dream.

Since members of the honourable member's party got into office in Canberra, the testing of incomes has been uppermost in their minds to limit the outflow of public funds to reduce the deficit. Money has been withdrawn from the over-70 age pensioners, the superannuation schemozzle, the recent bungling of assets testing, etc. I also understand that the Department of Social Security has greatly increased its inspectorial staff throughout Australia to check on cheats and other persons who defraud the social security system.

Surely the honourable member for Chatsworth must admit that some check and control is necessary in a public housing system that offers subsidised rent, that offers persons good housing at affordable rents and that allows enough remaining cash from wages and social security benefits for people to live decently and hold their head high in the community.

Sunnybank Private Hospital

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Wavell—Minister for Health) (11.4 a.m.), by leave: I wish to draw the attention of the House to a report in the “Southern Star” newspaper dated Tuesday, 20 March, in relation to the Federal Government's classification of the Sunnybank Private Hospital.

In this report, the honourable member for Salisbury and his Federal colleague the member for Fadden, in the House of Representatives, make a number of false and misleading statements about the hospital's classification in an attempt to shift the blame for the damage done by Medicare onto me and the Queensland Government.
The first paragraph states—

"Health services offered by the Sunnybank Private Hospital to the southern suburbs of Brisbane are being threatened by the lack of support from Health Minister, Mr Austin."

That statement is an outright lie.

Under Medicare, the Federal Health Minister (Dr Blewett) has classified all private hospitals into one of three categories for the purposes of subsidy payments. On behalf of the Queensland Government, I vigorously opposed this categorisation system during Medicare negotiations last year. When the proposal was discussed at the Health Ministers Conference on 15 June 1983, I stated—

"We have been caught many times before in taking over areas of Commonwealth responsibility. At this stage, with the information before us, we will not be participating in the scheme."

Nevertheless, Dr Blewett decided to proceed with the categorisation system, taking the entire responsibility for the introduction of a system that has already caused enormous disruption for private hospitals and their patients. Dr Blewett has not even sent me a list of the classifications of private hospitals in Queensland, obviously because he understands that the State is not participating in the system. However, this has not prevented Dr Blewett and his ALP colleagues, such as the honourable member for Salisbury, from attempting to drag me and the Queensland Government into the mess that Medicare has created in the private hospital sector.

Mr Goss: Tell us about the letter you wrote to the hospital. Why don't you table it?

Mr AUSTIN: I inform the member for Salisbury that there is more to come.

Dr Blewett has telexed me on a number of occasions seeking my views on variations to the system or to the classifications of various private hospitals. On each occasion I have responded by saying that the Queensland Government has no objection, provided no additional cost was incurred by it.

Under the 1983 amendment to the health legislation the Federal Health Minister is required to consult with a State Health Minister before any variation is made in a private hospital category. However, the Federal Health Minister need only have regard for the views of the State Health Minister, and is not bound to accept them.

Dr Blewett has never consulted me about the Sunnybank Private Hospital, which I understand—

Mr Goss: Table the letter you wrote to the hospital.

Mr AUSTIN: I will be delighted to do that. I do not have the letter with me today, but I will produce it next week. It will give me a chance to give the member for Salisbury and his party another going over.

I understand that the Sunnybank Private Hospital is seeking to be upgraded from category 2 to category 1. Neither I nor this Government has any power to upgrade that hospital; that responsibility rests entirely with Dr Blewett.

If the future of the Sunnybank Private Hospital is threatened, as alleged by the honourable member for Salisbury and his Canberra colleague in the said newspaper report, the entire blame lies with the Labor Federal Government and its disastrous Medicare scheme.

The honourable member for Salisbury either is ignorant of the facts and the terms of the relevant Federal legislation, which is most surprising for someone supposedly trained in the law, or has set out to deliberately deceive the people of Queensland on this issue. That is what he has done; he has set out to deliberately deceive the people of Queensland. The Labor Party is very vulnerable on the classifications of private hospitals so its members are running round the State trying to put the blame on the State Government; but the legislation lays the blame entirely at the feet of the Federal Government. No matter what the member for Salisbury may say, the legislation provides that the Federal Minister for Health is responsible. I believe that the member for Salisbury, like the rest of his ALP colleagues here and in Canberra, has set out to deliberately distort the truth about what Medicare is doing to hospitals and patients in Queensland because of major blunders by its architect, the Federal Health Minister (Dr Blewett).
Youth Employment Opportunities

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Peak Downs—Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs) (11.9 a.m.), by leave: I draw the attention of the House to a major Government inquiry into youth employment opportunities. State Cabinet has agreed to a comprehensive review of youth employment prospects and possible State Government responses.

From the outset, I say that the Queensland Government is determined to come to grips with the problems of unemployed youth in Queensland. Although Queensland has the lowest unemployment rate for persons aged 15 to 19 years, that rate of 24 per cent or in real terms, 37,000, is still unsatisfactory. What is needed is goodwill by all parties—trade unions, employers and the young persons themselves.

People are increasingly bringing to my attention the difficulties of employing young persons when, in many instances, they are required to pay adult rates of pay. Even where there are junior rates of pay, they are generally related to the age of the person and not his or her experience. Some awards do not have any junior rates of pay, and this acts as a disincentive to employ juniors.

I believe that if trainee rates along the lines of apprenticeship rates were introduced it would encourage youth employment. I am speaking not about the trades, technical and professional occupations, but about those occupations which people enter with little or no skills and in which the skills training falls back on the employer. What must be addressed is that a realistic wage must be paid to young people while they are in a learning situation.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr LESTER: It is very clear that members of the Labor Party do not want to co-operate in anything that will help to gain employment for the young people of this State. Labor members would rather knock than do something to overcome the problems.

The Industry and Commerce Training Commission of my department has provision for traineeships, and I will be asking the inquiry to consider how traineeships can be effectively implemented to open employment opportunities for young people.

I do not intend that this inquiry be a bureaucratic exercise, and I will be ensuring that programs undertaken within other States of Australia and our near neighbour, New Zealand, will be considered throughout the inquiry.

Whilst my department will be co-ordinating this inquiry it will be examining employment and training programs conducted by other departments.

I expect to invite submissions from employers, unions, members of the public and, in fact, anyone who feels he has worthwhile information which will assist the inquiry in opening up employment opportunities for our young people, who are the life-blood of our nation and deserve our whole-hearted support and investment in their future.

The inquiry will be holding hearings in various parts of the State. Most inquiries will be chaired by myself.

Sunshine Association

Hon. N. J. HARPER (Auburn—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (11.13 a.m.), by leave: I deplore the attempt by Opposition members to bring the failure of the Sunshine Association into the realm of politics, as they did yesterday. In a ministerial statement that I made yesterday I said—and I repeat it now—that in my opinion—

Mr Wright: An attempted cover-up.

Mr HARPER: I think it was the honourable member for Wolston who said that. If I am incorrect, I apologise. However, a member of the Opposition—perhaps it was the Leader of the Opposition, who yesterday disclaimed—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister asked leave to make a ministerial statement. I ask him to proceed.
Mr HARPER: I repeat that I deplore the attempt by members of the Opposition to make charity a political matter. I said that yesterday, and I also said that I would refrain from doing likewise. However, if the Leader of the Opposition wishes to name people, he should start at the top of the Brisbane City Council's Labor administration.

Mr CAMPBELL: I rise to a point of order. Would the Minister please make his ministerial statement?

Mr HARPER: I take this opportunity to indicate to the House a report in today's "Daily Sun" that follows my statement to the Parliament yesterday in regard to the Sunshine Association of Australia. The report says that a Labor front-bencher stated yesterday that the State Government knew 15 months ago of shonky business within the Sunshine Association.

As I indicated to the House yesterday, a complaint was received by the Department of Justice in November 1983. Investigations into that complaint commenced in December 1983. The books and records were examined by qualified inspectors of the department and their final report was submitted only this month. I also indicated yesterday that it was received by me yesterday morning.

The report in the newspaper also stated—
"Donations of toys and goods to 44 children were not included in Mr Harper's figures."

The report further stated—
"According to the Sunshine Association of Australia, the cost of granting a child's last wish averages between $1500 and $2000."

It reported Mr Shuker as saying that much of that cost was donated by sympathetic companies willing to assist.

I shall outline the facts. From records provided by the association it is evident that, since the inception of the Sunshine Association, approximately $15,000 of the funds raised was expended in assisting terminally ill children and their families. Donations of goods and services to the value of approximately $13,500 were also provided by organisations sympathetic to the association's cause. Accordingly, the average amount spent on granting a child's last wish would be closer to $650 than the amount of $1,500 to $2,000 suggested in the report.

Mr Shuker was also reported as saying that he had received an annual salary of $20,000 and that his wife was paid $10,000 for selling and packaging goods to raise money. From the records of the association and information given to my inspectors, it would appear that the present salary payable to Mr and Mrs Shuker is $30,000 per annum and $16,000 per annum respectively, and that Mr Shuker, as national executive director, has the use, for official and private purposes, of a motor vehicle leased by the association.

Between August 1982, the date of inception of the association, and 31 December 1983, the association sold merchandise, the value of which is difficult to calculate accurately because what is available is a mixture of gross and net figures. However, the merchandise was sold by the association in the name of charity to raise funds. In addition, donations of $207,472 were received.

During that same period, only $10,916 was expended on the objects of the association. I repeat that so that Opposition members who are too busy talking among themselves might clearly understand that I am talking about the period from August 1982 to 31 December 1983. During that period the records show that only $10,916 was expended on the objectives of the association.

However, a similar amount in goods and services would have been donated by organisations sympathetic to the association's cause. As I indicated to the House yesterday, investigations by officers of my department are continuing. When further details resulting from those investigations are available, I will make sure that members of this Parliament are made aware of them.
PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr WRIGHT (Rockhampton—Leader of the Opposition) (11.20 a.m.), by leave:
Yesterday in the House I asked two questions of the Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer, one relating to State taxation revenue and the other to levels of Commonwealth funding to the States. The Minister, by way of reply, stated emphatically that the figures to which I referred were not correct. He said the report in which the figures were contained was wrong. He did so on not fewer than than three occasions, stating at one point, “I am saying that it is wrong in every way.”

The Minister has implied that I supplied incorrect, misleading or inaccurate information to the House. I cannot allow such an accusation to be levelled without responding. I resent the Minister’s suggestion that I did, in any way, supply incorrect information to the House.

The figures to which I referred were contained in the December 1983 Reserve Bank Bulletin—and, I stress, were supplied to the Reserve Bank by the Queensland Government Treasury. In other words, the Minister is disputing, or rejecting, information supplied officially by his own department.

The Reserve Bank Bulletin provides a comparison of State taxation revenue. It shows that since 1975-76, Queensland State taxes have increased by 145 per cent; New South Wales, 144 per cent; Victoria, 156 per cent; South Australia, 95 per cent; Western Australia, 130 per cent; and Tasmania, 123 per cent. The Reserve Bank figures, which are, in turn, the Government’s figures, show that Queensland has had the largest increase in State taxes other than Victoria.

In relation to my second question yesterday, the Reserve Bank Bulletin of December 1983 also shows that, since 1975, Queensland has received the highest increase in Commonwealth funding of any State. It received an increase of 184 per cent compared with 149 per cent for New South Wales, 146 per cent for Victoria, 138 per cent for South Australia, 151 per cent for Western Australia and 143 per cent for Tasmania.

Mr SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. Does this not constitute a debate rather than a personal explanation?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I cannot allow the point of order.

Mr WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Minister sought yesterday to discredit these figures by saying they were “wrong in every way” and also by introducing a totally irrelevant reference to tariff protection. The Opposition appreciates that the Minister is under a great deal of pressure to keep alive the myth about Queensland being a low-tax State. In fact, he went so far yesterday as to say, in response to my questions, that Queensland was the lowest-taxed State in Australia.

I feel that this matter needs also to be corrected. The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures (1981-82) show that both South Australia and Tasmania had lower State taxes per head than Queensland. These figures are Queensland—$504.01 per head; South Australia—$476.76 per head; and Tasmania—$495.86 per head.

In conclusion, I reiterate that the figures to which I referred in the House yesterday were not my figures, or the figures of the Federal Labor Government. They were, in fact, based on information supplied to the Federal Labor Government by the National Party Government of Queensland.

Hon. W. A. M. GUNN (Somerset—Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer) (11.23 a.m.), by leave: I did refute those figures. I refer to the figures from the Institute of Public Affairs. They show that in two years the growth in State taxation in the four Labor States ranged from 40 per cent in Victoria to almost 27 per cent in South Australia. Queensland’s increase was just over 15 per cent—in effect, a reduction in the real level of taxation. I will say that the increase in Tasmania was only 10 per cent.

A 40 per cent increase in Victoria in two Budgets means that Premier Cain is collecting an additional $800m, which represents about $320 for every adult in Victoria. However, growth in Victorian State taxes has not matched Government spending, which increased in that State by 43 per cent. No wonder Victorians are flocking to Queensland!
Last year, per capita taxes amounted to $640 in New South Wales, $632 in Victoria but only $482 in Queensland. In New South Wales, with a work-force of 2.5 million, $1.3m was paid in pay-roll tax. In Victoria, with a work-force of 1.8 million, $969,700 was paid in pay-roll tax. In Queensland, with a work-force of 1,078,000, the Government received $394,000. In addition to that, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia have a 1 per cent surcharge on firms that have an annual wages bill of over $1m.

I will now make a comparison of workers' compensation figures. I am sure my ministerial colleague will not mind. These figures come from the Workers Compensation Board and are the rates per $100 of wages paid. In the building and construction industry, the figure in Queensland is $4.70; in New South Wales, $29.54; and in Victoria, $21.88. In breweries, the figure in Queensland is $3.65; in New South Wales, $12.87; and in Victoria, $6.29. For clothing factories the figure in Queensland is only 97c; it is $8.05 in New South Wales and $4.08 in Victoria. For indoor clerical work, the Queensland figure is only 24c, compared with 44c and 79c in the southern States. Underground coal-mining has a Queensland figure of $8.02; in New South Wales it is $22.72; and in Victoria, $40.22.

Mr DAVIS: I rise to a point of order. Will the Minister table those documents?

Mr GUNN: No, I will not. I refuse to. I will read the figures out because it is necessary that the Opposition hear them.

Mr DAVIS: I move—

"That the Minister table the documents."

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister.

Mr DAVIS: I rise to a point of order. I move—

"That the Minister table the documents."

That is a straight-out formal motion.

Mr GUNN: Mr Speaker, as soon as I have read from these documents, I will table them. First, the Opposition will have to cop it.

Mr SPEAKER. Order! The Minister has advised that he will table the documents.

Mr GUNN: It is a pity that the Leader of the Opposition has not read these figures. They were handed out at the opening of the building for the Workers Compensation Board.

In department stores, the Queensland figure is $1.30, and in New South Wales it is $3.03. In the field of engineering, the Queensland figure is $5.99; New South Wales, $21.65; and Victoria, $19.47. Abattoirs in Queensland pay a figure of $16.61, while the New South Wales figure is $27.87, and in Victoria it is $37.66. For motor workshops in Queensland, the figure is $1.58; in New South Wales, $1.03; and in Victoria, $7.23.

For hotels, the Queensland figure is $1.34; it is $4.08 in New South Wales, and $6.71 in Victoria.

In the pastoral industry, Queenslanders pay $3.65; in New South Wales, $12.73; and in Victoria, $15.72. In the farming and agricultural areas, it is $2.84 in Queensland, $12.73 in New South Wales, and $11.06 in Victoria.

Mr Wright interjected.

Mr GUNN: The honourable member wanted it, and he is getting it.

In petrol and oil refineries, the figure in Queensland is $2.67; in New South Wales, $3.47; and in Victoria, $6. In the plumbing industry, Queenslanders pay $3.48; in New South Wales the figure is $8.03, and in Victoria $7.81. In the printing industry, the Queensland figure is $1.26, compared with $6.01 in New South Wales and $4.81 in Victoria.

Now I come to the big one. In sawmills and planing mills, the Queensland figure is $7.21, compared with $42.68 in New South Wales and $28.36 in Victoria. In warehouses, the premium cost per $100 in Queensland is $1.83; in New South Wales, $4.94; and in Victoria, $5.55.
I now turn to tariff protection, which I mentioned yesterday. The national average is $290 per annum per capita. In Victoria the figure is $430; in New South Wales, $294; and in Queensland, $123. In effect, Victoria receives an additional $307 per capita per annum from the Commonwealth Government in tariff protection. Victoria receives a total of $1,200m. That is why people from the other States are flocking to Queensland.

