WEDNESDAY, 21 AUGUST 1991

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. Fouras, Ashgrove) read prayers and took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

Remark by Member for Port Curtis about Member for Flinders

Mr PREST (Port Curtis) (2.30 p.m.): Mr Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. Last night in this House, I made a remark concerning the member for Flinders. I wish to advise that I withdraw that remark and apologise unreservedly for making it. I had been seeking to defend a friend from a defamatory attack by the member for Merthyr when I was provoked by the member for Flinders. This, however, in no way excuses the remark that I made. I express my regret at having made it, and I reiterate my apology to the House.

Mr SANTORO: Mr Speaker, I totally deny that I have said anything defamatory about the honourable member for——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Merthyr will resume his seat. At this point of procedure, I can take only a matter of privilege, and I have done so. Accordingly, the honourable member for Merthyr may make a statement when I ask whether there is any other business, but he cannot do it now.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Religious Education

From **Mr Gilmore** (52 signatories) praying for the Education Department to be directed to abandon all work on the P-10 religious education curriculum and allocate resources to the existing religious education system.

Child-care Centres

From **Ms Spence** (57 signatories) praying that any proposed changes relating to child-care centres be preceded by a Green Paper and a 6-month commentary period before any legislation.

Melawondi Timber-mill

From **Mr Stephan** (54 signatories) praying that the timber-mill at Melawondi be allowed to continue its viable productions by operating a second shift.

Public Assembly Bill

From **Mr Beattie** (55 signatories) praying that those aspects of the Public Assembly Bill allowing public demonstrations and “speakers corner” type activities in the mall be not proceeded with.

Fraser Island, Vehicular Traffic

From **Mr FitzGerald** (480 signatories) praying that the recommendation, to close the beach from Wathumba Creek to the South Ngkala Rocks to vehicular traffic, as recommended in the report into Fraser Island, be not proceeded with.

South Queensland Power Boat Club

From **Mr Beanland** (1 031 signatories) praying that the South Queensland Power Boat Club's racing licence be withdrawn and their activities moved to a more appropriate area.

Railway Boom Gates, Caboolture

From **Mr J.H. Sullivan** (2 457 signatories) praying for an urgent review into the supply and installation of railway boom gates and traffic islands for the McKean Street crossing at Caboolture.

Land Subsidence, Palm Beach

From **Mr Coomber** (6 004 signatories) praying for urgent action to compensate families whose homes have been affected by subsidence in the Palm Beach area and for an investigation into the development of the estate.

Tobacco Levy Increase

From **Mr Ardill** (17 559 signatories) praying that the tobacco levy be increased and that the proceeds be channelled into an independent foundation for health promotion, research and sponsorship of sport and the arts.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

Regulations under—

- Health Act 1937
- Education (General Provisions) Act 1989

Proclamations under—

- University of Southern Queensland Act 1989
- National Parks and Wildlife Act 1975-1990

Orders in Council under—

- Grammar Schools Act 1975 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982
- Grammar Schools Act 1975-1989 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982-1990
- Canals Act 1958-1990
- Fauna Conservation Act 1974-1990
- Fauna Conservation Act 1974
- Land Act 1962-1990

Land Act 1962
National Parks and Wildlife Act 1975-1990
National Parks and Wildlife Act 1975
Statutes under—
James Cook University of North Queensland Act 1970
Queensland University of Technology Act 1988
Reports for the year ended 31 December 1990—
Griffith University
James Cook University of North Queensland
University College of Southern Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Visit to South East Asia by Minister for Primary Industries

Hon. E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (2.36 p.m.), by leave: I have pleasure in reporting to the House on the outcome of a ministerial visit I undertook to Singapore, Malaysia, Laos and Thailand between 24 June and 4 July 1991. The trip was successful in pursuing a range of agricultural trade-related issues with Government and private sector leaders in those countries. Queensland is well placed to play a significant role in the development of South East Asia's economy, particularly as the younger people of countries such as Malaysia and Thailand continue to move away from traditional agricultural pursuits into areas such as manufacturing and service industries. Queensland's expertise in the area of tropical agricultural production is well known and respected throughout the region, and I am pleased to report that my party—which included private-sector representatives—identified a number of new opportunities for trade, particularly in animal industries.

The Government believes that its most effective role in developing export opportunities is as a facilitator for Queensland private enterprise to establish links with overseas trading partners, and from that viewpoint alone, the trip was a resounding success. All members should be aware of the rapid structural changes now occurring in South East Asia, and the compelling reasons for a continuing export effort on behalf of our rural industries. The Government has worked swiftly to sharpen Queensland's trading focus on the Asia/Pacific region, and it is paying off. No other country is better placed than Australia to further trade in agricultural goods and services within the region. No State is better positioned than Queensland because of its location and recognised success in tropical primary production. However, in the highly competitive markets of South East Asia, there is no room for complacency, particularly in regard to marketing. Demand for fresh and processed supermarket food lines is growing daily, reflecting the greater spending power of wage and salary earners in these countries. Consequently, quality and presentation is assuming a greater role in supermarket decision-making. Price is not the only lever.

In Singapore, for example, air-freighted Australian fresh milk sells in supermarkets for up to 40c per litre less than a reconstituted Malaysian milk product, yet effective marketing of the reconstituted product means it holds a 67 per cent market share. In Malaysia, beef from India outsells the Australian product because the Indian beef is perceived as being of a higher quality. Food export opportunities throughout South East Asia are enormous. The Queensland Government is doing everything in its power to assist primary producers develop the right products, and will also open as many doors as needed to ensure that the right marketing contacts are established.

In closing, I would like to single out three important highlights of my visit. These were—

the signing of an agricultural cooperation agreement between the Queensland Government and the People's Democratic Republic of Laos—a ground-breaking agreement with an emerging nation of growing stature;

the signing of contracts for the supply of 8 000 head of Queensland cattle to the Government of Thailand by Brisbane-based company Australian Rural Exports; and, I am most pleased to report,

a reinforcement of the strong Government and business links that Queensland maintains with Malaysia, despite diplomatic uncertainties which are beyond State control.

I seek leave to table details of the trip, including a full list of the participants, the itinerary and meetings held.

Leave granted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Visit to New Zealand by Minister for Primary Industries

Hon. E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (2.39 p.m.), by leave: During the second week of July, I represented the Queensland Government at the Australian Fisheries Council meeting in Wellington, New Zealand. New Zealand was recently offered, and has accepted, full membership of the council and undertook to host this annual conference, which included from throughout Australia Ministers with responsibility for fisheries. While in New Zealand, I was able to conduct other business of importance to Queensland's primary industries. Indeed, since early in my Ministry I have been seeking the opportunity to follow up previous discussions regarding Queensland's trade position with New Zealand.

I would like to briefly inform the House of the meetings I had in New Zealand and raise the major issues that emerged from these discussions. In Auckland, I met with Australia's Senior Trade Commissioner, Mr Ken Johnson, and Trade Commissioner, Mr Geoff Hill. This meeting provided me with a valuable introduction and overview of the trade situation. I am able to report that there seems to be continuing strong interest in tomato exports from Queensland. There are also emerging opportunities for mango exports out of north Queensland. The strong impression I gained is that there is a need to continue the promotional work being undertaken in relation to horticultural products out of Queensland as well as urge industry to ensure reliable supply of quality produce. This is the critical factor. Quite clearly, the radical changes to New Zealand's import policies are providing new opportunities for Queensland's primary industries. However, there are no easy gains, just sales on the basis of quality, reliability and price.

While in Auckland, I also had a meeting with the New Zealand Futures and Options Exchange. Members would be aware that the subject of a futures and commodity exchange being established in Brisbane has been raised in the press in recent times. I have no doubt that, in the not-too-distant future, the use of these instruments will play an increasing role in farm financial management. There are substantive benefits in having a commodity exchange floor in the region where the sugar, beef, wool and cotton are located. Beef, in particular, would seem to have the potential to facilitate an active exchange in the Australia/New Zealand area.

Recently, interest has been expressed by New Zealand dairy-farmers in the dairy herd improvement program operated by my department. Accordingly, I met with the

Livestock Improvement Corporation in Hamilton. At present, all work in this area is controlled by the Livestock Improvement Corporation, which, to put it mildly, seems less than enthused by the prospect of outside competition in this area. However, under Common Economic Relations (CER), this cannot really be prevented. At present in New Zealand, there is under way an independent review of the entire herd improvement program which is due to be completed by February 1992. I was assured that, as part of that evaluation, Queensland's bid to become involved will be assessed impartially.

One of the most interesting aspects of my trip was the visit to the large Watties food-processing plant at Hastings. Discussions held at the plant with the managing director and plant supervisor revealed some interesting points of relevance to the Queensland horticultural industry. Certainly, Watties sees Queensland as a potentially useful source of raw material. It recognises the seasonal advantages offered by Queensland and was open to the idea of cooperative development. However, I was disappointed to hear that, in the past, some quality problems had been encountered with certain supplies from Queensland. Quite frankly, if it is to realise substantial gains in value-adding, Queensland horticulture needs the involvement of operations such as Watties. The managing director, Mr David Irving, welcomed my invitation to come and have a close look at Queensland's horticultural potential, particularly in the emerging Burdekin district, with a view to joint-venture operations with Queensland processors.

The twenty-first meeting of the Australian Fisheries Council was held in Wellington, New Zealand, following New Zealand's acceptance of full membership to the council earlier in the year. Major items on the agenda included quota management and licence-splitting concerning the Northern Prawn and East Coast Prawn Fisheries, recreational fishing, fisheries research funding and foreign investment ownership controls in the fishing industry. On this latter point, I expressed my strong view to council that any assessment of foreign ownership needs to take into account regional implications and strategic trade issues, and to do this the work needs to be detailed and first-hand. Following the discussions around the table, I believed there to be substantial support for such argument from the other States. A final itinerary of my visit to the Australian Fisheries Council meeting in Wellington and my visits with industry whilst in New Zealand are hereby tabled in the House today.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Construction of Government Office Building, Brisbane

Hon. R. T. McLEAN (Bulimba—Minister for Administrative Services) (2.43 p.m.), by leave: As part of its program to stimulate and encourage activity in the building industry, on 19 August 1991 the Government invited tenders for a major Government office building. Between the commencement of design work and completion of the structure in March 1994, in addition to the spin-off employment generated in the supply and manufacturing industries, the project will directly provide 23 600 weekly pay packets for construction workers and a further 3 020 worker weeks of employment for professional consultants. So that we might get as many people in employment as soon as possible, tenders have been invited for the detailed design and construction of the building, which will be to a design separately commissioned by the Government. Construction of the building will enable the Government to reduce the outlays on leased space, which currently accounts for approximately 36 per cent of its total office accommodation.

The design incorporates numerous measures such as external sun shading, double glazing, access flooring throughout, economy air-conditioning cycles, and microwave communication facilities to ensure that the building will be energy efficient, cost effective to operate and maintain, with high flexibility to accommodate alterations to office layouts and future changes in communication and information technology. The 33-level building is

to be of a primarily reinforced concrete frame with granite-faced external columns, and an aluminium and glass curtain wall incorporating aerofoil-shaped sunshades, and will provide 28 000 square metres of useable office space and basement parking for 170 cars. The master planning of the site provides for the integration of the new car park and building servicing areas with those of the adjacent Education House.

In order to attract the most competitive price for the project, selected tenders have been invited from six firms with proven experience in major design and construction projects. They are Baulderstone Hornibrook (Qld) Pty Ltd; Civil and Civic (Qld) Pty Ltd; Concrete Constructions (Qld) Pty Ltd; John Holland Constructions Pty Ltd; Leighton Contractors Pty Ltd and Watkins Pacific (Qld) Pty Ltd (Watpac). In submitting their tenders, each of these contractors will be required to make a statutory declaration to the effect that they have not been party to any attempts or agreements to cover the tendering costs of the unsuccessful tenderers, nor to make a contribution to any trade-related organisation in connection with the tendering process. Similar declarations will be required of all subcontractors tendering for trade packages throughout the progress of the works.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER DURING QUESTION-TIME

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (2.45 p.m.), by leave: I have to advise the House that the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing will not be in the House today during question-time.

LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (2.46 p.m.): I seek leave to move a motion of censure of the Government Whip.

Question—That leave be granted—put; and the House divided—

DIVISION

Resolved in the negative.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (2.56 p.m.), by leave: As honourable members would be aware, recently, I undertook an official overseas visit to the UK and the USA. The main focus of that trip was on the Economic Community and US trade issues, which I know are of extreme importance to this State and this nation; police; law and order; issues of public assembly; matters relating to the British Parliament; and matters relating to a spaceport in this State. I appreciate being afforded the opportunity to take a trip of that nature. It was the first trip of that nature for a Leader of the Opposition, and I acknowledge the Premier in that regard. I believe that the work that was undertaken by me, my wife and my press secretary was of value to the people of this State, and I recommend that such trips continue.

This report outlines my discussions on various issues that are of extreme importance to this State. It includes also the various appointments that were made and the contact points at which they were made, so that other people, from whichever political party, may be able to follow up those contacts, using the addresses and the telephone numbers. I have listed discussions of all natures. It is a very comprehensive report. Therefore, it will be of value to all members of Parliament and others who follow. We brought back quite a considerable amount of material from both countries, material that we have delivered to the Parliamentary Library and which will be available as resource material for all members of Parliament. I commend the report to the House.

QUESTION UPON NOTICE

Ministerial Staff

Mr BEANLAND asked the Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development and Minister for the Arts—

> "What are the staff numbers and the remuneration package of press officers or persons engaged in public relations duties in each department and in each Minister's private office?"

Mr W. K. GOSS: In reply to the honourable member's question, I advise: the Queensland Government employs 20 ministerial press secretaries in its 18 ministerial offices. Two of those press secretaries are employed in a media unit responsible for coordination and liaison between ministerial offices as well as the additional workload of my office and that of the Deputy Premier. Eighteen of the ministerial press secretaries receive salaries within the range of administrative officers levels 5 to 8. They are reimbursed the full rental of a telephone installed in their residence as well as a percentage of calls as agreed between them and the Minister. Press secretaries are not entitled to receive any remuneration for work performed outside ordinary hours. Two of the press secretaries receive salaries which extend into the range of those for the Senior Executive Service.

As I have previously advised this House, previous National Party Governments utilised the former Public Relations and Media Office of the Premier's Department—with a staff complement of around 40—virtually as a personal public relations unit for the Premier. That practice ceased with the change of Government. The Public Relations and Media Office, now renamed the Media and Information Service, has been transferred to the Department of Administrative Services and fulfils a proper Government public relations and information service. Information on the staff employed in Government departments engaged in public relations activities, and their salaries, varies significantly between departments. I suggest to the honourable member that he might wish to consider directing questions to individual Ministers concerning those activities within their respective departments.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Remarks by Member for Port Curtis

Mr COOPER: I direct a question to the Premier. Quite frankly, the apology that we have just heard from the member for Port Curtis, who holds a reasonably high office in this House, is simply not good enough. As we are aware, last night, the member for Port Curtis made some disgraceful racist slurs. I want to know what the Premier is going to do about it. The member for Port Curtis referred to Aboriginal women as "gins". He also referred to a member on this side of the House as a "gin jockey". Later, he apologised "on behalf of the dark girls", which only compounds the issue and does not in any way exonerate him from the racist slur. I ask the Premier: on the basis of recent events in Victoria involving racist slurs, which led to a substantial compensation case and the resignation from the Cabinet of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, will he remove Mr Prest from office today? If not, why not?

Mr W. K. GOSS: In relation to the comments that were made last night by the member for Port Curtis—I regard those comments as offensive and unacceptable. Furthermore, I indicated to the member for Port Curtis that I believed that he should unreservedly apologise to the House and to anyone else who might have taken offence to those comments, and he has done so. Even though I find those comments personally and, indeed, politically offensive in terms of the proper conduct of this House, what I find more offensive is the sniggering, cynical, dishonest hypocrisy that we saw here this afternoon. The Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues were smiling and sniggering behind their hands as they put forward——

Mr COOPER: I rise to a point of order. I find that——

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would like to hear the honourable member's point of order.

Mr COOPER: I find that comment to be untrue and offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: I have to ask the Premier to withdraw that comment.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Which comment? I am entitled to comment on matters that I observed. I withdraw in accordance with your request.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I have got all day. I withdrew the offensive remarks.

PRIVILEGE

Remarks by Member for Port Curtis about Member for Flinders

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.04 p.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. Earlier this afternoon, the Government Whip rose on a matter of privilege. We have just heard the Premier say that he told the member to apologise. When the honourable member raised the matter of privilege, he was obviously not acting on his own volition, and he has abused the privileges of this place.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BORBIDGE: He has been following the orders of that man opposite.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet. Next time I am on my feet, I ask the member for Surfers Paradise to resume his seat forthwith, otherwise I will deal with him.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr W. K. GOSS, continuing: In relation to that point—I indicated what my opinion was to the member in the same way as I have indicated it to this House.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The comments were withdrawn. I wish members would take notice. I am starting to get a little annoyed. I would like to have a very orderly Parliament. Members have to observe and respect Standing Orders.

Mr W. K. GOSS: What the member for Port Curtis did was a matter for him. He knew that; we all knew that. Today, he took the action that he considered appropriate. In relation to the matters that I was commenting on before the point of order taken by the Leader of the Opposition—let me say that what I saw during the division when I sat on the other side of the House was seen by every Government member. What we saw was plain, and I regard the motivation as nothing more or less than cynical and opportunistic.

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Condamine under Standing Order 123A for interjecting. The honourable member will cease interjecting.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The remark that was made last night was offensive. I have made that point, and I think everybody of good conscience would agree with that. I would like to believe that the remark was made in the heat of the moment in response to provocation in relation to a close friend of the member for Port Curtis. Assuming that it was made in the heat of the moment, how offensive is that compared with the calculated dishonesty that we saw this afternoon?

Mr BOOTH: I rise to a point of order. The Premier has made the remark that people were sniggering. I do not know what else he said. I challenge him to name the people who did this.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member will resume his seat.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The member for Surfers Paradise, the member for Carnarvon—or wherever he is from—the member for Warrego, the member for Fassifern——

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Under Standing Orders 119 and 120, the statements made by the Premier are offensive. They are a lie and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to withdraw them under the Standing Orders.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Provided the member for Warwick does, I will.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I rise to a point of order. I would also like to say that I find the comments made by the Premier offensive. I was not sniggering at the comments made by the honourable member for Port Curtis.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I will not allow every member in the House to take points of order and collectively make a statement. That is out of order.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I rise to a point of order. In response to those members who have objected—I am quite happy to apologise to those members opposite who are prepared to deny the charge.

Mr NEAL: I rise to a point of order. I also deny that I was sniggering.

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. I believe the Premier has maligned me. I do not believe that he has withdrawn his remarks properly. In fact, I was sniggering at Mr McGrady's task force and the machine gun in the Charleville Police Station.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, it is your question-time. I think the point has been made. I ask honourable members to get on with question-time.

Regionalisation of Rural Services

Mr COOPER: Yes, Mr Speaker, we will get on with question-time. I refer to the remarks made by the member for Warrego. In the light of the Premier's recent safari through central Queensland to assess the impact of the Government's cuts to rural services and the admission that mistakes have been made in this process, I ask the Premier: will he recognise that regionalisation has severely disadvantaged many rural communities and will he restore those services lost through the cuts?

Mr W. K. GOSS: The matters that I discussed last week with a range of individuals during my travels through central and western Queensland confirmed the advice that I had received from members of the northern and rural task force—Mr McGrady and others—which is that there are some concerns in certain regional areas about the consequences of regionalisation. In some areas and in respect of some decisions, I think this is due partly to poor communication on the part of the Government. It is also due largely to false and dishonest scaremongering by a number of members.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Warrego under Standing Order 123A for interjecting.

Mr W. K. GOSS: As I said to people in the towns I visited, such as Biloela and those all the way to Longreach throughout electorates such as Callide, Peak Downs and Gregory, as far as I, as Premier, am concerned, there is a real problem because I never receive any positive representations or constructive representations from the members who represent those electorates. For that reason, it is absolutely necessary to send competent and conscientious members from the Government side of the House——

Mr LESTER: I rise to a point of order. I find very offensive the suggestion that my representation is not positive. I have just spoken about the School of Distance Education that should be placed——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Peak Downs under Standing Order 124, and this is a fair dinkum warning. I am on my feet, and the member will resume his seat. There is no point of order. Honourable members, I will not countenance frivolous points of order. Members have a right to rise to a point of order or rise on a matter of privilege at any time, and the Speaker must hear that point of order or matter of privilege. However, if those privileges are going to be abused, then, as Speaker, I have a right to say that it is frivolous and warn the honourable member concerned. I warn the member for Port Curtis under Standing Order 124 for taking a frivolous point of order.

Opposition members: Ha, ha!

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr W. K. GOSS: As I indicated to citizens right throughout central and western Queensland, members of my back bench are prepared to carry the load of those electorates as well as the load from their own electorates. Because I was interested, I wanted to talk to people so I dropped in at workplaces, schools and other community organisations, such as the meatworks at Biloela, the CWA at Longreach, the school at Banana and the shearing sheds north of Longreach. I simply spoke to people to find out what they were concerned about and the areas where they wanted more action taken by

the Government. I was able to allay their fears, but I think they were very disappointed and concerned to find that a number of the statements that had been made by members of the National Party in particular about closures of this or that facility were completely false—and knowingly false, what is more. This issue will receive further attention from the Government because it is committed to being a Government for all Queenslanders, including Queenslanders in rural, regional and northern Queensland. Let me also state that I think it is fair to say——

Mr Harper interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Auburn will cease interjecting.

Mr W. K. GOSS: It is fair to say that not only was my visit well received but also there are places where I received correspondence from people in National Party electorates who state that it has been literally years since they had a member of Parliament visit them and actually listen to them. They were very appreciative of the extensive work being undertaken by the member for Mount Isa and other members of the task force who are prepared to contribute that extra bit of effort to make sure that Queenslanders in National Party electorates are represented in this Parliament.

National Mutual Administrative Centre Relocation

Mr PREST: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to the announcements made last week that the insurance company, National Mutual, will relocate a major part of its operations to Brisbane, creating more than 400 jobs over the next 12 to 24 months. I ask: will he outline broadly to the House the prospects of Queensland attracting further business relocations from other States, and the employment benefits these will create?

Mr Borbidge: Tell them about land tax.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I take the interjection made by the member for Surfers Paradise because one of the three significant factors taken into account in the decision made by National Mutual to locate one of its two national administrative centres in Brisbane—and I make the point that the other one is in Melbourne, which is the company's headquarters and which means that one of the centres always had to be in Melbourne whereas the other one was the subject of vigorous competition between the other States—was cost, including accommodation costs. The other two factors taken into account by National Mutual when it chose Queensland and Brisbane for its national administrative centre—which will result in offices in Sydney and Adelaide being reduced and staff being relocated to Queensland—was that a study revealed that not only were costs, including the costs of accommodation, lower in Queensland, but also the State taxes and charges were lower and productivity was higher. Furthermore, in terms of people relocating throughout Australia, south-east Queensland was one of the most popular places people chose. This is very encouraging news for the Government and for the Queensland community, because it indicates that businesses that are at the point of making a decision on relocation or expansion are looking seriously at Queensland and are being attracted to Queensland for the significant reasons I have mentioned—low State taxes and charges, lower costs and higher productivity. The Government will be pressing home these advantages in the year ahead to attract even more business to Queensland.

HOME Loan and HOME Shared Programs

Mr PREST: In directing a question to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing, I mention that the Government's HOME Loan and HOME Shared programs are celebrating a first anniversary today following an amazingly successful year, and I ask: can he give the House full details of the way in which these two schemes have assisted both job

creation in the building sector and thousands of Queenslanders, married or single, into homes that they had no chance of buying 12 months ago?

Mr BURNS: This week heralds the first anniversary of the HOME Scheme, which has been very successful for the home-owner who could not obtain a loan under many of the other schemes available. Figures reveal that, in the first 12 months of the HOME Scheme, 5 798 Queenslanders were able to buy a home. The scheme took a short time to get started and is now averaging 630 loan approvals a month, which has generated $54m into the economy. Early in the scheme, 70 per cent of the loans were being taken up by people buying existing houses. Because things are tough in the building industry, we have tried to increase the amount that will be invested in the purchase of new homes. The only way to give the industry a kick along is to provide funding for new houses. To achieve that, last year we entered into a joint-venture arrangement with Jennings to construct new houses. The Government owned 50 blocks of land and Jennings owned 50 blocks of land and we put them on the market as a house-and-land package. In 12 months, we had 210 000 people contact the hot line seeking to borrow money to buy a home. Because we had a large waiting list, we sent letters to those people. It was a highly successful scheme. We then launched another 373 houses for purchase. A number of members wrote to me saying that, by the time the people received the letter, the blocks of land had been sold. Builders involved in the joint-venture arrangement with those house-and-land packages include Jennings, Devine Homes, Hutton Homes, Berella Constructions and Iezzi Constructions. The prices of those 373 homes in the house-and-land package ranged from $68,000 to $130,000. Anyone who has knowledge of the marketplace will realise that that is very good value. Of course, most of the cheaper homes were bought quickly. We are looking at improving that program. We intend to enter into more joint ventures with private builders and to extend the program to provincial cities. We expect that between 500 and 750 homes a year will be provided through that joint-venture scheme, as well as a further 1 500 new homes.

Figures produced by the Federal Treasurer and by our State Treasurer reveal that, for every $1m spent on that scheme, the economy is boosted by $2.35m in additional output and $480,000 in additional wages and salaries. With the $120m that has been put into new homes this year, on my calculation the economy has been boosted by $278.6m in additional output and $56.9m in additional wages and salaries, and 4 744 extra jobs were created. More importantly, this morning on the telephone a young woman was complaining to me about the long waiting-list for home loans. I asked her if she had inquired to the building societies and banks about loans. She said, “Yes, I have, but no-one will finance us on the low deposit that the Government is prepared to.” I give credit to the real estate industry and the building industry for cooperating with the Government on this project. They have not set out to send anybody broke or to put into homes people who cannot afford them. At this stage, very few home-buyers have caused any concern. Because it has helped the battler to have a chance to buy his own home, the HOME Scheme is one of the great initiatives of this Labor Government.

Land Tax

Mr BEANLAND: I direct a question to the Deputy Premier. Yesterday in this House, I referred him to the case of a Sunshine Coast tourist operator whose land tax bill has risen from $4,500 to $57,000 in two years. In spite of that fact, the Deputy Premier said that he was still opposed to any cuts in land tax charges. As that tourist operator has stated in today’s *Sunshine Coast Daily* that he would rather go to gaol than pay his land tax bill, which could destroy his family’s livelihood, I ask: in light of this compelling evidence of financial and personal hardship, will the Deputy Premier reconsider his opposition to cuts in land tax?

Mr BURNS: I do not know the person concerned. However, I am opposed to the Leader of the Liberal Party's Robin Hood in reverse style. His idea is to rob the poor people in this State to look after people who have substantial property holdings. The gentleman concerned must have, in addition to his own home, property with an unimproved capital value in excess of $150,000. We are experiencing difficult times. If the Leader of the Liberal Party is pretending to help small business, he should show me how he will do that with his consumption tax. I keep coming back to the same issue. What will the small tourist operator say when people cannot afford to visit the area because they must pay 15 or 17 per cent extra on every item that they will have for breakfast—the bacon, the butter, the bread, the sugar, the milk and so on? When they pay 15 to 17 per cent on their laundry, their rates, petrol, bus fares and everything that they buy in that area, how will that small-businessperson be assisted? The Leader of the Liberal Party pretends to be interested in those people, but he knows that the Federal Liberal consumption tax policy will slug them every day. If a Liberal/National Party Government is ever elected in Canberra, the small-businesspeople will be collecting that consumption tax on behalf of the Government. Those people will have to employ additional staff to work out the tax and collect it on behalf of the Government. When I have looked after the battler, I will then be prepared to talk about reductions in land tax.

Fitzgerald Report on Fraser Island

Mr NUNN: I ask the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development: is he aware of claims by some people in the Hervey Bay and Maryborough districts that industry confidence in the region is suffering as a result of the Fitzgerald report on Fraser Island? Can he inform the House whether those claims are accurate and whether there is any evidence of industry confidence or investment suffering?

Mr SMITH: I am aware that some people are attempting to spread doom and gloom and talk down the economy in these two regions. I am also aware that there is absolutely no basis for that action. It is unfortunate that some people have abused the Fraser Island report and used it as a tool in a smear campaign for their own political ends. Even before the Fraser Island package is put in place, we are seeing concrete evidence of industry confidence in that area. Early last month, under the Queensland Grants for Industrial Research Program, this Government provided something like $284,000 for the development of the Seabird project, of which all honourable members should be proud. I am pleased to inform the House today that that confidence has been rewarded. A Japanese aviation company, ADICO, has sought to take equity in the company to the extent of 10 per cent. ADICO is a firm that has been heavily involved in trading and the aviation industry over a period of some 60 years. The position that that firm has taken is indicative of its support for the project. That firm has certainly indicated that it intends to take up greater equity in that company further down the track. The result of that will be more long-term jobs in the Wide Bay area—jobs in new technology, jobs that will last for a long time, and jobs that will expand.

Comments by Member for Port Curtis

Mr BORBIDGE: I ask the Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs: will she completely dissociate herself from the racist slurs directed at Aboriginal women by her colleague the Government Whip in the Adjournment debate last night?

Ms WARNER: I am grateful for the opportunity to publicly dissociate myself from the racist and sexist remarks that were made by the member for Port Curtis last night in this Chamber. The comments that were made demean both the persons who were being vilified and the person who made the comments. I condemn the comments in the strongest

possible terms because, if they are allowed any currency, they create and exacerbate a racial division within our society at a time when one would have hoped that those sentiments were a relic of the past. Those redneck idioms reflect the deep level of open contempt and arrogant paternalism that Aboriginal people endure every day of their lives. I am pleased that the member for Port Curtis has withdrawn and retracted those sentiments, and I urge him to refrain from making them in the future.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Poker Machine Tenders

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct a question to the Treasurer. Further to his reported comments, I ask: can he confirm that all companies approved to tender for poker machines in Queensland have been vetted and have received clearances from Australian and international police? Will he table these clearances?

