

WEDNESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 1994

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

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Capital Punishment

From **Mr Lester** (2 405 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will instigate a referendum for the return of capital punishment.

Teachers

From **Mr Perrett** (100 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will ensure that teachers are not suspended without pay prior to a court conviction or finding of fault by disciplinary procedures, that there is a fair and immediate investigation of complaints against teachers, that action is taken to support teachers with a fair and effective disciplinary structure in the schools, that action is taken to penalise individuals who make frivolous or malicious complaints against teachers and that substantial compensation be provided for teachers who are exonerated.

A similar petition was received from **Ms Power** (71 signatories).

Sentencing Procedures

From **Mr Palaszczuk** (6 signatories) praying for action to be taken to introduce truth in sentencing legislation with no parole for perpetrators of violent crimes.

Fisherman Islands Port

From **Mr Purcell** (197 signatories) praying that the Ministers responsible for the planning and development of the proposed Port Road Corridor to Fisherman Islands Port will attend a public meeting to openly discuss this matter and that all interested parties be informed of the proposed meeting.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

(a) Treasurer (Mr De Lacy)—

Queensland Treasury Corporation—
Capital Market Operations—Annual Report
for 1993-94

(b) Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing (Mr Gibbs)—

Mount Gravatt Showgrounds Trust—
Annual Report to 30 April 1994.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Overseas Visit; Queensland Coal Industry**

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—Minister for Minerals and Energy) (2.33 p.m.), by leave: In August, I travelled to Asia to meet with major importers or prospective importers of Queensland's coal and minerals. From Saturday, 13 August to Saturday, 27 August I visited Thailand, China, Korea and Japan. I was accompanied on the trip by my wife, Mr Paul Breslin, Director-General of the Department of Minerals and Energy, Mr Richard Cleal, my senior ministerial policy adviser and Mr Mike Scanlan, General Manager (Business Development), Coal and Minerals Group, Queensland Rail.

In Bangkok, I held discussions with the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand, which is expecting an electricity growth rate of 8.4 per cent per annum. I also met with representatives of Siam Cement, which is also expanding rapidly. Both are looking for new fuel supply sources, and I believe that in both cases Queensland coal will receive serious consideration. My visit helped to promote the properties of Queensland coal and reliability of supply and infrastructure of the Queensland coal industry.

While in Bangkok, I had the opportunity to visit the Prada Jewellery Group, who are major users of Queensland gemstones. This combined with my recent visit to the Queensland gemfields has given me a very good understanding of this important and growing Queensland industry.

In Beijing, I met with representatives of the Ministry of Metallurgical Industry and the China National Metals and Minerals Import and Export Corporation. I took the opportunity to inform them of the developments occurring in the Carpentaria-Mount Isa Minerals Province and the huge potential this province has for future exports to China. These companies are already importers from Queensland, including copper from MIM, but I believe that future growth in China will lead to even greater demand for Queensland's minerals, including alumina, copper, zinc and lead.

I am also pleased to report that while in Beijing I was able to hold discussions with Mr Wang Senhao, Minister of Coal Industry, who visited Queensland last year. Coal is one of the vital ingredients in China's growing economy. China already takes significant amounts of Queensland's coking and steaming coal, especially in the south of the country, where transport and climatic conditions mean that China is unable to provide a reliable year-round supply of coal from its domestic coal industry. After discussions with the Minister, I believe the future growth area for coal supply to China will be steaming coal, and Queensland coal suppliers should be developing their contacts with Chinese organisations in this area.

In Shanghai, I was able to visit the Boashan steel works operated by Boashan Steel, which imports approximately 100 000 tonnes of coking coal. I am pleased to say that on the visit to the steel mill—and, for that matter, with all the importers I held discussions with—it was confirmed that Queensland coal is amongst the best in the world and that Queensland coal suppliers have an excellent reputation overseas.

In all the discussions I had and in all cases, Queensland received an A plus on its report card. It was also very pleasing for me to hear at meeting after meeting of the excellent job that the Queensland Government is doing. In fact, I was often told that, in the mining area, we are the best in the world to deal with.

I seek leave to table my full report, together with a detailed itinerary.

Leave granted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Koala Protection

Hon. M. J. ROBSON (Springwood—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (2.37 p.m.), by leave: I am pleased to inform the House that, as from last Friday, new laws have been gazetted to give the Queensland Minister for Environment and Heritage the powers to intervene quickly and decisively to stop the unlawful clearing of critical koala habitat.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the Minister.

Ms ROBSON: In particular, with regard to the koalas in the Redland and Logan areas, this new law means that the bulldozers and chainsaws cannot frustrate the Government in implementing its \$28m Koala Coast Protection Plan.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition under Standing Order 123A. I will not allow members to trivialise this House.

Ms ROBSON: As from last Friday, the koala was classified as protected wildlife in Queensland under the Nature Conservation Act. Breaches of that Act are subject to significant penalties, which I will shortly outline. Populations of the koala are considered comparatively secure over its range in the southern and eastern parts of Queensland, provided their habitat is protected. A population in the Logan and Redland areas is, however, under threat due to pressures from urban and related developments.

During consultation on the south coast motorway, I received information that certain landholders in the Redland Shire have, in the past, flagrantly ignored vegetation retention orders issued by the Redland Shire Council. According to the Redland Shire Council, this practice is not isolated, and the Logan City Council has experienced similar problems. The protection of the koala cannot be achieved solely under local government legislation, and the high penalties provided by the State's Nature Conservation Act will provide a significant deterrent to unlawful land clearing.

Under the new laws, if the Minister for Environment and Heritage considers that a critical protected wildlife habitat is under a threat which is likely to have a significant detrimental impact on that wildlife, the Minister may make an interim conservation order for the conservation, protection or management of that wildlife or habitat. An interim conservation order can prohibit or control a specific threatening process—in this instance, the clearing of trees. An order has immediate effect and lasts for a maximum of 60 days. There is a provision to extend that period to a maximum of 90 days. The maximum penalties available under the Nature Conservation Act for failure to comply with the terms of an interim conservation order are \$180,000 or two years' imprisonment for an individual, or \$900,000 for a corporation.

Any landholder subject to an interim conservation order is entitled to be paid reasonable compensation by the State. However, the existence of vegetation protection orders under local authority laws may mean that such compensation is minimal or zero. I must stress, however, that an interim conservation order will only be used as a last resort to prevent damage to important habitat. Every effort will firstly be made to negotiate an agreement between the landholder and the department to protect the koala and its habitat. These new laws mean that the Department of Environment and Heritage now has the capacity to monitor land-

clearing activities relating to the habitat of koalas and, if necessary, to take action to prevent any major detrimental effects on critical areas of that habitat. We will work closely with the Brisbane, Logan and Redland councils to implement these measures.

The new laws mean that the Minister for Environment and Heritage can act promptly to protect any areas of critical koala habitat.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS BY MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (2.41 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That so much of Standing and Sessional Orders be suspended as would enable the member for Broadwater at the conclusion of question time today to produce to the House any documents or further evidence he has which would support his allegations that the State Government has suppressed evidence in a major organised crime investigation."

In particular, I refer to the member's claims on television last night that he had "a bucket load of evidence" and that he would produce more evidence if the procedures of the House allowed it.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 51—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bennett, Bird, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Budd, Burns, Casey, Clark, Comben, D'Arcy, Davies, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Gibbs, Goss W. K., Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Mackenroth, McElligott, McGrady, Milliner, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Power, Purcell, Pyke, Robertson, Robson, Rose, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Sullivan T. B., Szczerbanik, Vaughan, Warner, Welford, Wells, Woodgate *Tellers:* Pitt, Livingstone

NOES, 33—Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Stoneman, Turner, Veivers, Watson *Tellers:* Laming, Springborg

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Annual Report

Mr HOLLIS (Redcliffe) (2.47 p.m.): Pursuant to section 17 of the Public Accounts Committee Act 1988, I table the annual report of the Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts

for 1993-94 and I move that the report be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

Mr HOLLIS: This report provides Parliament with details of the activities of the committee during the last financial year. Honourable members will see that the committee has had a productive year both in terms of the issues investigated and the reports produced. More importantly, the committee has made recommendations on a wide range of issues associated with the financial management of the public sector. The committee has been pleased to see many of these recommendations adopted by Government and will continue its work in providing the effective parliamentary scrutiny of the financial management of the public sector.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to thank the members of the committee, Mr Elliott, Mr D'Arcy, Mr Fenlon, Mr Grice, Mr Pearce and Mr Santoro, for their support and hard work. I commend the report to the House.

Mr LITTLEPROUD having given notice of a motion—

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I table copies of those letters.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS BY MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (2.51 p.m.): Pursuant to the resolution of the House carried a moment ago, I seek leave to move a motion without notice to give absolute privilege to those documents to be tabled by the member for Broadwater subsequently. I seek leave to move a motion without notice because I want to make sure that those documents have privilege.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Under the Parliamentary Papers Act passed by this Parliament, if a member seeks leave for the tabling of documents, those documents are privileged.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise on a point of order and seek a ruling from you, Mr Speaker. It relates to a question that I asked in this place of the Minister for Family Services on 31 August 1994. The Minister gave a very clear assurance to this House that she would supply the information to me later. The question was about the involvement of a departmental employee in the land rights claim in respect of the Century mine. It is now a week since the question was asked. The Minister informed me that the information would be forthcoming. No further response has been received. I seek an assurance or a ruling from you, Mr Speaker. When Ministers indicate that information will be supplied in this House and

they do not do so, what action do you intend to take?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I think "later" means later.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am not going to get into a debate about what "later" means.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

1. TAFE Colleges

Mr SANTORO asked the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations—

"With reference to a report titled 'Restructuring for TAFE colleges: An analysis of policy formulation and implementation', prepared by Dr Robert Furnell for the Vocational Education Training and Employment Commission—

- (1) Has his department contributed financially for this report/research?
- (2) If so, how much did the department pay for this research?
- (3) Who approved this expenditure?
- (4) Has he read it?
- (5) Does he intend to implement the report's recommendations and, if so, which ones?
- (6) Does he agree that the plethora of changes introduced by senior executives of Queensland TAFE over the period covered by this research have actually decreased, rather than increased, TAFE's competitiveness, particularly when compared to the TAFE systems in Victoria and New South Wales?
- (7) In view of the substantial criticisms of the largely out-dated matrix model of organisational structure (ie high tension system, very stressful for employees, dilution of priorities, organisational paralysis and confusion, low morale, conflict) why has he allowed his senior executives to experiment by inflicting this model on Queensland TAFE colleges?
- (8) Does he intend to introduce a more progressive organisational model of a more progressive senior management of TAFE?"

Mr FOLEY: I seek leave to table the answer and have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

- (1) Yes. The report entitled 'Restructuring and TAFE Colleges: an analysis of policy formulation and implementation' was the outcome of a 'Restructuring and TAFE Colleges Project' commissioned by the Office of Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission (VETEC).
- (2) The commission was by way of a Grant of \$30,000 to the Centre for Skills Formation, Research and Development at Griffith University.
- (3) The expenditure was approved by the General Manager of VETEC.
- (4) Yes.
- (5) The report's recommendations have been taken into account in the ongoing development of policies and models for the formation of TAFE Institutes and provided some background to the Vocational Education, Training and Employment (VETE) system strategic planning processes.
- (6) No. In comparison to other TAFE systems during the period 1991 to 1992:

the student contact hours for TAFE Queensland increased from 14% to 16.5% as a percentage of the national total;

the Victorian TAFE percentage remains static at 23% and the New South Wales percentage decreased from 42% to 40%.

Similarly:

enrolment figures in TAFE Queensland during that period increased by almost 4% while in Victoria the increase was 1% and in New South Wales there was a decrease of 2.5%.

During the term of the Goss Government funding totalling 1.629 billion dollars has been provided to the TAFE system to fund the day to day operations of the Institutes and Colleges. As a result, TAFE student contact hours have increased by 66.5% and student enrolments increased by 108.5% over the period 1989 to 1993.

This spectacular increase was necessary in view of the low resourcing levels for Queensland TAFE pre-1989 as a result of decades of neglect by the National and Liberal Party Governments.
- (7) The 'matrix' model of organisational structure to which Mr Santoro refers is, presumably, the flatter management structure introduced to TAFE Colleges as a result of the implementation, in March 1991, of restructured TAFE and Senior College Teachers' Awards which were negotiated between management and

unions. These Awards brought changes to the way in which teachers operate by providing for greater ownership in the management of courses and curriculum, and in decision making processes. Substantial pay increases were linked to the adoption of the new Awards. These matters are currently being reviewed as part of the TAFE workplace reform agenda and enterprise bargaining processes.

- (8) TAFE Queensland has established and is continuing to establish Institutes of TAFE in accordance with a number of principles against which any proposal to establish an Institute is assessed. These include greater capacity for client ownership, improved quality of curriculum, and increased efficiency in resource utilisation. Institutes must also indicate improved management structures incorporating an extension of the range and level of management functions as well as benefits to staff through broader career opportunities, staff development options and access to a range of work experiences. The move to the establishment of Institutes is designed to provide an efficient, effective and responsive organisational structure to meet the challenges of a competitive training market.

In those Institutes already formed, staff consultation processes have been employed in developing management structures. Staff at these Institutes are enjoying unprecedented involvement in designing the most appropriate management structures to deliver quality outcomes for their Institutes.

2. Titles Office

Mr SANTORO asked the Minister for Lands—

- (1) For each of the 34 mini titles offices, how many positions in those offices are exclusively or partially devoted to the titling function?
- (2) Where a position is only partially a titling function, what portion of the position is devoted to titling and what portion is devoted to other duties?
- (3) What is the salary paid for each of those positions?
- (4) Which of these positions have a

Government vehicle provided and what was the cost for each of those vehicles in 1993-94?