Whereupon the honourable gentleman laid on the table the documents referred to.

PETITION

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petition—

Funding, Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade

From Mr Burns (2,821 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will take action to provide more efficient and effective funding of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade.

Petition received.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, because of an inadvertent name-place error in question 1, I request that the answering of the question be deferred until the next day of sitting to allow a minor alteration to be effected.

Mr SPEAKER: Is the Minister in agreement?

Mr POWELL: If the honourable member can tell me what error he has made in his question, I can probably rectify it for him immediately.

Mr SPEAKER: Is the honourable member prepared to rectify the error now?

Mr SMITH: Yes. The words "Kelvin Grove" should replace the words "Mt Gravatt".

Questions submitted on notice by members were answered as follows—

1. Shortcomings in Education System

Mr Smith asked the Minister for Education—

(1) In view of the obvious concern of people who are apparently enrolling their children at alternative schools outside the State and recognised independent school systems, is he prepared to admit to substantial shortcomings in the State education system?

(2) For example, will he admit that the incidence of children's inability to read could, in fact, be reduced substantially if (a) class sizes were reduced to allow a lower student-teacher ratio and (b) many more remedial and resource teachers were available to assist students with specific learning difficulties?

(3) Has the resource teacher course, previously conducted at the Mt Gravatt campus of the Brisbane CAE, not been run in recent years and, if not, what is the reason?

(4) Will the Government be prepared to release teachers to attend this course if it were to be re-established?

(5) Has the Queensland Government requested Federal funds to re-establish the course?

Answer—

(1) Parents of children in Queensland have the right to enrol their children in whichever school satisfies the educational ambition they have for their children.

(2)—

(a) There is no proven relationship between class size and student achievement. It is the expectation of the Government that teachers have used the existing reductions in class sizes to increase the amount of individualised instruction and assistance for children with special needs.
(b) It is important that the responsibility for the progress of children should remain with the staff of the regular school and the children's parents and that an over-dependence on specialist teachers should not be fostered. Resource teachers are provided to assist classroom teachers. They directly assist only those children with severe problems.

(3) The resource teacher course (182a and 283a) conducted at Mt Gravatt has not been discontinued. This is the part of the question in which there was an error. I will check the position at Kelvin Grove and inform the honourable member and the House of the situation on the next day of sitting.

(4) Teachers from the Department of Education are currently on release to attend the course at Mt Gravatt.

(5) See (3).

2. New Hospital, Dirranbandi
Mr Neal asked the Minister for Health—
What is the present stage of development of the proposed new hospital for Dirranbandi?

Answer—
Approval has been granted for the preparation of working drawings and specifications for the new hospital at Dirranbandi. Documentation for this project is nearing completion and, following a satisfactory review by the Department of Works, approval will be sought for the Balonne Hospitals Board to call tenders.

3. Box Jellyfish
Mr Randell asked the Minister for Northern Development and Aboriginal and Island Affairs—
(1) Is he aware of the urgent need for measures to be taken to minimise the serious problems that are being caused by the box jellyfish in north Queensland?

(2) What are the safety qualities of a net being experimented with for swimming enclosures?

(3) Is a subsidy available to interested authorities from the State Government for the establishment of such nets?

(4) What measures are being taken to develop a vaccine to combat the deadly effects of the box jellyfish and is the State Government making any contribution to any research?

Answer—
(1 to 4) Following forceful representations by the honourable member and a rather aggressive advocating of northern interests, Cabinet provided $15,000 for research at the James Cook University of North Queensland for the purpose of investigating the breeding ground of chironex fleckeri, the box jellyfish as it is known. At the same time, a task force was set up under the leadership of Dr Joe Baker from the James Cook University. He is an eminent and acknowledged leading world authority in this field. The James Cook University, being close to the Australian Institute of Marine Science, is very well placed to handle the task force. Also the Government decided to make an attempt this year to provide in the Budget a 33½ per cent subsidy for anti-stinger nets, two of which have been set and have proved to be extremely successful in north Queensland.

The task force will make a three-pronged attack: (1) The provision of anti-stinger nets at a number of beaches in north Queensland; (2) The production of a better and more effective form of antivenene; and (3) The undertaking of research into the breeding grounds and the making of attempts to destroy these jellyfish in their breeding grounds in north Queensland.
I inform the House that, this year, three deaths have been caused by stings by *Chironex fleckeri*. That, I think, makes it one of the worst years ever. We are hopeful that the task force will make great inroads into solving this problem.

I thank the honourable member for the efforts that he has made in the past and is presently making.

4. Storage of Molasses for Drought Stock

Mr Randell asked the Minister for Primary Industries—

(1) Has the Federal Government abolished subsidies on the establishment of facilities to hold molasses for use in drought times to assist starving stock?

(2) If so, will he take every available action open to him to have these subsidies reinstated, bearing in mind the way they can help to alleviate the hardship and heartbreak associated with drought?

*Answer*—

(1) It is true that the Federal Government has abolished subsidies on the establishment of facilities to store molasses for use in drought periods. These subsidies were available to local authorities during the latter part of the recent severe drought, and storage facilities were approved for 10 country centres in the central and western parts of the State. Feedback from graziers indicated that the provision of these storages facilitated the feeding of livestock and in fact assisted in minimising the extent of drought mortalities.

Despite strong representations to Canberra, the Commonwealth rejected our request to continue this subsidy in non-drought periods. It argued that such a continuation was beyond the scope of the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements.

(2) I appreciate the interest shown by the member for Mirani in this important issue of the provision of molasses for drought-affected stock. I can assure the House that every available opportunity will be used to press the Commonwealth for a reconsideration of its decision.

For example, I have requested a senior officer of my department to raise this issue at the next meeting of the recently established National Drought Consultative Committee. This is a joint Commonwealth/State committee, with additional representation from the National Farmers Federation. One of its functions is to consider alternative assistance measures. I hope that it would recognise that the correct time to construct storage facilities for molasses is prior to the onset of drought rather than waiting until a drought has begun to take its toll of the livestock population.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

Sunshine Remedial Centre; Sunshine Association of Australia

Mr WRIGHT: In directing a question to the Minister for Welfare Services and Ethnic Affairs, I refer him to the timely revelations yesterday by the ALP shadow Minister for Justice (Bob Gibbs) regarding the Sunshine Association of Australia, and I draw his attention to the fact that the State Government, in this year’s Estimates of the Probable Ways and Means, granted $40,500 to the Sunshine Remedial Centre. I ask: As the Sunshine Remedial Centre is a totally separate organisation from the Sunshine Association of Australia, will the Minister join with me in separately identifying these two organisations and assuring the community that Sunshine Remedial Centre, which carries out care for disabled people of 14 years and over, is a reputable organisation and is not under any form of suspicion?

Mr MUNTZ: I am not aware of the details of the particular organisation to which the Leader of the Opposition has referred. I will certainly have the matter investigated to ensure that that organisation can continue to operate on the basis that it has operated in the past.

Mr Wright: But not identified with this other organisation.

Mr MUNTZ: At this stage, I cannot comment on whether it can be identified with the other organisation. I will make the appropriate investigations and report back to the honourable member.
In-line and Video Game Machines

Mr WRIGHT: In directing a question to the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, I refer to his previous denial that he had any knowledge of a man by the name of Jack Rooklyn or any criminal or gambling activities associated with this man or a company known as Queensland Automatics. I ask: Is it correct that in recent times, with the approval of the Justice Department, Queensland Automatics, which is a front for Jack Rooklyn, has acquired 33 new sites, such as snack bars, cafes and fast-food stores, for the placement of video games in Brisbane and the surrounding district? Will the Minister now investigate the claims that, having legally obtained permission for these sites from his department, video game machines are now being replaced by in-line gambling machines?

Mr HARPER: I am not aware of the accusations made by the Leader of the Opposition. Of course, the question of licensing sites for entertainment machines is dealt with in the normal course by local authorities, subject to my department’s approval of permits to conduct those machines.

During recent months, I have refused permits for particular sites and have approved permits for the establishment of entertainment machines at particular sites. I will have the matters raised by the Leader of the Opposition investigated, and I will be quite happy to report back either directly to him or, preferably, to this House.

Mr Wright: To the Parliament.

Mr HARPER: The Leader of the Opposition has requested that I report to the Parliament, and I am very happy to do that.

Train Robbery

Mr NEAL: I ask the Minister for Transport: Is he aware that there has been a pay-roll robbery from one of Queensland’s trains this morning? If so, will he inform the House of the circumstances of that robbery?

Mr LANE: This morning, near Gladstone, an armed hold-up took place from a fast express freight train. The staff on that train were threatened by two men with firearms and told to lie on the floor of the guard’s van or they would be shot. A pay-roll of $51,000 was taken from that train. It consisted of salaries and wages for traffic and maintenance employees in that division.

I am happy to report that no-one was hurt in the robbery. However, the two men, using bolt-cutters, cut the chain holding the steel pay-roll box to the brake lever, threw the box out of the train and jumped down after it. They also stole the guard’s radio so that the alarm could not be raised.

Arrangements have been made to ensure that the railway employees affected by the loss of the pay-roll will be paid promptly. Of course, the important thing is that no railway staff were injured.

The police are investigating the robbery and my colleague the Minister for Police informs me that a State-wide alert has been raised and that road-blocks have been set up. I will conduct a review of security procedures to guard against a repetition of this type of train robbery in the future. I am pleased to say that such robberies are fairly rare.

In-line Machines

Mr WARBURTON: I have a question for the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General. On 7 March 1984, the House was given details of the 1974 Moffitt royal commission, the 1978 Allen inquiry and the 1983 poker machine inquiry. Those inquiries mentioned Jack Rooklyn and his involvement with criminal activities. I ask: Has the Minister considered the findings of those inquiries? If he has, does he agree that the company Vimi Pty Ltd, which owns Queensland Automatics, was established by Jack Rooklyn as a front to avoid the requirements of the Nevada Gaming Commission? Most importantly, does the Minister believe that Jack Rooklyn should be allowed to operate his in-line machine business in Queensland without a public inquiry or police investigation into his activities? Will he initiate such an inquiry or police investigation?
Mr HARPER: Queensland is a free-enterprise State. That means that any person has the right to conduct a legitimate business within the constraints of the law. I am not interested in who that person is, or whether he has a criminal record, provided that he operates within the law now. Of course, people with criminal convictions are restrained by the law in some of their activities. Those who may only be under a cloud do not suffer the same constraints.

This Government believes in free enterprise. If a person has the enterprise to establish an industry that operates within the law, he should be encouraged to do so. However, the honourable member's question related to suggested illegal activities. I repeat that such suggestions are always investigated and, when appropriate, action is taken.

Inspection, Regulation and Policing of Amusement Machines

Mr WARBURTON: My second question also is to the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General. I ask: Does his department have only five inspectors to inspect, regulate and police amusement machines, including in-line machines, throughout Queensland? Does he agree that that number of inspectors is totally inadequate for the task? Will he advise the House why, on the pretext that the department has spent over its budget and cannot afford the additional expenses that will be incurred, those inspectors have been ordered to stay in their offices in the department and do paperwork instead of going out into the field to police gambling and in-line machines?

Mr HARPER: If the inspectors to whom the honourable member referred have been given instructions not to go outside but to stay inside, those instructions have been given without any authority from me and without referral to me as Minister. I say that quite categorically.

In the past, those inspectors have gone out into the field and carried out their duties quite effectively. When Opposition members began talking within the last week or two about the illegal use of in-line machines, I indicated to the House that usually my inspectors, when they are required to go into country areas, move about in pairs, if for no other reason than that they are required to remove and confiscate certain machines. At that time, inspectors had confiscated machines at Toobeah, Goondiwindi and Surat, and I informed the House of that. So inspectors within my department do move about.

However, I make no apology for saying that it is not my intention, nor that of the Government, to set up further inspectorial bureaucracy containing hundreds of de facto policemen merely to supervise the operations of what, in the majority of cases, are most respectable clubs and organisations throughout Queensland. If members of the Opposition wish to continue to harass legitimate, well-run and well-organised clubs throughout Queensland, so be it. But my department will carry out its duties in a most responsible manner. It will certainly not take part in a witch-hunt at the behest of the Opposition.

My department will continue to supervise the permit system that operates, and it will continue to supervise clubs that have permits to operate entertainment machines. That will be done to the best of the ability of the inspectors available. They will continue to operate, as they have in the past, in the field.

Inspection, Regulation and Policing of Amusement Machines

Mr GOSS: I direct a supplementary question to the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General. I ask: If he is not responsible for the instructions to the Justice Department inspectors to stay in their office, which officer of his department has the authority to give instructions one way or the other to those inspectors?

Mr HARPER: Responsibility for that type of day-to-day instruction to officers within the Justice Department does not come back to the desk of the Minister; policy decisions do. In view of the suggestion by the Opposition, I will certainly make inquiries as to whether any officer with authority in my department has given an instruction of the nature suggested.

I assure the de facto spokesman for justice that, if such an instruction has been given, it will be countermanded. It is not my policy to impose a restriction of the type suggested.
Mr HENDERSON having asked a question without notice—

Mr GOSS: I direct a question without notice—

Mr HENDERSON: I rise to a point of order. I asked a question without notice.

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If it is such a joke, and if the Minister so requests, I think that the question should be put on notice for the next day of sitting.

Mr HINZE: To enable me to adequately answer the series of questions—I understand that the honourable member requires a full and detailed answer—and because I intend to give his predecessor a bit of a serve in the process, I ask him to place his question on the notice paper.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the honourable member to do so.

Mr HENDERSON: I do so accordingly.

Speech by Member for Ipswich on Police Dogs Bill

Mr HENDERSON: I ask the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police: Has he read an article which appeared recently in the “Daily Sun” referring to comments from the Queensland Police Union on a speech made by the honourable member for Ipswich during the debate on the Police Dogs Bill? If so, does he agree with the comments of the Queensland Police Union treasurer, Mr Garry Hannigan, that the speech served no useful purpose in advancing the cause of the Queensland Police Force?

Mr GLASSON: I am aware of the comments made by the Queensland Police Union in response to the contribution made by the member for Ipswich that night. That was a very important piece of legislation. For the first time in the history of the Commonwealth of Australia, the right was given to a very important part of the police department—police dogs accompanied by their handlers—to enter into areas previously restricted to it.

Honourable members might remember my comments in reply to the debate that night. I said that one could be forgiven for thinking that the member for Ipswich was doing a screen test as a clown. The debate on the legislation was a serious matter. However, the second member of the Opposition to speak to it that night said that the comments made by the member for Ipswich were in good taste; indeed, that they introduced a bit of humour into the Chamber after the long day we had had. Obviously, members of the Queensland Police Union shared my view that a more responsible attitude might have been expected of the member for Ipswich instead of his making a joke of the matter. The comments of the union were appropriate. It views the police dogs as a tremendously important segment of the Queensland Police Force.

Speech by Member for Mt Gravatt on Police Dogs Bill

Mr PREST: I ask a supplementary question of the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police: Was it not in the same debate that the member who asked that question referred to Senator Susan Ryan as a bitch?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PREST: What did the police union think of that statement?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It was a terrible statement. I call the member for Salisbury.

Mr GOSS: Was that last question on notice?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not allow that question as a supplementary question.

In-line Machines

Mr GOSS: In directing a question to the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, I remind him that three weeks ago I told the House that in-line machines have been banned as gambling machines in England, Scotland, Wales, most other European
countries, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. I now ask: Has he in the intervening three-week period confirmed for himself that those machines have been so banned in those countries as gambling machines? What action has he taken in the last three weeks to assess whether or not such machines are being used for gambling in Queensland? Does he accept the findings of Australian commissions of inquiry and the United Kingdom royal commission report on gambling that such gambling machines are used from time to time by organised crime to launder the proceeds from drug-push ing and prostitution? What guarantee can he give that organised crime does not have links with the distribution and operation of in-line machines in Queensland?

Mr HARPER: I was interested to hear the honourable member claim three weeks ago, as he says, that in-line machines were banned in so many nations throughout the world. I was very interested to hear his advocacy of their legalisation in Queensland. It seemed to me to be strange logic that he was drawing the attention of honourable members to the fact that the machines were prohibited in so many countries throughout the world, but as a spokesman for the Labor Party was advocating legalisation of the machines for gambling in this State. That raised the question, “Why?” Was the Labor Party trying to compensate for some previous payment or was it looking for more favours from that direction? I indicated to the member at that time and I reiterate now: appropriate action has been taken and will continue to be taken in regard to in-line machines used for illegal purposes in Queensland.