Mr De LACY: I thank the honourable member for the question. I might say that the campaign that he has been running in respect of the poker machine tenders has not been doing him any credit. The honourable member has made something like 50 allegations, none of which have been proved to have any substance. In regard to the allegation that he made on 18 July concerning an investigation by the Australian Federal Police—I have given him five opportunities to provide some evidence. He has been unable to do so. As late as last night, the Federal Police in Canberra, Brisbane and Sydney advised this Government that they know of no such investigation.

Mr Borbidge: This is to all the tenderers?

Mr De LACY: I will come to that. If the member for Surfers Paradise has some evidence, I challenge him to table it in this place, because his credibility is fast disappearing. If he has some evidence, I ask him to please provide it to the Australian Federal Police because they have advised this Government that they know nothing about it and that they would be very interested in it.

I note that the member for Surfers Paradise has also been keeping this issue alive with the latest unsubstantiated allegation that there has been collusion amongst the invited tenderers. This has gone to the Trade Practices Commission. I want to make the point in this House that this is the last chance for the member for Surfers Paradise. If this allegation is proved to be without substance, his fast-declining credibility will be zilch. I await with bated breath the result of the investigation by the Trade Practices Commission. In respect of the six companies that have been invited to tender—they have been checked by the Machine Gaming Division in a number of areas, and the advice given to me is that there is absolutely no reason why they should be precluded from tendering.

Growing of Opium Poppies in North Queensland

Mr PITT: I ask the Minister for Primary Industries: has he considered a suggestion by the member for Tablelands that the Government should investigate the growing of opium poppies as a crop in north Queensland? Has the Government considered such a move? Is it likely to do so in the future?

Mr CASEY: I could not believe my ears when I heard the honourable member for Tablelands making a suggestion last week on ABC north Queensland radio that opium poppies should be grown in north Queensland as an alternative crop and that this Government ought to be carrying out a lot of research in relation to it. The first thing that must be done when one is going to examine a new crop, as you would well know, Mr Speaker, from your own agricultural science background, is to start out in the market with the consumer to see whether there is a need for that particular crop. Obviously, this is the

first major mistake that was made by the honourable member for Tablelands in regard to his fantasy. It is true that approximately 10 per cent of the opium poppy that is grown throughout the world is grown in Tasmania. However, it is grown to provide the basis for the manufacture of codeine and other analgesics, and it is grown under specific contract. The growing of opium poppy throughout the world is controlled by a United Nations charter, which I believe was implemented in 1961, and firmly adhered to by all countries in the world that have supported the United Nations for the simple reason that, of course, the major use in so many countries of the world for opium poppy is the production of heroin, one of the drugs which are causing so many problems. In Australia, we are spending millions and millions of dollars on trying to stamp out the illicit drug trade in this country so that we can stop this scourge from affecting not only our young people but also many of our older people.

We have heard all the stories that came through, even from the Fitzgerald inquiry, about the way in which drugs are being used in this State. We as a Government are not interested in the growing of heroin, cocaine, marijuana or any other crop that contributes to the drug trade of the world. The truth of the matter is that under this strict control of the United Nations convention, opium poppy just cannot be grown. Tasmania, for instance, has a licence to grow opium poppy, because it is a relatively small island State. The operation is secure, it is controlled, it has a high fence around it, it is under guard. The crop is grown in a controlled situation, with a guarantee that everything that is grown is taken. It is a distinctive, controlled situation. They are the points that I think must be made quite specifically when it is suggested that opium poppy should be grown in Queensland.

I have just recently visited Laos, and I reported to the House today that we are endeavouring to help the Laotian people in the Golden Triangle to get out of the heroin trade in which they are deeply involved. We are definitely not interested in having Queensland involved in this operation in an insecure environment, particularly in far-north Queensland, which already has a problem with the drug trade.

Cooke Inquiry

Mr HARPER: In directing a question to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, I refer to his reported claim that the Cooke inquiry into the activities of particular Queensland unions was a waste of money and that the commissioner went into unnecessary and time-consuming detail, and that the inquiry recommendations tabled yesterday highlighted the need for security measures to prevent ballot-rigging, a lack of budgetary controls, substandard audits of union funds, use of false documentation for expenses claims, and a host of other rorts that were exposed. I ask: in view of this shocking indictment of the trade union movement, will the Minister now commit his Government to bringing trade union management to an acceptable level of business accountability by requiring standards of disclosure consistent with Companies Code requirements applicable to corporations? Although the Minister refused to allow the Opposition to debate the relevant clauses in Committee, will he now expedite the introduction of the legislative amendments recommended to the Industrial Relations Act in the interests of cleaning up malpractices in the trade union movement?

Mr WARBURTON: I will endeavour to answer the question as I heard it. Irrespective of what the honourable member alludes to, I do know what I said to the media yesterday. I said that in my opinion the Cooke inquiry took too long and it cost too much. They are the words that I used. There is a lot of logic in those words, because the National Party Government itself was advised in early 1991 that the expectation by the commissioner himself was that the Cooke inquiry would cease operations in August 1990. So there is logic in the comment that I made inasmuch as I believe the inquiry took too

long. Because it took twice as long as it should have, obviously the logic that follows is that it cost too much. So that was my position very, very clearly.

In respect of the other parts of the honourable member's question—the recommendations really have come in three parts. Recommendations were made in respect of the charging of a number of people—if my memory serves me correctly, a total of about 11. Each time the recommendations came through they were immediately referred to the Director of Prosecutions, and I understand that the Director of Prosecutions has those matters well in hand. There have been recommendations made for legislative change, and also recommendations made which do not involve legislative change, but which former Commissioner Cooke believes would improve the accountability arrangements of trade unions. I can only assure honourable members that I am working with senior officers of my department to assess as quickly as we can the merit of those recommendations. It should be understood that there is legislation pending at a Federal level. We must also look at that in addition to what we are looking at on a State basis. Certain recommendations will have to be fully discussed by Cabinet because they concern matters in respect of which the Government as a whole has to make a decision. I can assure honourable members that the matter will be looked at and attended to as expeditiously as possible.

Unemployment

Mr HARPER: In directing a question to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, I refer to yesterday's Federal Budget and the prediction that unemployment would continue at a high level, estimated at 10.75 per cent—a figure which has been branded as conservative by employer groups and criticised by some Labor leaders as unacceptable for a Labor Government. I ask: in view of the fact that Queensland's rapidly worsening rural crisis threatens to drive unemployment in this State even higher, what initiatives have been put forward for Budget consideration to alleviate unemployment in this State? Does the Minister agree that the Federal Budget's premise of continuing high unemployment shows that the honourable member's Federal Labor colleagues have sacrificed their traditional supporters to follow the economic purists down the road of this recession that we had to have?

Mr WARBURTON: I thank the honourable member for his question. I do not know if he has directed it in the right direction, but I will certainly attempt to answer it to the best of my ability. I would have to say at the outset—and I know I express the points of view of everybody on this side of the House—that we view the unemployment of people throughout this State and throughout the nation as one of the most serious matters that confront our nation as a whole. I think that right across the political spectrum of this House, we generally agree that it is a matter that has to be attended to, and attended to as quickly as possible.

My responsibilities in relation to employment rest with a number of schemes under my jurisdiction which are aimed at the disadvantaged. As I have explained to this House on numerous occasions, for quite some time my main objective has been to ensure that, in particular, young people, who face a high unemployment level of about 26 per cent, have the necessary skills to ensure that they are occupied and that they have every opportunity to have access to work when this recession lifts, and hopefully that will be sooner rather than later. In relation to the Federal Budget—I did note that it increased TAFE recurrent funding from 4 per cent to 5 per cent. In percentage terms, that may not seem a great deal, but it means that the total capital and recurrent funding to the States and Territories is estimated to be in the vicinity of $388m in this financial year. That is an increase of 4.6 per cent over last year's amount. For the information of honourable members, I point out that the Commonwealth also funds TAFE via employment and training

programs, and this is getting to the crux of the question asked by the honourable member. Fortunately, spending on the latter—that is, the training programs—will rise by $260m, an increase of 50 per cent. That funding is aimed at giving assistance to job-seekers in industry and at such things as Aboriginal employment assistance, where very significant increases have been made. Although those things do not receive a lot of publicity, from my point of view it is tremendously important in this Government's thrust in the field of employment relief and its perseverance in the training area.

As far as the other part of the honourable member's question about what I, as the relevant Minister, have put forward in respect of employment programs and other matters which will improve the lives of the young and the not-so-young people in this State—I ask honourable members to be patient. As the honourable former Minister would be aware, that is something that is now on this Government's plate. I am sure that, in the not-too-distant future, when the Budget is brought down by the Treasurer the honourable member will receive the responses or the answers that he requires.

Gateway Arterial

Ms POWER: I ask the Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development: given the high number of vehicles that currently utilise the Gateway Arterial road, can he advise if the Department of Transport has carried out any studies to indicate that, in the future, the number of access roads that lead onto the Gateway Arterial road will need to be increased?

Mr HAMILL: I think all members of the House would recognise that the Gateway Arterial represents a major component to the road network servicing south-east Queensland. Progress is being made for the full duplication of the very important north-south route in Brisbane's eastern suburbs. On a number of occasions, the honourable member for Mansfield has expressed concern about access points to the Gateway Arterial being extended and the detrimental effects that that would have on residential areas in Brisbane's south-eastern suburbs. Whilst we are relying upon Commonwealth contributions for the development of that major arterial project and we anticipate that the total upgrade of that particular road will be completed over four years, I want to advise the honourable member and the House that no further access points to that route are anticipated or will be put forward by the Department of Transport.

One, point which is perhaps not well understood by some members of the House in respect to our major arterial roads, is that those roads best service heavy traffic volumes when they are maintained as limited access routes. The Gateway Arterial will remain a limited access route to best provide a service to the freight industry and to road transport in south-east Queensland.

Market Milk Quotas

Mr PERRETT: In directing a question to the Minister for Primary Industries, I refer to the recommendation of the Industries Commission to deregulate the dairy industry and in particular to the recommendation to eliminate the market milk quota, and I ask: will he give an unequivocal assurance that the quotas will remain in Queensland, thus protecting farmers and consumers alike from the market power of Victoria and New Zealand?

Mr CASEY: The matter of dairy industry review has been one that has been under way within this Government for some time. Unlike other reviews that were undertaken by the previous Government in this State, it has been a review that has covered the broad range of the entire dairy industry, from the producer right through to the consumer. Those of us who have been members in this House for some time know of some of the administrative actions that were undertaken by the previous Government over the years

and the way in which it allotted special quotas and special allocations, and the way in which it transferred entitlements from various dairy factories to other dairy factories at the whim and behest of different National Party branches.

Unlike that Government, this Government has gone about it in a very, very positive way. As a result of that, through a Cabinet subcommittee that has been established, a Green Paper is being compiled. What is likely to be contained in that Green Paper has been discussed in detail with industry representatives. The paper is almost ready for submission to Cabinet, and within the next few weeks it will be available to the dairy industry. It is a matter for Cabinet to make the final decision on this Government proposal. That Green Paper will enable all sectors of the industry to have further input on which direction they feel the dairy industry in this State should be heading.

I wish to make one very important point. Unquestionably, because of market pressure on all sectors of the food industry through major competition between large supermarket chains, the Queensland dairy industry must become part of the eastern Australian dairy industry. One has only to consider the major advertising campaign undertaken this week throughout Australia by one major supermarket chain to realise the pressure that will be applied and the competition that will result in the near future in Australia, particularly along the east coast, so far as the consumer dollar is concerned. We must be realistic and ensure that Queensland is the first priority of this Government. As will be stated in the Green Paper and has been stated before in this House, this Government will to do everything possible to maintain a viable dairy industry in this State right through from the producer to the consumer.

Legislation Affecting Primary Producers

Mr PERRETT: I direct a question to the Minister for Primary Industries. In view of legislation planned by the Minister for Environment and Heritage, which would see primary producers lose effective management control of their land, suffer production cuts through losing access to parts of their properties, be forced to encourage the breeding of native fauna including the predatory dingo, and become unpaid national park rangers on their own land, I ask: will the Minister introduce his own legislation to protect the right of producers to use their land productively, thus maintaining the supply, price and quality of produce to consumers?

Mr CASEY: The honourable member for Barambah comes into this House and displays the obvious ignorance and arrogance that he has displayed for several months out in rural communities in an attempt to scaremonger them about our Government. The propositions put forward by the member in his question are absolute nonsense. It is not the intention of this Government to take away from any farm operator in this State the control of the operations of his farm. It is not the intention of this Government to introduce any legislation that will result in an increase in the pest and vermin population of this State. It is the intention of this Government to continue with the task that it has undertaken so far, which has brought great accolades from primary industry groups of this State, namely, management control of Queensland in a way that benefits its primary industries, its overall economy and its people. This Government will continue to do that.

The real problem with the National Party is that it can see its support in the rural areas of this State dissipating and disappearing. That support is drifting away like the sand in the hourglass on the table of the House—slowly wilting away. National Party members are starting to realise that the people whom they thought were absolutely under their control when they were in Government are prepared to talk to this Labor Government. National Party members cannot understand that for the simple reason that for 32 years their party manipulated the rural sector of this State for its own political purposes. This Government is dealing with the people involved in the primary industries sector of this

State as industries and as people who are contributing to the economy. It does not matter what their political feelings or beliefs are, while they are contributing to the economy and well-being of this State, this Government will continue to support them.

Government Building, Rockhampton

Mr SCHWARTEN: I ask the Minister for Administrative Services: given this Government's commitment to constructing a State Government building in Rockhampton, could the Minister advise the House as to the progress of that project and the benefits that will accrue to Rockhampton?

Mr McLEAN: I congratulate the honourable member for Rockhampton North and the other member who represents a Rockhampton electorate, Mr Braddy, for their involvement in that project from the beginning. When the project in Rockhampton was first suggested, some minor problems had to be overcome. Negotiations with the former Rockhampton City Council were very successful. That cooperation has continued to some extent with the present council. Without the efforts of those two members who represent the Rockhampton district, that project would have been set back even further.

The building project that is proposed for Rockhampton is first class. When it is completed, the city will be proud of it. The total budget for the project is some $24.3m. The building will contain 10 000 square metres of offices and 157 basement parking spaces. The site acquisition for the project from the council is almost finalised. The council has demolished two warehouses on that particular site, and consultants are already working on the project design. A Rockhampton firm of architects has been working in association with a Brisbane-based consultant architect. The services engineers are also Rockhampton based. In November, the construction tenders will be invited from selected project management firms, and construction is due to begin in January 1992. The completion date is expected to be in June 1993. That positive project, which is part of the accelerated capital works program, represents one of the Government's reactions to the unemployment problem in Queensland. It is part of a $350m injection into the building sector in Queensland. The project, which will provide about 8 000 weekly pay-packets, will be a huge boost to the local economy. The flow-on effect will be even greater. This Government believes that Rockhampton has enormous potential, and we will ensure that that potential is realised.

Bread Industry Deregulation

Mr SCHWARTEN: I ask the Minister for Primary Industries: is he aware of the circulation around retail outlets in Rockhampton of a petition concerning bread industry deregulation? If so, could he advise the House of the facts surrounding this issue?

Mr CASEY: This is Liberal Party touch-up time. I am aware of the petition to which the honourable member for Rockhampton North referred. At the behest of the honourable member for Townsville, I spoke recently with people in Townsville connected with the same matter. As I understand it, an organised campaign is under way, being aided and abetted by the honourable member for Nerang, throughout the State of Queensland to try, once again, to cause a real scare problem within the community. It is a matter that is typical of conservative forces in this State about something that they do not wish to have. Every member of this House knows that, last year, we passed a bread industry Act in this House and that that Act contains a provision giving the industry 12 months to get itself in order. The Act contained a review period of 12 months, which must be undertaken. The Bread Industry Authority has undertaken that review and it has submitted preliminary information on it to me. I have sent that back to the authority for further information that is required.

I say quite clearly that, when I spoke in this House during the debate on the legislation, out of all of the options that were considered, it was pointed out clearly that total deregulation of the bread industry in this State would have two major effects: firstly, in the long term, it would help to increase the price of bread for consumers; and, secondly, vendors would disappear right out of the system. They would be the big casualties. That is quite clear. This Government has no intention of doing anything that will harm vendors or consumers. The catchcry that everybody seems to be using is: institute a minimum retail price. However, a minimum retail price would only force people into paying more for bread than they should have to pay. This Government is not about prosecuting people out there in the community because some retailer wants to use bread as a loss-leader and sell it at a cheaper price in the supermarket than does his competitor down the road.

The legislation is designed so that, if that retailer wants to do that, he may do so and the consumer can benefit, but he does it at his cost—not at the cost of the vendor, not at the cost of the manufacturer and not at the cost of other people in the community. Unfortunately, suggestions have been made of manipulation by some people.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is debating the question.

Mr CASEY: I will just wind up, Mr Speaker. This point must be emphasised. Unfortunately, because that is happening in the community, bread-manufacturers and vendors have come to my office and said to me, "This is what is happening." I have said to them, "You give me the evidence. We will put it to the Bread Industry Authority and it can prosecute." They then say, "I will not bell the cat", and they walk out. That is the problem. Until such time as the people within the industry are prepared to clean up their own industry and to prepare the information that can be used in a proper court of law in accordance with the Bread Industry Authority Act, we will not be able to clean up the industry in the way in which people would like to see it done.

Linear Accelerator Units

Dr WATSON: In directing a question to the Minister for Health, I refer to his press release of 6 February 1991, in which he stated that the capacity of the Queensland Radium Institute Centre attached to the Mater Hospital to provide radiotherapy treatment for cancer patients will be doubled. Further, he indicated that a preliminary budget of $4m has been set for the building works, including bunkers for the installation of the new accelerator units. The $4m budget was approved by State Cabinet last month as part of the accelerated capital works program to stimulate activity in the building industry. That commitment was reiterated in a press release on 30 April 1991, and the Minister further noted that the installation of units and the associated equipment should begin this year. I ask: is the Minister still committed to the installation of the two new linear accelerator units for the treatment of cancer patients at the Mater Hospital, and when will that begin?

Mr McELLIGOTT: The question refers to a press release dated February 1991, but nothing has changed from the indications that I gave at that time that, yes, the Government is committed to expanding cancer treatment services throughout the State and, yes, we are committed to the installation of two linear accelerators at the Mater Hospital as a subcentre of the Queensland Radium Institute. We are further committed to the development of a comprehensive cancer treatment program in north Queensland by the installation of further linear accelerators in north Queensland as time and finance permit. The reorganisation of Queensland Health through the QRI indicates that the Queensland Radium Institute will be part of the Brisbane north region. It will be responsible to a chief executive officer responsible for the Royal Brisbane Hospital complex and will report directly to the regional director of Brisbane north. We have indicated that we have committed this Government to providing a comprehensive treatment centre for cancer patients right throughout the State.

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

MATTER OF SPECIAL PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Rural Crisis

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise the House that, pursuant to the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 16 July 1991, I have received a proposal for a Special Public Importance debate. The proposal submitted by the honourable Leader of the Opposition is for a debate on the following matter—

> "The Government's continuing failure to respond to the rural crisis in Queensland and the deliberate Government actions which have accentuated hardship in country areas."

I now call the member for Barambah to speak to the proposal.

Mr PERRETT (Barambah) (3.59 p.m.): Before I commence, I acknowledge the presence of students from the Goomeri State High School in the public gallery.

Labor is set on a course which could bankrupt primary producers, squeeze the life out of scores of communities and force up the price of food on every table in Queensland. Every day, a new cost or a new restriction is imposed. If it is not rental costs or transport charges going up, services are disappearing. Survival is uncertain in rural areas, even when Governments try to do the right thing. Producers cannot influence two vital factors: world market prices and the weather. Prices are down, courtesy of a world trade war. We are also in desperate trouble with drought. Much of Queensland has had no winter rain to speak of. Forecasters tell us that we face a long, very hot, very dry summer. I hope the Premier took a good, hard look at the country during his well-publicised drive last week. If he did, he would have seen a bone-dry State with empty cultivations and livestock with little condition. He would have seen a rural sector going broke.

The people of rural Queensland are desperate for relief. They prayed for it in the Federal Budget, but the Treasurer took a giant sidestep to the left. He had to repay the cynical coalition which kept Mr Hawke in his job. Queenslanders must realise who they have to thank for this mad Budget. There is the loony Left, led by Victoria's Brian Howe, and the Australian Workers Union heavy, Bill Ludwig, who, with some help from Wayne Swan, bullied the boys into line behind Hawke and the Left. His shabby union with Howe has allowed the Federal Budget disaster for rural Australia. It allows millions of overseas conservation schemes and truckloads of money for trendy urban schemes whilst the bush starves and country towns die. Bill Ludwig is the union bully who calls the shots for this Labor Government. When Goss took the knife to Warburton he relied on AWU muscle, and he still does. When this Labor Government bleeds the bush, it is with the full support of the union. What a pity the AWU and Bill Ludwig have forgotten where they came from. They backed the policies which make rural Queenslanders wonder what is coming next. What is next is a new mass of green legislation that will cut productivity at the very time it must rise. This union-dominated, urban-based Labor Government savaged the bush right from the start. There were savage increases in lease rentals, big hikes in truck registrations and even the gutting of the QIDC, thereby ending effective drought relief.

Now this Labor Government is threatening the very viability of rural industries and communities. Ministers can get up in this House or use the media and weave all sorts of fanciful explanations. They can talk about equity, level playing fields or rationalisation. They can even talk like the Treasurer about rural Queensland having it too easy in the past, but there is a bottom line. Our great primary industries are going down the gurgler and so are the towns which depend on them for their own prosperity. Labor's Treasurer sees them as a milch cow for funds and the rest of the Government sees them as a source of savings. In other words, the Government can bleed provincial Queensland dry, then forget about it and leave it to its own devices. We even have the Treasurer's word on that.

Honourable members will remember what he told the *Australian*. The cuts in services, courthouses, the DPI and hospitals were examples given and were to make up a $200m difference between revenue and expenses. He said that rural Queensland would make up the $200m deficit—not the 65 per cent of voters in the south-east, but the 35 per cent in the rest of the State. He also said that cuts in public service jobs were inevitable. In case we missed the point, he told Matt Robins that small towns cannot rely on the continued delivery of services from their own town. Few people took the Treasurer seriously, but because they have the proof country people knew he was telling the truth.

The Premier and Minister for Primary Industries squeal pretty loudly when the truth is reported. I pay tribute to Tony Koch for the stories he has written in the *Courier-Mail* about cut-backs in provincial areas, but the truth is there for all to see. The big cuts have occurred outside the south-eastern corner of the State. They add up to a savage attack on the ability of rural industries and their towns to survive. If they do not survive, we will all pay through mass bankruptcies and massive unemployment. This will happen not only to farms, but also to all the businesses that service rural producers. We will pay in the hugh blow-out in the welfare bill, and the nation's balance of payments will suffer further. In addition, there are all the implications it has for interest rates—even in the cities. Most importantly, we will lose our self-sufficiency in food production and pay through the nose to get our food from elsewhere. We will go on paying. We will lose a big part of this State's productive capacity and we will never get it back. Life has never been easy outside the big cities, but generations of people have accepted the challenge. Governments have helped by trying to keep services up to scratch. They—and I include past Labor Governments—actually encouraged rural communities. They saw the importance of real decentralisation. They knew that investment in rural infrastructure was an investment in prosperity.

Mr Elliott interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! The member for Cunningham must not interject from other than his own seat. It is improper for him to interject on his own colleague.

Mr PERRETT: They knew that investment in rural infrastructure was an investment in the prosperity of the whole State, including the south-east corner. This Labor Government went the other way. It started by taking away local control of fire, ambulance and hospital services, which in the long run means the elimination of services in some centres. In others, the services will not match local needs. Local decisions will be made from the comfort of large centres. This Government has fiddled with education and moved teachers and administrators around, generally from smaller centres to larger towns. Next on the list were the courthouses. Twenty-six civilian clerk of the court centres were marked for closure, including those in substantial towns such as Babinda, Boonah, Collinsville, Kilcoy, Millmerran, Miles, Moura, Wondai, Wandoan—the list goes on. Earlier this year the Government started to knock off police clerk of the court centres, and 53 of them in centres all over the State were closed. For the benefit of city members on the Government side of the House, I point out that a great deal used to happen in those courthouses. They handled most of the business that people might do with the Government, particularly the processing of licences, fees and permits from a variety of departments. However, access to all those services now means a long drive to another town for something that used to be on people's doorsteps. The Transport Minister has cut rail services and scores of towns have lost rail freight depots. Trains now speed past them carrying freight that has to be trucked back by road. Freight charges went through the roof. In some cases, they increased by 300 or 400 per cent. The new main roads legislation took away much of the autonomy of local engineers who used to work closely with local councils. Again, we have the position in which local knowledge is no longer used

when decisions are made.

When the Premier went around the Cabinet table looking for cuts, the Minister for Primary Industry whipped up his hand and shouted "Me, too" louder than all the rest. Some Ministers might try the excuse that they did not know better, but that excuse will not wash with the Minister for Primary Industries because he is a former leader of the party. He has been around for a long time and comes from a primary producing area. There can be no excuse for the damage that he has done. He has already slashed staff numbers by almost 200 in very important areas. These cuts are having direct effects on the viability of producers, and they are beginning to have an effect on what consumers can buy. Ultimately, there will be disastrous effects in the cities of Queensland as well as in rural areas. The Minister has dumped up to 40 inspectors—most of whom were stock-inspectors—and has slashed veterinary services. He has exposed Queensland's livestock industries to the threat of grave danger posed by exotic diseases such as blue tongue or even foot-and-mouth disease. The potential to destroy Queensland's meat export industry exists, which could make meat even on Queensland tables scarce and expensive. He has taken away meat-inspectors in many butcher shops and small abattoirs. How dangerous is that? The Minister has also closed down research programs in important primary industry areas and has bundled out people who are involved in important extension work. He has withdrawn soil experts while at the same time preaching land care. Everything the Minister for Primary Industries has done will affect the price, supply and quality of produce flowing to the cities. Whenever this Labor Government imposes additional costs beyond the Great Dividing Range, whenever it increases rents or permit fees, whenever it withdraws public servants and their services, and whenever it takes land out of production, it makes conditions just that much harder. Eventually, something will have to give. When that happens, the whole State will pay.

Mr NUNN (Isis) (4.09 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker——

Mr Perrett: This will be good. Who wrote this?

Mr NUNN: I wrote it.

Mr Perrett interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Barambah has had his say.

Mr NUNN: Honourable members will recall that when the Fitzgerald inquiry into corruption in this State was instituted, the members of the Opposition claimed great credit for it. However, they forgot to tell the people of Queensland that they were the reason for it. Today, they want to debate the rural crisis in Queensland. Again, they are the reason for the crisis. If anybody should be on trial in this House today, it should be the member for Roma, Russell Cooper. He should be the one who tells the people of Queensland where the Opposition stands on land tax and on consumption tax. He should be the one trying to explain where he will find the $200m to fund his promise to abolish land tax. He should be the one trying to explain why his party is supporting a consumption tax that would add hundreds of dollars to the cost of a family's yearly food bill, and he should be here explaining why land tax revenue under the National Party's administration jumped more than 60 per cent a year in 1986-87 and 1989-90. What does that $200m represent? It means that members of the National Party would sack more than 5 200 teachers or 4 000 policemen. Members of the National Party would sack the very teachers of the students from Goomeri who are presently in the gallery, and I hope those students go home to their parents and tell them all about it. I hope the teachers tell the parents about it, too. According to Mr Cooper, he will privatise Queensland Railways and he will get rid of all regional and rural services. Is that his idea of providing services to the rural community?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr NUNN: Listen to them squeal! They make me feel like a pig-farmer leaning on the rail, looking at his stock. They remind me of the old yarn about the bloke who rolled up to

the farmer's gate and ran into the farmer's boy. The boy said, "Dad's down at the pig sty." The bloke said, "Thanks." The kid said, "You'll know Dad. He's got the hat on." I have a problem here today because not one member of the Opposition is wearing a hat, and I am confused. I do not know which is which.

Mr Hobbs: We know.

Mr NUNN: I am pleased that the honourable member knows something because the electors in his area have told me time and time again that they never see him; that they only ever see the underbelly of his plane as he flies over them; that he makes no contact with them whatsoever; that his wife runs the place, and that he is never there. The history of these matters reveals that during the 1980s, the previous Government reduced staffing levels in Queensland Railways by 7 000, whereas this Government is working at making Queensland Railways stronger for the good of its staff and its customers. The Government is doing this without any Queensland Railways worker having to fear the sack. In contrast to that, this gang in the Opposition sacked 7 000 railway workers. Members of the National Party have been running a cruel and vicious rumour campaign in and throughout rural Queensland. They have been playing with people's emotions by claiming that there will be closures and job losses. They claim that local hospitals will be closed. What a lot of claptrap! That is blatantly untrue.

When members of the rural task force arrived at Dirranbandi, the people met us with the rumour that the hospital was going to close. We said that we would check it out but we knew that it was not true. By the end of the day, the task force was able to allay their fears. I can inform honourable members that there has not been a closure of a hospital in Queensland—in rural areas, in city areas or anywhere else. In fact, this Government is building new hospitals, and one will be constructed at Childers in the next 12 months. The people of Childers are happy about that. They say to me, "Thank God you came along because this hospital, which was falling down round our ears, was getting past a joke. We will put you back again, if you will only give us a hospital." This Government is giving them the hospital they want. For the record, let me also point out that part of the Opposition's campaign of lies and rumour-mongering involves the closure of offices, in spite of the fact that the Minister has said many times that no Lands Department office has been closed.

Mr Neal interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Balonne wishes to interject, he should do so from his usual place. And then I would suggest that he does not interject.

Mr NUNN: I thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. The only staff being moved are those who are presently in Brisbane. Where are they going? They are going out to regional and rural Queensland. Why are they going? The answer is that they are going to rural Queensland so that rural people can get better, more efficient and more effective service. This is the way in which this Labor Government treats its rural people.