- (5) Which of those positions have accommodation provided and what was the cost to the Government for each of these accommodation arrangements in 1993-94?
- (6) For each of the 34 mini titles offices, what is the annual rent?
- (7) What is the total number of persons employed in each of the 34 mini titles offices?
- (8) What is the definition used to calculate the 98 per cent availability for the new Titles Office computer system?
- (9) What was the percentage availability during normal business hours of sufficient terminals to allow business to proceed normally in the receiving sections of the Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville offices during each of June, July and August?"

Mr SMITH: I seek leave to table the answer and have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Question one (1) to seven (7) are substantially the same as those raised in the House in November 1993 and again immediately following the recent Budget Estimate Hearings. I refer the Member for Clayfield to the responses provided at those times as the situation has not changed.

Question 8. The formula used to calculate the percentage of availability of the Automated Titles System is as follows: quite simply, the percentage of time during available business hours that the computer is available is calculated.

Question 9. The percentage of system availability during the month of June was 97.1%. The percentage of system availability during July was 98.8%. The percentage of system availability during the month of August was 94.5%.

The majority of downtime in the months of June and July was caused by a recurring INGRES problem. This problem has not re-occurred since the installation of the new version of INGRES on August 6. The system availability figures for June and July are normal for a computer environment of this complexity and load.

The risk of the problem experienced during August re-occurring has been considerably reduced through configuration resource enhancements and Sequent is taking action to

prevent any further problems of this nature occurring.

Other issues that impact upon availability are network outages. For Brisbane, Townsville and Rockhampton, network outages have totalled 4 hours in August. Hence, terminal access to ATS has been available for an estimated 93% in this period.

It is important to realise that while any system as large and complex as ATS will always experience operational problems at some stage, this system has had comparatively few teething problems associated with its implementation, and that those that have existed have been remedied quickly.

3. Gifted Students

Mr PYKE asked the Minister for Education—

"What action has the Goss Government taken to address the problems that gifted students in Queensland have faced for many years through a lack of Government and school support for their special abilities?"

Mr COMBEN: I seek leave to table the answer and have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

A year ago this month, I launched the Queensland Government's Gifted Students In Queensland policy, setting out in detail for the first time how Queensland schools would assist gifted and talented students.

It is no coincidence that the launch was held at Corinda State High School, in Mr Pyke's electorate of Mount Ommaney. Corinda, as the Honourable Member knows very well, is one of our premier high schools and it has been at the forefront of providing services for gifted and talented students.

The policy provides this broad definition: gifted students are those who excel, or have the potential to excel, in general areas or in specific ability areas.

The policy says that gifted students "have a right to schooling which helps them achieve their potential." It also notes that "giftedness is a disadvantage when members of a community fail to recognise it, understand it or provide appropriate schooling to develop it."

More than 200 schools throughout Queensland are now providing more than 400 special programs and activities specifically for the identification and support of gifted students.

We hear a lot about behaviour management students because they tend to attract the

headlines, but those students are vastly outnumbered by the quiet achievers in schools around the State. Thousands of Queensland students are doing extraordinary work, whether it is in the area of building boats or playing concertos, creating computer enhanced pictures or cooking up a feast fit for a king. All of those activities have been happening at Corinda and much more.

Current initiatives at Corinda include: 35 students participating in the Tournament of the Minds; participation in interests ranging from furniture restoration to cinematography; two groups of 12 students with advanced literacy skills are now evaluating books that have been nominated for the Queensland Children's Book Week Awards.

The development and approval of a policy for gifted students is just one of many initiatives in education since 1989 of which the Goss Government is justifiably proud.

4. Dental Services

Mr HORAN asked the Minister for Health—

"With reference to the Commonwealth funding of \$11m in 1994-95 for the Commonwealth General Dental Program to provide dental services to an additional 80 000 people who are now not eligible for state public dental service and as the Health Department has a current shortage of 41 dentists and is unable to attract applicants to vacant positions and the waiting lists for general dental work is 1 to 2 years and more—

How does he propose to deliver the services required by this Commonwealth grant to these 80 000 extra people if he does not have dentists?"

Mr HAYWARD: I seek leave to table the answer and have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

In response to the specific questions made by Mr Horan, I can advise as follows:

In the second phase of the Commonwealth Dental Health Program, the General Dental Scheme, funding of \$11M is available to Queensland. The number of additional persons to be treated in Queensland in 1994-95 is estimated by the Commonwealth at 80,000 persons. What the Member for Toowoomba South has obviously failed to understand is that this figure for 1994-95 is based on the numbers of Health Card holders and their adult dependants, and holders of the Commonwealth's Seniors Health Card in Queensland. These are

Queenslanders who are already eligible for public sector oral health care.

The Commonwealth Dental Health Program has been introduced into public dental clinics to enhance the services already available to those people who are financially disadvantaged and to reduce waiting times for general dental services in certain areas to acceptable limits. The Emergency Dental Scheme operated from February to June 1994 provided 50,700 more patients with emergency/immediate care than in the corresponding period in 1992/93. This was achieved through additional hours of operation for public dental clinics.

Services for an additional 80,000 persons will be provided in 1994-95 by continuation of this strategy, and by employment of additional public sector dentists. By agreement with the Australian Dental Association (Queensland Branch), private practitioners will also be employed in public dental clinics on a sessional basis.

Conditions of employment for public sector dentists is the subject of a hearing before the Industrial Relations Commission, with a view to improving the recruitment and retention of dentists.

Also, to further address the issue of improved waiting times, I have recommended that access to dental prosthetic services, for disadvantaged persons eligible for free treatment, be improved by offering patients who have been waiting over three months the choice of receiving full dentures in either the public or private sectors.

5. Hospital Staff Levels

Mr HORAN asked the Minister for Health—

"With reference to advice to the Queensland Nurses Union from his Ministerial Policy Advisor reaffirming that an additional \$773m was available to the public health system over the past five years and to advice from the Queensland Nurses Union to himself and his Policy Advisor that both have failed to recognise and understand the difficulty encountered by hospital staff in dealing with growing demands on our hospital system and in view of the public protests at major hospitals throughout Queensland, in particular the Princess Alexandra Hospital, and as he claims to have adequate funds available—

Will he take action at Cabinet level to address the problem of the exodus of staff from our hospital system which is occurring as a direct result of the low hospital staff levels imposed by his policies and management priorities?"

Mr HAYWARD: Again, I seek leave to table the answer and have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

In response to the question from Mr Horan, I can advise as follows:

Union protests at major hospitals should be seen in the context of the enterprise bargaining process currently underway between health unions and Queensland Health.

Specifically with regard to Princess Alexandra Hospital:

There have been difficulties in recruiting nursing staff to several areas in the Princess Alexandra Hospital, particularly to the Operating Theatres. In addition, there was a significant number of nurses, and other staff, off on sick leave during winter.

To address the first issue, the Hospital has initiated an enhanced recruiting campaign - which may include looking overseas for suitable nursing staff.

The Hospital has established a Pre-Admission Clinic, together with an Admission and Discharge Lounge. This initiative will enable the more efficient use of the surgical beds.

Additional medical staff are being recruited into specific areas directed at improving the discharge management of medical patients.

A consultative committee of Health Services Unions and Hospital Management staff has been formed to address issues in a harmonious and consultative way.

Further the integration of QEII and Princess Alexandra Hospitals will allow for a 10 percent to 15 percent increased throughput of elective surgery in the Brisbane South Region.

A number of Queensland Health initiatives to improve work conditions for nurses at Princess Alexandra Hospital have been implemented by my Department and I have taken a very hands on approach to ensuring this process is of top priority. Those initiatives include:

Nursing staff in wards have been involved in work practice reviews within their areas in the past twelve months - and this activity is ongoing.

Recruitment both locally and interstate through advertising in newspapers Australia-wide and separate advertisements being sent to southern state hospitals for inclusion on their noticeboards:

recruitment of additional intake of newly-graduated nurses into an additional first year registered nurse program

(approximately 20 registered nurses to commence on 26 September). These nurses have come from both Queensland and interstate;

inviting third year undergraduates from nursing faculties at universities here in Brisbane to work at the Princess Alexandra Hospital on a temporary basis as Assistants-in-Nursing and Enrolled Nurses; encouraging the employment of nurses who would not normally be in the workforce to come back on shorter working shifts, and a general review of rostering hours throughout the nursing services.

Providing supervised clinical practice of twelve weeks duration for unregistered nurses and nurses who have been out of the hospital system for quite some years resulting in these nurses returning to work at the Princess Alexandra Hospital.

I believe it should be noted for the record that the majority of overtime worked within the Princess Alexandra Hospital by nurses is planned overtime and staff are paid appropriately.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Protection of Whistleblowers

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct a question without notice to the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General. I refer to the secret CJC hearings into the actions of the Premier's senior staff and his Government's politically appointed Director-General of the Department of Environment and Heritage conducted by former Labor lawyer Michael Barnes into the foxtail palm affair. I also refer to leaks to the media that the pending CJC report will attack the whistleblowers and clear Labor's mates, and I ask: as certain whistleblowers have allegedly received letters indicating adverse findings against them, what confidence can any whistleblower ever have ever again of protection and integrity in examining his or her complaints?

Mr WELLS: I long for the days of old when the Leader of the Opposition was interested in law and order. Honourable members will remember the days when the Leader of the Opposition used to stand in his place in this House snarling and salivating like a carnivorous rabbit, talking about law and order. Mr Speaker, through you: I have got news for you, "Bunny Boy". You are blown right out of the water on law and order. You have had a week and a half to ask me questions about law and order, but there has been not one.

What we have is some sort of spurious put-up job—some sort of spurious put-up

question—about matters which have to do with a CJC investigation. Opposition members would like the Government to have control of the CJC because they do not want to have an independent commission such as the CJC. The whole, hidden agenda of this mob of reprobates on the other side of the House is to get rid of the CJC. They want to shoot the watchdog, because they are not prepared to have independent surveillance of the processes of government or the processes of legislation. We on this side of the House are.

We knew what it was like to labour and toil under a corrupt Government. We knew what it was like when Executive corruption was absolutely rampant in the State of Queensland. The best protection against that kind of Executive corruption is an independent body such as the CJC. This Government supports the CJC. Opposition members oppose it. This Government is committed to keeping corruption out of Queensland. Opposition members want it back.

Foxtail Palm Inquiry

Mr BORBIDGE: Amazing. I direct a question to the Premier. I refer to media reports of an impending whitewash by former Labor lawyer Michael Barnes, of Heiner inquiry fame and of Graham Richardson inquiry fame, of a secret inquiry into the foxtail palm affair which suggests that the Premier's mates will be cleared and that certain whistleblowers will be attacked, and I ask: who is leaking details of the whitewash; is it the Premier's office; is it Labor lawyer Barnes; or is it other Labor sources within the CJC?

Mr W. K. GOSS: This is an offensive question from an offensive person. The Leader of the Opposition is caught out as a smear merchant. He is well known as a backdoor smear merchant, and he has done it time and time again. Because this person and the group that he leads—I think that is the term—are devoid of policies—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The Leader of the Opposition is devoid of policies; that is why he is going to have a directions statement. I did not think there was any politician in Australia who took Alexander Downer as a role model, but we have one in Queensland, and he is going to have his own directions statement. The leaks that I get out of his show indicate that he is hoping to have it in Cairns to get the jump on the Liberals in Barron River. But anyway, we will see. It is not going to be about policies.

Mr Borbidge: Tell us about Mr Barnes.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am coming to that. Is his directions statement going to be policy or is it going to be some puff? Is it going to be about the Nationals' direction on three-cornered contests or the Liberals' position? The Opposition has so many directions over there that it could certainly well and truly fill a directions statement.

In relation to the offensive and, indeed, grubby question—people need to remember the track record and the style of the Leader of the Opposition. This is the person who got his job by going to the end-of-year Speaker's Christmas drinks and saying to a group of people that number such and such in the travel reports report was his leader. The next day, his leader was gone. He then moved on and used the case of some allegations made by one of his staff.

Mr Littleproud: Answer the question

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am coming to that. I am trying to make clear this person's pedigree—the calibre of the person who leads the Opposition. I will come to the forthcoming CJC report.

Then there were some spurious allegations—some false allegations—made by a member of his staff, Mr Jones, which he knew about in respect of a public servant called Tait, and which he organised to seek to smear myself and my office as to some involvement in some wrongdoing. In that case, they triggered, through their cynicism and backdoor smear activities, a comprehensive CJC investigation into people in the Premier's Department and myself. The result of that CJC inquiry was that the relevant people were cleared. Once again we have a situation in which—

Mr Borbidge: He was no longer Cabinet secretary—you shifted him.

Mr W. K. GOSS: That was long before the honourable member started the smears. He moved to another position that suited his ability.

A Brisbane journalist and the member for Burnett started the smear campaign in which they got hold of—

Mr SLACK: I rise to a point of order. I ask that the Premier withdraw that remark. I find it offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Premier to withdraw.

Mr W. K. GOSS: All right, the member for Burnett started it on his own.

Mr Slack: Withdraw!

Mr W. K. GOSS: I withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I point out that today I have been warned under Standing Order 123A for less than that. If the master of

slaeze opposite wants to continue, that is okay by me.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Mr Premier, so that the people can hear, I ask you to withdraw the remarks found offensive by the member for Burnett.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I withdraw with respect to the member for Burnett, and I say, "What a sook", to the other. What a big sook! He asks an offensive, nasty question but he does not want to hear the answer.