Budget Deficit

Mr BORBIDGE: I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer: How does Queensland's projected Budget deficit compare with the Budget deficit of other States and what is the present credit rating of the Queensland Government?

Opposition Members: Don't read it, Bill.

Mr GUNN: One would have thought that, when the ALP returned to its usual place in the Chamber after the last election, with increased numbers of course, an increased amount of intellectual capacity would have been noticed, but it has not been. I thought that the Opposition might have had some new ideas and fresh submissions. Instead, it dishes up the same, beat-up, old statements and stories that it has used in the past.

I know that the honourable member is referring to an article in the “Gold Coast Bulletin” by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Mr Warburton), in which he stated that Queensland had a deficit of $1.113m. An appropriate reply to that allegation is what the then Dr Edwards said in this House 12 months ago to the day when answering one of those old, beat-up questions asked in the House from time to time: This deficit is a figment of the imagination of the Opposition.

The Opposition is incapable of understanding how the Queensland Government has been able, over a period of years, to forge ahead with infrastructure financing without once placing any added burden on the tax-payers of this State. In effect, the deficit figure referred to by the honourable member in that press article comprises expenditure on major, important mineral railway line developments, water supply projects and power generation projects in Queensland. In general terms, these commitments are funded by mineral development organisations through security deposit.

I suggest to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that he speak with the member for Nudgee (Mr Vaughan), who spoke on this very subject last night in the debate on the Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement and Queensland Coal Trust Bill. The member for Nudgee displayed some, but not much, understanding. Because the member for Nudgee has at least a flicker of understanding of the matter, I suggest that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition speak to him.

The key point in all of this is that the development of these major projects will not influence the Budget in any way and will not place a burden on the tax-payers of this State.

Mr McLEAN: Mr Speaker, I wish to ask a question of the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs, but quite obviously the Government does not place a great deal—

Mr GUNN: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: Order!
Mr GUNN: The Honourable the Minister is at Executive Council.

Mr McLEAN: With another five! I will redirect the question.

Mr GUNN: Mr Speaker, I repeat: the Honourable the Minister has special business at Executive Council.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Bulimba to ask his question.

Industrial Relations between Government and Government Employees

Mr McLEAN: In directing to the Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer this question which I wished to direct to the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs, I refer to the obsession of the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs about the need for harsh industrial laws, his attack on penalty rates and his refusal in response to recent questioning to give full support to recommendations and decisions of the State Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. I refer to the fact that, although Queensland is fortunate to have had an unprecedented period of industrial peace in the private sector of industry, industrial havoc has occurred in the public sector, for which the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs and the Government are directly responsible.

I now ask the Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer: Will he explain why the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs is unable to maintain good industrial relations between the Government and Government employees, and what action has he taken to overcome the industrial unrest among State Government employees?

Mr GUNN: I refute that the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs has any obsession in the area referred to by the honourable member. He has been and is an excellent Minister. When I visit various areas throughout the State, that is the opinion expressed to me by people. I would not expect the honourable member to hold any other opinion. I place on record the work done by this newly appointed Minister. He has thrown himself into his work and he has done a very good job for Queensland.

Mr McLEAN: Mr Speaker, could I repeat the question? The Minister has not answered it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member has asked his question.

Mr McLEAN: The Minister has not answered the question in any way.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Does the honourable member intend to ask his second question?

Mr McLEAN: I will place my second question on notice.

Southport RSL Services Club

Mr JENNINGS: I ask the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: Is the Minister aware of articles in today's press alleging a pay-off of some $134,000 to a company in New South Wales, quoting as the informant, a Mr Doug Adams, and further scurrilous allegations made by the member for Salisbury that numerous violent threats have been made against individual members and competitors at the RSL Services Club at Southport? If the Minister is aware of those allegations, is he also aware that the Southport RSL Services Club is a highly respected and reputable club that has recently spent many thousands of dollars on improvements and the provision of an excellent service and facilities for the many hundreds of respectable and fine members and citizens of Southport who enjoy the club's social and friendly atmosphere?

Is the Minister also aware that I, as the local member for Southport, have never at any time been approached by any member of the club, or anyone else, with a claim that he has been threatened violence by anyone at the club, connected with the club, or because they visit the club?

If the Minister is aware of these matters, because the Southport RSL Club is currently involved in planning the construction of a magnificent block of home units for retired war veterans, and because the scurrilous allegations involving threats
of violence referred to by the member for Salisbury are a disgraceful affront to all the
decent members of this club, visitors to the club and the staff, will the Minister advise the
House of any action which is contemplated?

Mr HARPER: The Gold Coast newspaper with the report and allegations in it
has been brought to my attention. I do not doubt that the Southport RSL club is a
very responsible and respectable organisation, as are the other RSL and memorial clubs
throughout the State.

Mr Burns interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member for Lytton to put his micro­
phone down and to engage in fewer interjections.

Mr HARPER: I have no doubt that the Southport RSL club is a very responsible
and respectable club, as are the other RSL and memorial clubs spread throughout the
length and breadth of Queensland. This matter is just another indication of the Oppo­
sition's attack on clubs throughout Queensland. Opposition members are doing what
they can to bring about their downfall, and to reduce the impact the clubs are having
throughout Queensland. I make it quite clear——

Mr Prest interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the honourable member for Port Curtis.

Mr HARPER: I make it quite clear that I am not going to harass or undermine
the work of respectable and responsible clubs, or their committees, throughout Queensland.
We support clubs throughout Queensland. As Minister, I have made that clear and I
will continue to do so, as will my Government.

Mr Burns: Don't read. It is a question without notice.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Burns: Look at him reading.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Lytton will come to order.

Mr HARPER: I understand the embarrassment of the Opposition. I believe that the
source of at least part of the Opposition's information is this person to whom the
honourable member for Southport referred, one Doug Adams. In fact, I think that
yesterday the Opposition indicated that he was a former manager or manager/secretary
of the RSL club at Southport. It has been suggested to me that he left that employment
under something of a cloud, but I do not intend to canvass that here today. But I am
told——

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I point out to the Minister that his answer to this question
is turning into a debate. I ask him to answer the question explicitly and as quickly as
possible.

Mr HARPER: In answer to the honourable member's question—I am told that this
Doug Adams was also involved with Ted Vibert in the poker machine lobby and was
a zone official of the Registered & Licensed Clubs Association.

I leave it to members to exercise their own judgment as to any involvement that
this Doug Adams may have had with the Ainsworth organisation or any association or
collusion that he may have had with the Labor Party. I repeat: I have every confidence
and faith in the clubs operating legally and legitimately throughout Queensland. My
Government will do what it can to encourage them, not harass them in the way that the
Opposition would suggest.

Assault on Women by Doctors

Mr BURNS: A question without notice to the Minister for Health——

Mr Tenni: Don't read.

Mr BURNS: No. I am asking a question.
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Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BURNS: Do you want me to ask it this way? I refer to a story in today's "Telegraph", in which another doctor—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Lytton to ask his question.

Mr BURNS: I shall ask it through you, Mr Speaker. I refer to the story on the front page of today's "Telegraph"—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Lytton to ask his question in the formal manner.

Mr BURNS: Right. I have a question without notice to the Minister for Health. I refer to the statement by the president of the Queensland branch of the Australian Medical Association, Professor David Weedon, in the week-end press, which he repeated on television, in which he said—

"We've had at least six medical students in the last ten years with severe psychiatric disturbances yet the university allowed them to graduate."

I ask: What investigation has the Minister undertaken in relation to those six doctors who, in the words of the president of the Queensland branch of the AMA, had "severe psychiatric disturbances"?

In the light of the front-page story in today's "Telegraph", which reports that another doctor has been charged with drugging a woman and indecently assaulting her, is the Minister aware of the grave concern amongst the women in the community that there appears to be some laxity on the part of the university and the authorities that has allowed those doctors to run rampant, drugging and raping women who go to their surgeries?

Mr AUSTIN: Unfortunately, I have not had time to read today's "Telegraph". I do not read the newspaper during question-time. I did see the week-end media reports of the allegations that were made.

Mr Fouras: You know nothing about it?

Mr Burns: Hang on—this is serious.

Mr AUSTIN: It is a serious matter, but apparently the honourable member for South Brisbane is not treating it seriously. As the honourable member for Lytton quite correctly said, a number of women are extremely concerned about this matter. The names of the doctors mentioned in the allegations made by Dr Weedon in the week-end media have not been brought to my attention. Whether they have been brought to the attention of the Medical Board, I do not know. I am not in a position to know, but I will ask the chairman and advise the honourable member for Lytton.

I can say something, however, about the suggestion that the authorities should do something about the mental health of medical students prior to their registration as doctors. My understanding of the by-laws of the University of Queensland is that, in any faculty, the university has the authority, on a recommendation or report from university staff that a student is showing irrational behaviour or appears to have psychiatric or other problems, to exclude that student from the university. It should not be a matter for health authorities—

Mr Comben interjected.

Mr AUSTIN: The identikit man is talking again. I suggest that he keeps right out of this discussion.

Mr Burns: But don't you believe that the AMA has been irresponsible in not doing something about this before someone was charged with rape, and before the women were raped?

Mr AUSTIN: I am not aware of when this matter was drawn to the attention of the AMA.

Any professional person who graduates from a university, an institute of technology or a CAE can suffer mental problems. I admit that, with doctors, the issue is more sensitive. However, it is possible that there may be a crackpot engineer.

Mr Burns interjected.
Mr AUSTIN: Let me finish. This is a very serious matter. Engineers are responsible for the design of structures, and a crackpot engineer could perhaps design one to fall down. It is possible that there may be crackpot solicitors and crackpot architects. All sorts of professional people have responsibilities to the community.

Mr Burns: Will you check on those——

Mr AUSTIN: I will get to that in a minute. The responsibility rests with the tertiary education authorities to ensure that students who pass through the corridors of tertiary institutions are suitable graduates. The lecturers and tutors are the best people to judge the students as they proceed through their courses. Far more attention should be paid by them and by others associated with tertiary institutions to a student's progress.

I am not aware of the report in today's "Telegraph", and I do not know whether it has been brought to the attention of the Medical Board for investigation. I have been informed by the chairman of the Medical Board that the case involving Dr Michaux was referred to the board only about a week before the charges were laid.

Mr Burns: Do you have any idea——

Mr AUSTIN: I am trying to answer the honourable member's question, because it is a serious matter. I know what the member for Lytton is driving at, but I do not know the answer. I can only say that the AMA has not referred any names to me. I am not aware whether the AMA has corresponded with the chairman of the Medical Board, but I will endeavour to find out.

Coat of Arms

Mr FITZGERALD: I have a question for the Minister for Works and Housing for the next day of sitting. Because this Chamber does not display a coat of arms, and as to my knowledge, all other Chambers in Australia, including the former Legislative Council Chamber of this Parliament, do display coats of arms, I ask: Is there a coat of arms available for this Chamber, and if so, is it planned to display it in this Chamber?

Mr WHARTON: I can answer that now.

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Did the member for Lockyer ask that question without notice?

Mr FITZGERALD: I placed it on notice for the next day of sitting, but the Minister indicated that he wished to answer it straight away.

Mr SPEAKER: The Minister can answer the question as if it was asked without notice.

Mr WHARTON: I am prepared to answer the question. It is interesting to note, among the rabble that goes on in this Chamber, that one of the newer members has asked a question about this ancient and honourable institution's furnishings.

The Queensland coat of arms was never part of the original design. The appropriate place for the coat of arms would be where the historical pattern is displayed.

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr WHARTON: I am on the wrong side, not the right side, of the media men or television men.

As honourable members will recall, that historical pattern was restored.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: This is making an absolute mockery of questions.

Mr WHARTON: This does not suit the honourable member, does it?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Wolston.

Mr WHARTON: The honourable member is not interested in this very ancient and honourable institution.

Mr R. J. Gibbs interjected.
School Training in Handwriting Styles

Mr FITZGERALD: In directing a question to the Minister for Education, I refer him to a report that the South Australian Minister for Education intends to introduce into South Australian schools a new style of handwriting known as the modern cursive style. I now ask: Has consideration been given to the introduction of any changes to handwriting styles that are taught in Queensland schools? Further, is there any uniformity throughout Australia in handwriting styles?

Mr POWELL: I thank the honourable member for his question. At the beginning of the 1985 school year, a change in handwriting styles will be introduced into Queensland schools. The new handwriting style is to be called the Queensland modern cursive.

The present position is that two handwriting styles are taught in Queensland schools. In Year 1 and Year 2, vertical script is taught, and in Years 3, 4, 5 and later, cursive writing is taught. Those honourable members who went to school in Queensland would have been taught those styles.

Mr Davis: Running writing.

Mr POWELL: That cursive writing—or running writing as it has been referred to by the honourable member for Brisbane Central—is difficult.

Mr Comben interjected.

Mr POWELL: Obviously, the honourable member for Windsor is not interested in a legitimate question concerning education. It is a shame that he does not listen.

The cursive writing or running writing that is taught from Year 3 upwards is difficult to write quickly. Honourable members will know the illegibility problem that has evolved as a result of that style of writing.

The Queensland modern cursive, which will be introduced in 1985, has been introduced on a trial basis in 13 Queensland schools. The results of those trials are quite positive and interesting.

There will be uniformity in the eastern States and South Australia. I am not sure what Western Australia and Tasmania are doing. This modern cursive style permits the person writing to lift his or her pen in the middle of a word. If the present cursive style is written properly, the writer should not lift the pen. That is where the untidiness occurs, together with the lack of speed and illegibility.

Honourable members would be wise to find out more about this matter, because I have no doubt that their constituents will ask questions about it, particularly next year when, in Year 1, children will not be taught the vertical script; they will go straight into modern cursive.
I believe that most people will experience a change. I suppose that many people are frightened of change. It is a change, however, that will produce beneficial results, particularly for senior students who must write quickly.

**Lime Line-marking**

Mr CAMPBELL: In directing a question to the Minister for Education, I refer to recent publicity given to an incident in which a former groundsmen was blinded in one eye after being sprayed with lime, and I refer to footballers having received second-degree burns from lime lines on sporting grounds. I now ask: Will he ban the use of lime for line-marking in schoolgrounds?

Mr POWELL: Good heavens, no! I hope that the question has been asked frivolously.

In all schools of which I am aware, groundsmen are particularly careful in the way in which they mark schoolgrounds. To ban lime would be a ridiculous overkill. On many sporting fields, the lines are fertilised so that the grass in those places grows more quickly and greener and stands out. Dieseline and old oil are also used to mark lines. The use of lime for marking lines takes place mainly on tennis courts. It is only through carelessness that it can cause injury. Both principals of schools and groundsmen are particularly careful to make sure that no injury is caused to children no matter what material is used in the school area.

**Vertebrate Pest Legislation**

Mr CAMPBELL: In directing a question to the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police, I refer to an answer given by him on 28 February 1984 attempting to justify the withdrawal of the proposed Vertebrate Pest Act and also to a statement by him that there would be no categorisation of birds or fish. In view of the Fisheries Regulations gazetted on 26 January 1984, namely, the eighth schedule, which lists certain species of banned fish, I ask: Will he now clarify the intent of his statement that he made to the House on that day?

Mr GLASSON: It is true that I made a statement about the matter referred to by the honourable member on the day that he mentioned. That statement was not made in an attempt to justify the action taken by my department. I repeat that no action was taken by the Stock Routes and Rural Lands Protection Board to categorise those species, particularly birds, which is a matter that comes within my portfolio. Fish do not come under the portfolio of Lands, Forestry and Police; they come under the Primary Industries portfolio.

There is sufficient strength in the Stock Routes and Rural Lands Protection Act for the board to declare any birds considered to be pests to agriculture. There is no need to categorise them, as happens in other States. At the time, the Minister for Primary Industries made a decision in conjunction with other States to introduce uniform legislation. It was interpreted that Queensland would automatically join with other States in the categorisation of birds. There is no need to categorise birds, because there is sufficient power under the Act. The Stock Routes and Rural Lands Protection Act provides for the categorisation of birds that might be endangering crops or any other agricultural product.