Not one industry organisation has criticised the restructuring of the Department of Primary Industries. The new President of the Queensland Graingrowers Association, Ian MacFarlane, has stated—

> "The policy change from being all things to all people to planned extension programs is supported by this association. I am satisfied that these changes will improve the transfer of technology from scientists to farmers."

These are the very groups that members of the Opposition have been pretending to represent for years and years.

I will refer to some examples of National Party arrangements which have been changed. In the Barambah electorate, there are two stock-inspectors' offices less than 13 kilometres apart. Just before the 1986 election, at Mareeba a seed-testing laboratory opened which was capable of only half the work of its Brisbane counterpart. Opposition

members should cop this one. The Jandowae DPI office was closed. Strangely enough, it was located just a few kilometres from Sir Robert Sparkes' property. That stock-inspector spent 85 per cent of his time referring soil conservation matters to a soil branch at Dalby only 50 kilometres away. At his own request, because of lack of work, the officer was transferred to Crows Nest, and it was not until three months later that the people of Jandowae woke up that he had gone. That is how much work he was doing.

I have been travelling extensively throughout Queensland with the Premier's rural and northern task force listening to the problems in various areas. We were welcomed everywhere we went. It is a pity that Opposition members have not carried out a similar exercise. If country people saw Opposition members occasionally, they might vote for them following the redistribution. People in country communities complained that they had not seen a politician in years—and that was in conservative country. I have more information to provide to the House on this subject. When the National/Liberal coalition took office in 1957, the number of men employed in the day labour force in rural Queensland stood at 1 320. By 1978, that number had been slashed by almost half by the National/Liberal Government. When the Labor Government was elected, that number had been further cut to just over 500. That means that more than 800 rural jobs were axed by the National Party-led Government—more than 60 per cent of the jobs. We do not have figures on how many of those men were married or how many of their wives shopped in the local stores. We do not know how many of their children would have attended local schools or how many of those families supported the local communities. However, in 1957, Wide Bay had a work force of 120. By the time the Labor Party got into power, that figure was slashed to 52. Those figures show just one person working at some small towns. The National Party-led Government cut the labour force in the bush to ribbons. The National Party Government closed down Lands Offices in St George in 1959, in Barcaldine in 1972, in Longreach in 1972, in Taroom in the 1980s, and in Theodore in 1985. The closest office to Barcaldine and Longreach would have been Blackall.

Mr Ardill interjected.

Mr NUNN: Of course. I mentioned him before as one of the 7 000 people the National Party Government sacked. Presumably the closure of Taroom meant that the people of Taroom had a choice of going across country to either Roma or Monto. The closure of offices at Theodore and St George would also have left huge gaps, but they would not be anywhere near the size of the gaps that are to be found in the credibility of Opposition members who attempt to tell us what they have been doing for rural people. Rural people have had them up to their necks. If it were not for gerrymandered boundaries, they would have elected Labor Party members in the west. The women will tell Opposition members all about that. Have they ever considered that seats such as Roma might disappear and that they will have a wholesale bunfight trying to hang onto their seats? They will be knifing one another in the back.

Mr Springborg: What about you fellows?

Mr NUNN: I am safe and secure in the seat of Isis. I am sure that the National Party does not have a hold on it.

Time expired.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (4.19 p.m.): At least the member for Isis recognised that the rural community is in crisis. I note that the Minister for Primary Industries is not in the House for this debate. I am disappointed that he is not showing any interest in what is occurring in rural Queensland.

Mr Prest: I'll relay your message to him.

Mr STEPHAN: I am not too sure that the honourable member would relay it very accurately. From his comments, it is obvious that the member for Isis is not aware of what

is occurring in the rural community. He referred to the reduction in staff in country areas. He will find that there has been a 30 per cent reduction in staff in offices of the Department of Primary Industries. When one visits country offices, one finds empty chairs and empty rooms and wonders if those offices will be turned into some type of hospital. The honourable member referred to Childers. Of course, I can understand that the honourable member would need a new hospital at Childers to help him at the next election. The point is that the Department of Primary Industries is not providing services in the country.

Mr Dollin interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr STEPHAN: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. Drastic cuts have been made in the areas of research, horticultural advice and pastoral advice.

Mr Perrett: It now takes five months to get a soil conservation officer in the Burnett.

Mr STEPHAN: In 12 months' time, the honourable member will be lucky to get a soil conservation officer at all. They do not have the time, the equipment or the vehicles to visit all the areas. As well, the Government is cutting back in areas such as horticultural marketing. I fear that the marketing advisory service will be taken away and that reporting will cease. That task will be allotted to market trusts. Rural producers will not receive daily reports on market prices. If that is an indication of what we can expect, heaven help us in future!

I would like to think that this Government realises that the rural community is presently experiencing a drought. If one goes out into rural areas, one finds that very little assistance is being given to primary producers. They are in dire straits. One does not have to be in a rural area for very long before one realises that a number of primary producers are ready to walk off their properties because of a lack of funding and because the banks have said, "No more loans." The banks have said that they will not extend any more loans to primary producers. In many instances, primary producers have been told that unless they put some money in the bank, they cannot expect to be able to draw any cheques. That means that a primary producer has to sell a tractor, for example, just to get funding, at a time when a fair return cannot be obtained. Some primary producers are having to sell cattle that they need for breeding or for other purposes at a time when the market is depressed. This is not doing very much to help the primary producers.

I also have some concerns in the area of forestry research. A while ago, I wrote to the Minister in an effort to get clarification of just what is going on regarding forestry research. As honourable members are aware, Gympie is the centre of a very large forestry area. One sees headlines in the local newspaper such as "Jobs at risk in shake-up". The jobs referred to in that headline are in the area of research. If ever research was needed into forestry, it is right now. If ever research was needed into how to compensate for the shortage of hardwood timber and how to utilise the thinnings, the slash pine, the radiata pine and the Caribbean pine that will be coming on stream in the next 10 to 12 years, it is right now. But what is happening? This Minister is taking away the research department. In the newspaper article to which I have referred the Conservator of Forests is quoted as saying—

> "Everything is changing at present. We are hoping the net result will be positive.
>
> One of the objectives of the review is to achieve the commercialisation objectives of our commercial operations. At the same time what we can say is that we have quite substantial non-commercial and social responsibilities in forest management."

Commercialisation in the forestry area, specifically in the area of research, can only mean that researchers will not be able to proceed unless they can get someone from within their own department to pay for the research that they are doing or unless they can find other departments or other countries to utilise the facilities and the expertise that they have. If those researchers are going to sell their expertise to other countries, they certainly are not going to be making it available to the industry in this State. These researchers are recognised worldwide for their expertise and for the work that they have carried out. I am very disappointed that the Minister and the Government have seen fit to take this step. I am even more disappointed that the Minister has not yet seen fit to answer my letter to him seeking clarification in regard to what he has in mind for the future. It is of concern to me, and to the forestry industry, that the Government does not seem to be facing up to the problems and that a lot of questions need to be answered.

Yesterday, I heard the member for Maryborough talking about a woodchip operation in his area. There certainly needs to be a woodchip operation in that region. The chips were going to be cut anyway. The thinnings were there. They have been coming on stream over the last four or five years, and they will certainly be coming on stream in the next 10 years——

Mr Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Archerfield will not interject from other than his usual seat.

Mr STEPHAN: If the member for Maryborough thinks that a woodchipping operation is going to compensate for the loss of the hardwood industry in his area, then he has a very good imagination. The woodchipping operation is going to be under way, and it should be operating alongside the hardwood industry, which was doing so well for such a long time. I see the member for Archerfield shaking his head. The member for Archerfield sits in his wooden house, enjoys his wooden furniture and, I suppose, burns wood to keep himself warm. But this step is an indication of the attitude that this Government is adopting. It is determined to go down a particular track. It will not take note of what is happening in the community. Only this morning the Premier said that he has been out in the rural community, that he has spent some time travelling around Longreach, Biloela, etc. However, it is obvious that he did not take very much notice of what he was told if he still says that all is well, that everything is bright and rosy, on the regional front. If the Premier believes that, it is about time that he took advice from the people out in the field, the people who have hands-on experience, the people who are trying to make a living——

Time expired.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave) (4.30 p.m.): Over the past 12 to 18 months, members of the Opposition have made a concerted attack on this Government's policy of regionalisation. Contrary to the nonsense that they have been peddling, the progressive regionalisation of Queensland's public service will increase and improve services in rural areas. The State Government is not about stripping rural areas of public servants, as claimed by members of the Opposition. In my view, members of the Opposition fail to understand that regionalisation means the devolving of decision-making power out of Brisbane into regional areas. The Goss Government knows the importance of an efficient public service to the rural areas of Queensland, and it is committed to that end. For too long, the State public service has been a highly centralised bureaucracy with little feeling for, or understanding of, the problems of people who live outside the south-east corner of the State. I might add that this situation developed under the previous administration and its long years in Government. Unfortunately, it is the perception in some rural areas that regionalisation somehow meant centralisation. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it means exactly the opposite. The State Government is not looking to taking public servants out of country areas, but putting them back there where they belong. However,

from time to time there is no doubt that adjustments will have to be made, and this will be done for cost efficiency reasons, and usually in response to population changes.

Recently, the Treasurer, the Honourable Keith De Lacy, gave a commitment that there would be no overall reductions in public service numbers and that the proportion and total number of public servants outside Brisbane would in fact increase. I firmly believe that the level and seniority of staff in country areas will also gradually increase. As a matter of fact, it is happening already. Two important benefits will come from this process. Firstly, this will mean that the real decisions, the decisions that have to be made, will be made at the coalface, out in the rural areas themselves, taking into account local conditions and problems. Secondly, it will also speed up this decision-making process in country areas. For too long, important decisions affecting vital aspects of life in the country have been made by bureaucrats based here in Brisbane.

I would point out that one of the great success stories of regionalisation in Queensland has been that of the Department of Health, now called Queensland Health. Back in 1976, an eminent Queensland surgeon and medical historian, Sir Clarence Leggett, wrote—

> "All the major changes in the Queensland public hospital system occurred during the tenure of Labor Governments."

We refer to Kidston in 1905 and his attempt to gain control of the Brisbane General Hospital. Unfortunately, this was defeated by the Legislative Council at the time. However, by 1923 much of the good work he had started was actually brought to fruition. The Hospitals Act was passed, and that Act made provision for the maintenance, management and regulation of hospitals throughout this State. Later on, Hanlon introduced a new Hospitals Act in 1936, and this resulted in the Department of Health being given control over expenditure in hospitals. It also established the direct administrative line between the Director-General, the medical superintendent and hospital managers. The aim of that Hospitals Act was to give more authority to hospital boards, but both hospital boards unfortunately received their advice only from the bureaucracy of the time, and the result, unfortunately again, was that we ended up with a highly centralised system.

The Goss Government inherited what another eminent knight once described as a "monolithic structure with centralist attitudes—a rigid bureaucracy, staffed by competent people with an old philosophy". These words were in fact spoken, no doubt out of sheer frustration, by the then Minister for Health, Sir William Knox, who was then a member of the National/Liberal coalition. Sir William Knox, like other politicians, service-providers, and the clients of health services, found their desires for change and reform, or even for a bit of improved access, sacrificed on the impregnable altar of tradition and establishment. The most noticeable thing about the Queensland system as it had developed was its uniqueness. No-one else could claim to have an administrative system such as the one that had developed in Queensland. The system developed this way because of a combination of politics, personalities, and some good old-fashioned home-grown parochialism. No wonder when the Government decided to bite the bullet and regionalise Queensland's public sector health services, hardened old hands in the Department of Health reassured each other by saying, "Don't worry. I've heard it all before. It will never happen." After all, after 32 years of bureaucratic dominance, self-perpetuation and preservation under the previous Government, it was well accepted that Ministers come and go, but bureaucracies go on forever.

However, these people did not realise that this was a Government willing to make the hard decisions—a Government not afraid to take on the sacred cows that the previous administrators had run away from. There are many supporters of the former Government—thinking people, I might add—who have conveyed to me their support for

the new measures. They have dismissed the scaremongering as a pathetic diversion from the real business at hand. They look forward to the new emphasis on people rather than the system itself.

I am rather surprised that the word "regionalisation" seems to evoke such paranoid outbursts from some members of the Opposition and their die-hard supporters in some of our rural areas. In fact, Queensland health services have been largely regionalised for many years, even though there can be substantial argument about the appropriate distribution of those services and the quality of the services provided. Rather, I would believe, what has been lacking is the control of these services on a regional level. Instead of local people making local decisions on local services based on local needs, we have had an unresponsive centralised system of almost autocratic administration. What regionalisation and restructuring has done is to provide the opportunity to improve services to clients and to set in place structures and processes which are more responsive to community needs.

Aside from the policy inadequacies of the National and Liberal Governments, the other major reason for the failure of reform was the power of the hospital boards and the prevalent organisational culture which had developed in the Department of Health. No-one can ever convince me that the hospital board system was an efficient or effective way of delivering health services. Quite often, the well-intentioned people placed on these boards were out of their depth. They found they relied heavily on the advice of public servants and members of the medical profession who in many cases used the boards to rubber stamp their wishes. No effective mechanism existed for the real gauging of community needs and feelings.

Another reason that organisational change was so difficult was the institutionalised conflict which had developed in the department and the hospitals. The tripartite system of management involving a doctor, a nurse and an administrator in virtually every major, and even most minor decisions—and thus the lack of single point accountability—led to people having allegiance to their stream within the department rather than to the organisation as a whole. Professional jealousy and poor lines of communication resulted in a degree of paralysis as far as decision-making was concerned. Where decisions were taken, there was every opportunity for personal conflict to cloud the soundness of that actual decision.

This Government is integrating the administration of community health services and hospital care to ensure that the most appropriate and cost-effective care is available to all our clients. Regionalisation became a reality on 1 July 1991 with the opening of 13 regional health authorities throughout Queensland. Senior officers have been appointed to both the regions and the central department. To enable these wide-ranging changes, a new Act was written, and the Health Service Bill passed through Parliament. That Bill enshrined the principles of social justice, equity, responsiveness, efficiency, and, of course, accountability. A significant number of other Acts have also been repealed. The Bill guarantees the right of people to participate in decisions made about their local needs, either as members of regional health authorities or through advisory and consultative mechanisms, and these advisory committees are working extremely well.

With the abolition of 292 positions and the regionalisation of many hundreds of other departmental positions, the central office is being downsized dramatically. This will ultimately free up more money to be spent on providing services to clients. Central office will now concentrate on policy and planning and on program development and performance evaluation, with all service delivery administered by the regions, except for a reducing number of Statewide services. The red tape is being slashed and for the first time ever, all 32 000 people working in the Queensland health system now work for the one employer—Queensland Health. For the first time, employees, whether they be doctors,

nurses or administrators, are responsible to the one person and not divided on the basis of their professional qualifications and background. For the first time, those doctors, nurses and administrators have one basic objective, that is, patient care.

The tragedy of Queensland politics in 1991 as it relates to health is the total inability of our political opponents to grasp the thrust of the changes and therefore to contribute in a meaningful way to the debate. Out of ignorance, they have reverted to the use of fear and uncertainty by talking of reduced services or closures of facilities and accusations of political patronage. Those accusations can be dismissed for the irrelevancies they are. Patient services in our hospitals will be paramount and will be enhanced on the basis of local decisions about local needs by people at a local level. The system will be more responsive to client needs, it will be fairer for clients and essentially it will be more accountable to our clients. I turn now to the Department of Primary Industries. It has been my belief that not one industry organisation——

Time expired.

Mr RANDELL (Mirani) (4.40 p.m.): Like most other primary producers in this State, cane-growers are doing it hard under this Labor Government.

Mr Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! The member for Archerfield has already been warned once that if he wants to interject, he should do so from his own seat.

Mr RANDELL: Like most people in any sort of business in Australia, cane-growers are reeling under the impact of high interest rates and a general deterioration in business conditions. They also have to face steeply rising input costs and declining prices for their product. Just today, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resources published figures showing the plight of rural industry. The Opposition did not pluck those figures out of the air. If a member opposite who represents a northern electorate looks at those figures, he will see that the Opposition is not plucking them out of the air. He will see that they are factual. For the benefit of an uncaring Minister who is not in the House at present, I point out that the price of sugar has dropped by another 9 per cent. Sugar-producers right throughout the State are in trouble. In some areas, bank managers talk about as many as 90 per cent of growers being in serious financial difficulties. That means that 9 out of every 10 cane-growers in this State are having financial trouble. That is occurring under State and Federal ALP Governments. In plain terms, a great many cane-growers will go to the wall. That makes a nonsense of the comments of the Minister for Primary Industries, who talks about expansion of the industry. He is going round the State talking about an expansion.

Many of the problems that growers face can be traced back directly to the inept, uncaring policies of the Labor Party. One of them is the crazy Labor policy of dropping tariff protection for the industry. In the past, the Queensland sugar industry has been regarded jealously by other rural industries in Queensland. People from all over the world came in droves to study our manufacturing and production methods. They came from everywhere. People could be excused for thinking that Mr Kerin and the bureaucrats in Canberra—that is what they are, bureaucrats—have finally got their way and in effect ripped the insides out of a self-controlled, fully regulated, secure industry and made it into one that is fully exposed to corrupt world prices and the highly subsidised world markets.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mr RANDELL: The member for Mount Isa might try to do something about daylight-saving. Queensland's Minister for Primary Industries supported the dropping of the tariff protection.

Mr Booth: He couldn't care less about it.

Mr RANDELL: He could not care less.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mount Isa and the member for Warwick will stop interjecting.

Mr RANDELL: The Minister supported that action, despite the fact that he knows better and despite the fact that he would have shouted the rafters down if a conservative Government had done it. But, no, not a whimper was heard from him about the Federal ALP Government doing that. Lowering tariff protection was absolute lunacy. Everyone in this State knows that. Even the inept members opposite would know that, although they will not say it. The price of sugar on the domestic market was the sum of the world price and the fixed price of the tariff. The loss of the tariff means that Queensland sugar-growers will lose about $13.1m this year and more than $10m next year. That is a great deal of money to rip out of a depressed industry just to satisfy the Labor theorists in Canberra. But our Minister supported it! Not one whimper was heard from him. Every ALP member opposite, including those who represent sugar-producing electorates, supported what happened to the sugar industry.

An Opposition member: Shame!

Mr RANDELL: It is a shame. Why did they do it? Because they could not care less. Not a whimper was heard from any one of them when, in yesterday's Budget, Treasurer Kerin gave $800m to capital cities to improve their way of life but actually reduced financial support to rural industry in Australia. Support to the industries which provide the bread and butter in Australia—provide jobs—was reduced. Kerin and the Labor Government could not care less that they have jeopardised the livelihoods of farmers, the jobs in the mills and the distribution system. They could not care less that towns which depend on the sugar industry are bleeding, and bleeding white. When that much money goes out of the sugar industry, it has to come from somewhere. It comes from spending in the local towns. The tragedy is that, while our tariffs went down, other countries were busily putting theirs up. Yet we hear so much about the level playing field. Australia is down to about $75 a tonne, the EC is up to $550 a tonne, Thailand is up to $447 a tonne and the USA is up to $357 a tonne. Producers in those countries are laughing all the way to the bank.

If the sugar industry can survive the cuts, the unfair competition of the world tariff system and the harsh season we are going through, it will be through its own resilience. It will owe nothing—I repeat "nothing"—to the people on the other side of the House, to this Labor Minister or to the Labor Minister in Canberra and his gang of economic cutthroats. That was proven when Labor deregulated the industry. When Labor did that and when it used its numbers to force that through this Parliament—and those members sitting opposite helped Labor to do that—it conveniently forgot about one of the key recommendations of the sugar industry working party. That group made the sensible point that research needed a major boost. The industry knows that expansion of the industry does not necessarily mean an expansion onto new land. It could be achieved quite economically by boosting productivity, which recently in some areas has fallen alarmingly. The industry needs research, and plenty of it. The working party recommended that the Government match the 14c a tonne that the industry contributes to the work of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations. People might think it strange that, when that call was made, the Minister fell totally deaf. There is nothing strange about that. This Minister and his Government become stone deaf whenever they hear a plea on behalf of any primary industry. They are content to let primary industry fall by the wayside. And the sugar industry may fall by the wayside.

The Federal Minister for Primary Industry has been told of alarming crop shortfalls. In the Burdekin, the harvest looks like being the lowest since 1957. The Mackay area is facing a drop of 600 000 tonnes on preseason estimates, and Bundaberg is facing a drop

of 200 000 tonnes. Some of those falls can be attributed to the bad season. Growers accept that, because it is a fact of life on the land. But they are extremely angry that the Government is not prepared to help fund—and I repeat "help fund"—research that might minimise crop shortfalls in the future. The sugar industry has been weakened by bad economic conditions, tariff protection cuts that expose it to unfair competition and a Government that walks away from its responsibilities to primary industry research. The sugar industry has been weakened by those factors, and it could be toppled by legislation which this Government is threatening to bring into this House in the near future. I refer to the great body of green legislation in the pipeline. That green legislation poses a huge threat to the existence of the sugar industry—or any other primary industry for that matter. That legislation, which is proposed principally by the Minister for Environment and Heritage who is getting the green vote, is a direct threat to the productive use of land. Under his legislation, public servants will decide all the important questions about land use. They will decide what ground can be cleared and cultivated and will make decisions on management practices such as burning of cane. The so-called coastal management strategy will have a particular effect on the sugar industry, because no other industry makes more use of coastal and near-coastal land. The Minister for Primary Industries may talk about the need to expand cane-growing onto new land, but there will not be much of that left when Mr Comben is finished.

The great sleeper in the industry is the planned legislation on the use of agricultural chemicals. If the Minister for Primary Industries remembers anything about the sugar industry, he would be aware that the industry needs to use chemicals, particularly fertilisers. Without them there would not be much productivity, and the Queensland sugar industry would be a sitting duck for sugar imports from other countries. And the Minister wants expansion! The Minister for Primary Industries is either pretty thick or trying to pull a con on the sugar industry. He has given a commitment to a growth rate in the industry of 2.5 per cent per annum, yet the policies that his department is pursuing make that figure very doubtful. Let me cite the example of the area served by the Maryborough mill. If we must have expanded areas planted to cane, Maryborough would seem to be one of the areas to qualify. That area is depressed largely as a direct result of this Government's policies. With its decision to wreck the local timber industry, this Government has done its best to wreck the local economy and has let its greed for the green vote take over all common sense.

Maryborough is in desperate need of more industry and more income, but the Labor Government has put two big impediments in the way. Under this Premier and this Primary Industries Minister, the State Government has withdrawn from a joint local land study that would have identified suitable areas for sugar expansion and facilitated the necessary changes in tenures and so forth. It is significant that the Crown owns a very high proportion of the suitable land in that area. The other impediment that the Government has put in the way is the direct result of a policy decision by the Minister for Primary Industries—the very man who claims that he wants expansion in the sugar industry. The Minister has put the price of irrigation water well out of the reach of most people who might intend to plant cane. Although the Minister comes from a cane-growing area—my area of Mackay—he is not very popular in that region, because a motion of no confidence in him was moved. He knows the importance of water to a good commercial crop.

Mr Dollin interjected.

Mr RANDELL: Mr Dollin also knows the importance of water. Why is he not doing something about this? If the Minister were to drive around the Maryborough area, he would realise that water is needed there. He should also know that, three years ago, the previous Government completed the lower Mary River irrigation scheme. If the Minister had his finger on the pulse in his department, he would know that he has put the price of water in Maryborough out of the reach of farmers. He has done that with two new charges

that were introduced last year. There is a one-off headworks charge based on a one-off megalitres allocation. There is also a scheme whereby an irrigator must pay for all installation expenses from the commission pipeline to the farm gate. It might make sense to the academics who run things in this Government, but it is nonsense for an industry that is trying to make a go of it.

Time expired.

Mr McGRADY (Mount Isa) (4.50 p.m.): I rise to participate in this debate with a feeling of sadness, because I can see opposite me a group of people who claim to represent the interests of country people but who, in reality, have sold them out in favour of the spivs and the white-shoe brigade. During this debate I expected to hear some constructive suggestions, but all members have heard today is the same, old, political rhetoric. Rural Queensland is hurting. There are real problems out there, but today honourable members have not heard one constructive plan, one realistic policy or one sensible idea that would help the people of country Queensland. Instead, they have heard the same, old rhetoric from the same, old tired men of yesterday. Today's Opposition members are yesterday's men who have failed to come to grips with the real problems and their new role of Opposition. The role of an effective Opposition in any democracy is so very important. Sadly for us, sadly for Queensland, but more importantly sadly for the people whom they represent, they leave so much to be desired.

I am getting somewhat sick and tired of listening to members opposite attacking the Premier's rural and northern task force. It is quite obvious to anyone that the role that the task force has taken upon itself is succeeding. In the past nine months, the task force visited over 80 places, most of which are represented by National Party members. People in some of those places have not seen a politician for years and years. The task force travelled many thousands of kilometres, listening to people—and I emphasise "listening". Members of the task force do not go out to preach and do not go out politicking; they simply listen to the real concerns of the people of country Queensland. I pay tribute to the members of the task force for the time and effort that they have put into trying to bring home to this Government and this Cabinet the real issues facing rural Queensland. The task force was most impressed with the number of articulate women on local councils around this State. Those women are concerned about health, housing, education and welfare matters. I believe that, in the years ahead, that will benefit country Queensland.

In recent times, we have heard members of the National and Liberal Parties mouthing off about the problems of people who have to pay land tax. I ask the leadership of both those parties why they did not abolish land tax during their 32 years in office. Why, all of a sudden, does it become a great idea? Last year, $197m was collected in land tax. If land tax were abolished, that revenue would disappear. That would mean—

5 200 fewer teachers, which would have a dramatic effect on country Queensland;

4 000 fewer police officers out of a Police Service of just under 6 000—again, that would have dramatic effects on country people; and

5 200 fewer nurses out of a total of 16 000 nurses—what would country people do?

It would mean—

the closing down of the Department of Environment and Heritage for more than two years—again, that would have dramatic effects on country Queensland;

the closure of the Lands Department for two years;

no family services;

no funding for any welfare groups;

no child care; and

no institutional care for disabled people.

This is what the coalition's policy would mean to Queensland. It would mean the elimination of the entire Department of Resource Industries for at least four years on current budgets. What would happen to the mining industry of this State? The abolition of land tax would mean—

the abolition of the Small Business Corporation;

industrial research and development would be severely curtailed;

the closure of the Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing for more than four years——

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. The member is not talking to the Bill. He is talking about hypothetical dream-time stuff. We are talking about cut-backs in rural industry.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! There is no point of order. Points of order are to be made about matters of procedure. I call the member for Mount Isa.

Mr McGRADY: For the information of my friend opposite, we are not discussing a Bill; we are discussing the concerns of country people, whom the honourable member and his colleagues have sold down the river over many years. The Leader of the National Party says that the National Party Government would sell the Gladstone Power Station to make up for the loss of land tax revenue. That shows a complete lack of understanding of the basic economic tenet that money earned by selling capital assets must either be used to repay debt or be set aside for the replacement of those assets. When the proceeds of the sale run out, what do Mr Cooper and his friends sell next? Do they abolish the State's free schools and hospitals system? Those are the questions that members opposite should answer today. The Liberal Party also says that it will abolish land tax. However, at least the National Party says where the money is coming from; the Liberals do not. Members opposite had 32 years in which to abolish those taxes, but they did nothing at all. They stand condemned in the eyes of people in country Queensland.

The irony of the opposition parties in this place now supporting the abolition of land tax is that their Federal colleagues are promising to introduce a consumption tax. Such a tax would be an horrendous imposition on people right across the State and would have devastating effects on people in the more remote parts of Queensland, because it would mean a massive increase in freight and a massive increase in every item that is used for day-to-day living. Mr Cooper talks about the privatisation of services that the State Government presently provides. That is one sure recipe for massive reduction in services and, if his crazy idea ever came into practice, one might as well draw a line on the outskirts of Brisbane and declare the rest of the State a no-living zone, because businesses could not operate and people could not afford to live outside the city. That is what the Cooper plan would mean for the people whom I represent and whom members opposite represent.

I believe that country people are hurting and, in some cases, hurting badly, but that is not the fault of this State Government. In the majority of cases, it is the result of international and other pressures. We hear the Opposition bleating almost daily——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There are too many conversations going on in the House.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Warrego under Standing Order 123A.

Mr McGRADY: We hear the Opposition bleating almost daily about increased land rents and, in particular, the implications of the Carter report. The Carter report was conceived by the National Party and it was accepted by the National Party. Were it not for

the 2 December election, which interfered with its plans, the report would have been implemented by the National Party lock, stock and barrel. Members opposite now have the hide to come into this place and condemn the Carter report.

Having travelled extensively throughout Queensland in the past nine months, I believe that our State Government can introduce a number of initiatives which would alleviate many of the problems of people in outback Queensland, and, in the not-too-distant future, many of our recommendations will be forthcoming. However, for the purpose of this debate today, I believe that there is a far greater need for the coordination of services that are being provided by the three levels of government. Closer consultation must take place between the State, Federal and local governments to improve the delivery of services. There must be a far better system of communication between the State Government and the people who live in the remote parts of the State. Some ideas that spring to mind are the extension of the 008 number to departmental offices in Brisbane, the introduction of post-free envelopes and a concentrated campaign from all Government departments to explain to rural people the reasons for decisions and the benefits that country people will receive from those decisions of Government.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired.

BUILDING ACT AMENDMENT

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 10 April (see p. 7084, First Session).

Hon. W. A. M. GUNN (Somerset) (5 p.m.): I do not think there would be any argument whatsoever about the establishment of a common building code. Many years ago, each shire council had its own building regulations. At that time, I was the chairman of a shire council. If councillors were not confused by one set of regulations, they were confused by another. For instance, some councils were permitting building to occur right up against fences. The council of which I was chairman had continual trouble with its regulations. Even the building regulations of a neighbouring shire—which was only on the other side of an imaginary line drawn on the ground—were different. Some of their builders would win tenders in our shire even though the tenders did not comply with our regulations. This caused a number of problems. It was decided that both councils would introduce a standard building code, and it worked well.