Mr SLACK: I rise to a point of order. I find the remarks personally offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr W. K. GOSS: No. I did not call the honourable member for Burnett a sook. What happened next is that persons unspecified started a smear in which they quite cynically used the ranger—this person called Shears—to run a smear campaign about two of my staff. That was a cynical use of a person who did not know what he was getting into.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Obviously, the Premier has seen the report if he can make those sorts of allegations.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I have not. For months I sat here and watched the members opposite and I received the reports from the people around the gallery and people in the public service. That is the way in which the members of the Opposition operated. The Leader of the Opposition cannot get us on policies, he cannot get us on substance, so he specialises in the smear. From the day he got the job that he has at the moment until today, he has had a consistent approach to try to get ahead and climb the greasy pole. We knew that he was always going to slip down this pole. Now that he has realised that he has walked off the end of the plank by making baseless allegations, he is trying to switch the smear from my staff to the people at the Criminal Justice Commission. He is nothing more or less than a smear merchant. As I said before, he is the sultan of smear.

From my own investigations into this matter, I believe that my staff will be cleared and that the Leader of the Opposition will be exposed. This incident will condemn him as the smear merchant that he is. All I can say to the rest of the members of the Opposition is that they deserve the leader that they have.

Queensland's Economic Performance

Mr PITT: I refer the Treasurer to comments by the Leader of the parliamentary Liberal Party that Queensland's strong financial position is due to the inheritance left by the previous Government. I ask: can the Treasurer inform the House of what that inheritance was?

Mr De LACY: I must say that those comments by the Leader of the Liberal Party were cutting indeed. To say that I never acknowledged the inheritance that we received from the National Party was cutting. I am prepared at any time to acknowledge that inheritance. Yesterday, I said that we inherited a \$4.3 billion debt; I acknowledge that inheritance.

Furthermore, I have acknowledged and continue to acknowledge the inheritance we received in respect of the funding of social programs. Time and time again, I rise in this House and talk about our inheritance. Queensland had a nationwide reputation for underfunding social programs. Only last week, I rose in this place and said that when we came to Government in 1989, education was funded on a per capita basis at 88 per cent of the national average. I pointed out that by 1992-93, we changed that to 98 per cent of the national average. Health funding has increased from 79 per cent to 89 per cent of the national average.

In a whole range of social areas, we have rectified the inheritance that we received from the National Party. It is not just me who says that. In the Budget debate on 7 June this year, no less an authority than the Leader of the Opposition—I might say in disparaging tones—said—

"This Budget confirms the Goss Government as the biggest spending State Government in the nation. Since 1989-90, outlays have increased by almost \$3 billion. That is three thousand million dollars—a lot of money even in Labor's language."

The Leader of the Opposition said in disparaging tones that that spending was bad. Is that good enough for the Leader of the Liberal Party? Yesterday, she said that the zero net debt position had been at a dreadful cost; that services have been reduced and Queenslanders are crying out for more hospital wards, more police on the beat, better transport systems, better roads and more schools. In fact, this morning on the Anna Reynolds program, Mrs Sheldon went so far as to say that we ought to rack up more debt to increase funding on services. She said—

". . . a business usually runs on an overdraft anyhow."

In answer to some questions from Ms Reynolds, she admitted—

". . . I suppose at the end of day you may not have zero net debt but at least you would be providing services to the community. That is a responsibility of the State Government."

Spend more, she said. I return to Mr Borbidge—

"Big spending can sound good, and big spending can look good, but in the end it can often mean the taxpayer simply pays more . . ."

That is a fair comment.

In relation to policies, I was criticised from the left by the Liberal Party and criticised from the right by the National Party—unlike last night during the QIDC debate when I was criticised from the left by the National Party and criticised from the right by the Liberal Party.

Mr W. K. Goss: It looks like we've got the middle ground.

Mr De LACY: We must have the middle ground. This morning, I read another interesting article in relation to things that really matter, titled "Life in the Fast Lane." The article stated—

" 'Before the election in 1992, we didn't have a coalition with the Nationals,' she says. 'We do now. We have one set of policies, one campaign committee . . .'"

I think she almost said one candidate in Barron River, but she was not game. Mrs Sheldon continued—

". . . we have a strong unified force. That's our best chance."

All I can say is that the coalition in Canberra is a policy-free zone. We have a policy-free zone here.

Ports

Mr PITT: I ask the Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development: can he inform the House what steps the Government is taking to further enhance the competitiveness of Queensland industries that are exporting through Queensland ports?

Mr HAMILL: Recently, in the House, I had the opportunity to inform honourable members that people from interstate recognise that Queensland ports are the cheapest in the nation for the shipping industry to use. If honourable members compare the costs associated with using the port of Brisbane with the costs associated with using the ports in Sydney and Melbourne, they will find that Brisbane is 21 per cent cheaper than Sydney and 37 per cent cheaper than Melbourne. That is a result of the policies being pursued by this Government.

At the end of June, the port of Brisbane abolished the last of its ship-based charges and further widened the gap in competitive pricing with its interstate competitors.

Mrs Sheldon: What about the money you ripped off the pilots?

Mr HAMILL: I take the interjection from "Bankcard Joan", who this morning on radio was arguing that we should borrow more so we could spend more. In fact, I wish that "Bankcard Joan" could adopt the adage that my grandmother used to say to me, "If you cannot say something good about someone, do not say anything at all." If the member adopted that attitude, we would not have to put up with her outpourings each morning on radio. She would be struck dumb because she never has a good thing to say about anything or anybody.

Today, I have some good news to impart to the exporters of Queensland. I have the opportunity to inform the export community and the shipping industry that the Queensland Government will be doing its bit to further enhance the competitiveness of Queensland ports and reduce State Government taxation, which affects the export industries of this State.

In response to the interjection a short time ago from the member for Caloundra, who has been belly-aching about pilotage dues levied by the State Government on the shipping industry of Queensland, I have great pleasure indeed in informing her that, consistent with this Government's undertakings, we have announced a reduction in pilotage and conservancy dues, which will benefit the shipping industry of Queensland to the order of \$15m. In other words, we are halving the impost of pilotage and conservancy on the port users of this State. This reform will be implemented over the next three years, and it will operate concurrently with the corporatisation of our State ports.

It might be of some interest to the member for Caloundra to learn that, although we will halve the conservancy dues, we will reduce the costs of pilotage in the port of Brisbane by 33.9 per cent—not 50 per cent. We would dearly love to reduce the cost of pilotage in the port of Brisbane by 50 per cent and, in so doing, hand back to the port users, the exporters and the shipping industry a further \$1m. We will do that if the friends of the member for Caloundra, the Brisbane marine pilots, are prepared to negotiate comparable work practices, as such practices have been negotiated with pilotage services elsewhere in the State. However, at present we have to pay the Brisbane marine pilots 66.1 per cent of the pilotage charge over the port of Brisbane. So we will hand back to industry the

other 33.9 per cent. If the member for Caloundra wants to do something worthwhile for a change, she should talk to some of her Brisbane marine pilot friends and suggest to them that best practice, which has been implemented in other ports in Queensland, might just as well extend to Brisbane as it will be for the benefit of the whole community.

Foxtail Palm Inquiry

Mrs SHELDON: In asking a question of the Premier, I refer to the secret briefing of key journalists about the findings of the CJC report into the foxtail palm affair. Given that already the media is aware that the former Labor council candidate from the wrong side of the AWU, Detective Sergeant Gavin Ricketts, will be attacked in the CJC report while the AWU's would-be Federal candidate, Dr Craig Emerson, will escape criticism, I ask: were the CJC findings the result of a secret inquiry of a former Labor lawyer, Michael Barnes, who subscribed to and participated in the factional internal politics of the ALP and, if so, does the Premier believe Mr Barnes was the appropriate person to chair such a politically sensitive secret inquiry?

Mr W. K. GOSS: That question contained a number of smears and allegations against people. I will just make a general rejection of those. I do not know, except for what Opposition members have said in this place, what Mr Barnes' involvement is in the investigation. My general understanding is that there are a number of people in the CJC—

Mr FitzGerald: He signed that letter the other day that was tabled.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I have not read that. I do not pay much attention to material that is tabled by the Opposition.

Mr FitzGerald: I didn't table it, he did. It was tabled by that side.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I do not know about it. I understand from the Leader of the House that that was another issue. So I say to Mr FitzGerald—

Mr FitzGerald: The same Mr Barnes—the question was about the same Mr Barnes.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Yes, it was a different issue.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Lockyer will cease interjecting. That is enough. The member has had a fair go.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Next time, the member should switch on his brain before he starts his tongue. In relation to the CJC investigation, let me say that I assume, as with most such

investigations, particularly one that has gone on for such an inordinate period, that a number of people are involved and that any investigator is under the supervision of the head of the relevant division. As I understand it, any report is supervised and authorised by the chairman and/or all the commissioners. So there is quite an extensive process of supervision and, I believe, an appropriate and independent framework for the processing of these matters.

If, in fact, this Government did have the capacity to call the shots at the CJC—and this Government does not and nor does it seek to—there would not have been an investigation into this smear and nonsense from the beginning.

In relation to the suggestion in the member's question about secret briefings for journalists—I do not know about secret briefings for journalists. The first reference I heard of a journalist predicting an outcome of this matter was when somebody told me that, recently, the presenter of the *7.30 Report*, Miss Cathy Job, had made some reference to it. I did not see that program myself but, from my experience, since the CJC was set up, the *7.30 Report* has generally known before I have what is happening out there. That pipeline was well and truly in place in the very early stages of the Criminal Justice Commission.

The Leader of the Opposition and his deputy, who today is referred to in the *Courier-Mail* as "Life-in-the-fast-lane-Joan", must think that the members of this House and the people in the gallery are mugs. We can see their tactics a mile away. For the last couple of weeks there have been these provocative references to "Labor lawyer this" and "Labor lawyer that". Every day, the Leader of the Opposition ups the smear notch just a bit—as if he thinks we cannot pick it—to try to pave the way for the big smear switch. Everybody knows what is coming tomorrow.

If, in fact, my staff are cleared, as they damned well should be because they did not do anything, everybody knows what is going to happen. Opposition members have only one shot in their gun, and that is the smear. They have to switch the smear to somebody else, and they are going to smear the messenger. They are absolutely pathetic.

Opposition members are a bit of a nuisance for the Government, but the impact that they are having on members of the public is nil. They recognise them for what they are—a bunch of smear merchants. That has taken Opposition members to the standing in the polls that they enjoy today. In a sense, the Government is very happy with their performance. It makes us a bit uncomfortable but, in the end when it comes to

the things that matter, it will keep us here in Government.

Foxtail Palm Inquiry

Mrs SHELDON: My second question—

Mr Veivers interjected.

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

Mrs SHELDON: I refer the Premier to the impending whitewash of the foxtail palm affair and the fact that already key political journalists in this city have been briefed on its contents, and I ask: has the Premier been briefed or informed in any way about whether or not present or former members of his staff are among those to have been served notice that an unfavourable CJC finding may be made against them? If so, what information was the Premier given that is not now common knowledge among journalists and editors?

Mr W. K. GOSS: It is absolutely incredible that the member would suggest that I have had some confidential briefing from the CJC in relation to this matter. I have had no contact with the CJC in relation to this matter. I have had no inside information. I have one staff member who works for me who was the subject of these grubby allegations—this smear and nonsense—cooked up by a couple of people who exploited the naivety of a ranger for their own political purposes.

Mr SLACK: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I find that offensive and ask that it be withdrawn, if the comment referred to me.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr SLACK: If the comment referred to me—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet. I warn the member for Burnett under Standing Order 124. When I am on my feet, the member will resume his seat.

Mr W. K. GOSS: As to the only staff member that I have who was involved in this, I spoke to him when I heard that some people were receiving—as was reported around the place—letters prior to the issue of the report. I asked him whether he had received a letter. He advised me as to whether or not he had received a letter. That did not in my mind require me to take any action whatsoever in respect of his position. I will be happy to answer questions on that tomorrow and on subsequent days, because I will not pre-empt the outcome of the report.

This investigation has been going on for about nine months or so. I gather that inquiries have been held all over the place. All sorts of people have been interrogated. I do not know what will come out of it. Given the track record of the CJC, from my experience I never take for granted what the CJC will come out with. So I will wait and see. What I smell on the other side of the House is a Leader of the Opposition who has run this smear hard and who is now starting to panic. He is about to be caught out for the kind of person he is, and he is trying to switch the smear.

Mr Borbidge: How do you know?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I can smell the honourable member's fear. We have only to look at his face to see that he is not comfortable, because he knows better than anybody else that he made false and baseless allegations. Sooner or later, that will catch up with him.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I find those remarks made by the Premier to be offensive. I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will ask the Premier to withdraw those remarks—that is, that the Leader of the Opposition made false and baseless allegations. That is the comment that the honourable member wants withdrawn.

Mr W. K. GOSS: He did make false and baseless allegations.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Standing Orders are clear. If a member finds words offensive, he has the right under Standing Orders to ask for them to be withdrawn. I ask the Premier to withdraw.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I withdraw the statement that I made which, I think, was that he made statements which he knew to be false and baseless. I withdraw that statement.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I ask for a full and unequivocal withdrawal.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The words that I recall that I said were that the Leader of the Opposition made statements which he knew to be false and baseless. I withdraw that statement.

Mr BORBIDGE: I ask that the comments be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has withdrawn.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, with respect—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I warned the honourable member under Standing Order 124 before.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, my point of order is simple. You upheld my point of order. I have not heard the Premier withdraw those comments.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have, and the Clerk has indicated that he did, too.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! He did. He told me that he had heard it. Order! I am running this House.

Right of Citizens to Defend Their Homes

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I ask the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: firstly, what is the current law relating to the right of citizens to defend their own home; secondly, does the Government propose to change the current law; and, thirdly, is the Attorney-General aware of any suggestions by the National Party to alter the law?