**Queensland Transport System**

Mr De LACY: In directing a question to the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing, I refer to the 1982-83 Federal Budget, specifically Budget Paper No. 7, at page 66, which refers to a special allocation of $20m for north Queensland roads and transportation. I ask—

(1) Is the Minister aware that the Minister for Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services (Mr Tenni) admitted in a telegram to the member for Leichhardt on 13 October 1983 that these special Budget funds were allocated for the upgrading of Queensland's transport system generally and not for north Queensland roads and transportation, as specifically provided for?

(2) Can the Minister explain the discrepancy between the content of Mr Tenni's telegram and his own statement published in "The Cairns Post" of 20 October 1983 that $10m was for northern roads and $10m was for other transport projects such as railways and bus development in north Queensland?
(3) In view of that statement and in view of his Government's brutal exercise in cutting railway cost in north Queensland, will the Minister detail where and when this money was actually spent in north Queensland, especially the $10m for railways and bus development?

Mr HINZE: The honourable member is probably trying to indicate that the railway is not entitled to any of the special funding. The answer is a very simple one. If he took the time to discuss it with his Federal counterpart, he would discover that considerable funding is paid in levies on diesel fuel used in railway locomotives. The Department of Transport, quite rightly, is claiming reimbursement from the Federal Government for its own needs.

For the benefit of the honourable member, I will outline the system of road-funding in this State. The State is divided into five zones. I vividly recall an occasion on which the member for Mourilyan, I think it was, said that insufficient funds were being spent in north Queensland. I said to him, "If I told you the amount, you would be embarrassed and so would I." Much more is going into north Queensland—

Mr De Lacy: Did that $20m go to north Queensland?

Mr HINZE: "$20m plus" would be the best way to put it.

Mr De Lacy: That special allocation?

Mr HINZE: We will not talk about $20m or any special allocation. We will talk about the total amount of road-funding in Queensland, which is something like $400m. That amount is distributed between five zones in the State, of which the northern part receives—

Mr De Lacy: If I put it on notice, will you look at it closely and answer it?

Mr HINZE: I am trying to give the honourable a reasonable answer. If he puts it on notice, I will give him another answer, but it will be just the same as the one that I am now giving him.

Mr De LACY: I so do.

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

PRIVILEGE

Suspension of Member for Ipswich West

Mr BURNS (Lytton) (12.32 p.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. It relates to the way in which the member for Ipswich West (Mr Dave Underwood) was dealt with on Tuesday after the special adjournment.

I draw your attention, Mr Speaker, to what happened on the sitting day before the most recent adjournment. At that time, when the Leader of the House moved the adjournment of the House, the Leader of the Opposition moved to keep the House sitting to debate other matters that the Opposition felt ought to be debated.

Mr FitzGerald: He didn't move at all. He rose in his place.

Mr BURNS: He tried to move. I do wish to have a fight with anyone by way of interjection. I am raising a matter of privilege in relation to the way in which the House operates. If the member for Lockyer listens, he will realise that a responsible question is being asked. I will be asking Mr Speaker for an explanation.

The member for Ipswich West twice attempted to take points of order in support of what our leader was trying to do. At that time, he was warned under Standing Order 123A and then asked to withdraw. There was some confusion, because the member for Ipswich West did not withdraw. He sat in the Chamber. Mr Deputy Speaker, who at that time was the Chairman of Committees (Mr Row), did nothing about it. I suppose I am something of an expert on what happens when someone is named or warned in the Chamber. Mr Deputy Speaker did not, as is usually done, again ask him to leave. If that happens and a member refuses to leave, he is named under Standing Orders. The occupant of the chair then calls upon the Leader of the House to move a resolution.
Nothing like that happened to the member for Ipswich West. To be truthful, I must admit that there was a great deal of confusion at that time. The vote on the adjournment went ahead.

I said that there was confusion. Let me illustrate that by referring to the proof copy of Votes and Proceedings. All members receive a copy of Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly. I draw the attention of honourable members to proof No. 26, dated 8 March. The third page contains this entry—

“SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.—Mr Wharton moved, That the House, at is rising, do adjourn until Tuesday, 27 March, 1984.

Question put—The House divided.”

The division is then listed. However, the copy of Votes and Proceedings that is not a proof, which was delivered 24 hours later, contains this entry—

“SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.—Mr Wharton moved, That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Tuesday, 27 March, 1984.

Withdrawal of Disorderly Member.—And the Honourable Member for Ipswich West, Mr Underwood, after warning, continuing to be disorderly, under the provisions of Standing Order No. 123A the Deputy Speaker ordered the Honourable Member to withdraw immediately from the Legislative Assembly Chamber.”

So no-one should try to tell me that the officers of the Parliament were not a little confused. Proof Votes and Proceedings were printed that night and circulated to all honourable members the following day, but they did not mention that Mr Underwood had been disorderly. The official document, which was issued 24 hours later, states Mr Underwood was disorderly. Those documents are supposed to be the same, but one is a proof copy and the other is the final document.

I argue that Mr Underwood was confused, like all of us, and was in fact the victim of incompetence by Mr Deputy Speaker. If Mr Deputy Speaker had done his job, he would have ordered the member for Ipswich West from the Chamber. If the honourable member for Ipswich West had not left the Chamber, Mr Deputy Speaker should have moved at that time for him to be named.

Mr Speaker, I remind you that, while I have been a member of this Assembly, I have seen members of Parliament named and removed from the House and then, by mistake or otherwise, return to the Chamber to vote in a division. Mr Speaker or Mr Deputy Speaker—whatever has been in the Chair—has then warned the member and asked him to leave. As I said, that has happened on a number of occasions.

On this occasion Mr Deputy Speaker, who happened to be the Chairman of Committees (Mr Row), did not kick the honourable member out, did not follow the matter up when he did not leave, and did not warn him when he voted in the division. The Clerk of the Parliament and his table staff first produced a document that did not show that the honourable member for Ipswich West had been ordered from the Chamber. Two weeks later, that honourable member was kicked out for seven days. I do not believe that that is a fair go; I do not believe that that is the way things should happen. I believe that it was incompetence on the part of Mr Deputy Speaker that caused Mr Underwood to be removed for seven days.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I also speak to the honourable member's point of privilege and say to the member for Lytton that he is not in order in raising a point concerning the proof copy of Votes and Proceedings of this House. That document is correctly termed "proof", just as "Hansard" appears in its uncorrected proof form each morning.

Mr Burns: Properly corrected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will listen to me.

Proof Votes and Proceedings are verified in detail on the morning following each sitting day. Matters that may be of a serious nature, as this was, are checked thoroughly before the Votes and Proceedings are issued in their final form. That was the procedure followed in relation to the incident referred to by the honourable member for Lytton.
For the benefit of the honourable member for Lytton and other honourable members, I point out that there is precedent in the House of Representatives for the naming of a member at the next sitting as a result of incidents that occurred at the adjournment of the previous sitting of the House. The relevant passage from "Pettifer, House of Representatives Practice", which is at page 474, reads as follows—

"The naming of a Member usually occurs immediately an offence has been committed but this is not always possible. For example, Members have been named at the next sitting as a result of incidents that occurred at the adjournment of the previous sitting of the House."

References are given to the House of Representatives Votes and Proceedings 1934-37/361 and the Votes and Proceedings 1974-75/154. It is stated that, on the latter occasion, the member was named for refusing to apologise for his conduct on the adjournment of the House at the preceding sitting. While the present circumstances may not be precisely the same as those that occurred in the House of Representatives, the two references do indicate that there is no absolute bar against dealing with a member on a later day in respect of something that he has done in the House. Therefore, I cannot sustain the point of privilege raised by the member for Lytton.

Mr DAVIS: I rise to a point of order. In relation to the ruling you have just given, Mr Speaker, is there any precedent for sending a member out after that has been discussed at a branch meeting of the National Party?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is a frivolous point of order.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading—Resumption of Debate

Debate resumed from 1 March (see p. 1770) on Mr Glasson's motion—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

Mr GOSS (Salisbury) (12.39 p.m.): In his second-reading speech the Minister said—

"A session without a Land Bill is as welcome as an oasis in the desert."

After reading the Bill, I certainly agree with him, and I look forward to such an oasis. The Minister further said that land Bills—

"... are only partially understood by about four members out of seventy-two, and ... full of dreary, meaningless phrases for the rest."

After that fairly damning introduction, I read the legislation with interest. I was keen to assess the level of excitement and interest that might be found in it. I am sure that my speech this morning will reflect the degree of excitement and interest I found in the Bill.

The Bill is quite substantial but, on examination, it is found that many of the amendments are merely machinery because of the recategorisation of various leases and forms of holdings, and because a number of categories and phrases throughout the legislation have to be omitted. The substantial measures in the Bill take up much less space. From my point of view, the Opposition has no great problem with the substantive amendments. However, I will raise a number of matters relative to them.

One concept referred to in the legislation is of great interest to me and my party. It relates to when a person is seeking to transfer freehold land to a corporation. The question is whether the consent of the Governor in Council should be required. That brings up the question of who owns very large tracts of land in Queensland, who should be entitled to own them, what guide-lines should be established to control or regulate that ownership, and whether the public is entitled to know the extent of foreign ownership—whether the public is entitled to know who owns the farm.

I am concerned that, without realising it, we are becoming tenants in our own State. When people do realise what is happening to them, the psychological effect of being tenants will be quite crushing for them.

Unless this problem is addressed, and this Minister and other Ministers tried genuinely to address it some time ago, serious problems lie ahead for Queensland, the self-respect of Queenslanders and their respect for the Government.
In making such comments I feel on safe grounds. I join Sir Robert Sparkes, the National Party, Queensland graziers, Queensland farmers and the RSL. On a number of occasions, the last-mentioned organisation has censured the Government's policy on foreign ownership and the sale of land to foreigners. Indeed, motions have been passed at some of its official congresses calling on the State Government to prevent further land sales to people who are not Australian nationals. Comments from the RSL have been to the effect that this sort of transfer of Queensland land involves mostly speculative money, which causes spiralling land prices, forces up interest rates and, most importantly, crushes the hopes and aspirations of people trying to buy rural land.

It is very sad that the Government should preside over this process. It is a very sad day when the Government has no interest, and is not prepared to allow the public to take any interest, in who owns Queensland—who owns the farm. By the time we find out who does it may be too late to buy it back, and we will be tenants in our own country.

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr GOSS: Many people who have the same wishes as the honourable member for Brisbane Central are prevented by foreign speculators from taking up careers as graziers or farmers. I am sure that the honourable member would be very successful in that sphere because of his approach to life and his positive approach to the community in general.

As I said, some time ago, this Minister and other Ministers attempted to make a genuine start on a solution to this problem. It is a great shame that this Minister, the former Minister (Mr Hewitt), and the then Minister for Justice and Attorney-General (Mr Doumany), were thwarted, as were the hopes of the RSL, the Queensland graziers, the farmers, the National Party and Sir Robert Sparkes. It is a shame that the hopes and aspirations of all those people were thwarted by a higher authority.

Mr Simpson: The Labor Party in the other States does not do it.

Mr GOSS: I take it that the anonymous back-bencher who made that comment is against allowing the public to know the extent of foreign ownership and against those members of his own party who would legitimately and genuinely seek—I commend them for it—to allow Queenslanders, particularly country people, to know what is going on in their back yard. That is shameful. That sort of toadying may be very impressive as far as the Premier is concerned—I know that that is the means by which a number of Government members seek elevation to the front bench—but is a very regrettable attitude, and I hope that the back-bench members of the National Party Government will not maintain it for too long.

Less than two years ago, those three very responsible Ministers to whom I have referred submitted positive and clear proposals to Cabinet. The Premier knocked them back—much to the disappointment of all those groups and Sir Robert Sparkes. At that time, the Premier said—

"I don’t like questioning people who are prepared to invest in Queensland."

The problem is that he does not question the investment even if it is speculative. What if it is speculative? What if it is not working to improve the situation of country Queenslanders? What if it is disadvantaging young farmers and graziers who miss out on the opportunity to become property-owners in their own right?

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr GOSS: The best that the honourable member will do for young country Queenslanders is to allow them to be tenants or employees on properties owned by foreigners, and I think that that is a great shame. He should adopt a more positive attitude towards country Queenslanders. They are entitled to a better deal. The honourable member is here to represent the interests of Queenslanders—not Koreans, Japanese or Germans. If there is to be that sort of investment, he should be working hard to ensure that it is beneficial and not speculative.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr GOSS: It behoves the honourable member to stop toadying to the line adopted by the Premier, in contrast to the attitude adopted by those other responsible groups
that I have mentioned, and start to stick up for country Queenslanders. I will be the first to give him credit when he changes his tune and adopts the sort of approach that the Minister, Sir Robert Sparkes, the RSL and various rural organisations have adopted.

That is one of the more important elements that is dealt with in this legislation. Of course, it does not go anywhere towards achieving the sorts of goals that we should have and that I feel sure the Minister would like to achieve if he had his own way on this subject.

The legislation provides that the consent of the Governor in Council will be required if a person wants to transfer property, that is, certain freehold land, to corporations. It refers to controlling and regulating that sort of a transfer. It provides that if such persons want the consent of the Governor in Council they will have to give full particulars about the identity of the persons having effective control of the corporation in question and show whether majority control is in the hands of persons outside Australia.

Will the results of those sorts of inquiries be made available to the public or responsible rural organisations so that they will have the same private and exclusive information that the Minister and the Cabinet will have about what is going on?

It is obvious that through this process the Governor in Council will acquire very substantial information about the extent of foreign ownership, and the interests held by foreign corporations in large tracts of Queensland rural land. Will the Government make available to the public the information that comes before the Governor in Council? That is when we will see whether there is any sign of good faith on the part of the Government. If that information is not made available, only one conclusion will be drawn.

The Government will also require notification of full reference to the description and area of other land held in Queensland in which the transferee or assignee has an interest. Will the Government ask about land held in other States? Will it consider the aggregate ownership throughout Australia? I realise that the Queensland Government has no jurisdiction in the other States, but will it give consideration to the total Australian ownership by foreign companies when it consents to applications to freehold and transfer large tracts of rural Queensland land?

What criteria will the Government apply when giving consent to corporations, particularly those completely or substantially foreign owned? Why is it that the criteria are not spelt out in the legislation? Queenslanders are entitled to know the basis on which the Government will give consent to foreigners. If the criteria are not spelt out, the Government will be suspected of patronage and favouritism.

Apart from the information that must be disclosed by potential transferees, the Bill provides that the Minister can demand from either of the parties to the transaction such additional information or further particulars as he deems necessary. What has the Government in mind in that provision? As no guide-lines have been laid down, I ask the Minister to give some examples of the sort of information he would be looking for. No doubt the Minister and his officers have considerable experience in this regard. If he can outline what sort of additional information he is looking for, and whether it relates to the extent of ownership and the control of companies, it would enable an assessment of the Government’s action to be made. It would also indicate which companies are getting favourable treatment and which are not.

Many of the amendments in the legislation deal with reducing the remaining types of tenure in the general category. The Opposition has no argument with those amendments. In his second-reading speech, the Minister talked about eliminating unnecessary paperwork, and I agree with that. Many lawyers and members of the general public find the Lands Department a very strange and complicated beast. Anything that the Government can do to improve it will be appreciated. The Lands Department is a maze for most people.

Mr FitzGerald: You obviously think it is.

Mr GOSS: The Lands Department is a hopeless maze for people such as Mr FitzGerald who is endeavouring to interject but cannot think of more than one or two words to put together.
Another approach embodied in the legislation relates to Government policy about the subdivision of Crown land and how that approach has traditionally precluded the holding by companies of developed leasehold blocks in the more closely settled areas. In the Minister's second-reading speech, he said that it was necessary to guard against the possibility of such land becoming aggregated into a one-owner situation. I agree with the Government's approach.

There are certain restrictions on companies wishing to purchase land on which to conduct mining operations. Those restrictions, at the present time, carry over to the subdivisions. That means that even the smallest subdivision is held subject to the condition of no transfer without prior consent of the Governor in Council. That is to be amended by this legislation. However, I would like the criteria spelt out in more detail. The Government's proposal is that blocks in excess of 2,500 ha will remain subject to control on transfer but that a smaller block will not be. Is the Minister concerned about whether it is necessary to implement safeguards to prevent holdings being broken up into blocks smaller than 2,500 ha to avoid that sort of scrutiny?

I understand that that has happened and that certain foreign purchasers have avoided scrutiny by the Foreign Investment Review Board by breaking a purchase into smaller individual purchases each at less than $350,000.