This legislation takes that decision a step further in that a common building code will be established throughout Australia. I believe that the Minister mentioned Victoria and South Australia in his second-reading speech. He might tell us in his reply how far those States have proceeded along this path. This Parliament is passing legislation to enable the Building Code of Australia to be implemented in Queensland.

Mr Burns: We thought we might be first, but we are no longer first.

Mr GUNN: No, other States have done it.

Mr Burns: Western Australia did it some time ago.

Mr GUNN: Yes. That is good. When people decide to build their first home they want the job done well. It is an exciting time for the family. They have probably saved hard, and for a lot of people it is one of the biggest investments they will ever make in their life-time. The Minister might have built six or seven houses, but after building so many houses, the thrill must disappear. However, it is a big thrill for people building their first home and they want protection. There is nothing worse than a person who has struck a shonky builder coming into one's electorate office. I do not think there are many shonky builders around, because over a period of 20 years only five or six per cent of people

building a home have complained about their builder. The Minister may have found the industrial relations thing. The 5 per cent of people who get caught out really do get caught out. That is pretty sad, because one can only say to them, "I am sorry, but you have not chosen wisely as far as your builder is concerned."

First of all, it is necessary for a home-buyer to employ a registered builder who is a builder of note, even if the person has to pay him a few dollars more. I keep on telling people this. In the legislation the Minister has allowed for local authorities to have a pretty fair say in building standards. They have to be flexible for the simple reason that from place to place conditions are different. For instance, in the Lockyer Valley there is black soil that shifts. Therefore, foundations in the Lockyer Valley have to be different from those constructed in Brisbane or in another area. Dalby is a bad place in which to build because the ground shifts badly. There is nothing worse than a slab cracking and allowing white ants to attack the building. I have seen it happen and it is sad.

Mr Burns: The building starts to crack itself when the slab cracks.

Mr GUNN: That is right. I visited that development at Currumbin, which was the greatest shemozzle of all time. It happened because the developers wanted to make a fast buck. Councils must be on the alert for this sort of thing. At the same time, buildings have to be constructed at a certain cost. There is nothing worse for people who are building their first home—perhaps they have gone to the Housing Commission for a loan—to find that extra costs are loaded on top. When building their first home most young people are strained to the limit. It might cost $50,000 or $60,000 and will take 20 years to pay off. I hope that local authorities keep building costs down. At the same time we must ensure that home-buyers receive the protection that they deserve.

No doubt the Minister has visited regions that have been affected by cyclones. He would have also seen the work done by universities, particularly the one in Townsville, on wind-resistant forms of building materials. This is very important work because buildings in cyclone-prone areas have to be more soundly constructed than buildings in other areas. Cyclones can occur in the south east, but they occur more often in the north. I have seen what has been achieved with wind resistance research by the Townsville university. It is very worth while. I will give honourable members an example of the amount of damage that big storms can do. A few years ago, as the Premier's representative, I flew in the Government plane to attend the funeral of a former Minister, Mr McKechnie, at Goondiwindi. On the way back I noticed a large red patch on the aeroplane radar and I asked the pilot where the storm was. He told me it was somewhere on the Gold Coast. His geography was a little out; it was over my house. The storm took off my side roof, which was galvanised iron. It was so ferocious that the iron was wrapped around the tops of the power poles. We were digging the nails out of the lawn for years afterwards. That gives honourable members some indication of the ferocity of the storms. I had employed a top builder who used iron bark for the roof trusses.

A products register is very important. Because shrinkage occurs in wood in tropical areas, the products used in the construction of houses in the tropics must differ from those in other areas. The choice of wood means the difference between a good and a bad job. Certain types of products will not withstand the rigours of a tropical climate. I applaud many of the provisions contained in the Bill because they are very necessary. Not enough use is made of our public buildings, which are one of the State's great assets. Although they are used in cases of emergency, over the last 50 years a large amount of money has been spent on buildings that are used for only a few days a week.Sometimes shire councils build public halls although nearby there is a beautiful school assembly hall that is not used.

Mr Burns interjected.

Mr GUNN: Yes, it is a terrible waste. Building has become so expensive that the State can no longer afford to waste its public buildings. Most schools, at the discretion of

the principal, will allow charities and other organisations to use their sporting grounds. For example, the Redlands Shire Council rents a school assembly hall and uses it as a public hall, which is a great thing. Very early this morning I visited my local police station, alongside which is situated a beautiful old building. My electorate has lost its courthouse, and I accept that; however, the police officers and the clerk at the station occupy a tiny room into which they can hardly fit yet there is a padlock on the door of that beautiful building. They said to me, "If only we could use that building." I understand that the police station is to be extended and that additional police officers will be assigned to the area, but as far as I am concerned, the building that is lying idle is a waste of public money. Perhaps the Government has an idea of the use to which the building will be put in the future, but I believe that the Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing could take some action that would assist in resolving the problem.

Mr Burns: Send me a note and I will take it up with the department.

Mr GUNN: I will do so, because I think this is a very important matter. A proper use should be made of public buildings at all times, not just in emergencies. When I was chairman of the local shire, there was a local shire hall. Although it was kept in good condition, eventually it became too small. Sir Henry Abel Smith opened the hall, which will give the Minister some idea of how old it was. It was replaced by a new community assembly centre which was made available to the senior citizens who used it for bowls and other activities. Because it is a public utility, the community felt that the centre should be a cost borne by the shire. I have no qualms about this Bill. I think this is good legislation, and it is also absolutely necessary. I believe that in many instances, tasks should be approached from a national perspective, and building standards should be approached on that basis.

Mr Burns: It is more efficient and more economical.

Mr GUNN: The Minister says that buildings of 1 to 10 storeys, rather than high-rise buildings, will predominate in the future, but one must not lose sight of the importance of high-rise buildings. Brisbane is very fortunate because its high-rise buildings have been well constructed. This is not the case in other parts of the world, and one country that springs to mind is South Korea. Some time ago, I visited Pusan and inspected a building. On the strength of that, I do not think I would be inclined to employ many South Korean engineers in the construction of high-rise buildings. I have nothing against South Koreans, but I had never seen a building so out of plumb as the one I saw in Pusan. Queenslanders are very fortunate because the by-laws and building standards ensure that substandard buildings are not to be found in this State. I reiterate my support for the Bill.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (5.11 p.m.): I rise to support the Building Act Amendment Bill, and I note the support given on behalf of the National Party by the member for Somerset. As all honourable members would know, the Building Act controls the design and construction of buildings in Queensland. As the result of a major review of the Australian Model Uniform Building Code, a new uniform building code has been developed and is known as the Building Code of Australia. It is now being adopted by all Australian States, which is the reason for the exercise in which honourable members are engaged today. The building code has already been adopted in Victoria, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. Queensland is following suit, and so it should. The code is aimed at developing a uniform set of technical requirements and standards for the design and construction of buildings in Australia, although Queensland has the right to vary provisions of the code to take account of local considerations. The major thrust and objectives of the code are: to ensure structural sufficiency, fire safety, and health and amenity. However, the code's requirements are designed to be: cost effective, that is, cost saving; easily understood; in the public

interest; and not onerous in their application. I take up the point made by the Minister when he interjected during the speech made by the honourable member for Somerset. He said, in a nutshell, that the standards are designed to be efficient and economical.

I wish to highlight a few matters that are of considerable interest to me. As I said earlier, one of the main purposes of the Bill is to enable the Building Code of Australia to be adopted in Queensland. The code streamlines building application and approval processes and the objection, variation and appeal procedures in relation to building applications. One of the most effective provisions of the code is that it provides for a reduction in the approval-time taken by local authorities in respect of building applications for class 1 and class 2 buildings, which are houses and outbuildings. That period has been reduced from 40 days to 30 days. In other words, it will result in a reduction in red tape and provide for more efficiency. In general terms, I believe it will be of considerable assistance in streamlining the processes.

Mr Foley: The end of an artificial quarantine.

Mr BEATTIE: I could not have put it more graphically myself. What a man of wonderful wisdom, as all honourable members would know! I wish to refer to two other matters. One relates to the consolidation of approximately 65 Acts and regulations that contain building requirements. A person who wishes to construct a building has to be familiar with and obtain approval in respect of many pieces of legislation. Many of the requirements are duplicated or even conflicting, and one can appreciate the hopelessness of the present situation. One of the objectives of building legislation should be to consolidate all of the technical building requirements that are contained in various pieces of legislation so that the end result is one building Act. For heaven's sake, that consolidation is long overdue. This consolidation process began with the incorporation of building requirements contained in the Fire Safety Act and the Workplace Health and Safety Act. In respect of technical building matters, approval under those Acts is no longer required. The local authority is empowered to provide the only approval necessary because the Bill sets out procedures for consultation between the local authority, the Fire Service and the Division of Workplace Health and Safety when appropriate.

Another matter to which I wish to refer relates specifically to the Bill and concerns the classification of Crown buildings. The provisions of the present building Act extend to and bind the Crown except for those provisions that relate to the classification of buildings under the Standard Building By-laws so far as that classification regulates the use to be made of such buildings. I emphasise the words, "use to be made of such buildings". In order for a building to be assessed under the Standard Building By-laws, it must be classified; for example, class 5 means an office and class 6 means a shop, etc. The classification of a building determines the appropriate egress, fire protection and health and amenity requirements. If the Crown were to use a building for a purpose for which it was not designed, the health and safety of the occupants of the building could be jeopardised. It should be pointed out that the Crown invariably does classify its buildings and uses those buildings for the purpose for which the classification relates, notwithstanding that it may not be required under the present Building Act. The Bill proposes to delete the above exemption and requires the Crown to classify and use buildings only for the purpose for which the classification relates. Provisions have been included, however, to permit buildings to be used in emergency situations for purposes other than those for which they were designed and classified. For example, a schoolbuilding could be used to accommodate flood victims or to shelter people during a cyclone, and so on.

In my electorate of Brisbane Central, I have a problem with fire hazards in boarding houses and backpackers' hostels. In my electorate, I have a number of backpackers' hostels at Upper Roma Street, Spring Hill, Paddington and New Farm. Boardinghouses

exist right across the electorate in West End, Spring Hill and so on. In days gone by, there were a lot more, but there still are quite a number. One of the biggest problems faced in those areas relates to fire difficulties because of overcrowding. I know that this legislation relates to new buildings and will not relate to the past. However, if this legislation had existed in the past, we could have overcome many of the fire hazards and difficulties that now exist. The problem is a conflict. The conflict is that those boardinghouses provide a great service to many retired single men, many of whom have in their latter days retired from the country and gone to live in the city. Because of overcrowding and fire hazards, many of those people are at risk. However, in the short term, because of the shortage of housing, not a great deal can be done. That need must be satisfied. In future, the Bill will avoid a number of the shortcomings that exist with the construction of boardinghouses and backpackers' hostels. Those of us who are aware of fires, particularly the one recently at Kings Cross, would know the difficulties encountered by backpackers.

Another matter in which I have a particular interest is the rejuvenation of the Valley. I congratulate the Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing on his strong support for the rejuvenation of the Valley. I know that some buildings in the Valley will be recycled, if I could use that term, and used for apartment-type accommodation to bring people back to live in that area. Last week, I had a meeting with the alderman for Spring Hill, my colleague David Hinchcliffe, and a proposed developer.

Mr McGrady: An excellent alderman.

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed, an excellent alderman. The developer proposes to construct in the Valley a building which will require the removal of a current building, although part of the facade will be maintained. The building that is constructed will put in the Valley housing for a cross-section of incomes and a cross-section of people.

Mr Burns: It's a good proposal, too.

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed. I take the interjection from the Minister. It is an excellent proposal. When I met those people, I indicated that the project had my full support. I look forward to its being approved through the various processes. I look forward to the Valley becoming what many of us hope it will be, that is, a residential area on the doorstep of the city which will lead to a total rejuvenation of the Valley. The Valley does not deserve the reputation that it currently has. It will go through a significant metamorphosis, and that is important. We will not have a red-light district in the Valley. We will have an area in which people live and shop. It will again become a part of Brisbane of which we are all proud. Whatever happens in the future, I am giving a clear indication that I am opposed to any red-light districts in the Valley or any other developments that will in any way reflect on one of the most important parts of Brisbane. In saying that, I highlight the fact that this Act and the national code will be relevant to the construction of buildings in the Valley such as the one that is in the process of being considered now, which, as can clearly be seen from this debate, has the support of the Minister, the local State member and the local alderman.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: No. Unfortunately, the previous Liberal administration discouraged any sensible rejuvenation of the Valley and simply wanted it to be a red-light district. That will be a perpetual reflection in an adverse way on the Liberal Party in this House and elsewhere. It is a matter on which I hold strong views.

I conclude by saying that these national codes are fundamentally important to developing standards so that people in the building industry and people in the community know what is required. It deals with basic matters of efficiency, fire protection and community interest. I congratulate the Minister on bringing this Bill before the House. He has been one of the most energetic Ministers in the Government. He has a proud record of achievement. I am delighted to stand here today and support another one of his Bills.

Mr COOMBER (Currumbin) (5.21 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I address the Building Act Amendment Bill. I am confident that the building industry will welcome the introduction of this legislation which enables the Building Code of Australia to be adopted in Queensland. The Building Code of Australia is a uniform set of technical requirements and standards for the design and construction of buildings and other structures throughout Australia. The code has already been adopted by Victoria, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. The intention of the Act for building applications to be processed in a one-stop shop process is a positive move. However, the consolidation of the present Fire Safety Act and the Workplace Health and Safety Act with the Building Act will, in my view—and that of others—lead to delays, not faster processing of building applications. I hope to enlarge later on that point. The need for consultation between the local authority, the Queensland Fire Service and the Division of Workplace Health and Safety is not in the best interests of local government.

The first matter that the Liberal Party wishes to raise is the exclusion in the amendment to section 4 of provisions that exempt the Crown from building classification. We agree that it is necessary for the Crown to classify buildings in order that they may be assessed along with the Standard Building By-laws, but the Crown should go further. In fact, that is Labor Government policy. The ALP local government policy document states—

> "A Labor Government will ensure that the Crown is bound equally with other citizens in complying with local government bylaws, town plans and ordinances."

Prior to 1966, the Crown was bound by town-planning schemes. Where councils are required to enforce State legislation, they will be provided with adequate powers to deal with offenders. This is particularly important in the area of environmental protection.

Local government is equally concerned about the impact of many State buildings other than compliance with the Building Act, but I do not see any movement by the Government to comply with rezonings, headworks changes, car-parking requirements or other factors. These factors, which impact on the infrastructure of the whole local authority, are far more important than compliance with the Building Act. The use of Government buildings in times of emergencies is just good, plain common sense, and the matter of building classification is irrelevant in times of fire or flood. The building industry will also be happy with the 30-day approval period for local authorities to process a building application. Most of the local authorities that I know of, or have been involved with, rarely take 30 days when the application is straightforward and no amendment is needed or no other information is needed. It is also my experience that if there is a delay, in the main it is not the fault of the local authority. Usually, building applications for homes or outbuildings form the majority of applications that are made to local authorities.

The Bill streamlines the many applications that seek a variation to the Standard Building By-laws and local authority decisions. The Liberal Party agrees with the rationale of having one appeal authority called a Building Tribunal. However, it is concerned about the size of the Building Tribunal and the need to appoint a registrar and staff to maintain its functions. The Minister might care to indicate how many referees he will need to appoint to maintain the availability of three referees at any one time, as no doubt he will need to appoint more than just three referees. The Act also does not appear to indicate how long it will take to make a decision about an appeal. New section 19A will state—

> ". . . shall determine any matters arising for its determination with all reasonable despatch."

Surely the building industry and local authorities should have some guidelines to work to.

The Liberal Party supports the changes in the Act in respect of the removal of buildings. It believes that there is a need for the lodgement of security bonds and that

giving people the ability to receive preliminary approval from the local authority will benefit everyone. On the Gold Coast, the removal, demolition or relocation of buildings is commonplace. It is not unusual to see a removal house stored on a vacant block of land. It makes good sense that the local authority has seen the building, knows where it is going and is able to judge whether the amenity of the neighbourhood will be affected. Another improvement to the Act is the provision that gives people the ability to seek approval where building works have been done without local authority approval. I have been contacted by many people who have been unable to sell their homes because of some form of illegal building work that has been carried out in the past. A garage may have been converted to a bedroom or a patio may have been added—all illegal in the eyes of the local authority. The Act will set out what is to be done in these instances.

It is a pity that the Act does not have any power to ensure that before demolition is carried out, the council has received and processed a building application. In Surfers Paradise and Coolangatta, the demolition of shops, accommodation units and other buildings has resulted in the creation of large, vacant sites which resemble the streets of Beirut, not the Gold Coast. This action has an immeasurable impact on the economy and amenity of the area. In Surfers Paradise, the Chevron site in particular is an eyesore. In cooperation with the local authority, other vacant sites have been turfed and large green spaces have been developed in the centre of Surfers Paradise. But it is not only private individuals or companies that have taken this option owing to the downturn in the economy. Suncorp, a statutory body of the Government, is now the largest land-owner in Coolangatta. In quick succession, many buildings were demolished and the land lays idle. The heart has been removed from Coolangatta, and it is no wonder that businesses are struggling. Why is it necessary to demolish shops and accommodation buildings when there is no intention to rebuild? Statutory authorities such as Suncorp should be more responsible regarding the long-term effects of their actions. Today, I am asking the Government to consider the need to legislate to stop this happening not only on the Gold Coast but also in Brisbane and Cairns, and no doubt in other areas of Queensland.

I move on to the attached Schedule and, in particular, Part 2 relating to building approvals. By-law 2.4 provides in detail information that is required when lodging a building application. One glaring omission is the need for a mandatory soil test. There is a responsibility on Government to remove or reduce the risk of subsidence. I do not believe that the amending legislation will do just that. A mandatory soil test is not required with a building application. If a soil test had been required on residential blocks of land at Palm Beach, the design of the foundations would have been modified to suit the condition of the land. Today, builders are being told by the Builders Registration Board that they are responsible for the building and the footings. To be fair to all, a mandatory soil test should be submitted with every building application. For an additional cost of approximately $200, the stability of the building is assured and the home-owner has peace of mind.

The second matter not addressed by this legislation is the local government inspection process. The inspection process is not mandatory. I realise that the Bill relates to building work and not subdivisions. However, I find it intolerable that local authorities may—I emphasise “may”—impose a condition relating to the following works that it may inspect—

foundations and excavations before footings are laid;

reinforcement before concrete is fixed;

frames before cladding is fixed; and

any other work at any stage or stages of construction as the local authority may require.

The option should be removed and all buildings should be inspected. If the local authority does not have the manpower to carry out an inspection, then it should be mandatory for an

approved person to certify the work. The real purpose of this process is to provide protection to the consumer. Professional consultants should have indemnity insurance for professional negligence. At least the home-owner would then have an avenue for recompense. Palm Beach home-owners would rather take action against a private company or individual for restitution or compensation than try to take on the whole world.

It is a shame, in my opinion, that the new Act will recycle one old problem, and that is how to define "commencement of work". Clause 3.1 states—

> ". . . every approval to the carrying out of building work must be granted subject to the condition that the building work be commenced within 12 months of the date of approval . . ."

What is the definition of "commencement"? From my experience, just digging foundations has been accepted as commencement of work. The lengths to which individuals will sometimes go to avoid expiration of the building permit are incredible. I feel that the Government has to define "commencement" in some form.

There are several matters on which the Liberal Party will speak at the Committee stage, but one issue that needs to be investigated is in Part 2, and it relates to special provisions. There is a need to ensure that adjoining property is protected from excavations and when dewatering of property is necessary because of a high watertable. I do not believe that local authorities have the ability to condition building applications to provide a bond against damage to neighbouring properties, but I do believe there is a need to enforce the provision of a bond. When companies are considering the construction of five-storey underground car parks, the amount of shoring needed and the amount of dewatering needed, local authorities and the Government have to be concerned about the stability of surrounding property. A bond would provide some insurance against work practices which could cause damage.

Clause 2.33, which amends section 30B, is, in our view, where the disadvantages of this legislation to local government begin. Proposed section 30B (1) (b) states that a local authority—

> "shall forward to The Commissioner of Fire Service the information required to be furnished by it pursuant to the Standard Building By-laws;
>
> and, after considering the building officer's report and any report received by it in respect of the building work from The Commissioner of Fire Service, the Local Authority shall determine . . ."

It is this clause and clauses 2.55 and 2.56 which cause great concern to the Liberal Party and to local authority people who have spoken to me. In my opinion, these new proposals may have an adverse effect on the building construction industry. I say this because the legislation now provides for the Commissioner of Fire Service to be involved in the administration and inspection of building applications.

At present, building applicants for class 2 to class 9 buildings are required to make a separate application to the Queensland Fire Service, which subsequently issues an interim certificate and, upon satisfactory completion, a certificate of approval. Under the current provisions of the Fire Safety Act, the Queensland Fire Service is responsible for fire extinguishers, fire alarms and evacuation systems. They also have the power to require other fire safety provisions if considered necessary for the safety of building occupants.

Under this proposed legislation, the Commissioner of Fire Service will have greatly increased involvement in the appraisal of building proposals and the inspection of fire service installations during construction. These installations comprise some of those that I will list, many of which are presently the sole responsibility of local authorities to administer. Some of those installations include: the installation of fire mains, fire

hydrants, sprinklers, special automatic fire suppression systems, fire detection and alarm systems, fire control centres, stairwell pressurisation systems, air handling systems used for smoke control, smoke and heat venting systems, smoke exhaust systems, emergency warning and intercommunication systems—and the list goes on.

It has been indicated that the Queensland Fire Service will increase staff numbers to enable it to undertake the additional functions, and it is therefore anticipated that the fees involved will be increased from those presently charged. I am concerned that local authorities will be required to collect fees on behalf of the Queensland Fire Service and then forward them on. The Department of Housing and Local Government has advised that, notwithstanding the Queensland Fire Service proposal to become involved as an adviser, local authorities will still be responsible for those services, and as such the department does not expect local authority fees to be reduced. In fact, they may have to be increased. The result will mean that the overall cost of building approval fees will be increased, which is undesirable, and particularly unfortunate as its introduction is likely to coincide with the anticipated revival of building activity in Queensland.

The proposal provides that, upon receipt of a building application, the local authority is to forward the fire services aspects on to the Queensland Fire Service for appraisal. If it is found to be incorrect, QFS is to advise the local authority, which in turn is to inform the applicant. The reverse will apply to any amended details received. It is anticipated that this procedure will result in delays in many instances. If a local authority disagrees with the QFS assessment, it may advise the QFS in writing of such disagreement within 10 days. The Queensland Fire Service has the right to lodge an objection to such disagreement to a building tribunal.

During construction, builders are required to advise both the local authority and the Queensland Fire Service when special fire services are ready for inspection. The local authority will not be able to issue a certificate of classification until a clearance has been issued by QFS. This could lead to further delays. It is my understanding that these proposed procedures have arisen as a result of some local authorities, particularly those in rural areas which have limited involvement in major building works, having limited experience with the installation of fire services. It is conceded that, in some areas, abnormal circumstances such as a tourist development boom would impose requirements upon the local authority to approve buildings more complex than normally experienced. The Liberal Party is concerned that the proposal will fragment rather than streamline the building approval and inspection process, which is likely to result in duplication, delays in the issue of building approval, and an increase in the overall costs associated with building control.

With the nation in the grip of recession, government must tread warily as to guard against any constraint which may hamper the recovery of the Australian economy. The building industry is one of our major employers and any compounding of approval delays or more red tape will only delay the recovery and the employment of our work force. It is desired that the administration of building regulations, including appraisal for compliance of proposals and inspection during construction, be the sole responsibility of local authorities. Local authorities that do not have the necessary expertise could utilise the services of the Queensland Fire Service or private consultants when required. This could be readily achieved by omitting by-laws 2.5 and 2.6 from the proposed Standard Building By-laws 1991. To some extent, the amendment Bill achieves the basic objective of the Building Code of Australia, and with some refinement and initiatives suggested by the Liberal Party, the code would be less onerous in its application, more easily understood and more cost effective, and its requirements would not extend any further than at all necessary into the acceptable standards for the community.

Mrs WOODGATE (Pine Rivers) (5.39 p.m.): This Bill contains nine major amendments. They relate to the Queensland appendix to the Building Code of Australia;

the classification of Crown buildings; excavations, filling and retaining walls; consolidation; accreditation; zero lot line; removal homes; building products registration; and the Queensland Home Building Code. Time does not allow me to cover all of those major amendments, but I would like to touch briefly on one or two of them.

Firstly, with regard to the Queensland appendix to the Building Code of Australia—honourable members would know that each Australian State and Territory has its own set of building requirements. But in this case we are talking about uniformity. The Building Code of Australia is a technical set of building requirements intended for adoption throughout the country by the end of this year. The code has already been adopted in Western Australia, Victoria, the ACT and the Northern Territory. One of the main purposes of the code is national uniformity of building requirements which would assist designers, builders, manufacturers and others involved in the building industry by having to deal with only one set of standards. There is provision in the code for the States and Territories to delete, substitute or add to the requirements of the code. These changes are contained in the State and Territory appendices attached to the code. All of us must agree that it is only common sense that, for example, if Queensland considers that a particular requirement is not appropriate, that requirement may be varied. I do not think anybody in this Chamber would disagree with that.

I now turn briefly to one common area of complaint to local authorities and to the Government. I refer to excavations, filling and retaining walls. These subjects are dealt with in Part 11 of the Schedule. Those of us in this House who have served on local authorities would be aware that when a person cuts or fills a building site on or near the boundary in order to construct a house, it sometimes happens that adjoining neighbours are affected by either their land eroding or collapsing on to their neighbour's land, or their neighbour's fill erodes down to their own property. Another problem that raises its head is that buildings or other structures constructed near the boundary could become unstable. The member for Currumbin touched briefly on that matter, too. This Bill proposes to remedy this problem by expanding the definition of "building work" to include the making of any excavation or filling that may adversely affect an adjoining building or other structure, or adjoining land if the excavation or filling is for the purpose of facilitating the construction of any building or other structure. This provision is long overdue. Therefore, if such excavation or filling does occur, a building application could be required by the local authority and the land could be required to be retained by means of a retaining wall or by some other suitable method and a system of drainage provided. This would stop many local and shire councils throughout Queensland receiving phone calls about this problem that has existed since building began.

Let me speak briefly also about one major amendment contained in this Bill, namely, that relating to removal homes. In accordance with the provisions of section 30BG of the Building Act, a local authority has the opportunity to consider the aspects of amenity and aesthetics where an application for the re-erection or relocation of an existing class 1 building is made. The provisions also relate to the erection of any new class 1 and new class 10 buildings. When a local authority forms an opinion that the building, when relocated or erected, will have an extremely adverse effect on the amenity or the likely amenity of the neighbourhood, or that the aesthetics of the building will be in extreme conflict with the character of the neighbourhood, it must notify the applicant within 14 days. The applicant then has the opportunity to object to the amenity and aesthetics panel against the decision made on the formed opinion of the local authority.

I have had some feedback on this provision in the Bill. However, in the main I think it is a very sensible line to take. In the past in my electorate of Pine Rivers, people have purchased removal homes to relocate in the Samford Valley. Anybody who knows that area will realise that it is very pretty. In some instances, the houses in question were really lovely, older-type colonial homes which blended in very well with the surrounding

countryside. When I was on the council, I received phone calls from people who had purchased little homes. They were not really railway workers' homes, but they were little homes that would have been better suited on small inner-city blocks. Without wanting to appear to bring the snob value into it, I really do not think that such homes are suitable in a place such as the Samford Valley. I think that is a matter of common sense. The Minister has handled it very well. There is a need for this amendment to be made. Although we do not like to stand over people and tell them what sort of a house they can live in, there are cases in which that has to be done. It keeps everybody happy. Some of the houses that people wanted to move onto the lovely blocks in the Samford Valley were completely out of character with the area. I have said enough about that. I think everyone has got the message.

In respect of the times for the completion of building work relating to the relocation of a removal home—thankfully, that time period has been reduced from 18 months to 6 months. We do not want removal homes to be sitting on wooden blocks for 18 months. That is provided for in Part 3—Commencement and Completion of the Standard Building By-laws. Further, as a condition of approval for such building work, a local authority has, under section 30BA of the Building Act, the discretionary power to require a security bond to ensure that the building work as required by the Standard Building By-laws is carried out. Not one council will argue with that. I am pleased that the period for completion of building work relating to the recommendation of a removal house has been reduced. As well, a local authority has the discretionary power to require the lodgement of a security deposit to ensure that all Standard Building By-laws are carried out. It is good news that that aspect has been tidied up.

I turn now to the zero lot line. During my time on the Pine Rivers Shire Council, I spent a lot of time arguing, debating and discussing the merits or otherwise of a zero lot line. At present, the Pine Rivers Shire has no designated areas for such development. However, earlier this year, the shire council approved the use of what is known as reduced lot lines, that is, houses closer to side and front boundaries. It is interesting to note that, in that particular development, narrower roads have been constructed. The development, which is being undertaken by Long Homes and Orlit Homes, is nearing completion. I am really looking forward to inspecting the finished product in the near future to see how it scrubs up. I hope that designated zero lot line areas will be established in the Pine Rivers Shire. I believe that there is a need for them in this day and age. Recently, I accompanied the Minister to Adelaide, where zero lot lines have been introduced and blend in very well.

Under Part 9, which provides for siting requirements of the Standard Building By-laws, a local authority has been granted a discretionary power to allow by resolution that class 1 buildings—and even class 2, 3, 4 and 10 buildings where specifically resolved—can be erected up to a side and rear boundary. Those zero lot line boundary clearances are conditioned to allow flexibility for the location of a residential building on an allotment. Of course, limitations are required—which is common sense—to maintain the amenity of an area and to prevent the spread of fire from one building to another. A local authority can decide to apply zero lot lines to any or all of its area of jurisdiction. Where the extent of its use is limited, a map which identifies those areas is required to be maintained and kept open for public inspection. I conclude my speech with a complimentary pat on the back to the Minister for introducing another good Bill. I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Mrs McCAULEY (Callide) (5.48 p.m.): I welcome the standardisation of the Building Code for which this Bill provides. As the Minister has said, it will ensure that acceptable standards of structural sufficiency, fire safety, health and amenity are maintained for the benefit of the community both now and in the future. The adoption of uniform building codes throughout Australia is a very positive step. It allows for ease of transition between the States. I refer to apprenticeship indenture transfers and tradesmen

who move from State to State. It also minimises confusion about the regulations. The streamlining of many aspects such as applications, objections and appeals will also help alleviate difficulties experienced by builders, local authorities and consumers. I agree with Mr Gunn's comments about people who build their first home—often their only home. Some of the most heartbreaking cases that I have heard of through my office involve people who pinned so much hope in the builder of their home and were bitterly disappointed. They must live with that forever. It is important that we consider consumers when dealing with legislation such as this.