Mr WELLS: I thank the honourable member for his question and for his interest in law and order, an interest which is conspicuously absent in honourable members opposite. The answer is, "Yes", the Government does propose changes to the law. And I am aware of some National Party moves to change the law, though these changes are not necessarily the same. I have here a document. It is a document that would be of great interest to everybody in this House. It contains motions from the National Party conference. It was not given to me by the CJC, it was not distributed to journalists, but it is a document that would be of great interest to honourable members.

It contains a proposal that states—

"That the National Party of Australia-Queensland support a policy which prevents a person committing a crime from suing the victim . . . for injuries occurred whilst committing the crime."

That is a laudable objective. It would be hard for any honourable member in this House to oppose that motion, which was a great reform that the National Party was proposing to bring in. The only trouble is that it has been the law of Queensland for 100 years.

The document that I am holding is the Queensland Criminal Code. I remind honourable members that this is the one that has the penalties in it. It also has the rest of the law in it. It says that we cannot be sued for taking any action to prevent the commission of a crime. One specific area of criminality about which many people are concerned is the area of breaking and

entering, which the Government proposes to rename purely "burglary". That area is addressed in this National Party document. It contains a proposition to this effect—

"That the National Party of Australia-Queensland promotes a policy which supports the right of the legal occupants of property to use whatever force is necessary to protect their property, themselves and their families against illegal intruders."

Mr FitzGerald: Which branch is that from, by the way?

Mr WELLS: I am awfully glad that the member asked. That was from the Gympie Electorate Council.

If ever there was proof that the National Party is weak on law and order, then it is this. It is proposing to reform the law to give householders less right to protect their property. What they might try to do is marginalise the poor, old Gympie Electorate Council. I can just see them shunting the Gympie Electorate Council off and saying, "You are on your own, boys and girls." That will be the next move.

What the Gympie Electorate Council proposed to the National Party, and what the National Party enthusiastically adopted, was a proposition which is weaker than the present law, which states that one can protect one's own home—

Mr Stephan: This will make good reading in the *Gympie Times*.

Mr WELLS: I note the interjection of the honourable member for Gympie. I will be happy to send him a proof copy of *Hansard*.

The present law states that one may use such force as is reasonably necessary.

Mr FitzGerald: What was the legal advice on it?

Mr WELLS: The legal advice that was given to the National Party—

Mr FitzGerald: Was that carried or not?

Mr WELLS: The National Party does not get legal advice; it is not interested in law and order. We have established that over the past week and a half.

Mr W. K. Goss: The only thing they get legal advice on is three-cornered contests.

Mr WELLS: As the Honourable the Premier says, the only thing that they get legal advice on is three-cornered contests.

The Government proposes to change the law in order to put a bit more force into it. Instead of the present provisions which say that one may use such force as is reasonably necessary so

long as it does not do bodily harm, the Government proposes to introduce a provision which states that one may use such force as is reasonable, so long as it does not do grievous bodily harm. In other words, we are proposing to do away with the necessity provision, which the Gympie Electorate Council and the National Party so fervently supported and which would prevent householders from protecting their homes to the extent reasonable in all of the circumstances. That is what the Government is proposing. We are proposing to give householders the capacity to protect their homes.

Oil and Gas Discovery, South-west Queensland

Mr LIVINGSTONE: In directing a question to the Minister for Minerals and Energy, I refer him to recent reports of an oil and gas discovery in south-west Queensland, and I ask: can he inform the House of the significance to Queensland of these discoveries?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the honourable member for one of the more sensible and relevant questions that has been asked in this House this afternoon. In the past couple of months, oil and gas have been discovered in the Cooper/Eromanga Basin in south-western Queensland. This is important in a number of ways. In June this year, the Inland No. 1 well, drilled by a privately owned Queensland company, IOR Exploration, resulted in an oil discovery flowing at more than 1 000 barrels a day. This discovery is significant, in that it is a multi-zone discovery and it is located well north of previous discoveries, which could signify the existence of substantial though unknown reserves in this particular region.

The Inland Oil discovery of June was followed last month by a significant gas discovery by MIM Petroleum Exploration at Bunya No. 1, located about 90 kilometres south, south east of Windorah. This is now the northernmost gas discovery in the Cooper basin. These two discoveries in the little explored northern section of the Cooper/Eromanga Basin highlight the potential of the basin as a future petroleum province.

These discoveries, however, also highlight the role played by this Government in providing the necessary information infrastructure to stimulate exploration of this type. Before these two discoveries were made, the Government reviewed the petroleum potential of this area and prepared a promotional brochure highlighting the region, which we believed to have significant potential. That brochure was distributed at this year's Australian Petroleum Explorers Association conference, held in Sydney in

March, with the clear objective of convincing companies that this area was well worth exploring. Clearly, the Government's strong belief in the potential of this area has now been vindicated.

What has also been vindicated is this Government's commitment to providing and expanding the information infrastructure for the industry, as announced in our *Leading the Way* document. Mr Speaker, as you know, in *Leading the Way* we made a commitment to investing \$60m over the next 10 years in information infrastructure aimed at stimulating further exploration.

The long-term development of Queensland's resource industries is of great significance to this State's economy and wellbeing. The two recent discoveries of oil and gas in what were previously little-explored areas vindicate the general importance of this Government's provision of information infrastructure and, specifically, this Government's strong belief in the potential of the northern flanks of the Cooper/Eromanga Basin.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Burnett, I have been advised that Mr Alexei Alexandrov, a Deputy of the Russian Parliament, and a party from St Petersburg are in the public gallery.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr D. Barbagallo, Mr D. Atkins

Mr SLACK: I ask the Premier: did the taxpayers of Queensland pay for the celebratory lunch that he had weeks ago with former staffer David Barbagallo and current staffer Dennis Atkins, who were at that time under investigation by the CJC, in expectation of this week's whitewash?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am not sure to which lunch the member is referring, but the answer is, "No." Together with a number of other people from my office, I attended a lunch, as I recall it, to farewell a member of my staff who was departing, about to be married or to mark some other significant occasion in the person's life. The only thing I would say to the member for Burnett is that he should be ashamed of his conduct, and I hope that he will apologise to Mr Shears when this is over.

Mr D. Barbagallo, Mr D. Atkins

Mr SLACK: I will return the compliment to the Premier.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will ask his second question.

Mr SLACK: I refer to the allegations made by the Premier in respect to smear, and I draw his attention to the fact—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is that a question without notice to the Premier?

Mr SLACK: It is a question without notice to the Premier. I draw the Premier's attention to the fact that this is not new to me, that it was put to me that this would be his tactic in respect to this investigation when I heard some time ago that it was to be a whitewash. I draw the Premier's attention also to the fact that the CJC undertook a long assessment process—much longer than normal; some six weeks—before it went into the investigatory stage and that that proceeded for some time before it then announced the secret inquiry. I ask the Premier: does he not think it is he who is conducting the smear campaign in indulging in these sorts of tactics?

Mr W. K. GOSS: The answer is, "No, I do not." Everybody who has followed this issue in this House and in the *Sunday Mail*—

Opposition members: Oh!

Mr W. K. GOSS: Do we not all recall the newspaper photographs and the television footage of Mr Slack and the journalist tramping through the swamp of north Queensland? Yes, we do.

Mr Connor interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: The member for Burnett, the Leader of the Opposition and other people made repeated, unspecific allegations of some wrongdoing by one of my staff and a former member of my staff. There was never any detail; there was never any substance; there was never any proof; there was merely a general allegation.

Any suggestion by the member for Burnett that somebody other than himself and his cronies has engaged in a smear is just fanciful. The member has made allegations which in my view are baseless, and he has made allegations which I believe constitute nothing but an unwarranted smear.

Mr SLACK: The Premier is misleading the Parliament. I have not made allegations—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member under Standing Order 124. He will resume his seat. He cannot just stand up and talk when he feels like it.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I will conclude on this note: the member for Burnett and the Leader of

the Opposition are wholly and solely responsible for the predicament that they now apprehend for themselves tomorrow.

Education Foundation Group

Mr NUTTALL: It is fairly tame, but I want to ask a question about my electorate. I direct a question to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. Representatives of the Japanese private education company Education Foundation Group were recently involved in discussions with senior TAFE officials at the Northpoint Institute of TAFE in my electorate. I ask: could the Minister advise the subject of those discussions?

Mr FOLEY: The Education Foundation Group was discussing a joint training facility with TAFE Queensland at the Northpoint Institute of TAFE. Indeed, on Friday, 19 August, I signed a memorandum of understanding with the chairman of the Education Foundation Group, Mr Hiroshi Ohashi. This is significant, because it builds on the links of vocational education and training between Queensland and Japan, and in particular it represents part of the effort to ensure that Australian vocational education and training is marketed effectively in Asia.

In July, I visited Asia and signed agreements on feasibility studies into the establishment of Australian TAFE facilities in Malaysia and Indonesia. This will become an increasingly important part of the export effort of Australia in the years to come, and represents an important way in which we may participate in the cultural, social and educational life of the Asia/Pacific region.

The Education Foundation Group wants graduates of Japanese high schools to study at Australian TAFE colleges. Under the memorandum of understanding, TAFE Queensland and the Education Foundation Group are committed to cooperation generally on vocational education and training issues—for example, by way of staff exchanges and study tours. A feasibility study will be undertaken over a period of nine months to include development of a business plan and, from the Queensland Government's point of view, any commitment will be in the nature of a commercial venture. This indicates the importance of ensuring that in TAFE and in the Queensland vocational, education and training system we maintain world-class standards and, indeed, that we are able to offer our services in a way which can boost the opportunities for Queensland industry and contribute to Australia's export initiatives.

Crime Tacticians; Metro North Police Region

Mr NUTTALL: I ask the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services: could he advise the House what results have been achieved with the appointment of crime tacticians in the metro north police region which covers my electorate?

Mr BRADY: Earlier this year, a decision was made to appoint a crime tactician in each of the nine divisions in the metro north police region. A decision was made to do so because it was believed that it could maximise the fight against crime identified in intelligence, and it is pleasing to be able to inform the House, and particularly the honourable member, that the success achieved has been very significant. Typical of the success achieved during the operation of the tacticians are the results recorded in the Boondall division. During the last school holidays this year, there was a 50 per cent reduction in reported break and enters in that division. The use of crime tacticians also assisted in the detection of three juveniles in regard to offences of unlawful use of motor vehicles.

It is apparent that this method of using intelligence and police personnel to identify trends allows us to more successfully solve crime, particularly when it is associated with CRISP—the Crime Reporting Information System for Police—which will be fully implemented right throughout Queensland by the end of this year. We believe that the appointment of these tacticians with that technology in all of these divisions will more than justify their appointment by the end of this year.

In effect, what it does is enable seniors to direct younger officers in the region to get involved in what could be termed basic old-fashioned policing—getting out there, doing the job—but with the confidence and the knowledge gained from the tacticians that that is where the action is. I take this opportunity therefore to congratulate the police generally in relation to this strategy and particularly the young police officers and their seniors involved in achieving this type of success. I also thank the honourable member for his support for a practical, basic policing action in his electorate.

Mr G. Richardson

Mr GRICE: In directing a question to the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services, I refer to a letter written by a past office bearer of the Labor Lawyers Association, Michael Barnes, which the Minister claims proves that there was no sanitisation of statements on Graham Richardson's involvement with organised prostitution. The letter claims that all

significant information given by a witness in taped interviews with police on 29 November and 7 December 1993 appeared in the statement dated 15 December 1993. Mr Speaker, in accordance with your ruling this morning, I seek leave to table that statement of 15 December.

Leave granted.

Mr GRICE: I am forced to table that statement in order to invite the Minister to point out where it contains reference to easily verifiable claims about a number—and I repeat "a number"—of calls made on mobile telephones. How does the Minister react to the plain fact of Mr Barnes' use of the letter to blatantly mislead the Police Commissioner, himself and ultimately the Parliament?

Mr BRADY: First of all, I should say that I, of course, have not seen that statement. This is one of the statements about which I have been accused of conspiring with unnamed people from the CJC—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BRADY: The honourable member should just be quiet for once—and the senior members of the Police Service with sanitising or making the statements go missing, so I cannot comment at this time on the details of the statement. The situation is this—the smearing, sneering statement from the member for Broadwater about the Labor lawyer is, of course, because the letter written from the Criminal Justice Commission to the Police Commissioner, which I tabled yesterday, dated 31 August 1994, is written by Barnes, the chief officer of the Complaints Section of the Official Misconduct Division and in fact it completely shatters the nonsense peddled by the member for Broadwater.

As the Premier indicated earlier in relation to another matter in this House, these letters, when they are signed—they do not come out of the blue or the smoke of one particular person. I am aware that this letter has the support of the Criminal Justice Commission and particularly of the head of the Official Misconduct Division. This attempt to smear the contents of a letter by saying that it was written by a particular person who once upon a time was a member of a particular association is what it is, just a smear and an attempt by the member for Broadwater to escape from the embarrassment that has been visited upon him last evening and again today when he was questioned about what facts he had.

The situation, of course, is this: the statements that he says have been sanitised or have gone missing, as the letter says, are in

existence. Two tapes which were placed in the safe of the detective superintendent have remained there for posterity, or to be listened to in the near future, and the CJC was able to do that. The statement of 15 December is a summary of some of the material recorded on one of those tapes.

The situation in relation to statements is—and it must be understood by the honourable member and everybody else—first of all, that the statements are not intended to be transcripts of the tapes. All the base information is there in the tapes and if there is something on the tapes relating to telephone calls, well, it is still on the tapes, and the tapes are available to be requested for release, as I indicated on two occasions in this House. Most of the statements in fact are prepared for use in court, so they are prepared on the basis that they will be admissible and that they will only include admissible evidence, not hearsay. It is the same thing as a defence lawyer would do.