The Minister referred to his approach to the problems involving mortgagees when consent or a further lease is not granted and the time expires. His approach seems to be quite a practicable one, and I have no hesitation in supporting it. However, to a certain extent I wonder why it takes so long for the consent to be granted. Apart from the Minister's answer to that question, I should state that the Opposition has no objection to the period specified, which I recall, is nine months.

A very sensible provision for which I commend the Minister is the one by which, in the case of the death of a lessee, the transmission of interest may be recorded without grant of probate. The Minister is quite right in saying that the monetary limit has to be increased. The move is a very sensible one because it avoids the unnecessary delays that occur in the granting of probate or letters of administration through the Supreme Court. Furthermore, it avoids unnecessary expense. All of us know that legal costs these days are quite considerable and that all of us should do all we can—shouldn't we, Mr FitzGerald—to reduce those that are not really necessary.

Mr FitzGerald: I could not agree with you more.

Mr GOSS: The honourable member is becoming very astute, and he will become even more astute as he agrees with me more often.

I turn now to particular aspects of the Bill. I find very interesting the amendment that changes the term "fixing of rent" to "determination of rent". Under the Act, the Minister had power to fix the rent. The Bill provides that he will have power to determine the rent. I realise that this Government was not responsible for the original terminology and that, even if it was not a Freudian slip, it has become one now. Of course, the Government has become sensitive to the use of the word "fix", by virtue of the fact that the word has acquired a new meaning under this Government.

I seek clarification on the provision changing the specific requirements in relation to the rate of interest to a term of interest as prescribed by Order in Council pursuant to section 171 (1), applicable at the time of publication and calculated upon annual rents.

I am interested to know what rate is proposed for the next year and how it will be determined. I should also like to know how often it will be determined and what terms will be involved. Will the rate change every year? I do not see any objection to that in principle, but I seek some clarification as to exactly how that alteration will be implemented in practice.

Other Opposition speakers will deal with different aspects of the legislation. Opposition members believe that there is a need to go further than this legislation and to look more carefully and in more detail at the provisions relating to the transfer of land to foreign corporations. Certainly it is dealt with in the legislation, but only in a passing manner. The Bill does not really address the problem that I know the Minister would like it to address.
The Australian Labor Party, when elected to power, will have no hesitation in moving in that direction. The type of measure that the Labor Party urges upon the Government is the freezing of transfers to foreign ownership so that no net increase in foreign ownership occurs until the extent of foreign ownership can be determined. It would also require that foreign corporations make substantial improvements and, as well, that consent to a transfer not be given when a local farmer or grazier is prepared to take over the property that it is intended will be sold to a foreign corporation.

[Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.15 p.m.]

Mr STONEMAN (Burdekin) (2.15 p.m.): It gives me tremendous pride and pleasure to speak in support of what is one of the most far-reaching and supportive Bills that could possibly be introduced in respect of the pastoral areas of this State. I congratulate the Minister and his staff in the Land Administration Commission on the way in which they have approached the problems that have been experienced for many years by the people in the vast areas of this State.

I wish to refer to some of the problems that I have experienced with pastoral holdings in this State. A great deal will be achieved by the introduction of a grazing homestead perpetual lease. For several personal reasons I am proud to be associated with this Bill. In 1960 I first became involved with grazing homesteads and their operation in this State, particularly in western Queensland, including the Winton district. At that time I became involved with the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police, who has introduced this Bill. For many years I was Bill Glasson's neighbour and friend. As I have said, it gives me a great deal of pride to speak in support of this Bill.

Mr Davis: Isn't that lovely?

Mr STONEMAN: I think it is. The member for Brisbane Central is about to learn a great deal about the people who support the interests of everyone in this State. He will hear about the concern that Government members have for those people.

The Bill recognises the evolution of land settlement in Queensland. As far as I am concerned and, I think, as far as the people of Queensland are concerned, the Bowen Downs area in western Queensland was first settled in 1863. That was the beginning of the development of western Queensland. I was very happy to be associated in a small way with the centenary celebrations there in 1963, when the directors of the company that owned the property were present. The people of Queensland recognised that the development of that part of Queensland played a major role in the overall development of this State.

The development of land has evolved from the subdivision of very large properties. Developers surveyed the land, subdivided it, fenced it and provided water. Western Queensland has vast drylands. The companies that first developed that land had the necessary finance to employ labour, to stock the country and to lay the groundwork for an understanding of the problems that are experienced in those areas of the State. Queensland would be the poorer without the development that has been undertaken by companies that moved into those areas.

Since 1863, the understanding of property sizes has grown immensely. The optimum minimum size of a property has probably been reached. When the original blocks in the area of which I have some knowledge were subdivided following World War I, the area of a grazing homestead was about 15 000 to 18 000 acres. It was soon discovered that properties of that size were not large enough. In many cases additional areas were provided to increase the size of the properties to between 25 000 and 30 000 acres. For many years I have been concerned to hear people say, "If you have 25 000 acres, you must be extremely wealthy." Such a comment is often made by a person who has not had a great deal of experience in working such areas. Acres do not count. Of importance is what can be run on those acres and the income to be derived from them so that a person can support his family and the local community and be a fulfilling and paying member of this State of ours.

Mr Davis: It's the quality of land.

Mr STONEMAN: That is exactly so. The difference in quality of land in our State is remarkable. At the top end of the western Queensland downs, in the Kynuna area, the country is ashy. It is very harsh country with not much shade. The running
of stock in that area is difficult in the physical sense and its carrying capacity is very light. A little to the south is Winton. People might say that that is a district. In fact, at the very least, there are three districts. The south-western area is generally harder, with larger operations. Cattle stations certainly commence there and are to be found down the Diamantina. To the north-west of the Winton area there is a slight improvement in the land structure, which continues into the further western area of Kynuna and McKinlay. In the eastern area towards Longreach and as one gradually moves south, the country has a better carrying capacity and is generally more manageable. Water is not as great a problem. There is more shade for stock.

The Bill recognises the differences between various areas in our State. Under the old Land Act, a person at Kynuna was effectively allowed the same maximum number of acres as people in Winton or further south in Longreach, Blackall and so on. It is imperative to recognise the variations in quality of land, which results in variations in the number of stock run and the amount of product from the stock. In the Kynuna area a person would think he was lucky if he produced 8 lb of wool, if I might use the old term, from each sheep. At Winton a person might get up to 10 lb, on average. A hundred miles or so further south there might be an increase of a pound or so in weight. Of course, weight means money. Similar comments apply to cattle. However, the area to which I will specifically refer is what I believe to be predominantly sheep country. Over the years it has been proved to be some of the best sheep country in the world, but also some of the most difficult in terms of management and deriving a living.

It is important to maintain a balance in the land laws of our State. It is broadly recognised that there are opportunities for the small, the medium and the large operators. We must recognise that in many instances Australians do not have the capacity to purchase, develop and run some of the large properties. We must not preclude those who are able to come in and pioneer. Many areas of our State still require pioneering.

One of the points recognised by the Bill is the need to secure a borrowing base. The present economic climate always seems to be worse than it was in the past, but whenever a person approaches his bank manager to extend an overdraft, to borrow money to further improve a property, purchase more stock or get over the last drought, the manager might say, “Well, you have a problem. Your lease has only a few years to run.” It has generally been acknowledged that there is not much chance of grazing homestead leases being resumed. However, the possibility has always existed.

Sometimes that was done in the best interests of the owner/producer, but more often than not it was a reason for a finance house to procrastinate. Until an owner receives his new instrument of lease, his future is uncertain. The grazing homestead perpetual lease means that a lessee will not have to apply for a new lease every 20 or 30 years and that, all things being equal, he will retain the property.

I commend the Minister and the Land Administration Commission for recognising that. There is no way in the world that these areas of the State can be further developed without causing severe detriment to those who live and work there. Even though these primary producers do not have a security of tenure, they still have to cope with the price fluctuations that occur owing to the vagaries of the economy. Whether or not a primary producer deals with beef, cattle, wool, sugar or small crops, he accepts that prices will rise and fall.

The Government cannot help to overcome those price fluctuations, but it can help to stabilise the security base for those who earn their living from primary production. Both floods and droughts can be dreadful and both certainly result in increased costs. A primary producer can be wiped out in a drought, as both the Minister and I well know. We have been through some painful times together. Similarly, floods can cause tremendous losses, particularly at the end of a drought. Primary producers need time to reconstruct, which is one of the points that the Bill addresses fairly and squarely.

That Australia tends to have a series of droughts is fairly well recognised. A bad season nearly always follows one good season. Even though the recorded history of Australia goes back only a short time, approximately every 12 years a fairly severe drought lasting a minimum of three or four years is experienced. About every 24 or 25 years a major drought occurs. Those periods can fluctuate. Because Australia has had white settlement for only a couple of hundred years, the exact cycles of droughts are not known. In fact, white settlement has been in the country I am speaking of for exactly 121 years.
Mr Davis: You have the ability of averaging your taxation over a period of seven years.

Mr STONEMAN: I can tell the member for Brisbane Central that longer than that is needed. I suggest to the honourable member that he visit some people on the land whom at one time he might have considered wealthy. I can assure him that the wives will be out mustering and trying to help with the shearing. They are doing things that they would not have dreamed of doing 20 years ago. I suggest to the honourable member that, in the last 30 years, primary production has regressed by 30 years. That might seem a contradiction, but it is an unfortunate fact of life.

Mr Lee interjected.

Mr STONEMAN: I thank the honourable member for Yeronga for raising the matter of shearers. I recognise that no group of people in this country works harder than shearers to earn a living. In fact, if any members of the Opposition have ever done any shearing they would understand what it is like to really work, especially with the physical problems encountered in that industry.

The huge increase in wool prices 30 years ago gave rise to huge increases in the running costs of properties. However, prices have fallen but costs have remained the same—or should I say that they have continued to increase? That is addressed by the Bill.

I have already covered the assessment of a living area. I can only repeat that when I came into Western Queensland in 1960, 7,000 to 8,000 sheep were considered to be a large enough flock to allow a grazier to employ people, pay his bills, maintain and improve his property without overstocking it and make a good living. Today, with only 7,000 or 8,000 sheep, a grazier could not employ a man, let alone make a living or pay for the shearing.

In many areas, particularly those in which production is low, property-owners cannot survive if they have 7,000 to 8,000 sheep or 750 to 1,000 cattle. The amending legislation recognises the need to change the old idea of measuring the number of acres or counting the number of stock. The basis of the change is a recognition that a certain number of stock and a certain area of country are required if a man is to make a living. I can only repeat that the legislation introduces the most far-reaching change ever made in the land laws affecting the western areas of Queensland.

Over the years, for many reasons graziers have been forced to overstock. If a property has a carrying capacity of over 10,000 sheep, sooner or later, without rain, the land will become overstocked, even if it carries only a few sheep. At times, my property of 50,000 acres has been unable to carry—I exclude the kangaroos—more than a couple of hundred sheep, and a fairly strong wind would virtually blow them away.

An Honourable Member: The kangaroos would go to greener pastures.

Mr STONEMAN: They create tremendous problems, particularly in times of drought.

Mr Prest interjected.

Mr STONEMAN: Where would they move to? They might move to other properties that have had storms; but unfortunately, in times of drought, storms do not develop and the kangaroos have nowhere to go. They remain on the property and compete with the stock for food. Finally, both they and the stock die. All the kangaroos cannot be mustered, put into a truck and sent to where there might be better food. They remain and eat out the property. The honourable member would not have a clue about what happens.

In times of drought, graziers are forced to overstock. That results in timber regrowth. In some areas, a reduction in the natural grass cover leads to the growth of sandalwood and gidyea suckers. Even when rain falls, the capacity of the country to carry stock remains very definitely reduced. The effects of continuing drought and forced overstocking are probably the major causes of many people losing their livelihood in the western area of the State.

At the beginning of the 1965 drought, we had 18,000 sheep. After six months on the roads and stock routes in western Queensland, we sold most of the flock at give-away prices. Finally, we trucked home 1,800, or 10 per cent of the original flock, and many of them died. We were still overstocked, but we had nowhere to go.
The Minister will confirm that the bad days did not end with the drought. We then had to borrow money to restock, and there were few stock to buy. It took half the normal term of a 30-year lease to get back to where we started. By that time, the bank manager or the stock agent might say, "Things are getting a bit scratchy; the lease has only a few years to run. You might lose it."

In times of drought and loss of capacity to borrow, the essential manpower in the grazing areas of the State tend to leave an area. The workers and their families do not return, and property-owners lose the expertise of good workers. The shearsers go to greener pastures or get a job on the council. These vitally important people are lost.

If there is no future for the land-owner, there is no future for his employees. The amendment to the Land Act matches the new technological era into which we are moving. New technology, such as satellites, will give tremendous benefits to people in that part of the State by providing not only entertainment on television, but also advice on seasonal conditions and stock movements.

I now wish to comment on a second matter that this legislation addresses. I refer to the property that is too small for the big operator and too big for the small operator. I have had a personal and, perhaps in some ways, painful experience in this area. My family owned a pastoral development holding—or perhaps I should say that the banks and stock agents owned it and we worked it and tried to pay for it. It comprised a couple of hundred thousand acres of quite difficult country. The country had a lot of potential, but money was needed to work it. It was too big for a small operator, which we were, and too small for a big operator.

Because of the provisions in the Land Act at that time, it was impossible for us to convert that holding into a consolidated area and to obtain a lease that would save our having to surrender up to one-third or one-half of that holding. We were not able to work the area with the resources at our disposal and make a living.

This property of about 200,000 acres had a 50,000 acre patch of clay-pan in the middle of it. We needed to carve an area of 60,000 acres or less out of the 200,000 acres. It was impossible to do that. That might sound like a large area, but I assure honourable members that, because of the clay-pan and the timber, it was not sufficient to justify the sort of carving up that we needed to do to consolidate the property.

Under this legislation, that whole property could, if necessary, be deemed to be a living area. Perhaps 100,000 acres of it could be deemed to be a living area. If the other bits of land were surrendered, they could be tacked onto adjoining 60,000-acre areas and they could be enlarged.

In our case, if we had selected a 60,000-acre block, what would the department have done with the remainder? It would not have been of sufficient area to provide another two blocks. It would have been too big for one block. If another block had been provided, what would have happened to the remaining 40,000 acres? It could not be tacked onto a neighbour's block because it would have already been close to 60,000 acres.

I commend the thinking behind this amendment in the legislation. Consideration will now be given to a living area and to the fact that this land is subject to flooding and that it contains a clay-pan area. It will be able to be split up and turned into an economic area.

Reference was made in the debate on the Firearms and Offensive Weapons Act Amendment Bill to diseased stock, dingoes and wild pigs. In the part of the State about which I am speaking, additional land has to be provided to compensate for the area that is destroyed by vermin, such as eagles, wild pigs and dingoes.

When 1080 was introduced into this State, it was so effective in wiping out dingoes that we were almost able to become viable overnight grazing sheep and cattle. Sheep are no longer found in those areas because, for some reason or other, the effectiveness of 1080 seems to have lessened. Therefore the problems of dingoes, pigs, eagles and flies will remain. How does a grazier find a fly-blown sheep in a 100,000-acre paddock of timber? The sheep dies, and the grazier's numbers fall. It is impossible to recognise by stock number and the amount of acreage what a living area is, but that has been the thinking for the last 10 or 15 years.
Large companies have made a significant impact on the growth of Australia and it is important that their involvement in pastoral areas be continued. Companies like Australian Estates developed huge tracts of Queensland land. I believe that Australian Estates no longer owns a property in Queensland, but, if it does, its holdings are nowhere near their original magnitude. Although they might have made a few dollars from their investments and then left the country, most of the large companies left behind them fairly well developed areas. Their developments also created opportunities for smaller developers to take advantage of that pioneering work. The Kidman investments have been criticised over the years but, if Australia had not had pioneers with the vision of Sir Sidney Kidman, it would not be the nation that it is today. Sir Sidney Kidman, of course, is well known for his pioneering work in the channel country, and in other places, which created opportunities for the rest of the community.