I very much appreciate the reduction in the number of parts of the by-laws from 58 to 13. I believe that that reflects the streamlining process, which is very welcome. Standardisation for local authorities helps overcome difficulties faced by mobile populations in terms of understanding building regulations. At the same time, it does not undermine a council's authority with regard to aesthetics and amenity matters. I believe that the honourable member for Woodgate spoke about appropriate buildings being moved into particular areas and the aesthetics——

Mr T. B. Sullivan: The member for Pine Rivers.

Mrs McCAULEY: What did I say?

Mr T. B. Sullivan: "The member for Woodgate".

Mrs McCAULEY: I apologise; I meant the member for Pine Rivers. I was thinking of that lovely little town. I agree with her remarks about the aesthetics of an area. It is important that councils take into account the aesthetics of an area when particular buildings are removed. The council on which I served had very strict rules and regulations relating to the removal of buildings, which is a commonplace way for people to obtain a house.

Mr Burns: It is big business now.

Mrs McCAULEY: Yes. It is also a cheap way of doing things. However, sometimes a horrendous looking building can be removed to a very good area. That is not to be encouraged. It is important that local authorities have the muscle to deal with the aesthetics of that sort of situation, because they are still the best judges of local community needs and the environment. It is necessary to emphasise the need to educate the public and builders about the policy changes that this Bill introduces to ensure its speedy and effective introduction so that it works well for all sectors of the community. I will not take up any more time of the House. The Opposition supports this legislation.

Mr McGRADY (Mount Isa) (5.52 p.m.): As a member of the Minister's committee, I rise to support the Building Act Amendment Bill before the Parliament. The practice of the Minister to enter into consultation before any Bill relating to his portfolio comes before the House is to be applauded. This Bill is no exception. Lengthy consultation occurred with the Local Government Association, individual shire, city and town councils and the building industry. In particular, I congratulate the Minister and his department on the series of seminars that were arranged throughout the State to explain some of the provisions of the Bill. This Parliament should thank those councils and people in the building industry who participated in those seminars.

This Bill is part of a process that will see uniform legislation right across this nation. Queensland is playing its part in that uniformity. The previous speaker said that the code has already been accepted by the Governments of Victoria, the ACT, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. It goes without saying that uniformity of this legislation will assist the building industry as a whole. In particular, it will assist builders, manufacturers, designers and other people involved in the industry. We should never lose sight of the important contributions that this industry makes to the development of our State and our nation. It is certainly considered to be the economic barometer. I had the honour of being

chairman of a building committee for some 12 years, and I know and appreciate the frustrations that many people have in trying to get through some of the red tape applied by councils and Governments.

Mr Coomber mentioned people who sign contracts to purchase houses only to find that, once the contract has been signed, the principle of "let the buyer beware" comes into vogue. The provisions of the Bill will certainly assist those people who find themselves with that sort of problem. I recall some years ago when a person in Mount Isa had purchased quite a beautiful home. The solicitor had got him to sign the necessary documents and, once he legally owned the house, the city council pointed out to him that an illegal structure had been erected. That structure was built in a very workmanlike manner and it is quite an excellent building but, quite honestly, it was illegal. It took two years for us to argue, fight and everything else with the powers that be. I am led to believe that, under the Bill, common sense will prevail and, if a city, shire or town council is happy with the finished product, it has the discretionary powers to allow it to stay.

Approximately 65 Acts and regulations contain building requirements. Therefore, a person wishing to construct a building may have to be familiar with and obtain approval under many pieces of legislation. This comes back to the red tape to which I referred before. One of the objectives of the building legislation is to consolidate all of the technical building requirements contained in the various pieces of legislation into one building Act. That process has now begun with the consolidation of building requirements contained in the Fire Safety Act and the Workplace Health and Safety Act. In respect of technical building matters, the obtaining of building approval under those two Acts is no longer required. The local authority provides the only approval, but the Bill sets down procedures for consultation between the local authority, the Fire Service and the Division of Workplace Health and Safety where appropriate.

One of the very pleasing aspects of the Bill is the accreditation of materials. That is certainly desirable, as the different climatic conditions in this State sometimes render certain products unsuitable in certain parts of Queensland. With the development of the Building Code of Australia, a system of national accreditation has been introduced, whereby a building material, form of construction or design is assessed and a certificate is provided certifying that the specific requirements of the Building Code of Australia are met. The national accreditation applies only to new or innovative building materials, forms of construction or designs for which no Australian standard applies. As I said a moment ago, I certainly welcome that provision of the Bill.

Some of the previous speakers in the debate referred to the security deposit for the removal of homes. I appreciate the comments that they made but, at the same time, when some of those homes are removed, they provide some good housing in parts of a town or city. I recall the time when, in my City of Mount Isa, the townships of Mary Kathleen and Gunpowder were closed down. Many of our people purchased those homes and brought them into the city. As a city council, we imposed a $2,000 bond and two years in which to bring the house up to standard. As a result of that policy by the council, today, we have a beautiful little area which, because the township of Mary Kathleen was bulldozed to the ground, now has some historic value. In our own city, we have a memory of that township. The people have beautified those homes and done a lot of work on the gardens and the landscape, and that has been a great success in our city.

I want to take the opportunity to mention the former Queensland Housing Commission and the types of homes that it used to provide as opposed to the homes that are now provided in my area. In days gone by, no air-conditioning, no flyscreens and no security doors were provided. In temperatures of 45 degrees, it was impossible for people to live in those sorts of conditions. We talk about improving the quality of life, yet a Government was providing those shells of houses to people who, in the main, are in the

lower income levels and cannot afford to purchase air-conditioning or any of those other facilities. Of course, the old-fashioned idea was that it was good enough for people who lived in Housing Commission homes. I was tempted to say that I could hear Opposition members saying, "Well, that is the case." Those days are gone. Under the leadership of Tom Burns, when Department of Housing homes are built in my part of the State, although we are not yet providing air-conditioning, we are certainly providing the ducting in the building. Also, the types of houses that are being built for the senior citizens are a credit to the Government. Today, in my home city, houses are being built with air-conditioning; they are being built with flyscreens; they are being built with security doors, and that is the way it should be.

In conclusion, I will tell a little story about an old lady who had been allocated one of those houses. Every night of the week, she would ring me at home to thank me and to tell me that she was saying a prayer for me. She wanted to buy something for me. I said to her, "In these post-Fitzgerald days, I am not allowed to accept anything at all from you. I cannot. I will tell you what—on the day of the official opening, you can buy me a drink." She said, "What do you drink?" I said, "On a cold day, I do not mind a glass of Guinness." At the opening, to the embarrassment of all of those people concerned, she came out to the lectern and presented me with two bottles of Guinness. I immediately disposed of one of them and, in the fridge of my office now, I have the other bottle of Guinness ready for the next visit to Mount Isa by the Minister for Housing. With all due respect, for the work that he has done in that area, I believe that he is worth a Guinness. If he continues to provide the homes in my city that he has provided in the past 18 months, I will give serious consideration to buying him a dozen oysters also. I am delighted to support the Bill. I congratulate the Minister, his committee and, indeed, all officers of the Housing Department.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.

Dr CLARK (Barron River) (7.30 p.m.): I welcome this opportunity to speak on the Building Act Amendment Bill tonight, because its main purpose is to enable the Building Code of Australia to be adopted in Queensland. The recent Premiers Conference has demonstrated the commitment of both the Federal Government and the States to work together as one nation and the benefits that this can bring. This is also illustrated in the Bill that this House is debating tonight.

The Building Code of Australia is a uniform set of technical requirements and standards for the design and construction of buildings and other structures throughout Australia and has been developed over a long period of time and with a great deal of thought. As we have already heard, it has been adopted in the Northern Territory, the ACT, Victoria and Western Australia and will ultimately be adopted in all States. It is pleasing to note that Queensland played an important role in finalising the code by providing representatives on the council, the executive committees and structural committees of the organisation responsible for producing it. The basic objective of the code is to ensure that acceptable standards of structural sufficiency, fire safety, health and amenity are maintained for the benefit of the community now and in the future. I wish to point out that, whilst the code is a national code, it takes note of the fact that different kinds of standards are needed in different parts of the country to take account of climatic differences. Naturally, in far-north Queensland we require different standards because of the cyclone-prone nature of our coastline. Those standards are then used across other States that have the same sorts of problems with cyclones, so that people who live in Queensland are as equally protected as those living in the Northern Territory or Western Australia where cyclones are also a part of life.

I wish to point out other important features, that is, that the requirements of this Bill are intended to extend no further than is absolutely necessary in the public interest and to

be cost effective, not needlessly onerous in their application, and to be easily understood. It is very important that, when compared with the existing Standard Building By-laws, savings are to be made through the amendments contained in this Bill. Some of these include the deletion of fire zones, the reduction in the types of construction from five to three, deletion of minimum room size requirements, inclusion of performance requirements which permit innovations and alternative methods of compliance, reduction in vertical separation requirements between floors in multistorey buildings and reduced fire ratings for car parks. All of these things sound very technical and perhaps very boring, but they are to be welcomed because in fact they can result in savings on building costs. This factor will be welcomed by all those families struggling to build a house, and it is of great value to the industry as well.

The Government is also committed to removing unnecessary red tape, and therefore I welcome the fact that the technical building requirements contained within the present Fire Safety Act and Workplace Health and Safety Act will be consolidated into the Building Act to enable building applicants to more easily obtain building approval in a one-stop-shop process. It is part of the Government's ongoing program to remove unnecessary red tape and regulations. It is also pleasing to note that the Bill streamlines the building application approval processes. This is well overdue. It will be streamlined so that the objection, variation and appeal procedures in relation to building applications will be more readily dealt with. The Bill provides for the establishment of a building tribunal to replace the various referees, panels and variation committees that previously determined such things as objections against local authority decisions and variations to the Standard Building By-laws. In effect, the situation is to be rationalised under one appeal authority, namely, a building tribunal. Another welcome amendment concerns the reduction of local authority approval time in respect of building applications for class 1 and class 10 buildings. It has been reduced from 40 days to 30 days. As we know, time is money, and this will be another welcome amendment because it will lower building costs.

Another matter I wish to touch on briefly has been referred to this evening by other members who were previously members of local authorities and know only too well the problems that can arise when houses are being relocated around a shire. In my electorate of Barron River, there is a small, historic township called Stratford. For a long time, the ratepayers association in that area has been keen to retain the character of the township, which is in a very quiet residential area with old Queensland-style homes and narrow streets. The people have worked very closely with the council in developing a control plan for the area to try to retain its appeal and character. I know that they will welcome this Bill. For example, when an application is made to build a Besser block home between two very nice Queensland-style homes, which would really spoil the character of the Stratford area, rather than try to bluff or persuade a builder that it is not quite right, the council will have the authority to refuse the application and have something to back it up. In my electorate, some of the suburbs with new brick houses have a certain quality of their own. These suburbs would not be enhanced either if a building, such as an older Queensland-style structure that really had no merit or was simply out of character with the area, was relocated into one of them. Residents in different suburbs will benefit from this Bill because its provisions will enable the amenity of their own locality to be preserved. People put great store in the character of their own suburb and wish to retain it.

This aspect of the Bill only applies to houses, although I would have liked it to have applied similar requirements for commercial buildings. There are many commercial buildings in my electorate. Tourist resorts are constructed and often there are comments about the suitability of the amenity of the buildings. Some people feel that more care should be taken to ensure a unique tropical architectural style of buildings in far-north Queensland. As I said earlier, I would have appreciated the Government having been a little bit bolder and considered allowing councils to become involved in the control of the

aesthetics of those buildings. In my own locality, I have been known to criticise certain buildings. I will not embarrass the owners of the buildings by naming them in Parliament, but I will say that the previous member for Barron River called me a “one-eyed knocker” for daring to suggest that a particular building did not add very much to the aesthetics of the area. Times have now changed. A committee has been formed in my electorate to advise the council on these matters. The Visual Environment Committee comprises concerned citizens who feel they have something to offer in terms of their professional knowledge in disciplines such as architecture, town-planning and landscape architecture. Although there are no mandatory provisions relating to these matters, the council is using the expertise within the local area to enhance and protect visual amenity. I very much appreciate the efforts of the members of that committee in that regard.

I take this opportunity to stress the importance of good building design in tropical areas from the point of view of possible energy savings and health protection. For example, the careful design and appropriate siting of buildings can reduce very substantially the need for air-conditioning and lead to energy savings. Most importantly, buildings in the tropics must provide shaded outdoor areas to reduce the likelihood of skin damage from sunburn. In far-north Queensland, protection from the sun is a very important part of life. It is pleasing to note that this Government has recognised its responsibility when it comes to the design of pre-schools. The recently opened pre-school at Port Douglas has a very large undercover area where young children can carry out a range of activities. It is most important to protect young skin from the damaging effects of the tropical sun, and I hope that some of the older pre-schools can be modified to provide extra protection. When schools are built, it must be recognised that different climatic conditions prevail throughout the State. There should not be a single standard school design that is used for schools in Brisbane, Mount Isa and Cairns. The designs should be modified to take account of the varying climatic conditions, and this can be achieved by clever and appropriate designs. In conclusion, I reiterate my support for the Bill. I commend the Minister for bringing to Parliament yet another much-needed reform.

Mr WELFORD (Stafford) (7.40 p.m.): It is my pleasure to support the Building Act Amendment Bill that is before the Parliament. There are a couple of aspects I wish to discuss relating to the environmental amenity of building design and urban estates design. As previous speakers have indicated, the primary purpose of this amending legislation is to adopt the Australian Model Uniform Building Code because of the way in which that code addresses the issues relating to the structural, health and fire safety requirements of buildings. The Bill also provides for a reduced approval period for building applications. I concur with comments made by previous speakers in relation to the desirability of local authorities being required to deal promptly with building applications.

Very often, people invest large amounts of their hard-earned money in buildings, particularly their homes. Recently, a constituent of mine entered into a contract to purchase a home, but subsequently discovered the carport attached to the home had not been approved. While he was prepared to proceed with the purchase notwithstanding the fact that the carport had not been approved, the company financing the purchase, Suncorp Building Society, was not prepared to approve a loan for a house comprising a structure that had not been approved by the local authority. Obviously, the only way he could proceed to finalise the contract was to either remove the relevant parts of the house, thereby obviating the necessity for approval of the carport, or apply for local authority approval. Obviously, if he chooses not to lose his rights to purchase the house under the contract, he will need to obtain approval pretty quickly. It is arguable whether even a period of 30 days would be soon enough in this case, but at least a shortened period will be of some benefit to people who are in a similar position.

Let me turn specifically to environmental considerations in the design of urban estates and houses, because there is a real question of the extent to which Governments

should be involved in these matters. I notice that clause 2.38 of the Bill contemplates circumstances in which a person is able to obtain a preliminary decision from a local authority in relation to amenity and aesthetics before making an application for approval and contemplates the local authority actually having a role in determining the appropriate aesthetic and design features of a building. As the previous speaker, the member for Barron River, indicated, there is a real issue pertaining to urban planning and house design in terms of how much control a local authority or State Government should have. In that regard, I mention the recent publicity given to comments made in Sydney by the renowned international architect, Harry Seidler. He criticised the suggestion that Governments should have more control over the design of housing—in particular the siting of houses on allotments—and whether people should be entitled to have a backyard. Harry Seidler was not advocating that everyone should be entitled to a 40-perch block. Clearly, the trend in urban consolidation, as it is called these days, is against the concept of all people being entitled to a 40-perch block. Certainly, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, that was the trend in Queensland. It is now realised that an enormous expansion of urban sprawl is extremely expensive to service in terms of the infrastructure that local authorities and State Governments have to provide. This State Government is confronting the problem of the enormous growth of buildings and population in south-east Queensland. Certainly, the urban infrastructure which the State and local governments have to provide in south-east Queensland is an issue which is now brought into very sharp focus by the pressures on Government to provide services in that area.

The two specific aspects I wish to address relate to provisions in the Schedule which comprises the Standard Building By-laws. The first relates to urban design or the planning of urban estates and the second relates specifically to house design. Part 9 of the Standard Building By-laws relates to the siting of buildings on building blocks and lays down certain requirements for things such as boundary clearances and the area of a block which a building can occupy. In particular, that part of the by-laws relating to siting requirements provides that by-laws apply specifically to single detached class 1 dwellings, that is, normal detached housing, and any buildings which are located on the same allotment as a detached house, for example, a garage or separate carport. The real question in relation to siting requirements is just where a building must be sited on the property. Although it is not a new feature of urban design, the latest buzz phrase is zero lot lining, whereby a building can be built right on a boundary. I recall reading an article in the 1970s, when Harry Seidler was a litigant in a case against, I think, the Sydney City Council, about this very issue.

During the 1970s, the big push was for larger blocks of land. Everyone wanted his or her own back yard, as it were. The trend in council by-laws and regulations was that there had to be plenty of space around the house so that people did not intrude upon the privacy of their neighbours. That trend is now turning full circle in that we realise that, with good design and good siting of buildings on allotments, it is still possible to line a building right on the boundary of a property and provide open space on the property for outdoor areas around the house without intruding on a neighbour's property. The clearances that are normally provided are set out in by-law 9.3, which requires that there be a 6-metre setback from the front boundary and that there be a side boundary clearance of 1.5 metres. From the experience I have had in building a house in Brisbane, that is a standard provision. I am talking now about standard houses where the highest part of the house does not exceed 4.5 metres. Where a building is higher than that, the clearance required around the boundary is much greater. These by-laws now provide for zero lot lining and also for more innovative forms of house siting on allotments under by-law 9.4, which gives a local authority specific power to make a resolution to apply to any or all of the by-laws relating to boundaries, but also to make variations in relation to narrower allotments. In a moment, I will talk about examples where that is already occurring.

One of the new programs of the Federal Department of Housing, which has a branch in the State Department of Housing and Local Government, is the Green Street program. That program has much potential and is one that Governments should encourage all local authorities to come to terms with and promote. The Green Street program is one whereby housing estates can be designed to cater for a higher density development without necessarily having town house or unit development. It provides for various forms of cluster housing, as the State department has already developed in areas such as Rothwell near Redcliffe, at Zillmere and on the south side of Brisbane. It effectively provides for housing allotments with an area of 400 to 500 square metres, which is a good 20 per cent to 30 per cent smaller than the standard 600 to 700 square metre allotment, thereby allowing a higher density development without necessarily detracting from the aesthetics or the amenity of the urban design. It provides for narrower streets. If they are well landscaped, narrow streets and private areas in cluster housing developments and this environment can provide a very attractive form of living for people who do not require large spaces or large houses.

The genesis of the Green Street program has its source in the programs of the Federal Government that are designed to develop more affordable housing. One of the unfortunate features of the new Green Street examples that have been developed by private developers is that it has not necessarily led to more affordable housing as such. Although the allotments themselves sell more cheaply—only because the allotments are smaller and the development costs are less—the houses that are built on those smaller allotments are, nevertheless, quite large, with two toilets, two bathrooms, en suites and the like. In most circumstances, those houses are way beyond the means of most people. In conjunction with the Green Street concept and the concept of smaller allotments and higher density cluster housing development, we need to encourage people to build only to satisfy their needs and not build large monuments to domestic housing simply because there are capital gains tax advantages involved in them.

The question is how to promote these Green Street designs in private developments. Recently, I visited the Australian Capital Territory and spoke to people in the Department of Environment and Planning. The big advantage in the ACT is that the authority there—previously under Federal Government administration but now under the administration of the ACT Government—owns all the land itself and can exercise a great deal of control over the way in which housing developments are structured. Indeed, in the ACT a rough outline of urban estates is created even before the developers come along. When the developers do come along, there are very strict guidelines as to the ways in which those estates can be developed and as to the siting of parkland, bikeways and accessways between properties. We do not have that benefit in Queensland. It may be that to gain that full benefit, we, as a Government, need to look at trying to buy more of the remaining available land so that control can be exercised over it. Alternatively, the Government needs to give local authorities the power to exercise more control over the design of estates, so that these Green Street concepts and smaller block concepts can occur without detracting from the amenity and the aesthetics of the environment in which people are, after all, expected to live and make their homes.

The important feature that drives all this is, of course, the demographic changes that are now occurring right across our urban environment. By and large, the number of households occupied by more than three people is on the decline, and the number of household units occupied by only one or two people is on the increase. This type of living, where the number of occupiers is becoming increasingly fewer, obviously does not necessitate the large housing and the large spaces that were previously provided for in urban planning. There are some examples of Green Street type concepts already in existence in private developments in Queensland. A good example is the Robina estate on the south coast, which provides some smaller allotments along the Green Street

model. The Forest Lake development in the Inala area is also a good example of a mix of allotments. There are small allotments for smaller housing for people who only require small household units and there are larger allotments for larger families. That mix of allotments in urban design is what is required. People's needs change as they move through the stages in their lives. When a couple who are married or who are living together go on to have a family, they can move into a larger house on a larger allotment in the same area. As the children move out of the home, the parents can continue to live in the area but move to another house or allotment that better suits their needs as a household.

That mix of housing development is really what is required. I think that incentives need to be provided by the State Government. The Government should lead by example in the developments that it undertakes and provide this sort of mix of housing opportunities and accessibility for the people of this State. I think that there is a real role for the Department of Housing and Local Government to play in this area. I have already inspected some of the cluster housing developments for public housing tenants that the Minister has opened recently. I think that they are an excellent idea. However, there is a long way to go. I have seen some excellent examples of this type of cluster housing development in Victoria, which were developed in the 1970s by private developers. These developments can be made very attractive. Indeed, the first examples of cluster housing in Victoria were developed under specific legislation and were in many cases snapped up at prices in excess of those that were being paid for other housing allotments in the same area.

Mr Fenlon interjected.

Mr WELFORD: I am very pleased to hear that the member for Greenslopes has in his own area a good example of that sort of development. What I have said so far relates to the urban planning concept generally. I turn now to talk briefly about housing design in particular. I note that the building code is adopted as part of the by-laws in by-law 1.4. I am not entirely familiar with the details of the building code, but I suspect that it does not extend to control over things such as energy conservation and energy use in housing design. I think these are things that are an extension of the Green Street concept, which we as a Government and local authorities need to start looking at and addressing in terms of the controls that are implemented. I think that there is a real issue about the extent to which local authorities or Governments and, in a sense, architects and designers in the bureaucratic role should intervene in housing development. I concur with Mr Siedler's concerns that perhaps it should not be driven totally by the bureaucracy and that there should be some room for innovation and flexibility which allows private architects to exercise some flair. Nevertheless, there are certain imperatives and boundaries within which we all must operate. In particular, honourable members might recall a speech I made when this Parliament last sat about the tripartite roles of energy, environment and the economy and how these need to be integrated in all our fields of activity if we are to have any sort of decent future.

There are real environmental benefits to be gained by people in terms of energy conservation in housing. There are economic benefits to consumers in terms of the amount of energy that they use in their homes and the costs that they will have to bear if they do not conserve the amount of power used and there are indirect costs from which householders will benefit in terms of the capital costs of increased power generation Statewide, which can be reduced significantly if each unit of housing in this State exercises energy conservation measures. A substantial source of this energy conservation benefit can be derived from housing design, not just in terms of building orientation to make use of the position of the sun for space heating or cooling but also solar design features such as water-heating or something as basic as insulation. I understand that recently the Victorian Government has specifically legislated so that henceforth houses built in Victoria must be fully insulated. I think that is an admirable

stance for that Government to have adopted, and I think it is something that this State Government should equally be considering as a way of encouraging energy conservation in housing design. One often hears builders and the housing industry complain about the potential increased costs incurred in building if energy conservation requirements are imposed. However, the simple fact is that with good housing design, these requirements can be incorporated in houses without significantly increasing the costs. If something as simple as insulation in housing is made mandatory, multiplied across the number of houses that are already in existence in the State or are going to be built in the future even just in the south-east corner, then this would make a significant difference to the energy use and the environmental consequences of reduced energy use in this State. The real question is whether we need to regulate or whether we should regulate, and I guess that is going to be the perennial argument. I think initially the Minister has done the right thing by setting an example in the way we as a State Government develop our own estates and build our own housing, and I would like to see more public housing built along the solar efficient design principles.

Time expired.

Mr SZCZERBANIK (Albert) (8.01 p.m.): I thank the member for Stafford for pinching half my speech. I would also like to speak about zero lot lines. I live in an area of rapid growth; at the moment the population growth in the Albert electorate is about 13.5 per cent. It is going through the roof. About five years ago, the Albert Shire grabbed the principle of zero lot lines and really pushed it in its town-planning zonings. Large areas of Robina have 400 square metre lots, and near the Beenleigh in a place called Windaroo it has also pushed the principle of zero lot lines.

A couple of months ago, on behalf of the Minister, Simon Crean and I launched the second stage of the Amcor design regulations. I had seen the Green Street houses there before, but it is not obvious that they are houses on smaller lots. It is a very attractive form of housing, ideal for retirees or couples with no children. I remember seeing the video provided by Mal Hotz from that Green Street development. One resident said that he loved living in that development because he could mow the front and the back yard in the half time of the VFL and he would not miss out on having his beer. They are great developments, but they are not the be-all and end-all of housing. My opinion is that Green Street housing and the zero lot line provide a niche in the marketplace for certain people—they are there if people want them.

Mr Burns: It is an alternative, and it helps to reduce land costs. Land costs are at a stage where they are dearer than the house.

Mr SZCZERBANIK: Land at Robina is not cheap. Some of the houses are now worth about $180,000 or $190,000. When the development first started in the late 1980s, they were selling for about $65,000. They have found their niche and people have taken to them.

Mr Burns: But they are good quality, though.

Mr SZCZERBANIK: They are very good quality. The outstanding part of that development to which I just referred and some that I have seen at Robina is the landscaping. Money has to be spent on landscaping to break up the frontages. Landscaping is a major part of such developments. We had a look around Robina, and some developments had just a couple of palm trees sort of stuck out in the middle of nowhere, and it was obvious they were duplexes. Some of the others were very well landscaped with a swimming pool and a barbecue area out the back. It is an ideal form of housing. I commend the Albert Shire for this initiative and for taking a stand back in the late eighties. Some of the other problems in my electorate relate to boundary clearances and retaining walls along boundaries. People on some rural residential blocks build just whatever they like, right up against the fence line and they do not seem to care what

effect they have on their neighbours. Those neighbours are coming in and screaming that the council is not doing anything, or complaining that the owner of the property next door has put up an illegal building and spent $20 on material while the adjoining owner has spent $200,000 or $300,000 on his house. It is a problem that hopefully will be addressed in the Bill. Such problems are never easy to solve.

The other part of this innovative Bill with which I wish to deal is that relating to floating buildings. Back in the early eighties, in the area where I now live out on the Coomera River Russ was building his quarry. He intended building floating houses on the lake. We thought it could not be done because of the amount of tidal flow that seems to go through there in the wet season around April or March. We thought we would have a dam the width of the Coomera River at the Coomera bridge near the Pacific Highway. This is another innovative form of design allowed for in the Bill—just because the land is under water does not mean that we cannot build on it. I can see this as being another market niche. My understanding was that the Sanctuary Cove developers were looking at such a proposal, but I am not sure what is happening now. It is good to see that this Government is bringing in innovative designs and setting some standards that councils can follow. I support the Bill.

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Housing and Local Government) (8.05 p.m.), in reply: I thank members for their contributions and note the continuing interest of all members with local government backgrounds in Bills of this nature. I appreciate their comments tonight. I thank Bill Gunn for his support. He is a sensible and practical member of this Parliament with a long history of service in Government and local government. I think he made the right point tonight, that is, that the most important investment in the life of most families is a house. When one talks about the provisions of the Building Act one is really talking about some protection for people's major investment. I have now discovered, as I start to review the operations of the Builders Registration Board, this is an area which causes the break-up of a lot of families. With wide-eyed innocence they go along to a display home, put their money down, and go away as happy as can be. Six months down the track the builder is in trouble and the slab has cracked—maybe it is blacksoil country as the honourable member for Somerset said, or it could be just a bad builder. They cannot get the insurance company to pay up, the builder will not finish the building, and the end result is that they end up fighting and brawling over it. Instead of having a house and a happy family there is a broken home, and a house which cannot be sold to get some money back. That does not happen every day. It happens in 5 per cent or even less of cases; but that is far too much.

Mr Gunn: That is too much.

Mr BURNS: I must tell the House that finally the Master Builders Association, the HIA and everybody else has agreed with the amendments to the Builders Registration Board legislation, so we will be back here again soon to debate buildings and the building industry. Mr Gunn also mentioned the cyclone testing unit at the James Cook University. Each year, my department provides some money towards that unit. This year, I went to Townsville to have a look at it, and it was a very good experience. Many practical builders have erected buildings on the site. Some of the builders that are used by my department have erected buildings on the site. A wind tunnel—one of the few available—is on the site to test models of houses. That is a very practical way of trying to address the very serious problems caused by cyclones in that area and allows tests to be carried out on the structures of homes. I welcome Mr Gunn's support for the work done in that cyclone-prone area.