Initially, a statement is taken to obtain the original information. All the original information is retained on the tapes—all of it, including hearsay. All of the original information is on the tapes, including hearsay or any other inadmissible evidence. But when most of the statements were prepared, they were prepared with two prosecutions in mind—prosecutions in relation to prostitution matters, which come before the court for committal hearing this month. So they were prepared using only admissible evidence.

What this person who specialises in smearing did—I am talking about the member for Broadwater—was jump to the conclusion that because everything that he was told this person had said was not in the statements that he had seen, therefore they must have been sanitised or therefore they had gone missing. Not so! It is contained on the tapes that have been listened to by the CJC. The information contained in them is still in existence and will remain in existence. However, for the purposes of the court hearing in relation to the defendants Leyden and Ashton, some of the information was not relevant to that hearing. Some of the information that I suspect the member is on about relates to other matters altogether. Other information relates to the possibility of prostitution being connected with organised crime and has no direct relationship to the prosecutions referred to by me in this answer.

Maybe the honourable member will now understand the system. What the CJC has said is that the statements are there and that the tapes are there. They have not gone missing, they are in their original pristine condition. All that has

been exposed is that this member who specialises in promoting himself at the expense of truth and justice has again been exposed for what he is, a person entirely without credibility.

Mr G. Richardson

Mr GRICE: I ask a second question of the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services. I draw his attention to tabled statements giving very different accounts of the evidence of a key witness in relation to an engagement with Mr Richardson. The sanitised—or perhaps summarised—version signed on 12 January 1994 omitted references to Richardson and another key player, the organised crime figure, Nick Karlos. I preface this question by seeking leave to table a document and a log.

Leave granted.

Mr GRICE: I have tabled a deposition from another separate witness which supports evidence dropped from the police statement tabled yesterday, and includes portion of the work log of that second witness. I now ask the Minister to explain his position that the key witness statement signed on 12 January does give a complete picture of the evidence that that witness gave.

Mr BRADDY: I have already explained it, but for the benefit of the honourable member I will explain it again. The statements of 12 January contain statements of a witness which police and their prosecutors believe are appropriate for prosecutions launched before the court and which will come before the court on prostitution charges very soon. They have to be in a form that will be appropriate, if necessary, to be tendered—as these statements often are—at committal proceedings and, therefore, will contain only evidence that is relevant to those particular charges. They make those decisions. What that person at the back of this Parliament did was jump to the conclusion—probably without knowing that—that if they did not contain all the spicy bits that he would like to have in them, somehow or other I must have interfered with them, I must have got at them in some way, or somebody else did, to delete them. So he came into this House and slandered me—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for questions with or without notice has expired.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS BY MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Further to the resolution of the House earlier today, I now call on the member for Broadwater.

Mr Nunn: There's a hole in the bucket.

Mr GRICE (Broadwater) (3.53 p.m.): A good call! I want to make it perfectly clear from the start that I do not intend to carry out my duties as a member of this Parliament by any timetable set by the Leader of the House. In the words of his ultimate leader, Paul Keating: I intend to do you slowly, mate. What I have to say about the perversion of the criminal justice system in this State has just begun. It will go on until Government members decide to live up to some of their own rhetoric. It will go on until the people of Queensland realise the extent of this Government's corruption.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am having difficulty hearing the member for Broadwater.

Mr GRICE: It will go on until the Government decides otherwise, by doing the right thing and seeing there is equal justice for all under Queensland law and Queensland's criminal justice system. In the past several days, I have made it abundantly clear that this Goss Labor Government regards the criminal justice system as just another of the spoils of office. It has systematically built up structures designed to ensure that no Labor person or fellow traveller need ever fear any of the justice system.

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. Mr Grice's words last night were, "In relation to tabling evidence"—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr GRICE: The case we have been talking about involves the Labor mate to end them all—the most powerful Labor powerbroker of all: Graham Frederick Richardson. The "King-maker" has long been spoken of as being associated with people most of us would rather did not exist in our society. Last year, on 10 August, Richardson had his mate Nick Karlos line up two prostitutes for a frolic at the Hyatt resort at Sanctuary Cove. Richardson did not pay for his own pleasure, but Nick Karlos did. He paid out \$4,000 cash for his mate's pleasure that night.

The matter of where Richardson finds his entertainment would be a matter entirely for himself—and I planned to keep it that way; it was not my choice to table this sort of information—were he not one of the all-time most powerful citizens in this nation. At the time, Richardson was a key member of the Federal Cabinet, able to participate in the most basic decisions about how Australians live their lives. It was grossly improper for Richardson to place himself in the debt of anyone, let alone someone widely regarded as being associated with organised crime with tentacles Australiawide.

Richardson did not innocently walk into the bar and fall in with a prostitute working alone—something the Queensland law makes legal. Instead of that, Richardson had an engagement with women working for an organised prostitution ring—an organisation clearly far beyond Queensland law. Even that we could accept, but the matter goes a lot further.

Police investigating organised prostitution on the Gold Coast found out almost by accident that Richardson was involved as a client at an extortionately high price—\$4,000 for two girls for two hours. That is where the Queensland Labor Goss Government went off the rails. Police trying to do a good job and an honest job took a series of statements from one of the women involved. They have shown her some of those statements, and they have withheld others. It is my allegation that the choice of which documents to table and which to withhold has been dictated to working police by others up the line with political connections to the Australian Labor Party.

I have tabled a number of documents in this House, and they all serve to point to the direction the Labor Party is taking in the greatest political cover-up this State has ever known. The moves to cover Richardson's tracks have been desperate, but they will fail. Too many people know the details of what happened on that night of 10 August last year. They know he was associated on that night—and probably others—with people with direct connections to organised crime. Police and the CJC know that. They have taken direct evidence of the events of that night. I have volumes of evidence of that.

Government members: Table it.

Mr GRICE: In time—in my time! They have also consulted at least the National Crime Authority and the Flannery inquest in New South Wales. An interim report on Operation Wallah, dated just a few months ago, is circulating in the Canberra press gallery today. The matter will not go away. I and others have every intention of pursuing it until the cover-up stops. We have to do that because of stakes involved and the administration of justice. What we have now is a differential and deferential justice, with the Government prepared to prosecute madams and hand up statements naming some of their clients. It is not, however, prepared to let one of its own face the same consequences.

The Government has had nine months to do the right thing about Richardson. Some of us who knew what the police had found out decided to let things take their course—to let the Government do the right thing. I got the depositions in March and June, but the Government did nothing about them—hoping that justice would take its course. Government

members would believe in the things they have been saying for years. Nine months is long enough.

Labor is intent on this cover-up. We have even had the spectacle of the enlistment of the CJC in the cover-up yesterday. The Police Minister used a letter from the CJC, signed by a former office holder, to make its case. That letter is a lie. It is a lie. I tabled material today that demonstrates that it is a lie.

Barnes wrote a cook-up designed to save Labor reputations. It did not disprove even one thing I have been saying. The material I tabled today is not what I would have wanted to put before the people of Queensland. It describes matters which most decent Queenslanders would find distasteful. But I was forced to table that material in order to prove the lie perpetrated by Mr Barnes and repeated by the Minister. I have still refrained from tabling other material which is in my possession but which is even more distasteful and graphic. It would be to my advantage to table that material since it contains direct evidence that I refer to, but I will not. It is easy to check the telephone calls—the durations, the numbers and the sources. If Richardson had not been in the Hyatt with two prostitutes on the night of 10 August last year, his telephone accounts would show that. But the Labor Party has not seen fit to reveal those telephone records. It has not done that because the checks were made long ago—and the police have them. They show that calls were made from Richardson's mobile phone to the prostitution organisation A Touch of Class.

Labor knows Richardson was there; Labor knows his pleasure was paid for by an organised crime figure. It knows his pleasure was delivered by people employed by an organised prostitution business in breach of Queensland law. But Labor has treated Richardson differently from the way it treats other people in this situation. I said that tabling the handwritten account of the prostitute would advantage my case against the Labor cover-up. I still intend to refrain from tabling that document in the interest of good taste. I will not be a party to letting prurience take precedence over the real question of the perversion of justice to save a Labor mate.

Yesterday I told a media conference that I have a great volume of material on the Richardson case and associated cover-up. I have that material. I will use it as I judge necessary to bring a corrupt Government to account. I will not follow any agenda set by the Leader of the House or by a Government set on cover-up. They can go to hell!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mr G. Richardson, Suppression of Evidence

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Rockhampton—Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (4.02 p.m.), by leave: Today the actions of the honourable member have proved the case against him most tellingly, because today he produced the statements which he said would obviously embarrass this Labor Government if they had not been sanitised or had not gone missing.

What he really has been getting at is as simple as this: because the statements that were originally given to him, either by Senator Chapman or by a witness or two witnesses, did not have all of those statements together, they had gone missing or they had been sanitised. Therefore, it is just as axiomatic in his poor—

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BRADY: Opposition members should just be quiet for a while. The logic of my statement is inexorable. The fact that they were not produced led him to say that not only had they been sanitised, not only had they gone missing, but also, therefore, we must have done it—the Labor Government and, therefore, Brady, the Police Minister, must have somehow or other sanitised them or caused them to go missing. Presumably that means that I had to conspire with the CJC and with senior police.

Let us consider the record. One week ago in this place, I explained that the CJC had looked at it and had verified that the statements and the tapes were still in existence and that the witnesses were entitled to renew their applications. Presumably one of them must have renewed his or her application because one of those statements is now dated 15 December. That statement makes allegations against Senator Richardson. If I was a great, grand conspirator, how come I did not get rid of these statements? How come I did not have them sanitised? How come they did not go missing? How come the original tapes are still in existence? It is an obvious nonsense.

I have not seen those statements before. It is not proper for the police to give these statements to me, nor did they. Honourable members should consider the propriety with regard to this allegation of conspiracy with the police. These allegations surfaced originally as questions on 30 July this year. Senator Chapman referred them to the Commissioner of Police. The same day he immediately contacted the CJC. The next day he forwarded details of Chapman's allegations—or questions—including

Chapman's letter setting out the claims of sanitisation and worries about missing statements. He did that immediately. The CJC then acted. The police at that very top level acted.

I will repeat, without giving any details away, what the police are doing in relation to these two matters. There are two types of actions: one relates to prosecutions against people involved in prostitution, of which two prosecutions have been launched, and the other investigation relates to an investigation into prostitution and organised crime. The way the Queensland Police Service handle those matters is entirely a decision for it.

The member for Broadwater comes into this place and says he, out of the goodness and largess of his personality, has given the Government nine months to prosecute Senator Richardson. The Queensland Government does not, in any way, participate in decisions about who is prosecuted for prostitution, and the honourable member knows that.

In relation to the priest that the honourable member referred to, no-one came to me and asked whether the priest be prosecuted; the police made that decision. He was picked up on the streets that night and he was prosecuted. There is no evidence known to me, and I am sure that there is no evidence known to the member who raises these matters, that Senator Richardson was picked up and arrested in a brothel or a similar situation. The evidence that the honourable member has produced today relates to an allegation by a prostitute that some time previously those things had happened. No client whom she may have given information about has been prosecuted. It has not been a matter of fish or fowl. The people who have been prosecuted are the people whom this Government has always said the police would be anxious to prosecute: the people who are running the illegal brothels. That is the two prosecutions. I cannot say anything more than that because the matters are before the courts.

As to any other matters relating to involvement in organised crime or anything of that nature, that is a matter for the police to continue to investigate and for the CJC to investigate. That will continue without their coming to me. They do not come to me with the statements. Mr Grice knows that they do not provide me with the statements, that they do not show them to me and ask, "Which ones of these will we prosecute?" By saying that, the honourable member is condemning and indicting in this place the Commissioner of Police, who was the chief investigator in the Fitzgerald inquiry and who has done more than

the honourable member and all of his colleagues put together to clean up this State. With his smear the honourable member is smearing the Queensland Police Service. The police do not come to me to get directions about prosecutions. If they were covering up, these statements would not still be in existence for the honourable member, would they? He has lied and he has smeared, as he always does.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to withdraw the word "lied".

Mr BRADY: I withdraw the word "lied". The honourable member is a person who cannot be trusted. Because Senator Chapman, as the media suggested last week, was muzzled by Big Al—Alexander Downer—and was not able to raise the matter in the Federal Parliament any more, the same material was sent to this person and he has raised it here.

At no time did this Government ever decide that Senator Richardson was or was not involved in anything. I always refused to answer. We are not the guardians or the defenders of Senator Richardson. What we do defend is that today there has been no evidence raised, and there can be no evidence raised, in relation to our covering up—our misleading the House. It is an absolute slander, an absolute libel. If the honourable member says it outside this place he will find out about it. That is a legal threat. He has slandered me in this House; he has not had the guts to do it outside. He has not had the guts to say outside this House that I misled the House or I covered up. Yesterday he had his chance. If I find that he has, I will take the proper legal course. He has misled the House by saying that I had the opportunity and, in fact, did both cover-up and mislead the House. He slandered and libelled the Queensland Police Service and its commissioner. If he had an absolute—

Mr GRICE: I rise to a point of order. That is untrue. I ask it to be withdrawn. I find it offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Under standing orders I have to ask the Minister to withdraw.

Mr BRADY: I am not sure what I am asked to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! What were the words that the honourable member found offensive?

Mr GRICE: "Libelled" and "slandered".

Mr BRADY: I withdraw. The record shows that the honourable member has accused the Queensland Police Service of being overborne and of being forced to alter or sanitise material, yet the material is here. He has it now. It is in existence. So how did we sanitise it? How did we miss it?

In relation to his empty threats that he would bring in something in the future, but that he is a man of such good taste that he hates to—that, of course, will stand as one of the greatest laughs ever in this place. He has been exposed for what he is by his own material. He has produced material that we said was always there, had never gone missing and had never been sanitised.