I draw the attention of honourable members to a humorous but interesting book written by the well-known American entertainer, Art Linkletter. At least 20 years ago he came to Australia and bought vast tracts of land in the Northern Territory. As he said in that book, he spent a fortune feeding the ducks and brolgas on his properties before he realised that he was going broke. Undaunted, he moved into Western Australia, but encountered similar problems. He eventually left Australia. However, Australians were able to feed on his experience and the development that he left behind him. Australians learned from his lack of success about the things needed to make rural properties more productive. The lessons are still being learned. There are huge areas in the gulf country, the peninsula and far-west Queensland, and large areas on the coast, that still need to be developed. Development of that sort can only be undertaken by companies such as Australian Estates and the Australian Agricultural Company. The pioneering vision of Sir Sidney Kidman is still needed in Australia. But those companies have been criticised by the Opposition.

What Opposition members do not understand is that although foreign companies take a profit from Australia—although when it is all added up there is very little real profit—the land cannot be taken away. The land cannot be picked up and taken to America, England or wherever. That must be acknowledged by the Opposition. I am sure that other honourable members will take that point up later in the debate. Foreign companies are providing employment and investment opportunities. Manufacturing industries are benefiting. I wonder how many millions of dollars have been spent on steel posts and fencing. For instance, Lysaght is benefiting. I also wonder how many tractors have been used for the sinking of dams and in the exploitation of timber. People are employed as a result of development by foreign companies. Australia needs the continuing support of these companies and the money that they invest. There is just not enough big money in Australia to promote development.

I compliment the Minister for the initiatives that his department has taken in introducing this far-reaching Bill. It is another step in the evolution of Queensland's land laws.

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (2.45 p.m.): The Minister, in his second-reading speech, said—

"A session without a Land Bill is as welcome as an oasis in the desert."

I say—

"This session with this Land Act Amendment Bill is as welcome as an oasis in the desert."

The Land Act is one of the most draconian and deceitful pieces of legislation that have been passed by this Parliament. It is deceitful because it is selective and discriminatory in the interests of a favoured few. I am sorry for the Minister, because he was not responsible for the original Land Act but he is left carrying the baby and suffering the criticism that is levelled at the Act.

It has been said that land legislation is introduced in a spirit of adventure not only on the part of the squatter or his successor but also on the part of the administrator or the politician of the time. In the Land Act and Another Act Amendment Act that was passed by this Parliament in 1981, that spirit of adventure went too far. In retrospect, I suggest that greater wisdom should have prevailed at that time.
The real problem that arises under this legislation is that it takes away the financial base of the Lands Department. In other words, in 20 years' time there will probably not be any leasehold land in Queensland. The freeholding allowances provided by the legislation are so good that everybody will be converting to freehold. Any lease-holder who does not convert to freehold would be a very poor manager indeed.

Mr FitzGerald: Did you say that there will be no leasehold land in 20 years' time or 30 years' time?

Mr CAMPBELL: In 20 to 30 years' time. There is no reason why a lease-holder would renew his lease when, under such favourable conditions as those provided by the legislation, he can convert to freehold. Those conditions under the Land Act are totally discriminatory against people who hold leasehold land under the State Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act. However, I shall elaborate on that later.

The Minister said that freehold blocks cannot be transferred in whole or in part to a corporation without the prior consent of the Governor in Council. That comment relates to bringing more blocks together, especially by companies. As was pointed out earlier by our shadow Minister (Mr Goss), the criteria in such an instance are not known. In other words, no-one knows the basis on which the freehold blocks can be brought together. However, that highlights the extent to which a Minister can adopt a patronising attitude.

On 29 February I asked the Minister the following question—

"Are persons freeholding land under the Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act disadvantaged in comparison with persons freeholding land under the Land Act and Another Act Amendment Act 1981?"

To that, the Minister answered—

"There are no 'in principle' anomalies. The principle is the same for both cases. However, different valuations by different valuing authorities . . . are involved."

That answer was not correct. The ordinary Queenslander, the little battler and the pensioner will suffer a real disadvantage when they come to freehold their land. Compared with the graziers and the foreign companies, which are given special allowances, they will be discriminated against.

Mr Glasson: You have not qualified that statement.

Mr CAMPBELL: I shall do so now.

The freeholding conditions imposed upon Housing Commission land are blatantly discriminatory, in that ordinary families make much higher payments to convert Housing Commission land to freehold than other lease-holders do. That is occurring under the 1981 Act. In other words, the Government has given very favourable conditions for the freeholding of Lands Department land.

As an example, let me cite the freeholding of a residential block valued at $12,000. If that land is held by the Housing Commission, the ordinary Queenslander, the battler or the pensioner will have to pay $19,680 over 10 years.

Another person, who has a Lands Department perpetual town lease which could be located next to the block to which I have already referred, will pay a total of only $12,000 or $400 per year over 30 years. A rural perpetual lease selection would involve freeholding payments of $12,000 over 60 years. If the Minister says that he does not think that that is discrimination, I will sit down now and ask the bright boys to prove to me that the ordinary Queenslander is not being disadvantaged. It is a fact that he has to pay so much more.

That, however, is not the real discrimination. It gets worse when a person buys out his lease. If a lessee wishes to convert his Lands Department urban block today, his total freeholding costs on a $4,000 block would be four annual payments of $400 since 1981, plus an extra $5,707.07, making a total payment of $7,307.07. That is the cost of freeholding a block worth $12,000 under the Land Act. The Minister said that many members could not follow many aspects of the Land Act. I would like him to tell me later about the present and future value of lease-out payments, because that matter is very technical.

If the $12,000 block to which I have referred was a rural perpetual lease selection converted to freehold today, it would cost four annual payments of $200 plus only $3,739.70, making a total of only $4,539.70. To buy out the same $12,000 block under a Housing
Commission lease, the total payment would be $13,440. If honourable members do not think that that is discrimination against ordinary Queenslanders, they should stand up and be counted. Some people have spent all their life in Queensland. Many of them have been disadvantaged. They are being charged up to three times more than foreign owners and large companies. If that is the way in which the Government acts, the people are being ripped off and they should remember it.

I will refer again to the example that I cited. Normal repayments on a $12,000 block under the Housing Commission lease would be $19,000, whereas the repayments under the Lands Department lease would be $12,000. On the buy-out basis, the amount under the Housing Commission lease would be $13,536 compared with the $7,000 and $4,000. That is basic discrimination. I do not believe that justice is being received by the people who have leasehold land under the Housing Commission scheme.

A further injustice really bites into the heart of land values today. Under the Lands Act, for rental and freeholding purposes, all land values were frozen at the valuation applying as at 31 December 1980. That is not so with Housing Commission land. For rental purposes, the land is revalued every 10 years and for freeholding purposes the land is revalued at the time of application. Regardless of the future market value of the land, the values have been frozen for freehold and leasehold purposes. That reveals the injustice of the two Acts. In Bundaberg, for example, there could be two blocks of land located side by side. Under the Land Act, the rent and freeholding costs are frozen. However, under the Housing Commission scheme, rent and freeholding costs escalate as land values increase.

One block of land in Bundaberg was valued in 1979 at $6,000. In 1983, when an application was made to freehold that block, the value had increased to $12,000. However, the lucky land-holders on the Jimbour Plains and the Cecil Plains areas of the Darling Downs had their valuations frozen at the 1971 and 1972 values. Those lucky land-holders—the favoured few—are able to freehold their land on the basis of 1971 and 1972 valuations. On the other hand, the land valuation of the average Queenslander is rising every day.

I ask the bright boys of the Lands Department how much money Queensland lost owing to that last amendment. Some newspapers estimate it at $100m. I say that closer to $350m was given away by the Queensland Government as a result of the Land Act Amendment Act of 1981.

Mr Lee: It wouldn't be that much, would it?

Mr CAMPBELL: Ask the Lands Department. Ask the Minister to put a valuation on it. The amount would be closer to $350m.

In 1971 the Bundaberg block that is now worth $12,000 was valued at only $3,000. I will compare that with leasehold land in the Jimbour Plains and Cecil Plains areas, where the valuations have been frozen under the Land Act. Those valuations would be frozen at $3,000 for evermore. However, the valuation of land in Bundaberg has risen from $3,000 in 1971 to $12,000 today. What will it be in 1990?

The repayments on the freeholding of a Jimbour Plains block have been frozen for evermore at the earlier valuation of $3,000. That is the total, all-up cost. However, the Bundaberg Housing Commission block—the block with a person's home on it—has risen in valuation from $3,000 to $12,000. At the current rate of increase, the valuation will be $18,000 in 1990. The repayments on freeholding that block rise from $19,680 to $32,760 if he decides to freehold in 1990. If a person wants to freehold his block at Jimbour Plains in 1990, it will cost him $3,000. That matter ought to be reconsidered.

It is not my desire to disadvantage country people by highlighting this blatant discrimination against Housing Commission families. However, whilst foreign companies and other non-residents can freehold Lands Department blocks on such favourable terms, the Queensland Housing Commission family cannot. I am asking that the same basis for freeholding be applied to both groups. Why not introduce some retrospectivity and set all valuations at the 1980 levels so that there is a fair deal for everybody? All Queenslanders would then get the same fair deal. There is nothing wrong with that.

Mr Wharton: They are not disadvantaged; you know that.

Mr CAMPBELL: They are disadvantaged. Can the Minister tell me why, where an urban block and a Housing Commission block are side by side, to freehold the
Lands Department urban block would cost $12,000, if that were the valuation on it, whereas to freehold the Housing Commission home would cost $19,680? If he were to freehold in 1990, it would cost $32,760.

Mr Wharton: You don't know what you are talking about.

Mr CAMPBELL: We don't know what we are talking about? For a person freeholding a residential Housing Commission perpetual lease block valued at $12,000, the financial arrangements at present are these: 5 per cent down and the balance in monthly instalments over 10 years at 12 per cent interest. The interest rate varies with commercial movements and is set by Order in Council. The present rate was gazetted in November 1983. Repayments for the $12,000 block would therefore be $164 a month, or $1,968 a year, for 10 years, making a total of $19,680. For the holder of a current account, the payments are spread over the term of his account of 10 years. If the current account term is less than 10 years, it is brought up to 10 years. I will now return to the easy way that it is done under the Bill.

Mr Wharton: Housing Commission land is usually freehold.

Mr CAMPBELL: It is not. When one family in Bundaberg bought a house——

Mr Wharton: That is only one instance.

Mr CAMPBELL: Yes, an instance of a good little Queensland family, and the Minister does not care about it.

Mr Wharton: Let us have the proper details and we will give you the right answer.

Mr CAMPBELL: I will give the Minister the proper details. In fact, I am giving them to him now.

I will now state how a perpetual town lease under the Lands Department is worked out. Those blocks are being converted over a period of 30 years with an annual payment of one-thirtieth of the unimproved value of the block as determined by the Lands Department as at 31 December 1980. It is important to note that the values were assessed every 10 years. So, at 31 December 1980, a valuation could be up to 10 years old. Therefore, a block valued at $12,000 before 1981 would have attracted an annual rental of $360. The lessee can now freehold it at $400 a year. Why would anybody want to retain leasehold land at an annual rental of $360 when for $400 a year he can freehold it? Nobody with a rural perpetual lease would want to keep leasehold tenure.

I will now describe to the Chamber the way in which a lessee may convert to freehold at any time on payment of a lump sum determined under the provisions of the Act. A lessee of a block valued at $12,000 who wishes to convert now would already have made four payments, each of $400, making a total of $1,600. Upon application, the Lands Department determines a future value for the block by using the following calculation: the rental income of $400 a year at 5 per cent interest—not 12 per cent, like the Housing Commission—over 26 years, fours years having already elapsed. That gives a total of $20,445.38. But that is not good enough for the Government, which gives a special allowance. The department then calculates the present value of that $20,445.38, which is the lump sum of money which, if invested today at 5 per cent, would yield that amount. The present value is the amount payable by the lessee to buy out his lease. In this case, the lump sum payable would be $5,707. So the total payment is—I have tried to go through it in some detail—$7,307. If my figures are wrong, I ask the Minister to tell me. If they are not, they are an example of discrimination against an ordinary Queenslander with a Housing Commission house.

Mr Stephan: Are you taking into account that a lessee has already paid for the right to occupy that leased land?

Mr CAMPBELL: Yes. All I am asking is that there be no discrimination between the two Acts.

Does the Minister know whether Ministers, or even, perhaps, a high ranking member of the National Party, were among the favoured people at Jimbour Plains and Cecil Plains who received this advantage? It would not have been the president of the National Party, would it?

A Government Member: What has that to do with it?
Mr CAMPBELL: Those people have received favoured treatment in this Bill; that is the important point.

The legislation introduced in 1981 is totally discriminatory against ordinary Queenslanders with Housing Commission houses. Even a press release at that time stated that the amendments used an ad hoc cut-off date that would mean that some land-owners would be greatly disadvantaged. I do not know whether that is correct. However, many people were treated favourably.

That is the key to what will happen. When it costs no more to freehold land than to rent it, everyone will be freeholding. In 20 years time, because all land will be freehold, no rental will be paid for Crown land in Queensland. That will be a disadvantage, because the Lands Department will not be earning income. It will have to be picked up in other ways.

Mr Lee: Would you stop that if you got into Government?

Mr CAMPBELL: If we got into Government—

An Opposition Member: When we get into Government!

Mr CAMPBELL: When we get into Government, everyone will be treated in the same way. Is the honourable member saying that that is not right? If the Government were to treat everyone in the same way, that would be fair.

I hope that point is taken up at a later date, so that all Queenslanders may be treated fairly. Ordinary Queenslanders are being disadvantaged by having to pay excessive freeholding costs for Housing Commission leasehold blocks. I ask the Government to consider changes in the freeholding of Housing Commission land so that urban families will be treated in the same way as foreign land-owners and country land-holders.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (3.7 p.m.): My contribution to this debate will be pertinent to the amendments before the House. I will not be canvassing a wide-ranging field as honourable members opposite have done.

Basically, this measure is a house-keeping Bill. It enables the present legislation to be tidied up. As the Opposition spokesman said, it is very difficult to understand land legislation in Queensland. When he said that, I said by way of interjection that I did not doubt that he found it very difficult to understand. I submit to the Opposition spokesman and the House that this measure simplifies the leases that are available in Queensland. The main thrust of the legislation is to bring the settlement farm lease, the grazing farm lease and the grazing homestead lease all into line as grazing homestead perpetual leases. At present, the leases are for 30 years. They will become perpetual leases. Provided they contain a certain area, all of them will be eligible for conversion to freehold.

For some time, the Government has had a policy of conversion to freehold. I take issue with the honourable member for Bundaberg, who said, that, in his opinion, Queensland would have no leasehold land in 20 years. When I questioned him about that, he said that that would be so in 20 to 30 years.

Mr Campbell: I said that no-one will be renewing leases.

Mr FITZGERALD: No, that is not what I understood the honourable member to say.

As Queenslanders we should keep in mind how much land there is in Queensland, how much of it is freehold and how much can be converted to freehold. I favour owner-occupiers of land freeholding wherever possible. For the benefit of the member for Bundaberg, I point out that Queensland has approximately 172.8 million hectares of land. Of that area, there are pastoral leases totalling 94,000,000 ha that are not freeholded. That is, 94,000,000 ha out of a State total of 172,800,000 ha.

Mr Davis: Mostly out in the desert.

Mr FITZGERALD: Mostly out in the desert.

Mr FITZGERALD: I realise that a lot of that land is situated in the inland and in the north.

The honourable member for Bundaberg said that, in his opinion, in 20 to 30 years’ time there will be no leasehold land in Queensland. The area that is freehold or is presently being converted to freehold under the various provisions of the Act totals 34,000,000 ha. The leases that are covered by the provisions of this Bill, that is, the settlement farm leases, the grazing farm, the grazing homestead, and the grazing homestead perpetual leases, total 21,000,000 ha.
I think that the honourable member for Bundaberg should obtain a few more facts. He should not just grab figures out of the air. He deliberately misled the people of Queensland when he said that in 20 to 30 years' time there will be no leasehold land in Queensland.

The legislation provides that the larger properties that are subject to grazing homestead perpetual leases and can be freeholded, if they exceed 2,500 ha in area, must be sold to natural persons, unless the specific approval of the Governor in Council is obtained. In other words, companies cannot buy up these larger holdings unless the Governor of the day, on the advice of the Government, approves of it. However, the larger blocks can still be subdivided so that the smaller operator can convert his property to freehold and sell it. Once a bar has been placed on the sale of land that has been freeholded, it is passed on from proprietor to proprietor. In other words, it is passed on with deeds of the property.

Mr De Lacy interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: I am glad that the honourable member referred to foreign investment. The Opposition spokesman on land matters, the member for Salisbury, referred to foreign investment and to a land register. Unfortunately, he is not in the Chamber at present. In fact, there are not many Opposition members in the Chamber at present.