The member for Brisbane Central, Peter Beattie, made reference to the reduction from 40 days to 30 days in which a local authority can decide a building application. This provision can only help the home-owner and the building industry. These days, all of the

work that is being done is designed to try to reduce the number of approval systems in order to get a one-stop approval system, if it is possible, and to reduce costs. If a person borrows $100,000 for a home at an interest rate of 10 per cent or 12 per cent and there is a delay of two or three months in obtaining approvals from the council or a delay because the builder is unable to obtain material on time, it costs that person money. If we as a Government can speed up the approval process, there will be a greater reduction in costs and greater assistance to the people concerned. Mr Beattie also raised the issue that building requirements are contained in about 65 different Acts. He will be aware that the Government is considering how to rationalise the situation that has been inherited over a long period. He raised the question of safety for boarding houses and backpacker hostels. The Bill makes no change to the current system. However, at present, all new buildings have to be built to the highest safety standards. For existing buildings, a council is empowered to require repairs, etc, if the building is dangerous. In addition, the Fire Service Act provides for ongoing inspections to ensure that reasonable safety standards are met.

The member for Currumbin, Mr Coomber, said he was confident that the building industry would welcome the introductions of the building code. He then made a few negative remarks. I think he may have written his speech before the Gold Coast City Council received from me the fax in relation to those matters. On 2 July, the council wrote to me basically raising many of the issues raised by Mr Coomber. Copies of the letter were also referred to six members of this House. I have responded in writing, refuting all of the points that the council raised. My response was faxed to the council yesterday and copies were also marked for the six members concerned for delivery throughout the House. I hope that the honourable member received a copy of the letter. However, I have made arrangements with Mr Deputy Speaker to table that letter and have it incorporated in *Hansard*. Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek your approval for that.

Leave granted.

20th August, 1991

Attention: Mr. J. Lamb

The Town Clerk

Gold Coast City Council

P.O. Box 5042

GOLD COAST MAIL CENTRE QLD 4217

Dear Mr. Lamb,

Re: BUILDING ACT AMENDMENT BILL — FIRE SERVICES

Thank you for your letter of 2nd July, 1991, reference 8/1/6, in which you expressed concern regarding your understanding of the possible duplication of the authority of the Local Authority and the Commissioner of Fire Service in the administration of the proposed provisions of the Building Act relating to Special Fire Services.

After comparing the existing and the proposed provisions I am of the opinion that the proposed provisions will provide a better service to the building industry in relation to fire services in buildings.

The purpose of the proposed provisions is to consolidate proposed legislation pertaining to building regulations and not, as you have suggested, arisen as a result of some Local Authorities having limited experience with the installation of fire services. The proposed provisions require co-operation between the Local Authority and the commissioner of Fire Service and I wish to allay the fears expressed in your letter. The proposed provisions do pass some limited additional responsibilities to he Fire Authority but at the same time remove overlapping and duplicated authority that exist at present.

The purposes of the proposed provisions are:

to allow one application for approval to one authority, the Local Authority, instead of two;

to allow one certificate from the Local Authority on completion of the work, instead of two certificates, and remove the requirement for an Interim Certificate of approval from the Fire Authority;

to clearly define areas of responsibility;

to provide, that where two authorities are involved, the Local Authority is the principal authority;

to formalise a process of liaison between the two authorities; and

to provide one process of appeal under the Building Act.

The Fire Authority will be concerned only with the operational aspects of Special Fire Services which affect fire-fighting operations. It is not intended that the Fire Authority will carry out a detailed assessment of the design of Special Fire Services; that will be done by the Local Authority which will usually rely on certification for that purpose.

If proposed By-laws 2.5 and 2.6 were deleted, as you have suggested, the Fire Authority under the Fire Service Act would still be required to consider the special fire services, but without the formalised co–operation required by the proposed By-laws. There would be a duplication of authority, duplication of approval processes and duplication of appeal systems.

The proposed procedures ensure that from the building owner's point of view the approval process will be simplified. From an overall administrative point of view, the process will be simpler, taking into account the combined needs of both authorities, not the Local Authority alone.

I understand that there will be no need for the Commissioner of Fire Service to increase staff, or to increase fees. With proper co–operation between the authorities, there will be no need for the total fee package to be increased, or for additional staff to be employed. The statement made in your letter that the Commissioner of Fire Service will have a "greatly increased involvement in the appraisal of building proposals and the inspection of fire service installations during construction" is refuted.

In detail, the differences in the provisions and their anticipated effects are as follows:

Application and approval process

Currently, separate applications are required to be made for approvals by the Local Authority and the Fire Authority.

The proposed procedures will require only one application for approval. The one application and the one approval will cover all the provisions of the Building Act, including fire safety installations.

An Interim Certificate currently issued by the Fire Authority would no longer be required.

Certificate on completion

Currently, two certificates are issued on completion of the work, a Certificate of Classification by the Local Authority and a Final Certificate by the Fire Authority.

Under the proposed regulations, one certificate is issued on completion of the work, the Certificate of Classification, which covers fire safety installations in addition to other building matters.

Appeal systems

Currently, two appeal systems apply in the event of an applicant disagreeing with a decision of one of the authorities. Under the Building Act, the appeal is to a referee; under the Fire Safety Act, the appeal is to the Magistrates Court.

Under the proposed procedures, only one appeal system will be involved, and that is to a building tribunal. The building tribunal will operate in a manner similar to the current referee system in the Building Act.

Applications which must be referred to the Fire Authority

Currently, all Class II to Class IX buildings require an application to be made to the Fire Authority, with the exception of small buildings such as duplexes.

Under the new requirements, only major buildings in Classes II to IX are to be referred to the Fire Authority. Generally these will be buildings having a floor area of 1,000 sq m or greater or, in cases where a fire hydrant is not provided within 90 m of the main entrance, 500 sq m.

Jurisdiction

Currently, the areas of jurisdiction of the two authorities are duplicated, or overlap in the following:

means of escape
- fire doors
- passageways
- travel distances, etc.

emergency lighting

means for fighting fire
- fire mains
- hydrants
- hosereels
- extinguishers

fire alarms
- smoke
- thermal
- manual
- audible warning

mechanical ventilation: Provisions relating to prevention of spread of fire and protecting means of egress.

The means of escape, emergency lighting and fire extinguisher requirements are not to be the responsibility of the Fire Authority in the new provisions. These matters will become the sole responsibility of the Local Authority. The rest of these provisions will remain the responsibility of the Fire Authority from an operational point of view.

In the proposed procedures, there is no overlap in jurisdiction, as the Local Authority is responsible for administration of the Building Act and the Fire Authority is subordinate to the Local Authority in that role. The Local Authority is required to refer to the Fire Authority building applications for which Special Fire Services are required, so that the Fire Authority can assess whether the operational needs for fire fighting purposes are satisfied.

It is not necessary for the Local Authority to duplicate the assessment work of the Fire Authority. The Local Authority may rely on the advice of the Fire Authority.

The Special Fire Services that the Fire Authority is interested in from an operational view only, are as follows:
- fire mains
- fire hydrants
- sprinklers
- special automatic fire suppression systems (foam, deluge and gas flooding)
- fire detection and alarm
- fire control centres (these are new provisions)
- stairwell pressurisation systems
- air handling systems used for smoke control
- smoke and heat venting systems
- smoke exhaust systems

emergency warning and intercom systems

emergency lifts

fire fighting vehicular access for large buildings

special provisions for buildings where warranted by the use of the building or by its size being in excess of 36,000 sq m

provisions for special hazards.

Requirement for liaison

Currently, except in limited circumstances such as the serving of notices, there are no provisions requiring liaison between the Local Authority and the Fire Authority.

In the new proposal there is a specific requirement for the Local Authority and the Fire Authority to liaise and resolve differences, if any, before the decision on the building application is given to the applicant.

Time for approval

Currently, there is no interaction or requirement for the notification of the Fire Authority approval to be conveyed to the Local Authority. The Local Authority approval must be given by the 40th day after the receipt of the building application. The Fire Authority approval must be given within 30 days of receipt of the application.

In the proposed procedures, the timeframe for the approval of the Local Authority is still 40 days. The new procedures require the application to be referred to the Fire Authority within 7 days of being received by the Local Authority and the advice of the Fire Authority to be returned to the Local Authority within 16 days. The latest possible time for the response to be received is day 23, out of a total of 40 days allowed for approval of the building application. It is expected that actual times will be much sooner. The time for Fire Authority to assess the application has been reduced from 30 days under the existing law to 23 days as proposed in the new legislation.

Obligation to consider advice

Currently, the Local Authority is not obliged to consider the decision or the advice of the Fire Authority before making its own decision on the application for building approval, except in some specific cases.

In the proposed procedures, the Local Authority is obliged to consider the advice of the Fire Authority and if it doesn't agree with that advice it must notify the Fire Authority.

Resolution of disputes

Currently, it is often necessary for the applicant to resolve differences in the interpretations and the decisions of the two authorities on the same issue. If the applicant is not able to resolve any differences through consultation with the two authorities, it may be necessary for the applicant to apply for an objection under the Building Act as well as disputing the decision of the Fire Authority in the Magistrate's Court.

In the proposed procedures, if the Local Authority and the Fire Authority disagree on any issue relating to Special Fire Services those differences must either be accepted by the Fire Authority or be resolved either by consultation or through the proposed dispute resolution process, before building approval is granted. There is only one dispute resolution process for both authorities. The Fire Authority has no further right of appeal even if it disagrees with the decision of the dispute resolution body.

SUMMARY

If the proposed By-laws were to be deleted, the situation would be worse, not better.

If the proposed By-laws were deleted, the Fire Authority would still require that it be satisfied in regard to those items listed under the heading of 'Jurisdiction' above.

The end result of your proposal would be a duplication of authority, a duplication of the appeals system, and an increase in fees. As a result, the situation as far as the building industry is concerned, would be worse.

I am sure that the expertise which the Gold Coast City Council has developed in fire protection, and for which the Council deserves the highest commendation, will not be wasted. However, it must also be acknowledged that the Gold Coast City Council is possibly a singular case. Most Local Authorities will welcome the opportunity to have the expertise of the Fire Authority available for assessment of Special Fire Services.

Industry has enjoyed a co-operative relationship between Local Authorities and the Fire Authority which has occurred in spite of a lack of requirements in the legislation for such co-operation. Never-the-less some problems have occurred. The proposed procedures serve to formalise a co-operative relationship. They do, however, require a friendly liaison which I am sure will continue as an extension of past practices.

With best wishes,

Tom Burns, M.L.A.,

Deputy Premier and Minister for

Housing and Local Government

Mr BURNS: I will highlight a couple of the points made in the letter. In part, it states—

"The purpose of the proposed provisions"—

it is referring to the Building Act Amendment Bill in relation to fire services—

"is to consolidate proposed legislation, pertaining to building regulations and not, as you have suggested, arisen as a result of some Local Authorities having limited experience with the installation of fire services.

. . .

The purposes of the proposed provisions are:

to allow one application for approval to one authority, the Local Authority, instead of two;

to allow one certificate from the Local Authority on completion of the work, instead of two certificates, and remove the requirement for an Interim Certificate of approval from the Fire Authority;

to clearly define areas of responsibility;

to provide, that where two authorities are involved, the Local Authority is the principal authority;

to formalise a process of liaison between the two authorities; and

to provide one process of appeal under the Building Act.

. . .

The proposed procedures ensure that from the building owner's point of view the approval process will be simplified.

. . .

I understand that there will be no need for the Commissioner of Fire Service to increase staff, or to increase fees. With proper co-operation between the authorities, there will be no need for the total fee package to be increased, or for additional staff to be employed. The statement made in your letter that the Commissioner of Fire Service will have a 'greatly increased involvement in the appraisal of building proposals and the inspection of fire service installations during construction' is refuted."

I will not read any further from the letter as it will be in *Hansard* for people to read. The important point is that we did address those matters and consider them very closely for the council.

Mr Coomber also mentioned the Crown being bound by the Building Act. The case is, yes, the Crown is bound by it, but it does not have to apply to a local authority for building approval or similar administrative arrangements. The Crown does have to comply with the technical building requirements of the Act. As for the Crown being bound by local authority town-planning schemes—this is an issue that relates to another Act. However, I would say that, unlike past Queensland Governments, my Government is now sitting down to negotiate a partnership role with local authorities regarding the roles and responsibilities of both parties in the planning system in Queensland. The honourable member also mentioned concern about the size of the building tribunal to hear objections and decide variations in the additional staff to be appointed—for example, the registrar. I do not see any problems in terms of the number of persons to sit on building tribunals as only one person will continue to hear the objections and up to three persons—whereas at present it must be three—will hear variations. So it does not have to be the three. I am advised by my officers that no additional staff will be required to implement the new arrangements. I have to say that because I do not know.

The honourable member also mentioned that soil tests for every site should be mandatory. We believe that this is overimposition as not all sites require soil tests. It is true that, if mandatory soil tests had to be carried out, many people at Palm Beach and a number of other places in the State would have been helped, but it really is a matter for the councils, which are in the best position to decide whether soil tests should be done. The big problem about mandatory provisions is that they add a cost. Even if the cost is only 50 bucks or 200 bucks, it is still a cost. I find that, in many cases in which money is lent under the HOME scheme, $200 or $300 can make a difference to the viability of a person's proposal. Near the end, some people really start to take a very fine line. They argue with the department when they are told that the department will not allow them to be more than $3,000 in debt. On the basis of a $3,000 debt at an interest rate of 15 per cent or 20 per cent, the little bit of money that a person has to pay in the initial stage can make the difference between being able to afford the repayments or not, so it gets down to a very fine line. I think everybody in the local authorities and in the building industry wants to reach the stage at which a home is as cheap as it possibly can be. If that can be done, it will be better for the building industry, the buyer and for each and every one of us. It will create a few more jobs. It has to be weighed up in one's own mind how far one goes down the line of inserting mandatory provisions, which will raise costs. The honourable member also raised the question of mandatory local authority inspections. For the moment, that situation will be left unchanged, but I am not firmly convinced that this is the optimum decision. This issue is receiving more thought by my department.

I turn now to the comments made by Margaret Woodgate. I was pleased to see Margaret in the House tonight speaking on the Bill. She is the secretary of my legislative committee. I have to say that she is the best attender. She sticks like glue. She is a hard-working member and a really dedicated member of this House. She spoke about retaining walls and the problems they can cause in residential areas in particular. The Bill addresses that problem in a practical way. I cannot understand how builders these days seem to always have the mentality that they have to put a bulldozer in and level off the site for the house. In the past, houses were built on stumps rather than slabs. Houses were built to suit particular sites, so that it was possible to put a level house on a sloping block. Nowadays, they send in a bulldozer, knock down all the trees and dig out a large area for a slab. As a result, people must pay large amounts of money for retaining walls and drainage. If a fairly large area is cut out of a slope, there will be a fair amount of seepage and associated problems. Perhaps architects and planners should consider whether or not slabs are the cheapest way to go. Although they may be cheap as far as the overall cost of a house is concerned, if an owner has to pay a substantial sum of money for retaining walls and drainage, a slab is perhaps not the practical answer in many cases.

In common with a number of other speakers during this debate, Margaret Woodgate supported the provision dealing with removal houses, which represents a practical solution to a difficult problem. One of the most popular practices these days is for people to buy a good Queenslander house and move it onto a good site in an inner-residential area with all amenities. The problem with that is that although someone might put a very nice Queenslander house on a block among all-brick, modern, tiled houses, another person might put an old, run-down house on the block next door. People in the area then believe that that lowers the value of their properties. Local councils need authority to do something about that. As a result, regulations relating to aesthetics have been included in the Bill. Members will notice that I have distributed copies of my foreshadowed amendment to the speakers for the National and Liberal Parties in this debate. That amendment alleviates a difficulty associated with a town-planning definition in the Building Code relating to aesthetics.

Diane McCauley mentioned very appropriately, the need to educate local authorities and builders about the new provisions of the legislation. As Tony McGrady said, my department has held seminars throughout the State to explain these proposals. Those seminars were well received. A similar education exercise will be undertaken before the Act is proclaimed. In other words, members of the Local Government Department will be sent out again to educate people about the legislation. I pay a tribute to the very expert staff of that department. This is a technical Bill. It is not a Bill about which the Minister would know the full details. A Minister relies upon officers of his department to do that work for him. My officers do that very well. I refer to Ron Deveer, Maurie Tucker and Harry Wadley, who have worked very well with me in this regard. I thank them for the work, time and effort that they have contributed. They will also send people out to work for the department. As Tony McGrady said, those officers have done a good job in the past. Tony is a former building chairman of his local council. As a former Mayor of Mount Isa, he is a practical man.

When uniform Australian building codes are considered, the difficulties of building houses to suit western Queensland conditions must be understood. Recently, my department has taken a lot of notice of Tony's advice about the installation of ducting for evaporative air-cooling into Housing Commission buildings so that tenants can install a very inexpensive form of air-conditioning in the west without having to undertake substantial building alterations that would otherwise be required. My department is also providing those facilities and security screens for pensioners in Housing Commission pensioner units in the west. Mr McGrady's practical advice and help have been very useful.

The member for Stafford, Rod Welford, spoke about zero lot lines and Green Street, as did the member for Albert, Mr Szczerbanik. The Green Street development has become very popular. From an Australian point of view, the Federal Government and most housing authorities would agree that Queensland leads the way in relation to that development. As to Robina—Rob Hill and other people associated with that development and those who put up their money many years ago to plan ahead for the long-term development of that city have done a remarkable job. Robina is a great success. People come from all over Australia to see some practical and classical examples of Green Street at work. As the member for Albert said, it is expensive but it is good quality and it sells very well. The real test in the marketplace is whether a proposal sells. If someone is willing to put his hand in his pocket and buy it, that is a good indication that it works.

As to my department—Rod Welford raised the issue of clusters. Over the years, the Housing Commission has been a market-leader in cluster development in Queensland. Many local authorities would not have clusters. It was only because the Crown was not bound that clusters got a start in Queensland. The Housing Commission went ahead and built clusters that worked. Private enterprise followed suit. I must say that, in some ways,

private enterprise has done a better job than the Housing Commission has done. Although private enterprise spends more money on those developments, it sells them at a higher price. Housing Commission cluster homes are rented out to tenants at about 25 per cent of their income. Although the department does not obtain a huge return on them, they are a good form of housing because they provide a small backyard and frontyard and greater density on a site.

Mr Gunn: They generally have a little common area, too.

Mr BURNS: Yes, they have a little bit of land in the centre that can be used. However, those developments create some problems for young families. It is not a great environment for many young families, because it only takes two or three larrikins—a Bill Gunn, a Tom Burns or someone like that—and there will be trouble.

The member for Albert also raised the issue of floating buildings. It is true that we must consider those sorts of innovations. I have always thought that I would like to own a house that was built on my favourite fishing spot so that I could fish morning and night from my frontyard, have a line set or something like that. I always thought that councils were sticks in the mud because they would never allow me to do that. Nowadays, I suppose it will be a little harder to convince authorities that that could be done.

Mr Szczerbanik: You pay rates on them, so you might as well live on them.

Mr BURNS: That is right. We should be considering that and trying to see what we can do to help people to meet their requirements for what they want to do on their blocks of land or live the life-style that they would like. That is one of the problems that I have with uniform building regulations. I keep saying to fellows from my department, "Will people be able to build fishing shacks any more over on the islands like they used to years ago, or will they have to meet uniform building standards, cyclone-testing standards, W52 and everything else?" As a result of this legislation, if people can no longer do that, although there will be some pluses there will also be some minuses.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. T. J. Burns (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Housing and Local Government) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1.1 to 2.35, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2.36—

Mr BURNS (8.26 p.m.)**:** I move the following amendment—

"At page 15, omit lines 19 to 23 and insert—

'(a) in the note appearing in and at the beginning of the section, omitting the words "buildings of Class I and X under Standard Building By-laws" and substituting the words "certain buildings";

(b) in subsection (1), omitting the words "on land of a building of Class I or X" and substituting the words "of a single detached Class 1 building or a Class 10 building";'."

Clause 2.36 relates to section 30BG of the Building Act, which permits a council to consider amenity and aesthetics on application to erect a class 1 or class 10 building. If the council considers that a class 1 or class 10 building, when erected, will have an extremely adverse effect on the amenity of the neighbourhood or that the aesthetics of the building will be in extreme conflict with the character of the building's neighbourhood, the council can, subject to an appeal process, refuse the application. Under the existing Standard Building By-laws, a class 1 building is described as a detached single dwelling.

The proposed new set of Standard Building By-laws contained in the Bill calls up the Building Code of Australia, which has a much wider definition of a class 1 building. For example, the BCA class 1 definition includes townhouses, small hostels and duplexes as well as detached single dwellings.

Therefore, under the amendment to the Building Act, section 30BG would apply to more than just detached single dwellings. Most townhouses and duplexes currently require consent under a council's town-planning scheme. That consent usually includes consideration of amenity and aesthetic matters, and a third party, that is, a neighbour, would have the right of objection. If section 30BG was not limited to just single detached dwellings, those amenity and aesthetic town-planning matters would be duplicated or could be in conflict with the provision in the Building Act. It has been proposed at a national level—and we propose it—that the BCA class 1 definition should be limited, but that has not yet eventuated. Therefore, it is necessary to amend the reference in the Bill to restrict the application of section 30BG to only single detached class 1 buildings and class 10 buildings, that is, to what is the current provision. I therefore commend the proposed amendment to clause 2.36.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2.36, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 2.37, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2.38—

Mr BURNS (8.27 p.m.)**:** I move the following amendment—

"At page 16, line 36, omit—

'building of Class 1 or 10'

and insert—

'single detached Class 1 building or a Class 10 building'."

The explanation is the same as that for the amendment to clause 2.36.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2.38, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 2.39 to 2.54, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2.55—

Mr COOMBER (8.28 p.m.)**:** I received a copy of the letter that the Minister sent yesterday to the Gold Coast City Council, and today I took the opportunity to talk to council members. They are not as convinced about the situation as the Minister may be. It is interesting to note that the first paragraph on page 2 states—

> "The Fire Authority will be concerned only with the operational aspects of Special Fire Services which affect fire-fighting operations. It is not intended that the Fire Authority will carry out a detailed assessment of the design of Special Fire Services; that will be done by the Local Authority which will usually rely on certification for that purpose."

I guess that the Minister is saying in that paragraph that the Fire Service is now relating back to what it was trained for, that is, fighting fires and not for designing buildings or for designing fire services in them.

Mr Burns: We are handing it over to the local authorities.

Mr COOMBER: Yes. I am quite happy to go along with the undertaking that the Minister has given on the understanding that, if what is now being put in place causes applications to be held up—in particular, in the faster-growing areas such as the Gold Coast with more than $1 billion worth of building applications a year, and time is of the

essence in many of those applications—I would like to have the opportunity to come back to the Minister and say that it is not working quite as he thought it should and to ask him to have another look at it.

Mr BURNS: I am only too pleased to give that assurance. I always give the same assurance on any Bill. I do not feel any ego about Bills that come into this House. The best thing one can do is put legislation out in the marketplace, test it, and, if it does not work, come back here, amend it and fix it up. I am only too pleased to do that if there is some difficulty with it. I do not know what the difficulty might be, but we will wait and see.

Clause 2.55, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 2.56 to 3.15, as read, agreed to.

Schedule—

Mr COOMBER (8.31 p.m.): I wish to get an opinion from the Minister about clause 2.8 of the Schedule, which deals with responsible design. When it was mooted that this be included in the legislation, considerable concern was expressed by people in the drafting industry, particularly on the coast, where a lot of homes and rather large buildings have been designed by draftsmen. There was concern that they would be out of a job because of the inclusion of this clause or that there would be a requirement for all their work to be certified by architects or engineers. I would like some direction from the Minister, because it seems that there is a disclaimer for these people contained in the second part of the clause, which states—

"Provided that the Local Authority may exempt the applicant . . ."

The way I read it is that the status quo remains and that people who have performed in the past, constructed buildings and have a presence with the local authority, can be exempt from the requirement of having their work certified by an architect or structural engineer. I ask the Minister: is that the case or not?

Mr BURNS: I am advised by my officers that there is no change to the existing provisions of the current Act. Nothing changes. If a person was able to do it before this legislation, he or she will be able to do it after the legislation is passed.

Mr COOMBER: I have another question concerning clause 3.1 in the Schedule as to the definition of the commencement of a project. As the Minister knows, building approvals are given for 12 months and in areas, particularly south of the Brisbane River, one finds that 21 or 22 days after a 12-month approval the builder is digging the foundations and appearing to commence the project. I understand that in New South Wales the definition of "commencement" is to have the basement and the first or second storey of the building constructed. I wonder if there is a need to define "commencement". From my experience, what happens is that, within the time-scales set by local authorities, either the guidelines or parameters change and the quality of the building may change. Some people are using this opportunity and commencing a building with about a week to go. It is a farce.

Mr BURNS: I will give the same answer to the member for Currumbin as I did to his last question. Under this provision there is no change to the existing Act. There is no change at all. I take on board his concerns about commencement. We are looking at the matter under the Builders Registration Act. As the honourable member will recall, in those days parts of a contract provided that, if the builder was unable to commence building a house within a certain time, rise and fall clauses would come into effect. Some builders laid down six weeks, six months, or whatever it happened to be, and they did not submit the application to council until three or four days before the time was up. This meant that there was no practical way in which approval could be given. Clause 6 in the Mansard contract allowed that company to invoke the rise and fall provision. There is no change to the existing Act. We have to look at it. The honourable member is exactly right. The existing Act stays as it is and the current situation prevails.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I indicate that as this is a very long Schedule containing many clauses, I will allow the member for Currumbin to speak more than three times to it.

Mr COOMBER: I refer to clause 9.8 of the Schedule and ask for a point of clarification from the Minister. This clause refers to special requirements for corner allotments and states—

> "Fences, screens, ornamental structures and the like on an allotment must not, without the approval of the Local Authority, be higher than 1m above the level of the natural ground surface . . ."

I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that there is conflict between that requirement and the pool-fencing legislation. If a pool is positioned on a corner allotment between the fence and the house, the owner of that property would be in conflict with pool-fencing by-laws.

Mr BURNS: I am getting advice from my officers. I am told that it only applies to a very limited area. I will take that on board. My department is looking at the pool-fencing legislation. I hope to introduce the amendments tomorrow afternoon and debate them as soon as the House resumes. There is a number of amendments, one of which will provide for 900-millimetre fences that have been previously approved by council to be acceptable. A one-metre fence might still end up being acceptable in some way. I will have a look at the matter. If it does affect the pool-fencing legislation, my department may be able to pick it up in that legislation.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Burns, by leave, read a third time.

ROBERTSON PARK TRUST VARIATION BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 18 July (see p. 208).

Hon. W. A. M. GUNN (Somerset) (8.38 p.m.): The Minister said in his second-reading speech that this is a very simple piece of legislation, but it is possible that many, many similar areas of land could be affected by this type of proposal. Many years ago, it was an established practice for public-minded people to donate small portions of land to be held in trust by the local council for a specific purpose. In this instance—although I am not aware of the particular circumstances surrounding this land—I suppose the Robertson family donated a parcel of land to the Brisbane City Council for parkland purposes. At that time, I do not think it was envisaged that the land would ever be interfered with at all. More than 40 years ago, the area in which the park is situated was a very quiet locality, and there can be no earthly doubt about that. Presently, I would estimate that up to 20 000 cars a day use the intersection referred to by the Minister in his second-reading speech. I have been trying to recall the types of cars that were driven in those days, and I think that at that time I drove a model A Ford. During that era, a trip to Brisbane was a great ordeal because the roads in those days were not up to present standards. Moreover, since that time, Brisbane has developed into a world-class city.

The demands of a modern, mobile society necessitate the construction of roundabouts for safety purposes. As a former Minister for Main Roads, I can vouch for the fact that roundabouts serve to facilitate traffic flow in many areas and that they are

probably the quickest and safest way of getting around major traffic problem areas. The subject land was donated to the council to be held in trust and, at that time, it was also an established practice for donated land to carry the name of the donor as a gesture of appreciation. Whereas the land may not have been of great value at that time, it would no doubt be a valuable donation in today's terms. Notwithstanding that, the intention to carry out roadworks on that piece of land requires the approval of State Parliament, which is no doubt why the Bill has been presented. The land comprises only 86 square metres, which is a very small portion indeed.

Mr Burns: It is just an additional piece of land that is required to complete the roundabout.

Mr GUNN: Of course, that would not be the size of a normal suburban roundabout. I do not think that anyone would argue about excising a small piece of land to complete a roundabout in the interests of public safety. In my opinion, the excision will not affect the amenity of the park, which is a very attractive area. Forty years ago, it was good thinking to set aside areas of land for parks because they now provide great playground facilities for children who live in suburban areas. During the previous debate, there was discussion about cluster housing arrangements. The problem with high density housing is that the children in the neighbourhood need open spaces, which are usually not available in estates containing 35-perch blocks. I recognise that this Bill is machinery legislation because the council needs the approval of this Parliament to facilitate completion of the roundabout. I can foresee no problems with the enactment of this legislation. I support the Bill.

Mr ARDILL (Salisbury) (8.42 p.m.): There are two aspects of this Bill that should be considered. First of all, this Parliament must consider the need for a roundabout. Secondly, the introduction of this legislation raises questions about the process of introducing legislation simply to excise a very small portion of a block of land that was given to the council in trust many years ago. The reason for the presentation of this type of legislation can be traced to the Myer case concerning land at Mount Gravatt. In that case, the Privy Council decided that any land held in trust by a council could not be used for any purpose other than the specified purpose. It is unfortunate that the fall-out from that celebrated case results in a minor matter being brought to this Parliament for approval. In future, I would like to see this process reviewed because decisions of the Privy Council very often have no real application to Australian conditions. It is time that the practice of referring matters to the Privy Council was overturned when the issue concerns the use by a local authority of a very minor section of land for the benefit of the whole community. I do not wish to canvass the rights or wrongs of the Myer case because, right from the start, I had mixed feelings about it. However, I believe that the decision in that case should not be allowed to impinge on the practicalities of a council making decisions in the public interest. In the near future, I hope to see the day when that procedure is corrected to avoid the necessity of councils having legislation enacted by this Parliament in relation to minor, fiddling matters.

The other aspect to be considered is the fact that a roundabout will be constructed on this land. I wish to inform the House of statements made in 1979 by two of Australia's best traffic design engineers. They said—

> "In Australia roundabouts have been, and in many areas still are, a much maligned form of intersection treatment. It appears to the Authors that this bias comes about because Australian Traffic Engineers have been strongly influenced in their attitudes by American practice where, with their nearside priority rule (drive on right - give way to right) roundabouts 'lock' under heavy traffic conditions and are therefore not favoured."