He is condemned in relation to the other major allegation, which was that the police who were doing their job had been transferred. The facts are clear in the CJC letter. One police officer is still doing exactly the same job and is working on these matters on an on-required basis. The other police officer, of course, fits into a Fitzgerald inquiry recommendation. When Opposition members ran the Police Service, they used to leave police officers in different specialist squads for so long that the opportunity for corruption was very real. Fitzgerald recommended that people in specialist squads, such as the Prostitution Squad, should not remain there beyond a certain time. The decision was made that an officer of this particular officer's rank should not serve more than two years in that squad. He had served, in fact, two years and one month and then he was transferred, quite properly, to another squad. That is in accordance with a realistic way of making sure that police officers are not corrupted.

The material that the member collected still exists, so the basic starting point of this honourable member's proposal falls to the ground. What he has done by producing this and by slandering me is give himself an opportunity to smear former senator Richardson. That is a matter for him and his conscience.

This Government supports the independence of the Director of Prosecutions, the independence of the CJC and the independence of the Queensland Police Service, and they will decide who will be prosecuted—not the member and not me. The man stands condemned for what he is, a fraud and a hypocrite.

Mr GRICE: I rise to a point of order. I find that offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the Minister to withdraw.

Mr BRADY: I withdraw.

MATTER OF SPECIAL PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Drought

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I advise the House that I have received a proposal for a special public importance debate pursuant to the Sessional

Order agreed to by the House on 5 November 1992. The proposal submitted by the honourable Leader of the Opposition is for a debate on the following matter—

"The devastating effect of the drought."

I now call on the Leader of the Opposition to speak to this proposal.

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (4.14 p.m.): Yesterday, we heard the Treasurer again talk about Queensland's unrivalled economic position. Yesterday, there was more talk of economic recovery, of the good times ahead and of the so-called golden era. Although there is increasing optimism for our economic prospects, we must never forget that for economic recovery to be real, for it to be sustainable, it has to be broadly based. The simple fact is that Queensland will not see true or sustainable economic recovery until we get recovery on the land—until the drought breaks and our primary sector returns to profit.

Queensland is still in the grip of the worst drought this century—a drought which since 1991 has cost the State economy more than \$2.5 billion in lost revenue. That is not to mention the social cost associated with families being forced off the land, rural communities being devastated and small country towns being closed down. Currently, we have a \$200m drought in Queensland's grain belt alone, with little prospect for the future as the planning period for the best potential new yield has already passed. Over the past three years, the grain industry has lost more than \$400m. There are 26 shires and more than 1 300 individual properties officially drought declared, which represents almost 40 per cent of the State's land mass. Some 10 000 primary producers are officially drought declared, while another 30 per cent of the State is well on the way towards reaching drought status.

The vegetable bowl of south-east Queensland—the Laidley and Gatton Shires—are the latest to join the list. These shires rely heavily on underground water for irrigation and, in most cases, have had no substantial run-off water over consecutive summers to replenish stocks. Given these real figures, which translate into real pain, it is understandable why many people in rural areas cannot see the Treasurer's golden era over the horizon. For those people, who are so important to our State economy, the only thing golden is the colour of the ground. It is easy to see why they consider the economic recovery to be confined to the capital city.

However, if the economic recovery continues to push up interest rates, they know that they will again be the losers. In 1988, farm debt in Australia was \$10.76 billion. According to the Reserve Bank, by June 1993 it had increased by more than 50 per cent to \$17.3 billion. Currently, average farm debt in Queensland stands at \$180,000. Even more worrying, given the failure of winter crops, is the average debt of \$250,000 on properties associated with grain production. Every 1 per cent increase in interest rates costs Australian farmers \$170m. Interest rate rises could be the final straw for many of these rural producers.

I note with interest the recent criticism of the banks by the Deputy Premier. It is time the nation's banks started to take a close look at their lending practices when it comes to the rural sector. Some have performed better than others. However, on this issue, as with so many others, the Deputy Premier has displayed his downright hypocrisy. The Queensland Industry Development Corporation, which had evolved from the Agricultural Bank, had the potential to continue to provide some meaningful State-based support for the rural sector. But what did this Government do? What did the Government of the Deputy Premier—the man who railed against the interest rate increases and the performance of banks—do? This Government put up interest rates on QIDC loans to drought-depressed rural producers from 13 per cent to 18 per cent, and then from 18 per cent to 22 per cent. The Government lauds the QIDC on the basis that it has posted record profits over successive years in the middle of the worst drought this century. Now we have the Cabinet, of which the Deputy Premier is part—and he is not participating in this debate today—approving a corporatisation charter for the QIDC which directs that that organisation's one and only reason for being will be to achieve a commercial rate of return on its investments. Under that scheme, rural loans that are deemed non-performing will be sold off to the highest bidder.

The Deputy Premier calls the commercial banks a pack of bastards. What is he doing, what is his Government doing and what is his Government's QIDC doing? These actions in respect of the QIDC provide but one example of Labor's failure going back more than five years to address the issue of drought in a comprehensive manner. Back in 1988, Government members supported the move by a Federal Labor Government to remove drought assistance from the category of measures described as natural disaster relief. So a cyclone is accepted by Government members as a natural disaster, bushfires are accepted as natural disasters and floods are accepted as natural disasters, but

droughts, which are also disastrous weather-based phenomena, are not natural disasters. That is illogical, stupid and something for which all Labor members should hang their heads in shame.

Perhaps the clearest examples of Labor's drought double standards were contained in the Treasurer's statement yesterday. That statement points out that revenue collected by the Department of Primary Industries in 1993-94 increased by 8.4 per cent to \$60.5m. According to the Treasurer, the reason for that increase can be put down to additional water irrigation collections as a result of the drought conditions. When one goes back to the 1990-91 Budget, what do we find was the situation before the worst of the drought took hold? We find that the same collections then amounted to \$42.6m. So, roughly over the period of the drought a Government, which claims to be concerned about drought, has increased collections through the DPI, which includes collections for water irrigation, by a massive 42 per cent.

Yesterday's statement also points to another increase in land revenue rentals to \$21.1m. Again, since 1990-91 land rental collections have increased by almost 70 per cent. So let us see an end to the double standards and hypocrisy of the Premier and the Deputy Premier on this issue. Let us see an end to the adhocery in decision making that has existed at a State level for the past four years. Let us see the Labor Party approach the issue of drought with the same sort of vigour that it manages to muster when issues such as Mabo and the republic are put forward. Let us see the issue of drought put forward as a permanent agenda item for COAG, so that State and Federal Governments can put together a much-needed national approach to the issue.

While rain is the only long-term solution, there has to be a continuing commitment from Government at all levels. That commitment has to go further than direct drought assistance. Government must also commit itself to the infrastructure needs of rural areas. Investment in rural infrastructure will be one of the long-term casualties of the combined effects of drought and recession. Spare money, of which there has been little, has been consumed in meeting debt obligations or in the quest for survival. As a result, investment on new capital equipment and technology has been sacrificed or, at best, deferred.

We must never lose sight of the fact that our rural sector now competes in an increasingly competitive international marketplace, an international marketplace where tariff barriers are progressively coming down and where new

trading blocs, of which we will not necessarily be a part, are emerging.

If we are to compete, we must improve. That means new investment, new capital and new technology. It also means a maintenance of Government services. The rationale that has seen rail lines torn up and courthouses, schools and hospitals and services to primary industry reduced has to be reversed. As a coalition, we are committed to providing Government services to these areas. We are committed to restoring initially, and then subsequently improving on, the stock of infrastructure in these areas.

The effects of this drought will be felt for many years to come. Even with rain—and a lot of it—the scars will remain. The real cost will never be calculated. But if some good has come out of this disaster, it has been the bond that has developed between city and country, and the better understanding on the part of urban Queenslanders of the problems facing our rural sector. That support, be it in kind or in direct financial assistance, I know has been appreciated.

I also wish to support an initiative of the Federal Leader of the National Party, Mr Tim Fischer, who has suggested a national day of prayer for the drought. I call on all parties in this place to support that call.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave) (4.24 p.m.): I appreciate the opportunity given today to speak to this important issue. It is one that affects every Queensland, not only those on the land but also those who dwell in the city.

Last night, we heard a number of speakers opposite using a debate on legislation to attack the Government over the issue of drought. They certainly did not miss the opportunity to score on every occasion. Today, I am hoping that, when we settle down to discuss this devastating drought, which is exactly what it is, we resist the temptation to score political points. It is an issue of bipartisan concern. It is an issue that requires bipartisan support for those who are suffering because of it. It is not a time to score cheap political points and it is certainly not a time to lay blame wherever we may wish to lay that blame.

Drought has far-reaching effects on local communities, the councils and the Governments in total right throughout our whole economy. However, it has to be realised that droughts in Queensland are an inevitable factor of Queensland's environment. It is a fact of life that in this nation we are into arid-land farming. Because we are into arid-land farming, the necessity to handle drought will be with us for a long time to come.

The records show that major, long-term droughts have occurred in Queensland during the periods 1880 to 1886, 1895 to 1903, 1918 to 1920 and 1958 to 1968. So it is not unusual to have long periods of drought. However, I agree with commentators who point out that this drought is the worst in living memory. It is not just the worst because of the length of time that it has lasted; it has compounded on a number of other factors affecting rural producers in this State.

Because the occurrence of all droughts and the length of time that they last is extremely variable, comparison between them is difficult. However, this current drought must rank, as I said, amongst the worst we have encountered. We on this side of the House recognise—and I know that the Opposition does as well—these exceptional circumstances. It is an accepted fact that the past drought measures were inadequate and lacked focus for the long-term development of Queensland's rural sector.

Faced with drought conditions in 1990 and 1991, the Goss Government, through the Primary Industries Minister, Mr Casey, initiated the implementation of a 10-year self-reliance program aimed at eliminating the need for the existing State Government freight subsidy arrangements that apply during times of drought. This policy followed extensive industry consultation over a two-year period and continues to be an ongoing process.

This comprehensive policy formed the blueprint for the National Drought Policy and is aimed at making producers less vulnerable to the uncertainty of the environment by encouraging producers to incorporate drought management into their normal property management procedures. The lesson that we have learnt out of this drought is that we have come of age as a farming nation. We must now attempt, where we can, to look into the long term and try to drought proof properties.

As the Leader of the Opposition has indicated, there is only one answer in the short term to the drought, and that is rain and plenty of it. We must look beyond the end of the drought as to how we will handle similar circumstances in the future.

Over the past four years, the worsening drought has led to a stage where over 38 per cent of Queensland is drought declared. This will dramatically increase if the forecasted dry seasonal conditions continue during the coming summer months.

One of the issues that I would like to raise quickly is that of hope. Our ability to forecast weather sometimes strikes at the very heart of hope. A lot of rural producers depend upon the possibility of a turnaround to give them the

opportunity to continue on. If one is faced with a weather prediction that says that one will not get rain for three or six months, that certainly does not do much for hope. I know that Mr Lennox Walker has indicated that rain is around the corner. As the member for Mundingburra said yesterday in this House, he is not always reliable but, in this case, we certainly hope that he has got it right on this occasion.

The areas experiencing the worst problems are the cropping areas of the Darling Downs, the Central Highlands, the Lockyer Valley and the Granite Belt. In addition, ground water levels are extremely low in some districts—in particular in the Lockyer, Pioneer, Callide and Bowen catchments.

As I said earlier, the Goss Government has been tireless in its efforts not only to have producers become self-reliant in the long term but also to give them any justifiable assistance to see this current drought through. It would not be correct for anyone to assert that the Government has not been responsive to primary producers in this State.

The Queensland Government Drought Strategy is aimed at transforming the primary production sector towards self-reliance in managing for the inevitable occurrence of drought. It has been developed to assist producers to plan and manage their properties on a long-term basis, with 22 farm financial counsellors employed and 12 property management centres set up in the regions. This strategy has been endorsed by the National Drought Strategy. A further \$15m has been allocated to assist drought declared producers with the transport of fodder, water and agisted stock.

A total of \$1.97m has been allocated to property management planning in the 1994-95 period. These centres are already servicing more than 2 000 land-holders. Since July 1991 to the end of August 1994, approximately 36 500 drought freight subsidy claims have been processed by the natural disaster relief section in the QDPI, providing \$28.5m in assistance to approximately 8 000 drought-stricken primary producers.

This drought is one of the worst on record, and these levels of freight subsidy expenditure are also unprecedented in the Government's attempt to alleviate problems being felt by people on the land. The public education aspect of sustainable development is being addressed through projects such as the information centres, property management planning, the Water Wise Campaign, Pasture Watch and computer-based training programs for producers. The development of initiatives such

as the Water Conservation Strategy, the new water pricing policy and the Great Artesian Basin Bore Rehabilitation Program and the Water Quality Maintenance Program will ensure that development will not adversely affect the water resource base. If there is one thing we must accept in this country of ours, it is that, of all the commodities we have on this continent, the most precious is water.

The industry/Government drought working group has been responsible for constructing a number of initiatives to help drought-embattled producers of Queensland. Recommendations from the last meeting of this group on 11 August have given rise to further initiatives which have been subject to Cabinet decisions in late August and will continue, I am sure, in the coming weeks. The Goss Government is putting together a review of Rural Adjustment Scheme guidelines to submit to the Federal Government to make sure that the guidelines are more flexible and to maximise support for drought-declared producers.

I noticed yesterday that there was a lot of talk from the Opposition about what could be done to alleviate some of the impacts of drought on the family lives of people in the bush. I think it should be noted that the Government will be approaching the Commonwealth on a number of issues such as relaxing access to programs such as Austudy, Jobsearch and other family support programs for droughted producers and to ensure public input on the review of taxation incentives for drought mitigating capital expenditure.