The accusation has been made that Queensland is being taken over by foreign companies. Over the years, the innuendo has been made that foreign investment in Australia, and particularly in Queensland, has to be watched. I have not heard the Governments of New South Wales, Victoria or Western Australia say that they are concerned about foreign investment. The Opposition in Queensland has talked about foreign investment for a long time. I ask Opposition members to correct me if I am wrong.

Mr De Lacy: That is correct.

Mr FITZGERALD: The member for Cairns says that I am correct. His colleagues in the other States may be concerned about foreign investment, but they have done nothing about it. We should be concerned about foreign investment, but we should look at the facts. Because the member for Salisbury raised this matter of foreign investment, I obtained an extract from the annual report of the Foreign Investment Review Board for 1983. It is rather interesting. Table 11.4 is headed, "Foreign investment in rural land, by location of expected investment, 1 July 1981 to 30 June 1983" The total value of properties under consideration for acquisition by foreign companies in Australia in 1982-83 was $37.4m.

Mr DAVIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I draw your attention to the state of the House.

(Quorum formed.)

Mr FITZGERALD: I noticed when I started talking about the figures from the FIRB that some members of the Opposition walked out of the Chamber.

Mr DAVIS: I rise to a point of order. I object to that remark.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! Too many points of order that have no substance are taken in this Chamber. There is no point of order. The member for Lockyer will continue with his speech.

Mr FITZGERALD: I know that the Leader of the Opposition wanted to use some of the time allotted to me in this debate, so some of his colleagues walked out of the Chamber. But, because I do not intend to use all that time, those members might like to come back into the Chamber and listen to what I have to say.

I repeat: The total amount allowed into Australia for the acquisition of rural properties for the year ended June 1983 was $30.4m. Of that amount, it was expected that $14.9m would be spent in New South Wales, $1.3m in Victoria, $7m in Queensland, $8.5m in Western Australia, $0.7m in South Australia, $0.5m in Tasmania and $3.8m in the Northern Territory. The Labor States do not have a register of land ownership, either. I point out to the Opposition that the majority of the land in Queensland is leasehold and, at present, 94,000,000 ha of land in Queensland cannot be converted to freehold. Those details are kept on a register in the Lands Department.
The Opposition has been harping on a land register for years now and it is no wonder at the last election that it got its just deserts, particularly in the country areas. I was amused by the comment of the Opposition spokesman on rural matters that, if Labor gets into power, it will freeze all freeholding. I would like that to be trumpeted throughout Queensland. The honourable member can correct me if I misunderstood what he said. "Hansard" will show whether or not I am correct. As I understand it, the honourable member for Salisbury said that the Australian Labor Party, if it got into power, would immediately freeze all freeholding of land until it had a look at the situation. In other words, it does not agree with the philosophies of this Government.

I will conclude by pointing out that this Bill is simply a house-keeping Bill that tidies up a number of leases and puts them into one particular lease to make it a grazing homestead perpetual lease. The smaller leases that have 30 years to run will be converted.

As the honourable member for Burdekin said, the Bill will give the occupiers much more security, and their financiers, in turn, will feel much more secure knowing that the leases are perpetual leases. The workers, too, will have more security, because they will know that the properties on which they work will not change ownership when the 30-year term expires and will not revert to the previous tenure.

The land to which I have referred should always be held under perpetual lease. I certainly hope that, where possible, the owners of this land convert it to freehold. The person who tills the soil should, where possible, own the soil. Both the Government and the Lands Department have adopted constructive policies under which Queensland has developed. More Queenslanders are going on the land.

Mr De Lacy interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: I point out to Opposition members who spoke about the acquisition of property by young Queenslanders that the Government did set up the Young Farmer Establishment Scheme and is now looking at it to see how it is working. I am sure that more money will be contributed to that scheme.

Mr De Lacy: Prices for land are so high that even genuine farmers cannot get onto it.

Mr FITZGERALD: I realise that the prices of farmland are high and that it is expensive. However, I would not have a bar of socialism, under which Labor Party members would decree how much each block of land in this State is worth. No way in the world would I accept the Opposition's policy.

Mr De Lacy interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: The way the honourable member sees the situation is that socialism would take over and Labor members would decree what every block of land in this State is worth. No way in the world would I accept the Opposition's policy.

Mr De Lacy interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: The way the honourable member sees the situation is that socialism would take over and Labor members would decree what every block of land was worth so that they could keep the prices down. I believe in letting free enterprise flourish.

As was pointed out earlier by the honourable member for Bundaberg, this State and this country have been developed by large companies that risked large amounts of capital in remote areas and, generally speaking, lost their capital. Provided such companies do not destroy the land—provided they improve the land—the development of the land by such companies is to the benefit of all Queenslanders. And that is the philosophical difference between members of the Opposition and me.

Finally, I commend the Minister for introducing the Bill. I give it my whole-hearted support.

Mr SMITH (Townsville West) (3.24 p.m.): There is certainly no doubt that, politically, land is a sensitive issue not only in Australia but also in most other countries. Traditionally, the acquisition of land has conferred some sort of privilege on the person who acquires the land, no matter how it may be acquired. That is probably my fundamental objection. I found the debate that occurred a few moments ago between the honourable member for Lockyer and my colleague the honourable member for Cairns quite interesting, because it reflected a fundamental difference of opinion on an issue that is of importance to society.

Like the honourable member for Salisbury, I recognise that the Bill makes some small contribution to the progressive distribution or equity of land-holding in the State. So one should not be too critical of it. However, it seems to me that the Bill contains very little that does anything about what Opposition members would refer to as equity of opportunity.
The honourable member for Salisbury has demonstrated a clear understanding of the implications of the Bill. He was generous in his recognition of what Opposition members see as the progressive elements in the Bill. Similarly, he has pointed out the Bill's shortcomings quite incisively.

The member for Bundaberg spoke with considerable effect. He stated the real consequences of the Land Act for some of the people whom he represents. Earlier I made the point that there are great differences between the people we are talking about and the effect of this legislation on them.

The member for Burdekin realistically demonstrated an understanding of the implications of the Land Act in respect to its effect on the grazing industry. He looks at the matter from the point of view of the large land-holder. Very little thought is given to the people who have no access at present and have little prospect of access to land in the future. Many people in the community seriously believe that their home is where they have some land that they own or lease or to which they have some claim. I think that the opportunity to gain equity in or access to land is very important.

There is a remarkable difference between the treatment of people who lose their land on which their homes may stand because of a freeway proposal and the treatment of a person who might lose his land because of a project that will bring about an improvement in the commercial value of the land. In those circumstances, a great inequity exists. It is generally believed that it is a matter of fate that the ordinary house-holder or the small-businessman must go, and that that is the price of progress. Where a primary producer is involved, there is a transformation in the attitude adopted. Special considerations are frequently provided to those people to ensure that they receive not only adequate compensation for their land but also some compensation for the loss of their future earning capacity on that land. That is not a fair crack of the whip.

Over a period of 30 years the National Party has largely reversed the policies that existed under the last Labor Government in Queensland. That is becoming clearer and clearer. I have heard references from the president of the National Party that he still believes that there are Labor supporters within the Lands Department who had to be rooted out. He certainly has a preoccupation in that area. I do not know how long a Government of opposite persuasion must be in power——

Mr Glasson: Who said that?

Mr SMITH: The president of the National Party, Sir Robert Sparkes.

Mr Fitzgerald: Where did he say that?

Mr SMITH: I know that the member for Lockyer does not read very much. If he did, he would find reference to it.

The Minister would be well aware that I am concerned about the excuse given for not freezing land prices when some projects are under way. Ministers say, “The Labor Party introduced that legislation 30 years ago. We are just carrying out Labor Party policy.” That is a very weak excuse. There has been a need to make all sorts of legislative changes in all other areas. The relative value of land compared with other goods, services and components, has increased dramatically and many other pieces of legislation have been updated to take account of the times, but in this instance, because the legislation, which admittedly was introduced by a previous Government, suits the interests of the larger land-holders and the people who primarily support the present Government, nothing has been done.

I shall refer the Minister to some recent examples that come within his portfolio and within the portfolio of the Minister for Water Resources and Maritime Services. On a number of occasions I have referred to these matters. I am sure the Minister would be surprised if I did not refer to them again. However, I have to look at the matter in terms of resumptions in the Burdekin, an area that I know so well.

The Burdekin scheme will cost between $200m and $300m, but it stands jeopardised for a number of reasons. I know that my colleague from that area does not share my view, and often says so.

An area of about 60,000 ha is involved. The people who held the land, who were because of the absence of legislation able to control the prices of land when it was about to acquire some new commercial value, were able to take up very large parcels of land——
admittedly, land they held or were using—at a figure of $59 or $60 a hectare. They were able to subdivide some of the freehold land they held. However, perhaps I am moving forward too far. My prime concern is that they were able to convert the land at the price I have mentioned in the full knowledge that there would be capital appreciation; that the land would have a value of something like $1,000 a hectare on completion of the scheme. My colleague, with some justification, would argue that land prices have not increased very much in recent years.

Mr FitzGerald: You should settle this outside between yourselves.

Mr SMITH: I am referring to the member for Burdekin.

I do not disagree that prices have not increased. As a result, the potential profit was not able to be realised. However, that is only a matter of circumstances. Those who converted their land still stand to profit if there is a turn-round in the rural industry. That could happen at any time. Because of the breaking of the drought in recent months and changing economic circumstances overseas, profitability in some primary industry sectors has increased by about 3,000 per cent. That may or may not happen in the Burdekin, but it could. Land certainly has that potential to increase greatly in value.

I have consistently argued that, where land is to be resumed and where it will clearly have an increased commercial value as a result of the injection of public funds in a project, there is no justification whatsoever for the land-holders to receive as compensation anything more than the value of the land at the time of resumption. People should not overnight become millionaires as the result of the injection of public funds into a project for the public benefit. The Minister knows quite well my views on this. I have said that I will raise it at every opportunity. If I am here for another 10 years—and I confidently expect to be—I will continue to raise it.

Mr FitzGerald: But you'll still be on that side.

Mr SMITH: If there has been no change in Government in that time, I will still be heard on this matter every time the Land Act is raised. I will raise an injustice that has existed for many years—one that has done a great deal of damage.

Mr De Lacy: Do you know that they added a million dollars to one property of a National Party farmer there, over and above the valuation—a cool million?

Mr SMITH: Yes. I am glad that the member for Cairns has raised that. Really, though, that is entering the portfolio of the Minister for Water Resources and Maritime Services. I am always prepared to talk about it, because again it shows the type of political favouritism that exists. After it was cut and dried as to how the land would be parcelled and distributed, a fellow named David Cox found himself in financial difficulties.

Although every other land-holder who was to have land resumed was obliged to sit on that land for some considerable time—many are still sitting on it without receiving the money—a convenient arrangement was made to pay Mr Cox approximately $2.2m on the excuse that the Government had to buy the land anyway, so providing the money in advance did not matter. No mention was made of the cost to the public. That demonstrates that over and over again the large landholders in the community have received privileged treatment.

Mr Stoneman: Are you prepared to debate this matter outside with Mr Cox, away from privilege? You won't answer that, will you?

Mr SMITH: I would like the honourable member to hear me out. I have never taken particular issue with the value of that property as against any of the other properties that will be resumed. What I have taken issue with consistently is the timing of the purchase of that property. If the honourable member checks the record, he will find that has been my personal stand.

Mr Stoneman: Will you debate that with Mr Cox in the open?

Mr SMITH: I have given the honourable member an explanation of what I am about and that is as far as I am prepared to take it.

Mr Stoneman: If you are telling the truth, you have nothing to fear.
Mr SMITH: Of course I am telling the truth. As a result of an answer from a Minister, the details of when the property was bought, why it was bought and who previously owned it are on the record of this place. So the honourable member will make no progress on that point.

Mr Stoneman: You can attack under privilege; what about Mr Cox?

Mr SMITH: The honourable member for Burdekin seems to be determined to pursue this element of the debate, but I do not care to.

What should be looked at is the artificially inflated cost of a scheme, which could well make it not viable for incoming farmers. If a wealthy land-holder has the assets and the equipment, he can enter a scheme with a high capital cost. After a few years he can sell out and, at the present time, without a capital gains tax, probably do very well and retire to the Gold Coast.

Mr Lee: Bob Hawke is having a good look at that one.

Mr SMITH: I think he is considering it, and not before time.

The immediate problem is that young growers will have great difficulty in entering the Burdekin scheme because of the artificially inflated value of the project, brought about by resumption costs and because of the fact—this matter does not come within the Minister's portfolio—that certain people will be able to avoid charges of $21.6m, which will be passed on to the incoming growers. Of course, all honourable members know that, with any foresight, that will not happen, but the potential is there.

I have considered these things, which are closely associated with the Land Act and its implications, and point to the fact that some of the most iniquitous provisions in the statutes of this State exist in this area. There is no way in the world that a Government of any other persuasion—I include the Liberals in the other States—would tolerate this type of legislation—which admittedly has been on the books for 30 years—which is no longer suitable to the times. The Government is virtually trying to hold time still to retain an advantage for a very privileged section of the community that has ruled over this State for far too long.

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt Coot-tha) (3.39 p.m.): I join the debate rather briefly to indicate quite clearly that the Bill meets with the approval of the Liberal Party because it is a simplification of what has been in the past a rather complicated land tenure system. One must realise that in the development of a country the size of Australia and in the development of a State which is sovereign in its own right, thus holding all the land in the realm of the State, over the years the progressive land tenure systems, bearing in mind also the varying political colours that influence those systems, have been rather complicated.

The actual development of the State progressively from the fertile lands to the more marginal lands has also posed problems to the administrators. It could be said that the political debates on land administration and land policy are legend in Queensland and in all the other States and Territories of the Commonwealth. I should imagine that I could go even farther afield than that.

I was impressed by the statement in the Minister’s speech attributed to Bernays in, “Our Seventh Political Decade”, which, for the purposes of the record, I will repeat—

“A session without a Land Bill is as welcome as an oasis in the desert. A Land Bill is mostly full of technicalities which are only partially understood by about four members out of seventy-two, and it is full of dreary, meaningless phrases for the rest.”

In the 20-odd years I have been a member, scarcely a session has passed without an amendment to the Land Act or ancillary legislation being debated. All of them have been necessary because of the changing times and the changing requirements of land tenure, because of the added capital investment required as against labour-intensive requirements of the past, or to give further security of tenure to those who are prepared to invest their funds in the rural area.

An enlightened approach to the evolution of the land tenure system in any State should accommodate contemporary and future requirements in the system to minimise administrative controls and to facilitate and simplify the land dealings—I will return to that point in a minute—bearing in mind that at all times the overall public responsibility and Government responsibility lie in maintaining, and improving where possible, the land resource for future generations.
Over the years, one of the things that have held Queensland back has been a lack of flexibility in the land tenure system. The requirements of land vary unrelated to the tenure of the land.

It has been said that, in the past, Governments have erred by subdividing land into areas that are too small. How true that was after the First World War. It was only after the lessees and, in some instances, the registered proprietors, had suffered because of their lack of resource for rural production in terms of land size, that those areas were finally sold up and amalgamated. People had to leave the holdings because they could not make a go of them. Flexibility is needed in the land tenure system.

It should be noted that in recent years that land has been developed by capital intensification rather than labour intensification. That, in itself, requires the borrowing of large sums of money. Those who are prepared to make that money available require adequate security. Some of the areas that could have been developed more comprehensively were incapable of being used as security for the type of money required. Because people were forced to try to increase productivity, land often became overdeveloped and exploited, and disaster was the result.

I am very pleased to see emphasis in this legislation not so much on area but on an economic unit. For the last 20 years, as can be seen from the debates, the Liberal Party has constantly advocated getting away from the so-called "strait-jacket-living-area" system and onto an economic area. An economic area is a unit of production that can be economically developed, not something that may maintain a man, his wife and two children on the breadline until finally, when the children reach the age of 21, or an even earlier age, they have to go away and fare for themselves. An economic unit is a unit of production that can stand on its own feet. I am pleased to see that the Minister is now providing for economic units, and I give him credit for that.