In other words, America does not have any roundabouts for the simple reason that, with its give way to the right rule, and because Americans drive on the right-hand side of the

road, traffic entering a roundabout has right of way over traffic already on the roundabout. Even under the best conditions, any single-lane roundabout will clog up if it is used by more than 1 800 vehicles an hour. In those circumstances, no roundabout can possibly operate. The introduction of roundabouts would have meant a total reversal of the standard American driving practice.

I must take responsibility for the second wave of roundabouts in Queensland, which continue to this day. For the past 20 years, because the brave step of reintroducing them was taken, roundabouts are still being installed. Previously, roundabouts had been tried—I instance the one at Chermside—but, because so many drivers did not like them, they were not persevered with. Tony Avent, the engineer, and Bob Taylor, who is presently the Brisbane City Council's expert traffic engineer, together wrote the article to which I have referred, setting out that Australian engineers were influenced to a large degree by the American experience. On the advice of Tony Avent, the council introduced roundabouts. They have been such a huge success that they have spread throughout Queensland very quickly. Within five years, they have spread to most provincial cities of Queensland and also over the border to the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales. Of course, Victoria already had them. However, in the mid-1970s the council introduced them in Brisbane and now the city could not operate without them. They are a great means of keeping traffic flowing, which is much better than having it stationary at traffic lights for long periods. Contrary to what many motorists say, roundabouts reduce the incidence of serious accidents. Contrary to the attitude of motorists that signals must be safer, that is not the fact. When roundabouts have been installed at previously uncontrolled intersections, accident rates for pedestrians have decreased by 34 per cent and injury rates have decreased by 36 per cent. When roundabouts have been installed at intersections previously under signal control, which most drivers seem to think are safer than roundabouts, serious and fatal accidents have decreased by 62 per cent. When small roundabouts have replaced large roundabouts, statistics reveal that there has been a significant increase in accidents. That has not occurred as often in Australia as it has in England. However, large roundabouts are safer. Roundabouts are of great benefit in reducing serious and fatal accidents. However, it seems that drivers ignore safety precautions at roundabouts in much the same manner as they do when they fail to stop at a red light.

In southern States, a new system of lane marking of double-lane roundabouts has been introduced which will cause more accidents. Instead of marking those roundabouts in a fashion similar to the way the Queensland department marks roundabouts—with a circle right around the roundabout—they tend to have breaks at four places in the roundabout to allow people to change lanes without having to give way to traffic in the other lane. That is a bad step that has been taken by the other States. I recommend to the Queensland Transport Department that it does not accept that as a standard and that it opposes it at a Federal level. At present in Queensland there are two methods of lane-marking roundabouts which have more than one lane. One method is to have a circle right around the roundabout, which is the standard procedure laid down in the drivers' manual. In Brisbane, the council found it necessary to also lane-mark roundabouts to enable two lanes through on the major road but only one on the minor road, which also cut down on accidents. Both of those methods are reasonably safe ways of lane-marking. However, the method used in the south is not safe. The other alternative is one that the RACQ has investigated and which in Canada is known as the Alberta system. That system has merit in that it reduces much of the uncertainty at roundabouts. Basically, drivers need to approach a roundabout at a slower speed than usual and with caution. That is why there is such a reduction in pedestrian accidents and serious accidents at roundabouts compared to those at uncontrolled intersections or those with "Stop" signs. I support the Bill for the two reasons that I have stated. Firstly, the granting of land in trust many years ago should

not automatically prevent a council from using that land for the benefit of the community at a much later date, as is the case here. Secondly, I commend the use of roundabouts because, as statistics have shown, they are a safer and quicker means of moving traffic.

Mr BEANLAND (Toowong—Leader of the Liberal Party) (8.52 p.m.): I am very pleased indeed to rise and support this most important piece of legislation. The land in question is situated in my electorate in the suburb of Indooroopilly. I have made a number of personal inspections—several hundred, in fact—of this particular area. The roadworks associated with this 86 square metres of land certainly will not affect the park itself. There will be no adverse effect on the playground facilities, the barbecue facilities or the picnic area within the park which is used frequently—particularly at weekends—by families who live in the area. Over the years the Lions club of Indooroopilly has made a major contribution towards the upgrading of facilities in the park. Some time ago, a footbridge was built across the creek in the park, and the upkeep of that footbridge was carried out by the Lions club of Indooroopilly.

The roadworks that will take place as a result of the acquisition of this small area of the park will be of significant benefit to people turning the corner at that particular intersection. Because of the heavy flow of traffic, particularly people going to and from the University of Queensland, this roundabout is going to improve the road safety and the traffic safety of the area. In common with a previous speaker, I am pleased to see that this legislation has had to come before Parliament. Although many members might think that it is an insignificant piece of legislation, it certainly is not. What we are dealing with is public parkland. Honourable members are aware that the Brisbane City Council tried to grab the Mount Gravatt Showgrounds for sale to commercial operators. The council wanted to sell off that parcel of land. Of course, it came to grief on that because in the view of the Privy Council it was land in trust. The Brisbane City Council was making a grab for public parkland on that occasion. The importance of that cannot be overestimated. Any changes to parkland in trust ought to have to come before the Parliament to be debated and discussed properly. It is not very often that these matters come before the House. I am sure that one could count on one hand the number of times that it happened during the last parliamentary session.

Mr Burns: With one finger.

Mr BEANLAND: No, it happened on more than one occasion. Honourable members have witnessed the attitude of the previous Brisbane City Council towards parkland. I think that the significance and the importance of parkland to the community cannot be overestimated. I am always interested to hear people talk about the quality of life and the need to green the suburbs. That is what this is all about. We do not want to suddenly wake up one day and see that our parkland has been filched away by a council which decides that it wants to flog off the local park to some commercial operator. What happened in regard to the Mount Gravatt Showgrounds is a good example. I am indebted to the honourable member who raised that matter.

On behalf of the Liberal Party, I am very pleased indeed to support this very important piece of legislation, which will allow this road-widening to take place in order to improve the safety not only of the people who happen to live in the suburb of Indooroopilly but also of the thousands of people who travel to and from the University of Queensland.

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Housing and Local Government) (8.56 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable member for Somerset and the honourable member for Toowong for their support for the Bill. Both honourable members know the small park very well. I am sure that the 86 square metres of land concerned will be used by the council to improve traffic flow in the area. I also thank the honourable member for Salisbury for his contribution. He has always been keen on traffic and transport matters. Recently, he paid his own way around the world to study these matters.

The contribution that the honourable member made in regard to roundabouts was appreciated.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 5 and Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Burns, by leave, read a third time.

FIRE SERVICE ACT AMENDMENT AND FIRE SAFETY ACT REPEAL BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 10 April (see p. 7091, First Session).

Hon. N. J. TURNER (Nicklin) (8.59 p.m.): On rising to speak in this debate, let me say that the Opposition basically supports the Bill. In so doing, the Opposition is mindful that it opposed the Fire Service Bill introduced in May 1990, and what has happened since has justified that opposition. The reason for opposing that Bill was that it was based on Labor philosophy, including the physical and managerial centralisation of the means of providing fire services to Queensland. More recently, the Government has applied the same philosophy to the QATB. Labor should have introduced the recommendations of the Leivesley report, in which the foundation for a modern Queensland fire service was proposed. The goal must be to ensure a high standard of service to both urban land rural communities.

It seems to be the dream of every young boy whom I have met to be a fireman. Boys are fascinated by the red fire engine, the uniform, the helmet, the pumping hose, the ladders and the daring feats and rescues that firemen carry out. Firemen are all heroes. They have a very responsible job. The danger of fire is present during every day of our lives. Just tonight on television we saw a massive fuel fire in Melbourne and bush fires at Coolum, Maroochydore, the Gateway and Karalee.

In Australia last year, at least 168 people died in an estimated 10 000 house fires, and a further 11 000 people were injured. This figure is short of the real toll, as seriously injured victims who later died in hospital are not included. Given enough warning, clear escape routes, and adequate mobility, all of these deaths could have been avoided. So why is it that people, particularly the very young and the very old, continue to be victims of what is essentially an avoidable occurrence? A spokesman for fire brigades has warned that the general Australian attitude to house fires is, “It won’t happen to me.” In fact, Australia has a comparatively high number of house fires and related deaths. Fires can start anywhere, but most often they start in living areas. They can be caused by the overloading of wiring, too many appliances, careless smokers, or using heaters to dry clothes. Smoke, the silent killer, is the lethal factor in most house fires. Smoke from a house fire consists of up to 70 per cent carbon monoxide, much more than the exhaust fumes from a car.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hollis): Order! There is too much audible conversation. I can hardly hear the speaker.

Mr TURNER: I believe we need a greater awareness of the danger of fire and the steps we can take to protect ourselves and our families. I think we are all guilty of

attending a cinema, a hall, a restaurant or other establishment, and not taking notice or being aware of where the fire exits are located. Officers of fire services provide an essential service and a mantle of safety for the community, whether it is in the business heart, the suburbs, provincial towns, or rural areas. If we recall the horrific fires such as the Ash Wednesday fires and the fires in the Adelaide Hills, we realise that those areas, and particularly rural areas right throughout this State or throughout Australia, are at risk. There has been tremendous loss of life, property and stock from fires. Despite intense training in fire-fighting, fire fighters' lives are at risk each time a fire call is taken. There are many facets to training—building surveys and reporting, prevention skills, vehicle rescue, hazardous substances, State emergency, counter disaster, fire fighting, etc. Under the new Fire Services Act, fire-fighters are officially responsible for the rescue of all people trapped in car or aircraft wrecks, industrial accidents, and virtually any other situation on land. An important duty is public education such as the promotion of the installation of approved smoke-detectors in private dwellings.

Unfortunately, fire-fighting is a stress-related industry to the extent that counselling services are provided to help firemen cope with the horror episodes of their job and to get the traumas of their work out of their systems. In that respect, one looks at fires that have happened in the past; for example, the Whisky Au Go Go tragedy—just to mention one. A critical incident stress debriefing program has been established. It gained impetus last October when a Brisbane fire officer died while fighting a blaze at an inner city hostel. Fire-fighters need the best equipment. They must wear special protective clothing to provide insulation from heat and protection from burns and physical injury. It has to be of a standard that provides the best internal environment and external protection for the wearer.

The heart of the Bill is to be found in the following statement in the Minister's second-reading speech—

> "The role of the fire service in the approval process will be that of a consultant to the local authority in relation to the approval and commissioning of fire protection installations in buildings."

The Government will be placing the onus on councils or local authorities to perform the duties previously carried out by fire services. I would like an assurance from the Minister that local authorities in remote areas and towns not versed in fire safety will not have to pay additional staff or pay fire services to do the consulting, and as a result incur additional expense. Fire services have been given the right to inspect a building as it is being constructed, and it is my opinion that that duty is performed in the interests of public safety. Ideally, public safety should take priority. I hope there will be no need to regret the change.

Another matter which will emerge later will be the cost of the change. It could be an add-on cost to the building industry. Only time will tell. There has been a vast improvement in building safety standards, fire alarms, sprinkler systems, smoke-detectors, etc, and they can and do save lives. Our fire services in Queensland say most fire fatalities occur when people are sleeping. Death is caused by inhaling smoke or poisonous gases which reach victims before the flames. Many people suffocate without waking or being aware of the fire. Smoke-detectors can sense fire and sound a loud alarm. Being battery operated, they need not be connected to household electricity. There are two types of residential smoke detectors—the ionisation and the photo-electric type. The former sounds an alarm when tiny, invisible products of combustion enter the detector and interrupt a flow of ionised air. The photo-electric type contains a light source whose beam is deflected into a photocell by smoke, sounding the alarm. New models combine both systems. The Queensland Fire Service says tests have shown ionisation detectors are slightly more effective in detecting flaming fires, and photo-electric models are better in detecting smouldering fires. However, both systems offer effective protection.

States are moving to adopt a new Australian building code, and I believe this is good and beneficial. However, according to an insurance company, buildings covering twice the area of a football field have been constructed in Australia without adequate fire protection systems being installed, and this has caused problems not just for insurance companies, but for fire-fighters as well. As well, there are older buildings which, on modern standards, could be regarded as potential death traps. In the present climate, these building-owners are loath to undertake any expensive work, because it would cost millions of dollars to bring the buildings up to standard. As I said, the Opposition supports the Bill, but it puts on record that we are concerned that efficiency and expediency could take priority over public safety.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave) (9.07 p.m.): As the Minister pointed out to the House in his second-reading speech, this Bill will provide welcome relief to people who apply for building approvals. One of the annoying difficulties that all citizens face in the many facets of life is that of seemingly unnecessary bureaucratic procedures. Constant complaints about red tape are common, and any measure that Governments can take to alleviate that situation is a step in the right direction. I understand that this Bill will rectify a situation of pointless duplication. Not only is this duplication costly, it is also responsible for frustrating delays.

The system as it now stands requires a person undertaking a new construction or making additions to an existing building to not only obtain local authority approval under the Building Act 1975-1989 but also to comply with the Fire Safety Act 1974-1990 and obtain an interim certificate from the local fire safety officer. Under this system, the fire safety officer returned to the premises before occupation was allowed and checked to see if the construction itself complied with the requirements laid down. If all was in order, a final certificate was issued. Additionally, the Queensland Fire Service was required to monitor compliance with the specific requirements, which were detailed on the certificate. As I said before, this whole process was unnecessarily time-consuming and was long overdue for some overhaul to simplify things. This legislation will provide for the local authority to take responsibility for the granting of approvals, with the Fire Service becoming the consultancy agency. I congratulate the Minister on this initiative, which will see the maintenance of high standards of fire safety delivered through a streamlined process. The added bonus of such legislation is to free up officers of Queensland fire services. Instead of acting as de facto building inspectors, they can now get back to their main business—fire prevention and fire-fighting.

This Bill continues the restructuring of fire services in Queensland. I noted that the Opposition spokesman once again attacked the legislation, which has brought significant change to the fire services of this State. On 1 July last year, fire brigade boards were disbanded and the operation of the Fire Service in Queensland, including the Rural Fire Services, was vested in the Commissioner of Fire Service. The creation of a single fire service meant that service to the community was improved. It was improved in these ways: it developed a career structure for fire-fighters and made for better use of equipment and resources; it standardised fire-fighting and fire-prevention procedures and it developed standards of fire cover through the use of risk mapping. The evidence is quite clear. The Government has delivered on all of these points. It was interesting to note that in July the Minister was able to claim that the Queensland Fire Service debt had been significantly slashed. The Queensland Fire Service, which was formed only one year ago when the State's 81 fire brigade boards were abolished, inherited an overdraft of $27.7m. In its first year, the single service, under the command of a commissioner, has reduced that debt by $12.7m. It has nearly halved the overdraft in just 12 months and, importantly, without any decrease in the level of service to the community. The visible evidence of improvements to the service included new helmets to meet international standards, improved protective clothing, the provision of gas-tight suits and chemical hazard response vans and the large-scale purchase of hydraulic rescue equipment.

At a local level, it recently came to my attention that the regional office was considering a proposal to remove from the Gordonvale fire station its second appliance, a Nissan twin-cab utility. Over the past 30 years, this vehicle and its predecessors have proved to be vital to the duties of fire-fighting and rescue operations in the area. This is quite apart from the everyday functions of supplying and maintaining a full-time station—duties which may prove to be both uneconomical and impractical when using a standard fire-fighting appliance. When the regional commander was suggesting this move, I took the opportunity to ask him to consider certain points. The Gordonvale station has a present staffing level of two permanent officers and 11 auxiliary firemen. The existing type 4 engine responds to call-outs with a maximum of three persons, including the driver, and when additional personnel are required use is made of the utility that I mentioned before. The equipment at that station also includes a purpose-built trailer containing the jaws of life, cutting, sawing and rescue equipment along with air jacks and power, lighting and pumping units. The trailer is towed by that utility. For some calls, such as non-volatile accidents, the utility becomes the up-front vehicle, leaving the main engine available for call-out. Over the years, this has proven to be most successful, especially during the cane season when multiple call-outs are quite common. Under the present mode of operations, the Mornington alarm system is used for call-outs after hours and at weekends. The auxiliary fireman cannot call out either the permanent fireman or the station officer until the on-site situation has been assessed. This again required the transport of these personnel to the incident when required. The township of Gordonvale is located in a predominantly sugarcane-growing area and experiences a large proportion of call-outs to cane fires involving potential property damage. The need for mobility in the field is obvious when back-burning to an existing fire front. With the advent of 24-hour continuous crushing in the near future at the Mulgrave mill, it would seem totally negative to reduce the mobility of this service. As I said, the regional commander was informed of my concerns with respect to this action and has provided further information to the extent that the Gordonvale fire station will have its major appliance upgraded.

Apparently, the Cairns fire station is to receive a new Firepac 4000 pumper, thus releasing a 1990 model type 1 appliance for positioning at Gordonvale. The type 1 will be welcomed at Gordonvale because it has a crew cab seating capacity of six. It also has a high-pressure pump and hose reel, stowage for the rescue equipment presently carried in the box trailer, and as a bonus it can travel at a higher highway speed. Whilst I appreciate the positive and prompt response by the regional commander, I feel a problem still exists because at times the nature of operations in our area requires more than six firemen to be present and it is not uncommon for double call-outs to occur. In those circumstances, the Nissan twin cab would be of great use. On top of this, the relocation of the vehicle can only at best be considered temporary, as the population in that area is growing quite rapidly. Besides being able to obtain a more informed local decision through a regional office, the process is another example of the closer communication that regionalisation has brought. This closer communication is a far cry from the days when all decisions emanated from Brisbane. Once again, I support the Minister in the introduction of this legislation. It is a good example of a Government having a good look at exactly how efficient our services are and making sure that the people in the Queensland Fire Service are put to their best use, that is, fire prevention and fire-fighting.

Mr SANTORO (Merthyr) (9.14 p.m.): The Liberal Party supports this Bill but, I must say from the outset, with some reservations. In essence, the Bill eliminates one stage of the approval process and hands this power over to local authorities. In doing so, the Bill brings Queensland into line with all other States that have agreed that local authorities are to supervise the implementation of fire-safety features within new and renovated buildings. Although the Minister claims that this Bill comes before the House with the official support of the Queensland Fire Service, there are many officers of the service who are yet to be convinced that it is a step in the right direction.

Many officers regard the Fire Safety Act Repeal Bill as an attempt to streamline the process of building approvals, but at a cost to public safety. As I stated before, under the new system contained within this Bill the Fire Service will act as a consultant to local authorities. This means that, instead of seeing all the proposed plans of public buildings, the Fire Service will see only those plans directed to it by local authorities. Those will be mainly plans involving fire alarms or fire-fighting installations. The Fire Service will not be required to visit and inspect buildings as they are going up. It is argued by Queensland firemen to whom I have spoken about this Bill that it is at that stage that fire prevention officers' practical knowledge is really invaluable. Members of the Fire Service argue that the service has been and has acted as a totally unbiased and impartial participant in its role in the building industry. Yet, in the past, it has found it necessary to disagree with local authorities on important safety measures. The proposed new system will ensure that on many occasions the Fire Service will not even have the opportunity to express an opinion. The fear has been expressed that occasions may arise when attempts may be made by the Fire Service to correct what it regards as safety breaches, but because such matters will be at the discretion of the local authority, they will be allowed to pass. From this point onwards the Minister has a clear responsibility to monitor the performance of this Act to prevent those fears from becoming a reality and thus a risk to public safety. A key element affected in this way is the means of escape. The Fire Service has always treated this issue with the attention that it deserves, giving due consideration and applying its considerable practical knowledge on matters such as adequacy of escape, width of escape routes, suitability of escape destinations and others. Members of the Fire Service believe that from a public safety point of view there is probably no more important facet of a building's structure than the provision of means of escape from the building. They fear that the monitoring and implementation of safety standards in those areas has been removed from the proper authority of the Fire Service. The Liberal Party understands and appreciates the genuineness of those feelings and fears and does not subscribe to the view that they are held by people who wish to cling to insensitive bureaucracies and unreasonable power.

Firemen are dedicated to the ideal of public safety. At some stage in their careers, all firemen put themselves in personal jeopardy in the course of public duty. At the same time, however, I believe that it is fair to say that many people involved in the various stages of the building industry have complained from time to time of unreasonable and economically damaging delays that have been experienced in obtaining the relevant Fire Service approvals. Equally, therefore, their demands for the streamlining of procedures are understandable, thus the major impetus for the Bill that members have before them today. The challenge for the Minister and his Government becomes obvious, namely, the maintenance of safety standards whilst providing industry with a speedier and less bureaucratic system of fire safety standards. The meeting of that challenge will require careful monitoring by the Minister and his department of the practical results of the new arrangements so that within a short time he can be satisfied that such results enhance public safety rather than detract from it. The review and assessment process must include the input of the Queensland Fire Service, because I believe that its members are in the best position to properly evaluate the effectiveness of the new system. I respectfully suggest to the Minister that a formal, on-the-ground, consultative mechanism be set up between the Queensland Fire Service and the relevant building industry associations with a view to monitoring and discussing public fire safety developments under the new system being established by this Bill. I particularly urge the Minister to give special consideration to the circumstances in which some local authorities in Queensland find themselves. I believe that it is fair to say that many local authorities in this State may not have the technical staff and experience necessary to administer efficiently particular provisions of this Bill. In the interests of public safety, the Minister has the responsibility to ensure that developments, particularly major tourist developments in small local authority areas, are afforded the best fire safety advice and directions.

I turn now to the superannuation amendment contained in the Act. From my reading of it, basically it seeks to protect the interests of fire officers so that they can continue with their original superannuation scheme when they are transferred to the control of the Bureau of Emergency Services, which occurred some time ago since the introduction of this Bill into the House. In relation to this aspect of the Bill, I have taken some advice and take this opportunity to voice a note of concern and bring it to the attention of the Minister. I am talking about the Queensland Fire Brigades Employees Superannuation Plan, which was constituted on 1 April 1964 under the Fire Brigades Act 1964 and was continued under the Fire Service Act 1990 as from 1 July 1990. The functions of the plan are contained in a trust deed and rules. The trust deed may be amended with the approval of the Governor in Council, but no amendment may prejudice any right accrued or accruing under the scheme to any person unless the person has consented in writing to the amendment. Five trustees are appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister as follows—

(a) one person, not an officer of the Queensland Fire Service, who is the presiding officer at meetings;

(b) two persons nominated by the Commissioner of Fire Service;

(c) one person nominated by the United Firefighters Union, Queensland branch, union of employees; and

(d) one person nominated by any other union of employees of which officers of the Queensland Fire Service are members.

Membership of the plan is compulsory for every full-time employee in the Queensland Fire Service. The most recent annual report presented to Parliament by the Fire Brigades Employees Superannuation Plan is for the year ended 31 March 1990. Extracts from that report and key elements are as follows—

"Objectives:

The Plan's objective is the provision of superannuation benefits to all employees of Queensland Fire Brigades Boards. Benefits are payable on termination of service resulting from retirement (after age 55 years), medical grounds, death or resignation/dismissal. The Trustees believe that their fundamental objective is to manage the Plan in the interests of the members viz., Boards and employee participants."

As at 31 March 1990, membership of the plan was 1 763 in the Defined Benefit Account and 1 965 in the Accumulation Account. The latter account holds primarily award superannuation funds. Accumulated funds in those two accounts were $111.531m and $8.765m respectively. The most recent actuarial report available at 31 March 1990 covered the period to 31 March 1989. At that time, the actuary reported that the plan was—

" . . . in a fully funded and healthy financial position . . . "

For the benefit of the Minister, I point out that the actuary expressed the concern—

" . . . that the level of Partial Incapacity and Total and Permanent Disablement claims has again increased during the latter part of 1989."

Those claims were the subject of reinsurance arrangements with Capita financial group to 31 March 1989. However, from 1 April 1989, the total risk has been borne by the plan.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I take the honourable member's interjection. I am not quite sure who said it. This is a reasonably serious matter. In line with other discussions that have occurred in this Chamber, it is important to put this matter on the parliamentary record so

that those members who perhaps do not take as much interest in these spheres of Government activity and departmental activity as I have to as the shadow Minister can be acquainted with it. I hope that the Minister is able to provide——

An honourable member interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I take the interjection from the honourable member that we all read the annual reports. Perhaps he might like to stand up and tell me what I am about to say next. Does the honourable member want to say that by way of interjection? In the absence of an answer, I will assume that he is ignorant and I will now proceed to inform him. These claims have been the subject of reinsurance arrangements with Capita Financial Group to 31 March 1989 but, from 1 April 1989, the total risk has been borne by the plan. Since that date, a medical examination has been required for all new entrants, and based on the medical report trustees may reduce the death, total disablement or partial incapacity benefits of any new member. The annual report of 31 March 1991, which is expected to be presented to Parliament this month, will include details of an actuarial report to 21 March 1990. In view of the comments that I have just made, I look forward to reading its contents.

Before concluding, I wish to make some general comments about recent dealings that I have had with the Queensland Fire Service. Firstly, in order to be fair in my utterances in this place, I wish to place on record my appreciation to the Minister for enabling me to have easy access to Fire Service personnel and department staff——

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I have gone on record in this place as expressing appreciation to the Minister. In particular, I remind him of the Charleville disaster. I will give the Minister a serve in a moment, so he should just be patient.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I will be constructively critical, as I always am. However, I feel compelled to express sincere appreciation to the Minister. He made his officers and various units of his department available to me. For that, I thank him. As the Minister probably already knows—because, despite claims to the contrary, he undoubtedly has his contacts within the Fire Service—I have travelled the length and breadth of this State. I have taken the opportunity to visit fire stations and talk to the officers in Toowoomba, Cairns, Ingham, Townsville, the Gold Coast, the north coast and within the City of Brisbane. Although the Minister claims that everything is well within the Queensland Fire Service, I beg to differ. Many of the officers of the Fire Service tell me that they are still greatly dissatisfied with the degree of increases in remuneration that the Minister, earlier in his term, was able to achieve on their behalf. They certainly complain of the way in which appliances go out, and they complain of being greatly understaffed, something which, in their view, puts members of the public and themselves at risk.

In relation to numbers—a rumour is going around that the Treasurer, Mr De Lacy, at the Cabinet meeting on 30 July 1991 or thereabouts, suggested that redundancy packages should be made available for 600 Fire Service staff. I see that the Minister is smiling. When he smiles that benignly, I suggest that there is a reasonable degree of truth in what I am saying. Perhaps the Minister might care to deny that that proposal came before Cabinet. He may wish to deny it for the record, and we will see what other information we can come up with in order to back the claim that I am making. Members of the Queensland Fire Service are interested also in knowing what compromises, what trade-offs and what future reductions were agreed to in the ensuing discussions which saw Treasurer De Lacy withdraw that suggestion.

In relation to basic items such as dress uniforms—the complaints that I received from fire officers in Brisbane were that this type of uniform is not a very desirable uniform for funerals, for parades and for similar events.

Mr Mackenroth: You just name your contact.

Mr SANTORO: I will not name all of the many people to whom I spoke. I will tell the Minister where I got that particular idea. I sat in the staff training centre in Roma Street. Sixteen fire officers complained about how ashamed they were that, after two years of the Minister being in his position, he still has not provided them with a suitable dress uniform so that they can turn out on their parades with dignity and pride and so that they can turn up to the funerals of their former mates. That is what they said in Roma Street. That is what they said in Kemp Place. It is not just one individual who is saying it; it is the Fire Service that is saying it. The sooner that the Minister admits that and faces up to that and to the other deficiencies within the Queensland Fire Service, the sooner he will start earning respect.

In relation to basic appliances and basic provisions—let us talk about the boots that do not fit. Let us talk about the way in which the Government took away the contract from local boot-makers who were able to make boots to fit firemen, who have to wear those boots in very attenuating, dangerous and difficult circumstances and who deserve to have comfortable gear. Let us talk about gloves.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I acknowledge the comments about helmets that were made by the honourable member who spoke before me. In that respect, the Minister did receive praise. I am prepared to say that people were happy with that provision. However, I am told that, when the gloves are wet, they lose their form. I am only telling the Minister what I was told by the people at those meetings. I have never worn firemen's gloves.

Government members: Ha, ha!

Mr SANTORO: Members opposite may laugh. I take the laughter as an interjection. I hope that *Hansard* records it, because I will circulate this speech to about 1 500 firemen. The mirth, laughter and uncaring attitude of Government members will be circulated to them. I am told that when these gloves are wet they lose their form and distort around the wrist. They fold over and fall off. As a result, when their gloves are in this loose condition and lose their functional qualities, fire officers lose the ability to grip appliances. I refer to another matter that causes some dissatisfaction and that concerns public relations. I am giving the Minister some feedback. I have been told that these people have tried to tell the Minister about their dissatisfaction but that he does not always seems to appreciate and understand what they are saying.

Ms Spence interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I will take that interjection. No, I am not smiling.

Ms Spence: I said, "You swallow everything."

Mr SANTORO: I do not swallow everything. If the honourable member suggests that I am swallowing this line, then she is suggesting that at least 35 fire officers to whom I spoke en masse are all lying. I do not accept that. A cynical person such as the honourable member for Mount Gravatt might accept that line, but I do not. I am prepared to admit that there may be some people who might be willing to push their own barrow, but I do not believe that the broad range of people to whom I have spoken are saying things in order to make me swallow a predetermined line that is against the interests of the Queensland Fire Service. I believe that I spoke to many sincere people. The fire officers have said that they would appreciate the same sort of PR effort as that given to the other services. I do not know how this can be achieved. Perhaps the Minister should talk to his commissioners and deputies and the people in his public relations department. It seems that when other services such as the Police Service and the Ambulance Service achieve a feat of some heroic proportions within the community the media recognises that feat. The fire officers have told me that often they are the first people on the scene and the ones who effect life-saving functions.

Mr Elder interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I will take that interjection. The honourable member says that that is rubbish. In some cases it does not apply, but in others it may be true. The fire officers would appreciate a bigger PR effort when they perform those life-saving services.