The Goss Government has amended the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme to provide for the allowable period for livestock restoration to be extended from 12 to 24 months, with no forfeiture of subsidy credits if an area is officially drought declared within that period. It is also recommended that access by intense livestock industries to RAS be reviewed. The freight subsidies working group has been reconvened to look at greater flexibility. As well, a report to be compiled on assistance measures for small businesses impacted on by drought will be brought to the Rural Communities Cabinet Committee by the Treasurer and the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development. In addition, the revised guidelines for the Crop Replanting Loan Scheme will be provided to the Rural Communities Cabinet Committee with the aim of ensuring adequate access to funds by producers.

Last Saturday, the Premier and Mr Casey launched the Lockyer Valley revival plan, which is aimed at giving the Lockyer Valley—known as the salad bowl of Queensland—a better chance

of recovery when the drought ends. The Lockyer region needs to have its vital underground water supplies restored. This is what producers draw upon for the irrigation that is necessary for their livelihood. This is a practical scheme which recognises that, although we cannot make it rain, we can make sure that producers are able to make the most of the rain when it comes. Under the scheme, which will assist 200 growers, local waterways will be cleared of silt and debris while they are dry, allowing the beds of creeks and weirs to absorb water much more efficiently when the rain finally falls. This in turn helps to restore the underground water table.

The Goss Government is continuing to work with industry in order to help address the harsh effects of this drought. Under the previous National Party Government, major discrepancies were revealed by the Public Accounts Committee inquiry into drought relief administration. It was revealed that the funds distributed were not really going to those in need, with the biggest share going to the large pastoral companies. The initiatives by the Goss Government have enabled valuable moneys to be evenly distributed.

Although only good, soaking rains can remove the problem, this Government has done all that is possible to help alleviate the hardship being suffered. That fact has been acknowledged by the president of the Queensland Graingrowers Association, Mr McFarlane. The Goss Government will continue to press the Federal Government for additional funding to see Queensland through this crisis. I commend the efforts of the Government and the Minister.

Time expired.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (4.34 p.m.): I wish to speak on the devastating effect of the drought, but I particularly want to speak on the effect that the drought has had on business, particularly small business, in the rural communities of Queensland. When we talk about rural communities, the definition of "small business" is somewhat blurred, because in rural communities the small business is just as likely to be a horticulturalist selling his products as a corner store or butcher. When we are talking about rural communities, the term "small business" covers many people and many pursuits.

While the large farming and grazing producers suffer through the worst drought on record, there can be no doubt that the rural towns are suffering along with them. These are often the forgotten people of the drought. The butcher, baker, and candlestick maker who

provide the vital support and back-up for the rural producers are often the ones left behind when Governments talk about drought relief. Small business in these towns receives little attention from the State and Federal Governments when it comes to financial assistance.

Let me detail some of the problems facing small business in these towns. When rural producers have trouble paying their bills, their local community often chips in and helps out. This means that many grocery retailers throughout western and northern Queensland are carrying credit on their books for farmer customers who cannot pay their bills. Although that is extremely worth while and charitable on behalf of the shop owners, it means that their cash flow situation is severely affected, and they have trouble paying their own bills.

This situation has been worsened by the best intentions of city charities. Food parcels, which have been extremely helpful for farming families who are on the breadline because of the drought, have cut the legs from under retailers in the country towns.

Mr Casey: How would you support them?

Mrs SHELDON: The Minister should just listen, and I will go through it. I take it that the Minister is sympathetic to those people, because at the moment he is not showing that he is.

These retailers, already suffering because of the lack of business from farming families who cannot afford food, are watching road trains go past their doors with food from the city for their customers. Surely a better system would be one of vouchers for rural families in need of food parcels, so that those parcels can be purchased in their local towns and through their local stores. That way, in one hit, charities are helping both the rural family and the rural community small businesses.

It is more than just grocery stores that are suffering. Some of the biggest losers are the farm equipment and car dealers. Right across Queensland, equipment and vehicle dealers have been closing their doors, as farmers stop buying new equipment. They are already having to reduce the cost of vehicles, so that they are making virtually no profit, just to be competitive. Of course, the greedy Treasurer is still taking his full cut of stamp duty on cars, four-wheel drives and the like. I know of several cases in which dealerships have been forced to close in towns such as Winton and Miles because they are just not getting enough business from rural producers to survive.

I refer the House to a letter from the executive director of the Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association, Ian

Baldock, to the Minister for Small Business, Jim Elder, urging the State Government for assistance for the business community in rural Queensland. In the letter, Mr Baldock states—

"A lot of businesses have already used a substantial portion of their capital or have had to increase borrowings or increase their overdraft limit in order to remain at least partly viable."

Mr Baldock went on—

"We have received information from a number of our members in various small towns to the effect that many are fast reaching the stage when they may have to consider more drastic measures such as closing in order to avoid an increased indebtedness situation.

Whilst we appreciate that the principal sufferers of the drought are the farmers and rural producers and that they are therefore the major beneficiaries of Government assistance, we are very concerned at the wider adverse effects that will only increase as the drought worsens.

Unless the impact of the drought is looked at in a global sense, we may find in addition to the worsening effect in the rural service community that the closure of a substantial part of the service sector will in itself add to the cost of rural producers."

That letter from Mr Baldock highlights the problems facing small business in rural and regional Queensland. Mr Baldock points out that Governments at the State, Federal and local level can help small business in country areas through the writing-off of interest payments and debt, some form of interest rate subsidy, rate relief, low-interest loans similar to those made available to farmers, and freight subsidies. These are all areas that the State Government, in concert with the other levels of Government, should look into. There is no doubt that the Government could do more to help these small businesses.

I remind the House that, in the Rural Adjustment Authority Bill 1994 passed by this House early this morning in concert with the new QIDC Bill, the State Government has placed an onus on the new statutory body to look after small business. The objectives of the Rural Adjustment Authority state that the authority—

"may also give assistance to small businesses (other than rural producers), and other elements of the State's economy in periods when they are experiencing temporary difficulty."

I believe that the "may" in that objective should

be "must" when it comes to many of the small businesses that are facing ruin due to the protracted drought conditions.

The creation of the statutory authority replaces the community service obligations of the QIDC, which was established to give broad-based economic support to business and the rural sector in Queensland. Therefore, the Rural Adjustment Authority must look at the broader picture and work to help all sectors of Queensland which touch on the rural sector. These rural producers will suffer in the long term if the private small business infrastructure is destroyed by the drought. The last thing these rural producers need would be that, when the drought finally breaks, they can no longer buy their cars, groceries and other consumer products in the closest town. If the drought has forced small retailers out of business, it will in the long term force rural producers to spend more money obtaining the produce from the city. It is therefore essential that Government agencies and Ministers do not forget the vital role played by small business in these towns.

The personal cost of the drought on small businesses in these country towns can be highlighted by the experiences in Miles. Margaret and Bill Hart have run Abraham's Drapery in Miles for 20 years. After working for 16 years, the Harts had the business at its peak in 1990, and were starting to reap some of the rewards of all their hard work. However, the drought has put an end to the financial security businesses such as the Harts once may have felt. To quote Mrs Hart, "Business is disastrous."

Since 1990, turnover has dropped by 33 per cent—or one-third—in the drapery. A Miles grocery store is suffering from a drop of \$4,000 a week in its earnings while businesses such as a coffee shop, florist and garage have closed down. One store closed down in the town only yesterday. The baker is also suffering, but much of his woes are as a result of the good intentions of many charities and the people of the coastal strip. At one stage recently, there were 600 loaves of bread a week being brought into Miles by charities to help feed rural families who were suffering. This, of course, has devastated the baker's business. These are real stories of real people in rural Queensland who are suffering through this drought, and they do not live on the land. Mrs Hart has been forced to significantly reduce staff numbers—hence people lose jobs—and hours at the drapery, and Bill and Margaret have had to increase the overdraft twice in the last four years.

I wish to quote a couple of the comments made by Mrs Hart on the problems faced by rural businesses. She said—

"There is no secondary industry in Miles. We are totally reliant on the farming industry, and they just aren't spending any money."

Mrs Hart also had a message for the State and Federal Labor Governments. She said—

"We have the feeling that if you live west of the divide, that the Government has forgotten you."

That is the message from the west and highlights the problems facing rural communities and the small businesses they rely on. The platitudes of Tom Burns and the hat-wearing camera opportunities by the Premier will not help these small businesses. They need real action and support, just like their rural cousins on the land.

Yesterday, we heard from the Treasurer how the State now had a zero net debt. I call on the Treasurer to please utilise some of his alleged financial windfall on saving, through tax incentives and genuine aid, rural Queensland's small businesses before it is too late for them.

Mrs BIRD (Whitsunday) (4.44 p.m.): As the member for Mulgrave said, it is important that while we debate this issue we do not try to gain political points from what is happening within our rural communities. The debate yesterday and indeed the debate last week was very suitable for this time. It is particularly suitable for me because within the Mackay region we have established the Mackay Rural Network. Much of the debate that has occurred over the past few days brought forward many of the points already raised and experienced at the Women's Network. Even though many of those points have been made before, I found them to be fruitful in that they just reinforce the thoughts that are coming from people in my electorate and perhaps those further west in the electorate of Mirani.

One of the things that I particularly wanted to point out today is that in the short term there seems to be no future for the man on the land. It is the long-term survival of the man on the land for which we really must work. It is survival that is necessary at the moment. As a Government, it behoves us to look at things in the long term so that we can ensure that the things that are happening within rural communities today do not happen again.

The Mackay Women's Network is attempting to find the answer. When the women first formed their network, they came forward with their tales and stories of their positions, and it was indeed very sad. Indeed, Cheryl Kernot attended one of the network's meetings and she was extremely surprised at what was occurring within the industry and happening to the people on the land. Since then, it has been our fortune to have

some rain in parts of my electorate and we are now able to move into the mode of preparing for the next long stretch without rain.

The women have surprised themselves. They always saw themselves as just farmers' wives. Owing to the drought, the Mackay Women's Network has made these women very good public speakers, good at conflict resolution and good at instigating care for children and support for one another. Those women are starting to prepare themselves in a reactive way. Another group who truly understand what is happening are those social workers working in rural communities, especially those employed under the Farm Family Support System, because they are face to face with the social consequences of the drought and they are the ones who report both to the network and, I understand, to rural communities.

I guess one of the problems within any rural electorate is that the metropolitan communities have some difficulty in understanding the severe crisis the rural communities are involved in. I describe it this way—imagine that a person went to his work every day, he opened his business, he cleared his shelves, he filled his till but nobody came in, not for one week, not for a month—not for three or four years! That person would still have to pay his rent and his bank charges. What would honourable members do if they were in that situation? Does one just move away and go on the dole?

That brings me to the point that has been raised here time and time again, and it has indeed been raised with me in my office and at the Women's Network—that is, the impossible working attitude of the Department of Social Security. The Federal Government has stated that—and I guess I will gain the wrath of some of my Federal colleagues in saying this—if the farmers walk off their land, if they say to the bank, "Take away my farm", and they come to the city, they are then entitled to a Jobsearch allowance. It is just stupid that people who are most drought-affected do not have access to this allowance. We need to support these families through this crisis time. It seems stupid that simply because they have a property valued at a price—an unsaleable price, mind you—that we are unable to give them a steady income or some sort of sustenance.

It seems that farm household support is very unattractive, particularly for these people. It gives them yet another loan to pay off, and they can ill afford it, adding another stress to them. Families are reduced to trying to survive on small amounts and they may be able to receive family payments under the hardship provisions and the financial assistance of the relief agencies, but of course

that only occurs in those cases where children are involved. Rural producers do have problems dealing with the Department of Social Security as it cannot accommodate their specific problems or style of business. Most producers are unfamiliar with the system, and when they are unable to seek clarification of problems, they really do give up.

The tension of constant financial pressure, physical hardship and physical hard work, produced by the fact that they now have extra labour and they are doing the extra work themselves, is taking its toll on the physical, mental and emotional health of people. In the Mackay region, we were very fortunate to be given an allowance to develop a task force which assisted us through the bad times. However, the most important thing at this stage is that we really need to have people gathering some sort of support for mental and emotional health. As a result of their circumstances, the majority of rural farmers are exhibiting many signs of rural stress.

The strain on marital relationships will have long lasting and detrimental effects on the structure of rural communities whose members traditionally rely heavily on each other for support. There is an alarming increase in medical problems being presented, possibly because people have delayed seeking medical attention for financial reasons or because they are unable to leave their property for work reasons. Alternatively, as people are becoming more and more run down, they are more susceptible to health problems. Long distances mean that the availability of health services in rural areas are limited, especially in respect to dental care and specialist services.

One of the things that I find most appalling, and one of the things to which I get a considerable amount of reaction, is the fact that doctors are not bulk billing. My husband tells me that within the health community they get most reports on the failure of women to have cervical cancer tests or pap smears. They are simply leaving them go because, firstly, they cannot afford the trip to town and, secondly, they cannot afford to pay the doctors because the doctors are not bulk billing; so they are letting their tests go by.

During a drought, some businesses are forced to close. As Mrs Sheldon said, once they are removed from an area it is very unlikely that they will be replaced. The impact felt locally has been on staffing. People were working at half-staff in businesses. Because people were not purchasing fertiliser; the fertiliser companies were in great debt. Of course, there was no new machinery, and no apprentices were being

employed. As Mrs Sheldon said, this has a domino effect throughout the community.