The other aspect that I am interested to see is the cutting down of the administrative requirements. Probably controls have been necessary in the past, but I think that they have gone too far. Because of the stringent controls that were placed on a land-holder at one stage, he almost had to get the permission of the Minister to sneeze. I am glad that over the years those controls have been reduced. Also, the number of tenures that will be made available is being reduced. Those tenures may have been desirable at a time when land was made available for specific purposes. I could go back to the old prickly pear selections. There is no prickly pear any more, so obviously those tenures have become redundant.

If my understanding of the intention of the legislation is correct, the broad pastoral areas that are subject to various types of leases will be made available under pastoral leases. Agricultural farms will be made available under a freeholding tenure and there will be optional perpetual freeholding conditions for urban blocks.

I am pleased to see that, in the future, grazing homestead leases, grazing farm leases and settlement farm leases will not be made available. Those properties will be made available as grazing homestead perpetual lease selections. That is a move in the right direction. As I have said, it is pleasing to see this development in our land tenure system.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Minister for giving a brief history of land settlement generally. It is not generally known that when this vast land was developed, in some parts of Australia the initial boundaries were by description from well-known places. I can speak with some authority on the land settlement schemes not only in Queensland but also in the Northern Territory. Starting points were given at well-known points on the overland telegraph line. Ryan's Well was one. People took up a permit area on which so many great cattle or small cattle could be run. A certain number of permits could be amalgamated. They were described as being so far from a starting point. They would go so far north, east, south and west to the point of commencement, unfortunately, disregarding the convergence of the meridians. That was necessary because some of those holdings covered thousands of square miles. The boundaries were parallels of latitude and meridians of longitude.

After World War II, when barbed wire had to be stretched in some of those areas, the surveys were rather complicated. In fact, to do an ordinary simple pastoral survey required geodetic considerations and geodetic calculations, and the boundaries were put in on the east-west boundaries as five-mile chords of the parallels. Of course, the meridians were run geodetically from those points.
We have seen the development of the sugar lands. Rich fertile lands were brought into production and, as technology and scientific knowledge advanced, there was a movement out into the more marginal lands and these were brought under production. Land administration and a land tenure system are progressive issues.

I am pleased to see that the Government is considering a number of points that have been raised by the members of the Liberal Party and others over the years and is moving towards adopting them. On behalf of the Liberal Party, I support the legislation.

Mr De LACY (Cairns) (3.50 p.m.): I join this debate briefly to support some of the comments made by my erudite colleague the member for Bundaberg, particularly in relation to the difficulties that people with Queensland Housing Commission land face in attempting to freehold it. As other members have said, the subject of land always crops up in a session and the discussion is never exhilarating. Because land is central to the whole notion of the way in which we live and to our economic system, any discussion about it generates a lot of heat.

The continuing increase in real estate and land prices in Queensland is an invidious influence on the community. It is caused not by the increase in productivity potential of the land but by the speculators who buy and sell. Unless a land tenure system and a Land Act take cognisance of that fact, the community is in deep trouble. The increase in the price of real estate is the main reason why many young people are having difficulty buying their own home. It also means that many young people are excluded from engaging in farming. Some Government members spoke about the need for a freeholding system and about the support the National Party is giving to young people to encourage them to go on the land. But while the price of land is impossibly high, there is no way that young Queenslanders will have the opportunity to go on the land unless they inherit it from their parents.

Fundamentally, the reason for freehold land, and the system facilitating freeholding, is not to make the land more productive. Freehold land does not make it any easier to grow wheat or sugar or to run stock. But freehold land is a saleable commodity. The Government has never considered that.

As I said by way of interjection, I grew up on a farm, and I remember my father saying that he did not support the Country Party but he had some respect for it because it was really the union of the farmers.

Mr Lee: What made you change?

Mr De LACY: I never changed; I never supported the Country Party. Neither did my father; but he did say that he had some respect for it. That respect has diminished rapidly because the National Party no longer supports small farmers; it supports speculators, big mining companies and big city interests.

Mr Littleproud: That is not right. I got 70 per cent of the vote in Condamine and everybody is a farmer.

Mr De LACY: The National Party received 39 per cent of the vote at the last election and the Labor Party 44 per cent. This raises its head all the time. The National Party claims that it received the majority of the vote at the last election. It was a long way from it then, and it will be a long way from it at the next election. If the results in the recent New South Wales election are any indication, the National Party will be going downhill very quickly.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr De LACY: The National Party actually lost ground.

Mr FitzGerald: The Labor Party lost ground in the rural areas.

Mr De LACY: Labor did not lose ground in the rural areas and still got well in excess of 50 per cent of the vote. That compares with the National Party's 39 per cent in the last Queensland election.

Mr Veivers interjected.
Mr De LACY: As the honourable member for Ashgrove said, the National Party should bring its national leader, Mr Sinclair, up to Queensland for the next election. It will be interesting to see what happens. How does he represent the small farmers? He, probably more than any other National Party member, reflects the way in which the National Party has moved away from the farming people.

I revert to the difficulty experienced when freeholding Housing Commission land and the way in which people who do that are not getting the same deal as that given to other people who hold land under a different type of lease tenure.

I refer to a young couple who live in Cairns. On the open market, they purchased a house. The house was on a piece of land that was leased. At the time, they were told that it was leased and that it was a relatively easy exercise to have it freeholded.

That young couple really did not want much in life; all they wanted was a roof over their heads and to participate in society. When they began to look at the situation, they were told that the land was leasehold and that they would have to pay a lease rental of $90 each year. I might add that they were paying rates as well. The lease rental of $90 a year did not cause them any great difficulty.

After they settled in and found their feet, they began to make investigations about the leasehold arrangements. They found that they held a worker's home perpetual town lease, which is the type of lease under which the Housing Commission holds its land. They ascertained the type of procedure that had to be followed, and in 1981 they were advised that the cost involved in freeholding their land was $10,500. That would have given them the title that most other people in urban areas have. The young couple found that, at that stage, that sum of money was too high, so they forgot about the matter and did not proceed.

In 1982, things got better for them, so they made another application. As is the case with Housing Commission land—but not the case with different kinds of perpetual leases in rural areas, as the honourable member for Bundaberg pointed out—the land was revalued. At that stage, the freeholding price was set at $14,000. That, too, was too high for the young couple, so they put the matter on the back burner and waited for another year.

In the next year they decided they would go ahead and, towards the end of 1983, made another application. They were advised that as at 23 March this year the freeholding price would be $30,000.

That shocked them. They saw me about the matter, and it shocked me, too. The property is only a very small property, of 600 square metres and it is in an area of Cairns that, although fairly central, is not considered to be an up-market area. That price is very much higher than that for a similar block in a similar area. They said to themselves, "It looks as though we will have to have leasehold for ever."

A Government Member: Did it have a house on it?

Mr De LACY: Yes.

Mrs Chapman: On an acre and a half of land?

Mr De LACY: On 600 square metres. I will have to ask the honourable member to go back to school. It would be about one-fifth of an acre.

A Government Member: You said 6,000 square metres.

Mr De LACY: I said 600 square metres, which is about one-fifth of an acre.

The young couple said that they would accept the leasehold tenure. However, in the meantime the Lands Department had carried out a reappraisal of the lease rental and had increased it from $90 a year to $600 a year. Furthermore, the increase was backdated two years. So they were hit with the situation in which they would have to pay $600 a year lease rental and meet a back payment of $1,200, as well as paying non-reducing rates.

As the honourable member for Bundaberg pointed out, in many instances it is more economical for people to freehold land than to retain it under leasehold tenure. Obviously, the young couple were caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. On top of facing a back payment of $1,200 and a lease rental of $600 a year, they were confronted with a freeholding price of $30,000.
Where could they go? They came to see me. I told them that I would contact the Minister for Works and Housing, which I did. He looked at the matter, which I appreciate, and after a fairly lengthy period informed the young couple that the Housing Commission was prepared to reappraise the freeholding price and to reduce it from $30,000 to $24,000, for which I am thankful. That lower price is very much closer to what I consider to be the market price.

What is the role of the Housing Commission? I have always believed that its role should be to help Queenslanders, particularly young Queenslanders, to obtain their own home. In the home-rental and home-ownership market, the Housing Commission, as a public housing authority, should be an alternative to the private system. The Housing Commission should provide competition for the private system and keep the lid on prices. When the Housing Commission announced that it would cost $30,000 to freehold a small block of land, it was establishing new and higher land values. It is contributing to the invidious situation in which the price of land in urban areas is at such a level that young people can no longer purchase a block of land and build their own house.

Over the years the Queensland Housing Commission has lost sight of its original objective of assisting young persons to purchase their own house in which they can live.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (4.1 p.m.): I was interested to hear Opposition members speak about their knowledge of land matters generally in Queensland. It must be borne in mind that it was the Labor Party that set the wheels in motion to ensure that Queensland would retain leasehold and not freehold tenure. That has long caused enormous problems for Queenslanders who have endeavoured to make a living from the land.

Mr Lee: They want it to remain that way so that when they make Australia a republic they can take it from them.

Mr STEPHAN: I point out to the honourable member that it is obvious from the comments that have been made that the Labor Party is determined that all land will be held under leasehold tenure. It has done everything within its power to stop freeholding procedures proposed by the Lands Department and the Mines Department.

I envisaged great problems in my electorate when provision was made for freeholding miners’ homestead perpetual leases. Because of the way in which the Act was written, there was certainly no intention other than to provide for leasehold tenure.

I commend the Minister for the moves that he has made in the last couple of years to freehold land at a more realistic price. However, at the moment that does not apply to special leases. Some land has been developed by families for two or three generations before it has become viable. If those blocks are converted to freehold, the market value must be paid for them. The market value is based on the value of land within a radius of 10 to 15 miles. Valuations can vary greatly. It must be realised that valuations have increased for a number of reasons, one of which has been the great influx of persons from other States and the great desire to own land in coastal areas because of its scenic qualities.

Some special leases have been developed at great expense over a long period. When a person must pay for the land at market value, he becomes frustrated and says, “What is the use? Should I buy that land, or should I go somewhere else, try to buy a better block of land and start all over again?” That is a problem I have encountered on a number of occasions. The procedures with other perpetual leases that are not special leases are more realistic and certainly appreciated by the land-holders. I commend the Minister for his efforts in that area. However, some grey areas still exist.

Two speakers have referred to speculators and said that they were responsible for the increase in valuations. I wonder how many members are buying land in the hope of selling it at a profit next year. I wonder how many people in the general community are doing the same. Anyone who is will get his fingers burned.

Mr Scott: Are you in favour of a capital gains tax?

Mr STEPHAN: I am not referring to a capital gains tax. I am talking about the value of land itself. For a number of reasons the price of land has levelled out. The price of land rose as a result of the demand when people speculated in the hope of benefiting from capital gain. That is certainly not happening now. Demand increases values.
At present it is very difficult to obtain an adequate return from rural land. How successful are hobby farmers and the other owners of small blocks of land? They provide adequate testimony of how difficult it is to succeed with a small block. Subdivision of large blocks into hobby farms has gone haywire. Local authorities have allowed subdivisions to run riot at the expense of productive farms. In one area a great deal of Water Resources Commission money was spent on a water diversion scheme involving a number of dairy farms. Those farms have since been subdivided. Only four or five remain productive. The remainder have been split up into five-acre lots. The water is not being utilised to its greatest economic advantage. Some people complain that they are forced to buy the water at a price greater than it would cost them to store it in their own dams. The community is no longer benefiting from the investment.

Time and again valuable land is split up and becomes virtually non-productive. Local authorities decide what land can be split up; they decide that their areas will be cluttered with hobby farms. More encouragement ought to be given to the maintenance of productive areas. It is not my intention to insult hobby farmers. They are encountering great difficulties, which difficulties will increase each year. I am aware of their difficulties because of the complaints I receive in my office. They lack the necessary expertise and the land does not live up to their initial expectations.

Mr Scott: What size is your block?

Mr STEPHAN: I do not own a farm at present. I had ideas of being able to hold my block, but things did not work that way. The return was much less than I had hoped. Consequently, I have had to dispose of it.

The point I was making is that many people buy small blocks of land—30 acres or so—and then realise that the returns are not adequate. They do not have the funds necessary to purchase tractors and irrigation equipment and to build dams, fences and other facilities.

These new settlers have found that to get a return has taken much longer than expected. Therefore, they have run out of money and become very frustrated and disappointed. An additional problem is that they have entered an area about which they have little knowledge. The combination of problems has forced many of them to turn to social welfare benefits. People should not think that a block of land of 100 acres, 30 acres or 20 acres is a viable living proposition.

Members have expressed concern about the amount of foreign ownership of Queensland land. Quite often many of them are carried away by false illusions. All they have to do is look at the 1983 annual report of the Australian Foreign Investment Review Board to gain some insight into foreign investment in this country. In 1983, only 570,000 ha of Queensland land was purchased by foreign investors. Contrary to popular belief, most of that went to American or British interests; the Arabs, Germans and Japanese were way down the list. That was a foreign investment of approximately $460m. Much more foreign investment, over $1,000m, went into mining. Foreign investment in service industries was $157m and $463m in manufacturing industries. Those figures do not take into account the value of land sold by foreign investors, who have found that the return on their investment has been insufficient and have therefore decided to diversify. When members of the Opposition seek the establishment of a foreign land register, they should remember that, if they care to do just a little research, the information is available. They should not allege that the information is kept under the bushes and then become emotional about the subject.

I realise that I have digressed from the provisions of the Bill, but I compliment the Minister for his efforts and initiative in dealing with land matters generally.
Because this legislation seeks to tidy up provisions relating to land, I ask the Minister to tidy up the inquiries in north Queensland. I know the Minister has a policy of not answering matters not directly related to a Bill, but at least I will get my message through. I know that the Minister does listen to the points of view of members. Although it is very hard to obtain the facts, a land-use study is being undertaken north from Daintree River, but I do not know if it goes as far as the Torres Strait islands.

Every time that, on behalf of one of my constituents, I inquire of the Lands Department or the Mines Department about leasing land I am told that a decision cannot be given because it is not known when the studies will be finished. On the last occasion on which I spoke to the Mines Department about land in the Portland Roads area, I was told, “The Lands Department has not carried out its part of the land studies.” I have spoken to the Minister about the use of land in that area and the continuing need for subdivision.

I have told the Minister that the Forestry Department is trying to remove some people who have been living on that land for some time. My argument is that the Forestry Department should have taken action six years ago. In my opinion, because the department allowed the people to remain there for so long they can claim a reasonable lease. The Forestry Department weakened its case by not taking action when it should have. This matter will no doubt develop into a confrontation and a man, his wife and three children will be turned out by the police, the bulldozers or fire. I do not know to what the Minister’s officers will resort to remove those people but, no doubt, the police will be there. This undesirable situation will be brought about by the inefficiency of the department.

Normally, because they have a difficult job to do, I do not criticise departmental officers. However, some smartening up is required, but I have been told that insufficient officers are available for that smartening up to take place. That thought brings me to the matter of the staff needed to make inspections before leasehold tenures can be changed. In one instance, two years will elapse before the land will be inspected. The Minister told me that certain administrative changes will permit increased efficiency in the department. That is certainly not before time.

A person in the Torres Strait area who applies to freehold is equally as important as a person in the grazing industry or elsewhere who makes a similar application. People in the Torres Strait area have equal rights to be given answers about land matters. I am concerned not about reserve lands but about land on Horn Island and Prince of Wales Island. The departmental officers visit the area once a year. If an application to change the tenure of land is made immediately after the officers make their visit, at the very minimum 18 months will elapse before an answer is given. Last year the officers did not even visit the area. That means that two years will elapse before the inspections are carried out. Inspections are essential before changes in tenure are approved.

Far north Queensland needs better service from the Lands Department. I urge the Minister to look closely at the matters that I have raised. I ask him to try to get the land use studies completed so that we may know what is to happen to land up there. National parks have been gazetted and there are mineralised areas to be considered. Due consideration must be given to all of these matters before any permanent or semi-permanent leasing arrangements can be entered into.

Unfortunately the Minister’s department is holding things up. People are moving constantly from the south to the north. In Queensland it is not a matter of going west, but of going north, because that is where the potential is. People who want a small block of land to live on should be given every assistance. The only way they are likely to attain their modest goal is to have the land use studies completed and for the Minister to have sufficient staff to handle queries. In that way, when a legitimate application is made, the people can be certain of getting a result within a reasonable time. I ask the Minister to pay particular attention to getting more efficiency in the Torres Strait and peninsula areas.

Debate, on motion of Mr Wharton, adjourned.

The House adjourned at 4.20 p.m.