Earlier in the month, the Minister referred to the reduction of the $12m debt within the Fire Service. I suggest that if it is not made clear within the Budget documents the Minister releases some tables showing how he has achieved this reduction in the debt. I would like to see those figures and, if the Minister can verify that it has occurred, I will be the first to give him credit for it. If the Minister has put out a release and I have missed it, I ask him to send it to me as Liberal Party spokesman. I will be pleased to receive it.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mr SANTORO: The honourable member for Mount Isa represented his electors with distinction when it came to daylight-saving and one day I will give him some credit as well, but I doubt that I will ever have the opportunity to do that because he is not up to the task. I conclude by saying that the Liberal Party supports the Bill. I express reservations and ask the Minister to answer my queries. I have sought to represent the genuine concerns and interests of those people to whom I have spoken. I reject the notion that I have been set up. If the Minister tries to say in his reply that I have been set up by individuals, I categorically deny it. I have spoken to dozens and dozens of fire officers and the comments I have made have a common theme and thread. I reject any notion that I have been set up.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (9.35 p.m.), in reply: I thank the three members who have spoken on this Bill for their support for it. The shadow Minister talked about the costs for councils and asked me to address that point. The idea is to free up the way that the system operates so that developments can be approved more quickly. Any costs that were to be associated with it in relation to consultancies would be costs that would have been paid in the past. There will be no additional costs to councils because of this amending Bill.

I thank the member for Mulgrave for his comments. I am pleased that he has recognised that over the last year the Fire Service has reduced its debt by some 46 per cent. We will be purchasing new fire-fighting units, and when one of those units goes to Cairns it will replace the unit operating at Gordonvale. I assure the honourable member that it will provide a better service in Gordonvale.

In relation to some of the comments made by the member for Merthyr, I wish to place on record that what he has been told in relation to something that the Treasurer is supposed to have raised in Cabinet about making 600 fire-fighters redundant is pure fantasy. The number of fire-fighters in Queensland has not been raised in Cabinet either by me or by the Treasurer, neither has it been raised by any other Minister. There is absolutely no intention whatsoever to reduce the number of fire-fighters in Queensland. We cannot build a Statewide Fire Service by sacking half the fire-fighters. The story that the honourable member has been told is fantasy. I refer to the story that the honourable member was told by Bruce about the dress uniforms. I agree that it would be nice if our fire-fighters had dress uniforms to wear when they needed to attend the funeral of a colleague, but as the member would be well aware, the Fire Service in Queensland inherited a debt of some $29m. We are working as fast as we can to liquidate that debt. The other points raised by the honourable member concerning the need for better safety equipment are certainly high on my list of priorities.

Mr Santoro: What you are saying is that you are rejecting the comments made by your members on the staff. You do not deny that they are reasonable concerns, do you?

Mr MACKENROTH: The concerns about the dress uniforms?

Mr Santoro: No, the concerns about gloves and boots and other things.

Mr MACKENROTH: I think that the Government should be working towards the provision of much better equipment. In fact, that was one of the matters identified by Sally Leivesley in her report, and it is one of the main reasons why the Government introduced a Statewide Fire Service. The Government is moving towards the provision of better equipment to fire officers throughout Queensland, and I am sure that the fire officers recognise that. However, given the need to supply better training and upgraded equipment throughout Queensland, the issue of a dress uniform is one that must be given a low priority. It must attract a low priority, because I cannot see this Government spending $1m on providing each fire officer in Queensland with a dress uniform when there is a greater need for the purchase of better equipment to enable them to turn out to fires and other incidents. This position has been stated to the honourable member's informant, Bruce, on a number of occasions.

One of the other matters raised related to recognition of the role of fire officers. I certainly recognise the job carried out by fire officers. Recently, I travelled throughout Queensland and presented more than 300 medals to individual firemen. Those awards were covered fairly well in the media throughout Queensland, and I believe that other incidents involving fire officers are also given due recognition by the media. The Bureau of Emergency Services has a public relations section which is responsible for drawing to the media's attention the deeds of fire-fighters and other people involved in emergency services in this State. Another matter raised by the honourable member for Merthyr related to the Fire Service's debt. My response to him is a fairly simple one. He should look at this year's Budget papers when they are presented where it is stated that the deficit has been reduced by 46 per cent.

Mr Santoro: How did you do it?

Mr MACKENROTH: The Government introduced increased efficiency and ensured that the system operating in Queensland did not involve a waste of public funds.

Mr Santoro: Did it involve capital expenditure?

Mr MACKENROTH: No. Capital expenditure is a separate item. I cannot tell the honourable member the exact amount of the debt that was inherited by this Government, but it was approximately $30m. However, the amount attributed to capital expenditure does not form part of the operating deficit. The Fire Service deficit has been reduced, and the Government will continue to take steps to reduce it. When the debt has been totally cleared, the Government will allocate funds to the operational expenditure of the Fire Service instead of using funds to pay off interest, which has been the case for the past seven or eight years.

Mr Stephan: Those stations have not been manned, though.

Mr MACKENROTH: Those stations are well staffed.

Mr Stephan: They are not.

Mr MACKENROTH: They are. There have been no cut-backs in staff. In fact, funds used for the training of auxiliary fire officers have been increased in many centres throughout Queensland. Auxiliary fire officers are now receiving more training than they ever received previously under the board system.

Mr Stephan: If that is the case, why are there signs at the Gympie fire station, at times, telling people to go around the corner and ring somebody up on the public telephone?

Mr MACKENROTH: That would have been happening previously.

Mr Stephan: No, it was not.

Mr MACKENROTH: Staffing in Gympie has not been cut back; nor has it been cut back in any other centre in Queensland. If the honourable member has a particular concern, I ask him to raise it with me so that I can have the matter looked into. I can assure him that the staffing levels throughout Queensland have not been cut back in any way, shape or form. I thank both opposition parties for their support for the legislation.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. T. M. Mackenroth (Chatsworth—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1.1 to 2.1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2.2—

Mr MACKENROTH (9.44 p.m.): A number of very minor amendments need to be made to the Bill. They correct mainly errors that occurred in the drafting of the legislation, so I do not intend to speak to them at length. I move the following amendment—

"At page 3, line 5, omit—

'16'

and substitute—

'18'."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2.2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3.1 to 3.3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3.4—

Mr MACKENROTH (9.45 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

"At page 4, line 11, omit—

'Queensland Fire Service'

and substitute—

'Commissioner as employer' ";

"At page 4, line 13, omit—

'of'

and substitute—

'in'."

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 3.4, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3.5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3.6—

Mr MACKENROTH (9.46 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 4, line 27, after '(2),' insert—

'by'."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3.6, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3.7 to 3.9, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3.10—

Mr MACKENROTH (9.47 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

"At page 6, line 12, omit—

'1986'

and substitute—

'1988' ";

"At page 6, line 17, omit—

'1986'

and substitute—

'1988'."

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 3.10, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3.11 to 3.17, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3.18—

Mr SANTORO (9.48 p.m.): I would like the Minister to explain one matter to me. As a result of consultation about this Bill with several groups, a question was raised as to whether section 104S implies that the fire safety provisions can be applied to housing by regulation at some future stage. They suggested that it would be quite inappropriate for such regulations to be extended to normal housing without a thorough and rigorous analysis of the costs and benefits. Would the Minister care to comment on that matter?

Mr MACKENROTH: Can these regulations extend to housing?

Mr Santoro: To normal housing, yes.

Mr MACKENROTH: I do not see why they could not extend to housing. They would be no different from regulations under the former Fire Safety Act, which would have allowed the making of regulations in relation to housing.

Mr SANTORO: On reading the clause, that is the impression that is conveyed. Before the provisions are extended to normal housing, will there be a thorough and rigorous analysis of the costs and benefits?

Mr Stephan interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! That comment is out of order. The Minister is consulting with his advisers, which is quite acceptable.

Mr MACKENROTH: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Mr Stephan interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! That is out of order. I warn the honourable member under Standing Order 123A.

Mr MACKENROTH: In answer to the honourable member—the regulations could be extended to houses. Of course, any regulations made under this Act would need to be tabled in Parliament and therefore could be debated in the Parliament. I do not know what the honourable member is trying to get at. Perhaps he could explain his objections to the regulations being extended to housing. It is possible that, in future, the provision could be extended to houses. However, the regulations would then need to be tabled in the Parliament and they could be debated at that time.

Mr SANTORO: The Minister has answered my question. The point was raised by the Housing Industry Association. When I consulted with members of that association, they suggested that the matter be clarified. The Minister has clarified the matter, and I

thank him for that. Those people believe that, before the regulations are extended to normal housing, a thorough and rigorous analysis of the costs and benefits be undertaken. I take the point that there will be an opportunity to debate the effects of such extension of regulations when they are tabled. However, the Minister has answered my question, and I thank him for it.

Mr MACKENROTH: There is no intention to bring in regulations under this Act in relation to private dwellings.

Mr Santoro: I understand.

Mr MACKENROTH: The power is there for that to happen, as it was under the former Act. We are not doing something that is different. In the past, the opportunity to do that was provided for in the Act. At present, a national committee is looking at smoke-sensors being fitted in new houses. This provision would enable the matter to be extended to housing, but the ability to do that was provided in the previous Act.

Clause 3.18, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 3.19 to 4.1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4.2—

Mr MACKENROTH (9.52 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 19, omit all words from and including 'issued' in line 1 to and including 'repeal;' in line 4."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4.2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 4.3 to 4.6, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (9.54 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

High Cholesterol Levels in Young People

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (9.54 p.m.): A recent edition of the *Medical Journal of Australia* contained a report that, by international standards, about 36 per cent of boys and 39 per cent of girls were at a high risk, and a further 23 per cent of boys and girls were at a moderate risk, as a result of high cholesterol levels. That is appalling when one considers that plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and good-quality food are available to young people in this country.

It is of interest to all honourable members to see how much the CPI rises each quarter. In the last quarter that was made public, the CPI rose by a relatively small amount—just over 3 per cent. The press release associated with it stated that, in that last quarter, there had been a dramatic fall in the price of fresh fruit and vegetables. In fact, the price of fresh fruit and vegetables fell by 28 per cent from the price for the quarter before. That contributed to a very small rise in the CPI figures for the quarter.

The House may not be aware of what a small percentage of the CPI fresh fruit and vegetables make up. In fact, fresh fruit and vegetables make up about 1.9 per cent of the weightage in the CPI. It is a minuscule figure. I find it rather interesting that in a country that is going through a depression, or a very severe recession, fresh fruit and vegetables make up such a minuscule amount of the Consumer Price Index. Processed fruit and vegetables make up only 0.852 per cent of the weightage. In fact, for the last quarter in 1986, food made up only 19 per cent of the figure. However, I notice that of that food, soft drinks, ice-creams and confectionary make up 2.289 per cent. That is extremely high when one compares it with fresh fruit and vegetables, which, as I said, make up 1.921 per cent. Meals out and take-away foods make up 4.671 per cent. The junk foods are the items that really put the weightage into the factor of 19 per cent.

Of the fresh fruit and vegetables, the vegetables that are weighted are beans, carrots, cabbages, lettuces, tomatoes, pumpkins, onions, cauliflower, mushrooms and celery. All of these products except mushrooms are the chief products of the Lockyer Valley. Therein lies the problem. At present, fresh fruit and vegetables are in abundant supply at extremely low prices. In the last quarter, their value fell by 28 per cent. Yet Australians rate fresh fruit and vegetables as being worthy of only 1.921 per cent of their Consumer Price Index, which, naturally, adds up to 100 per cent. I draw to the attention of the House that, at the end of 1986, food made up 19 per cent of the CPI. The figures for that year were the most recent that I could obtain from the Parliamentary Library. It is interesting to note that, in 1946, the figure was 40-odd per cent of the CPI and that it has gradually come down over the years. Australians are spending less and less on food and more and more on some other items.

I found it rather interesting that young people have high cholesterol levels, as has been pointed out in the Medical Journal of Australia, when at present fresh fruit and vegetables are very cheap. Australia has a population that is not eating an adequate supply of fresh fruit and vegetables. Australia has a balance of payments problem, yet a lot of food is being imported. The Lockyer Valley could supply Australia with adequate fresh potatoes and other fresh vegetables, yet the health of Australians is suffering.

I wish to draw to the attention of the House the need to publicise the fact that Australians should eat more fresh fruit and vegetables. If they did, the health bills in this nation would be reduced. Australian citizens are now going to have to pay an extra $3.50 to visit a doctor, so they will tend not to visit the doctor as often. I think it is scandalous that the former Treasurer says, “This is the recession we had to have”, and that he is quite proud of the low CPI figure. The Lockyer Valley farmers are bearing the brunt of the small rise in the CPI——

Time expired.

Cooke Inquiry into Australian Workers Union

Mr ELDER (Manly) (10.00 p.m.): I rise to comment on the report on the affairs of the Queensland Branch of the Australian Workers Union handed down by Commissioner Cooke and tabled yesterday in this Parliament. At the outset, let me say that there is no doubt that the Cooke inquiry into the affairs of the AWU was a politically motivated exercise, set up without any reasonable justification by the former National Party Government. The then Premier, Mike Ahern, justified the establishment of the inquiry with references to “slush funds”, houses in Sydney, ballot irregularities, and illegal payments to officials. There were also wild allegations from the present Leader of the Opposition and his deputy that “millions would be found to have gone missing”. Let us have a look at what former Commissioner Cooke had to say about ballot-rigging. He reports—

> “That there has not been any contravention of any law of the State by any person in connection with the elections for elected positions in the Australian Workers Union of Employees, Queensland.”

He goes on to say—

> "The Inquiry's accounting staff have not uncovered any evidence as a result of their analysis of the union's audited books of account, bank statements and other financial records"—

suggesting, of course, as Opposition members had, mass scandals and millions gone astray. Nothing from him about that. What about the statement about millions going into slush funds? Why do Opposition members not look to see what Mr Cooke had to say about that? He said—

> "As a result of that investigation, I am satisfied there was nothing improper or unusual about the purchase . . ."

He was referring to the purchase of the house that Opposition members made so much noise about. He continued—

> "I am satisfied that no Queensland branch money was used directly to finance the purchase."

So there is nothing there. That is a clean sheet.

Mr Santoro: What about your campaign? How much did you get?

Mr ELDER: The honourable member is a malicious rumour-monger. He comes into this House and makes farcical, malicious, embarrassing statements. The honourable member embarrasses himself, his constituency and his party. He is a waste of space. He is a real oxygen thief—nothing but an oxygen thief.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr ELDER: Those references and allegations that I have spoken about have been well investigated and a report has now been handed down. As I said: just what is the real truth of the matter? After a detailed, thorough and exhaustive investigation—undertaken, I might add, with the full and open cooperation of the AWU officials and employees—former Commissioner Cooke has handed down his findings. The inquiry has found that there is not one shred of evidence to suggest——

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I was just looking at that digital timer and wondering whether it was stuck. I do not know how much more I can take of this.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I thank the honourable member very much for his assistance.

Mr ELDER: The inquiry has found that there is not one shred of evidence to suggest any financial mismanagement or lack of accountability within the affairs of the AWU in Queensland. The report shows without equivocation that the original allegations made by the National Party are totally without substance. The honourable member should sit down and read the report thoroughly. Opposition members used it at the time to try to save their own skins. They should not take my word for it. I will quote from the report itself.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr ELDER: The honourable member does not have to take my word for it. The commission-appointed auditor, Mr Brown, said——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Merthyr will cease interjecting or I will have to warn him. I do not want to, but it is late in the night.

Mr ELDER: As I said, the honourable member is an oxygen thief. The commission-appointed auditor, Mr Brown, said that the union accounted virtually to the cent for any moneys it received. Former Commissioner Cooke himself said—

> "I am satisfied that the audited books of account of the Queensland branch have been correctly kept and all money has been accounted for."

I repeat, "correctly kept". He continues—

> "No law in this State has been contravened by any person in connection with obtaining or dealing with the assets and property of the Australian Workers Union of Employees, Queensland."

The AWU has once again successfully defended its proud reputation. But there has been a price. The AWU has lost valuable funds fighting for its integrity during this inquiry. Its officials have also lost valuable time that should have been spent working to protect the rights and welfare of its members. The membership of the Australian Workers Union is made up of battlers—ordinary working men and women who, through the sweat of their own labour, seek to provide a decent living for themselves and their families. It is these people who have paid the price for these scurrilous accusations, because these Queensland workers have had their union voice stifled and weakened during this National Party instigated intrusion into the affairs of their union. The AWU is now left to pick up the pieces and pursue its goals and objectives as if nothing had happened.

The AWU did not seek this intrusion into its affairs; nor did it or any of its officials do anything to hinder a speedy conclusion to this inquiry. They opened up their books and cooperated to the fullest extent with the investigation by the commission and the commission-appointed auditors. Officials and employees were made freely available, and any documentation required was produced on request without fuss or obstruction, even when it appeared that those requests had very little to do with the original terms of reference. This was no simple procedure, given the fact that the AWU has a large and diverse membership in all areas of the State. It is administered, as many honourable members should realise, through a district system to ensure closer contact with the grass roots membership. I would go as far as to say that the level of cooperation forthcoming from the AWU has contributed to an efficient investigation and swift conclusion to the inquiry. The Australian Workers Union is over 100 years old. It has a proud tradition of commitment to and support for the Australian Labor Party, the trade union movement, and last, but certainly not least, the many thousands of workers whose aims and aspirations it has represented for over a century.

Tully/Millstream Hydroelectric Scheme

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook) (10.06 p.m.): I would like to speak in support of the proposed Tully/Millstream hydroelectric scheme, which is to be situated some 100 kilometres south of Cairns. The project has the ability to generate 600 megawatts of electricity on a demand-type basis. It is the best option for electricity generation in this State at the present time. Demand-type stations have the ability to switch on at the flick of an eyelid and get up to maximum power load within 10 seconds, so this particular type of power station will have major effects as far as Queensland and its future generations are concerned. The areas that will be covered by the dam sites total some 4 300 hectares comprising 2 100 hectares of dry sclerophyll forest and 1 400 hectares of wet sclerophyll forest. About 700 hectares of farmland and about 135 hectares of rainforest in 17 small parcels are involved. Because some of this area is covered by World Heritage listing, the Wet Tropics Management Authority has to make a decision. Investigations are currently under way, and I understand that the decision will probably be made by the end of the year. The water will fall some 700 metres through a tunnel in the escarpment down to the turbines very close to the Tully River, and the tail water off those turbines will go into the Tully River itself.

Many points have been raised about the environmental aspects of the Tully/Millstream project. No flora or fauna will be put at risk because of the project. The Atherton antechinus, which has received a lot of publicity, and the yellow-bellied glider will not be made extinct. In fact, they will actually be moved sideways. I believe there are

probably 20 pairs of yellow-bellied gliders in the region of the dam sites. Tunnels underneath the rainforest will overcome any environmental problems caused by the connecting of the dams. Those tunnels will allow the unimpeded travel of native animals within the area of the dam sites.

Much has been said about power conservation. At present, power consumption is increasing by about 5 per cent a year. In 1980, the rate was about 9 per cent. Because of a number of power-conservation measures, that consumption has been reduced. Some hot water systems, etc., now operate on reduced night tariffs, thus reducing the demand during peak hour as well as reducing the cost to many consumers. People are able to use power at night-time at a cheaper rate. Pumps that are powered by electricity also use electricity at the night tariff. A 10 per cent reduction in power consumption in the next decade would defer for only one year the need for putting another power station on stream. It is absolutely essential that the Tully/Millstream project goes ahead. That project will not be completed until 1998. In 1988, the cost of the Tully/Millstream project was $550m. In June 1991, the cost was $640m, which represents an increase of $90m while waiting for a decision on whether to proceed with it. North Queensland needs the scheme. We need self-sufficiency in our electricity feeder system from the south. If that system broke down, we in the north could find ourselves with reduced power. It is absolutely essential that that area has a reliable source of power. In the event of that feeder system breaking down, the Tully/Millstream project will provide sufficient power to enable north Queensland not only to have the lights on but also to go ahead with industry.

The project will provide improved access to irrigation and it will assist recreation and tourism. I understand that the Wooroora dam site will be the only one used for recreational purposes. The other very important aspect is regional employment. Probably about 500 people will be employed in Tully and about the same number in Ravenshoe. Everybody knows how Ravenshoe has been bashed from pillar to post with World Heritage listing and with the reduction in the timber industry. A major loss of jobs has occurred. The people in that area require some scheme to provide employment opportunities for them. I understand that there is no objection——

Time expired.

Cooke Inquiry into Australian Workers Union

Mr McGRADY (Mount Isa) (10.11 p.m.): I also wish to comment on the report of the Cooke inquiry into the Queensland branch of the Australian Workers Union. Firstly, let me say that I fully endorse the comments made by my colleague the member for Manly. The report tabled yesterday shows quite clearly that the Queensland branch of the Australian Workers Union has conducted and is conducting its affairs in an exemplary manner. Given the size of this union, both in terms of its membership and the geographical and occupational spread of that membership, this standard of accountability within the Australian Workers Union is particularly impressive.

Commissioner Cooke was given a brief by a former National Party Premier of this State to investigate financial mismanagement or fraud and possible irregularities in ballots held for elected positions in the Australian Workers Union in the period 1987 to 1989. The final report now shows that there is absolutely nothing to suggest any wrong-doing whatsoever by the Australian Workers Union or any of its officials. The fact of the matter is, as has already been pointed out tonight, that this inquiry was never based on any serious concern about the welfare of the members of the Australian Workers Union. This inquiry was nothing less than a political stunt designed to take the heat off the National Party during that disgraceful period a couple of years ago. So it should not come as any great surprise that Commissioner Cooke undertook this inquiry with such enthusiasm and zeal.

So what happens now? During the course of this inquiry, the Leader of the Opposition and the next Leader of the Opposition have tried to seize upon each and every opportunity to score cheap political points. We have all witnessed the attempts by the members for Roma, Surfers Paradise and Merthyr to indulge in political grandstanding on the strength of any allegation or hint of suspicion served up by the media. This grandstanding has occurred with, I must stress, complete and utter disregard for the rights and reputations of those who today have had the last laugh. Will there be any retraction from those opposite? Will there be any apologies to those they maligned with their rumour-mongering? If the past missed opportunities for the display of principles are any guide, I doubt it. The people maligned by those opposite have been found innocent by the man the National Party put in place to investigate the flimsiest of allegations.

This House should note in particular the disgraceful and cowardly attacks by the Leader of the Opposition and others in this House on Deirdre Swan, a current industrial commissioner and former official of the Australian Workers Union. This report shows that Commissioner Swan's professional conduct has been beyond reproach. Commissioner Swan has worked tirelessly on behalf of the members of the Australian Workers Union. Coming from within the ranks of the Australian Workers Union, she has fought to advocate the interests and welfare of its membership. Through hard work and commitment she has also achieved degrees in both law and the arts and is soon, I understand, to be admitted to the bar. In short, I believe she is eminently qualified for the position of industrial commissioner in this State. However, in the eyes of the members opposite, her talent is secondary to the fact that she was appointed by the Goss Labor Government. One of the problems with this Opposition is its instinctive tendency to judge others by its own standards. After years of appointing only card-carrying members of the National Party, the Opposition cannot believe that appointments can be made on the basis of appropriate qualifications and proven capacity—in short, merit. This is just one of a number of differences between the previous Government and the Goss Labor Government.

Returning to the case of Commissioner Swan—it should be noted that there were strange coincidences and peculiarities in the way she was treated by the Cooke inquiry. The first of these curiosities was the fact that the inquiry chose to interrupt the evidence of the Australian Workers Union secretary, Ludwig, in order to permit an appearance by Commissioner Swan. Despite the unforeseen change of plans, the media appeared in droves to harass Commissioner Swan for two days while Commissioner Cooke and his officials concentrated on a single issue. That issue dealt with the payment of attendance fees to delegates to Australian Workers Union executive meetings and annual conventions. For the benefit of members present, I point out that those fees were paid in accordance with union rules dating back to 1915 and are strictly accounted for. Those accounts, including the payment of those fees, are plainly published in the union's newspaper, the *Worker*. They are also subject to independent audit. I stress that not once in the history of that union have those payments ever been questioned by the membership. The auditor appointed by Commissioner Cooke found no problem with the payment of those fees. However, Mr Cooke and his team decided to pursue the issue of those fees. I believe that, without much to go on, Commissioner Cooke strayed outside the terms of reference of the inquiry to steer the discussion about the fees towards taxation concerns. In the short space of time available to me, I wish to draw the attention of this House to the final summary——

Time expired.

Financial Crisis in Rural Industry

Mr HOBBS (Warrego) (10.16 pm.): It is a pleasure to speak after the "machine-gun" from Mount Isa. Tonight, I want to mention a very important issue, namely, the financial

crisis in the rural industry. A recent newspaper headline stated “Land crisis meeting called”. I want members to be aware of what is happening in the rural industry. Foreclosures are occurring in the industry throughout Queensland and the values of properties whether they be tomato farms or rural properties in the far west, are dropping. Concerns are being expressed by banking institutions and property-owners. A degree of panic is spreading amongst property-owners and financiers. Accusations about the unusual banking activities of some financial institutions are being made by land-owners. I suppose that anyone who has been involved in politics knows that there are two sides to every story. But who are we to judge? We really must consider individual cases and report them the way that we see them.

I believe that something must be done about this crisis. It is not my intention to watch the bones of land-owners be picked over. Many of them have been placed in that position not entirely by their own fault or actions. It is not my wish to go into the details of why they are in that predicament. I feel some sympathy for those people who are bitter about being in that position, because I suppose that one could say they have been put there by their own people—by Australians. I refer to actions taken by the Federal Government in relation to the high value of the Australian dollar, which has played a major part in the erosion of incomes of primary producers throughout Australia, and Queensland in particular. Approximately $2 billion worth of foodstuffs is imported into Australia each year. That has a very important effect on the productivity and incomes of primary producers throughout Australia. Wheat, sugar and wool prices have basically been deregulated. John Kerin, the Federal Treasurer and former Primary Industries Minister, dithered around with wool prices. He set the floor price at 870c then brought it down to 700c. Next, he declared that it would become a free market, but then he said that the stockpile would be frozen until a particular time. He then decided against that and determined that some of the wool would be sold. The buyers knew—and we were to learn—that John Kerin could change his mind. We discovered that wool prices decreased dramatically. I ask honourable members to consider what would happen if a service station operator suddenly decided to sell his petrol for 25c a litre and advertised it at that price for next week. Nobody would buy petrol this week; they would wait until next week. That is exactly what the wool-buyers did. They waited before they decided to buy our wool. I accept that foreign and global aspects have played an important part in the decline of our markets. However, it is very disappointing that we have contributed considerably towards that decline.

Time expired.

Cooke Inquiry into Australian Workers Union

Mr PALASZCZUK (Archerfield) (10.21 p.m.): I join in this debate to make reference to the report of the inquiry by Commissioner Cooke into the affairs of the Australian Workers Union. I endorse totally the sentiments and comments expressed by the members for Manly and Mount Isa. The cold, hard fact is that millions of dollars have been spent on a senseless, baseless investigation into Queensland’s largest and oldest trade union—a union that works tirelessly and ceaselessly to provide a service to its 60 000 members and to protect their interests. The Cooke inquiry spent 16 days on public hearings and many other weeks and months of inquiry to pursue evidence to support the original National Party allegations that “millions of dollars would be found to have gone missing” from that trade union. It is now apparent that the inquiry has not provided any substance to the National Party’s allegations.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: By that interjection, the member for Warrego demonstrates that his intelligence is matched only by the plainness of his shirt. Commissioner Cooke has not uncovered one shred of evidence to support any suggestion——

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The member for Merthyr and the member for Sherwood are happy, because they know that, at the next election, they will be gone; they will lose. That is the reason why they are smiling and are happy. They know their fate.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lockyer—honestly!

Mr Dunworth interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Sherwood under Standing Order 123A. I am trying to get the member for Lockyer to behave himself, and the member for Sherwood is really making it hard.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Commissioner Cooke has not uncovered one shred of evidence to support any suggestion that the financial affairs of the AWU have been conducted in anything other than a prudent, accountable and entirely above-board manner. The report makes it undeniably clear that the allegations against the AWU were spurious. The commission spent a good deal of its time and resources on pursuing the amounts paid to delegates to attend branch executive meetings—an initial bone of contention for the then Premier, Mike Ahern. The fact is that, before those hearings were conducted, auditor Brown had made it clear in his report to the commission that the payments were made in full accordance with the rules which contain explicit provision for such payments to be made. I also suggest that the payments were made in seeming concurrence with the wishes of the AWU membership, as the information of their payment was published regularly in the union's official newspaper the *Worker*. That does not sound to me like money under the table or in brown paper bags on the desk, as occurred under the then National Party Government.

Throughout the course of the inquiry, no-one came forward to express any concern about those payments. Indeed, the most that those payments ever amounted to was $144 a day—equivalent to a sitting fee that shire councillors receive. However, Commissioner Cooke—who, incidentally, received $350 an hour—felt that that issue warranted five full days of exploration by his counsel. It was not only the issue of the payment that was occupying the attention of the commission staff but also whether the payment should have been declared in the tax returns of the recipient—a matter which I believe to be outside the terms of reference of the inquiry. However, after five full days of pursuing that line, Commissioner Cooke decided that that whole affair was of no interest to him.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockhampton North will cease interjecting from that seat.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Another example of what I consider to be the somewhat trifling nature of the commission's approach is the number of days spent by its officers investigating whether or not there had been irregularities in ballots for positions within the union during the years under scrutiny from 1987 to 1989. I am advised that there were no documented allegations relating to any such irregularity. Again, there has been nothing. Indeed, Commissioner Cooke is forced to conclude in his report that there has not been any contravention of any law of the State by any person in connection with the elections for elected positions. As a matter of fact, I will give my final comment to Commissioner Cooke himself. In his report, he stated—

> "Pursuant to my Terms of Reference, I report that no law of the State has been contravened by any person in connection with the obtaining or dealing with the assets and property of The Australian Workers Union of Employees, Queensland during the period 1 January 1987 to 21 December 1989."

The National Party and the Liberal Party are upset because we, as members of the Labor Party, are founded on the oldest political party in the Western World, the strongest political party in the Western World, the most democratic political party in the Western World and the most successful political party in the Western World.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.