Distance education programs continue to provide education for a fairly large section of the community, but educational problems are beginning to show themselves in older children. Some time ago, the member for Crows Nest made a speech in this House about the suicide of a young man. I recalled that speech just recently when there was a similar experience in the Proserpine hinterland. It is just an indication of how the drought is affecting not only parents but also the futures of children who do not want to go back onto the land because they can see the purgatory that their parents are going through, and they do not want to participate in that; they want to continue with their education and be whatever they can be.

The lingering effects of this drought will affect rural producers for a long time after the rains come. The restocking, especially with breeding stock, and the rebuilding of the social atom and support broken down by friends, neighbours and relatives moving away will need to be restored. The impacts on health will, in some cases, be life long. There will be a lack of financial reserves, effects on education and training and replacement of machinery, environmental damage by salt intrusion and, in essence, just the falling down of the business community. Skilled workers are moving away from the rural community. We are having great difficulty trying to replace them.

Time expired.

Mr LINGARD (Beaudesert—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.54 p.m.): The Goss Government's response to the extreme hardship and social and economic upheaval wrought by this prolonged drought has been superficial and tokenistic. As I have repeated in this House many times, at no stage has this Government recognised that the extraordinary hardship and extraordinary circumstances of this drought require extraordinary measures. Instead, at every stage this Government has run a mile from constructive policies and constructive decisions that would provide substantive assistance to help Queensland's primary producers survive.

No-one can blame the country people for being cynical of this Government—a Government that seems to find extra money for a koala tunnel, extra money for Lang Park, extra money for the South Bank and extra money for the Gabba cricket ground. But when it comes to constructive money for the bush, no-one sees that money coming.

Everyone in the bush recognises that rain is vital—and it is critical—in restoring prosperity to the bush. However, it must also be recognised

that rain is only the first step in restoring our primary industries to a position of economic strength and self-reliance. Even if it rains solidly for the next week, it will not solve the deep-seated economic problems wrought by four years of drought, spiralling debt and recession. The Government must stop laying the responsibility for drought survival and drought recovery solely at the feet of nature.

Contrary to the Premier's ill-conceived belief that rain is the magic cure, the compound problems caused by this drought mean that recovery will take years, and the stark reality is that many primary producers will not make it—that is, unless the Government offers more than the paltry window-dressing that it is offering to farmers now.

We face a situation now in which many farmers have already passed the point of no return. Up to 40 per cent of the State's farmers are marginally viable, but are teetering on the edge of unviability. These same producers were viable last year, they were viable five years ago, and they probably could be viable in another five years. The first question is: does this Goss Government consider it acceptable that large sections of this State's rural communities face obliteration? The second question is: what is it going to do to prevent this holocaust? Its record to date would seem to indicate that it will do nothing apart from offer superficial platitudes, shallow rhetoric and cosmetic assistance.

There is an urgent need for immediate relief from the spiralling debt crisis. An extensive debt and finance restructuring package, coupled with access to long-term, low-interest loans, is needed right now to rescue farmers from imminent disaster. Such a scheme would give primary producers a measure of predictability and stability over their debts and give them a chance to get back on their feet.

This Minister and Minister Collins must have found that, in those brigalow areas in central Queensland, the farmers were saying that they did not want only handouts; they wanted some sort of surety that, if they did borrow money, at least the interest rate would remain at about 7 per cent or 8 per cent—an interest rate that they believe they can carry, especially with some of their off-farm work. They were not asking for loans. They were not even asking for RAS money. They wanted some sort of surety that interest rates would not go through the roof, exactly as it happened years ago, which was really the catalyst for their present problems. But instead of accepting a return to a wide-ranging rural reconstruction package, such as the one the previous Government had the foresight to

establish in the 1970s, this Government slams the door in their faces.

The QIDC, the corporatisation which was debated in this House only yesterday, was the linchpin of a strong and growing primary sector under the previous Government. And what did this Labor Government do? It turned it into the commercial, money-grabbing institution it is today, with a profit of \$18.1m and a dividend of \$18.9m going to the Government. This is occurring during a time of extreme drought—a time when people do want loans. Yet here we have a corporation making \$18.1m profit and handing back \$18.9m to the Government.

I was aghast at the Deputy Premier's accusations recently that banks are bastards. What utter hypocrisy, when one of the most ruthless commercial lenders in the rural market today is the QIDC—the State Government's own bank. The Government has all but emasculated concessional loans to primary producers. It opts instead for interest subsidies. Such a scheme only ensures that the banks get fatter off the back of extreme rural hardship.

Also debated in this House yesterday was the creation of a new body to administer the Rural Adjustment Scheme. I welcome that move and sincerely hope that that organisation will do a better job of administering the RAS scheme than did the QIDC. As few as only 20 per cent of Queensland farmers have been granted exceptional circumstances assistance during one of the most dramatic droughts in Queensland history. This is while in excess of \$33m of RAS money sits in Government coffers unspent—\$66m was made available for RAS, and only \$33m was accessed last year. Surely, the Minister and the Federal Government realise that when that sort of money is available and these people are having trouble because only half of it is being accessed, there is a difficulty and problem with the access agreements. The habitual bickering between State and Federal Labor Governments about whose fault it is that the scheme has been maladministered is, frankly, not good enough. It is about time this Government got its priorities right.

But then, what else has this Government done to help rural communities weather this current crisis? As the honourable Leader of the Opposition has already outlined, this Government has sent land rents skyrocketing by up to 2 000 per cent since it came to power—and this in the midst of one of the worst droughts in the history of this State. And then, in his usual tokenistic way, the Minister for Lands promised a freeze on pastoral rents. He promised to keep them at 1.1 per cent of unimproved capital value until the end of this financial year; but the crunch

is he made no promise to freeze increases in UCV.

The 1994-95 Budget papers clearly state that the Government intends to reap an additional 10 per cent in land rental revenue this year. What a total and utter disgrace! Then there is the \$51.3m that producers are paying for DPI consultancy and inspection services—an increase of 10 per cent over last year and a total increase of more than 23 per cent since Labor's first term in office. We are always being subjected to hot air about new earth-shattering measures to help the bush survive the drought, but we never see the proof.

The recent Cabinet meeting in Longreach was preceded by a public relations blitz. The Government was intending to introduce "significant new drought assistance provisions". What they delivered did not match the rhetoric. Whilst the announcement that access to freight subsidies would be extended to up to two years after drought revocations is welcome, it does nothing to alleviate the current situation. It does nothing about the critical problem facing farmers of finding funds for forward movement of stock. Apparently, that would be too much to ask of this Government.

The other announcement to come out of that Cabinet meeting was the reconvening of drought advisory committees. I commend those committees for all the uphill battles that they have fought with the Government over recent years, but the reality is that there is nothing those committees will be telling the Government that it has not heard and totally ignored before.

The Treasurer regularly trots out facts and figures on how much this Government has spent on this drought. Most recently he said that by June 1995 the Goss Government will have spent \$62m on drought relief. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that that amount is pitiable in the context of the \$2 billion loss incurred by the State so far as a result of this drought.

This Government often sprouts about its relationship with rural industry leaders. Ian McFarlane recently put a minimum figure of \$200m on the drought assistance that would be needed to help farmers survive this current crisis. Honourable members should weigh that up and then consider the low funding priority this Government has given to the bush.

Once again, I remind the Government of the \$65m loss this Government has made on the Gold Coast Indy. Then there is the \$120m ploughed into the South Bank complex, the \$15m spent on the Gabba, the \$10m spent on Compass, nearly \$30m on Lang Park and now \$30m on an overpass. This comparatively low

funding for drought relief is symptomatic of the apathy and indifference shown by this Government to the bush.

Let us look in more detail at what assistance is actually available. I refer to the infamous rural policy package in which this Government provides the even more infamous sum of \$6m towards emergency family assistance. If this Government is really serious about providing assistance to the bush, it must first of all increase emergency funding to a more realistic level. Secondly, it must broaden drought relief programs beyond the strictly emergency scenario and into genuine rural reconstruction programs. As part of rural reconstruction, the inclusion once again of drought in natural disaster relief provisions would be a considerable step forward for droughted rural communities. Until then, anything this Government is doing in the bush amounts to bandaid solutions.

Time expired.

Hon. E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (5.04 p.m.): Today, we saw the opportunity for the National Party and the Liberal Party in Queensland to contribute in a positive way via this Parliament to the problems that Queensland is currently experiencing as a result of what everybody accepts is the worst drought ever recorded. It is rather a shame that they have failed dismally to put forward any positive suggestions in the Parliament today. They have failed to put forward policies that this Government could adopt. Members opposite are not so expert as they think.

Instead, all we heard from the Leader of the Opposition was the same whingeing, whining criticism, the same carping, moaning and groaning that we hear from him when he speaks on every other subject in this Chamber. He stands up in front of his microphone, turns up the corners of his lips, screws back his nose and then starts to carry on in that whingeing, whining, moaning, carping way. It is no wonder that when he was speaking only three National Party backbenchers were in the Parliament. None of them was from the droughted areas of this State. I am sorry; two of those members were Liberals. The other members opposite deserted the place. The Labor Party provided the numbers to enable this House to conduct this Matter of Special Public Importance debate.

As I said, the Opposition has failed dismally. As usual, the Leader of the Opposition made statements of fact, as he calls them, that were totally wrong. His comments were absolutely misleading and false. The Opposition Leader tries to make presentations to this House that he claims are based on research that he has carried

out himself. I will take up the point that he made in relation to water. He says that, with one hand, the Government is giving back only a little to the farming communities and, with the other hand, it is filching from them through additional water charges. What the Leader of the Opposition does not know or does not understand in relation to charging for water allocations in areas where there is no water is that the Government has already waived those charges. That is what we have done. He should go and ask the people in the Lockyer area. He should ask Mr FitzGerald, who is not in the Chamber—

Mr FitzGerald: I am.

Mr CASEY: I am sorry. I apologise. The honourable member is usually making a bit of noise in the corner. Perhaps that is why I missed him tonight. Mr FitzGerald knows from his area in the Lockyer, which is probably one of the worst hit in Queensland, that this Government has waived the charges that were imposed under the system of allocations that was put in place by a National/Liberal Party Government in Queensland. Those charges have been waived because we cannot supply the farmers with water. In what other sector in Queensland do honourable members find that if people cannot be supplied with a service, they still have to pay for it? That was what happened under the National Party/Liberal Party Governments in this State. This Government has waived those charges. It is absolutely and utterly false for Mr Borbidge to come into this Parliament and endeavour to say that we are making money out of droughted Queensland by charging producers for water. There is no way in the world that that is happening.

When we came to Government, we finished off the Eton irrigation scheme that the previous Government was dragging out. We finished off the Bundaberg irrigation scheme that it was dragging out. We stepped up the pace in relation to the Burdekin irrigation scheme. We extended the Emerald irrigation area. We provided more opportunities for primary producers in the State to have the benefit of a water supply at all times. In places where we are not able to supply water, we have waived the charges that a former Government put in place. We are not making money out of the droughted areas of this State; we are making money out of the better direction that we are taking.

Mr Borbidge: That's not what your financial statements say.

Mr CASEY: Not according to the financial statements, says Mr Borbidge. I will refer to another of his false figures. He says that we have bumped up the value of land rentals. Of course, little "Sir Echo" beside him says the same

thing—that we have bumped up the value of land rentals in Queensland. If the honourable member reads the documentation that was presented before the debate on the Estimates of my department, and the documentation that was presented by the Treasurer in this Parliament yesterday, he will see clearly that land rentals for primary producers have not increased at all in the past 12 months. That is because we have given primary producers special consideration as a result of their droughted circumstances. Other farmers who are not droughted are also benefiting from that.

The figures that have been presented have been audited by the Auditor-General. If the honourable member knew how to read figures, he would know and understand them.

Mr Borbidge: They're your figures.

Mr CASEY: The honourable member should either jump off a cliff himself or sack a few of those people who are working for him and trying to get him to put this stuff forward, because there is no way in the world that he is putting accurate figures before the Parliament. The Leader of the Opposition does not have a clue about the State of Queensland. He does not have any policy at all, nor do his national friends. He rose in this House and started quoting people from Canberra. Only a matter of a week or so ago, the National Party in Canberra produced a great policy. That received the stamp of approval straight away from Alexander Downer, who would not know anything about it, anyhow. The Federal National Party said, "We are going to put in place a \$100m policy that will provide free fodder to the farmers in the droughted areas."

I point out that if that policy was implemented, the two biggest beneficiaries in the pastoral industry would be a fellow by the name of Kerry Packer and a family by the name of Holmes a Court. That is what was wrong with the National Party when it was in Government in Queensland. The rorts that went on in relation to drought funding were acknowledged and recognised by its own Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee and the evidence was tabled in the Parliament in 1988 and 1989. I see some of those members sitting in the House today. They know and understand that drought rorts were going on and that this Government has put a stop to all that.

This morning I chaired a dairy policy committee meeting, which was attended by representatives of the industry from areas throughout Queensland. There were people who represented the wholesalers, the retailers, the processors and the producers themselves. As we went around the table and talked about

the drought, every one of them congratulated the Queensland Government on the way in which it has acted and reacted to the suggestions that have been made by industry in this State. This Government has done things that have never been done before.

I will send each Opposition member a copy of Queensland's latest drought bulletin, which details how and where people can receive assistance—what is needed and what ought to be done. All of those measures are matters of public importance. However, the only answer that Opposition members can come up with is hanging some sort of medal around people's necks, as though they were Commonwealth Games athletes, that says, "We have a natural disaster in our area."

Five years after the previous National Party's Public Accounts Committee recommended that drought declarations be made after recommendations to the Minister by the local area drought committees, shires in National Party electorates are still writing to me daily saying, "Cannot we have our shire drought-declared? Cannot we pin this medal on our coat and say, 'We are drought declared'?"

The natural disaster system about which Opposition members speak had whiskers on it. It was part of the rorts and rackets that existed. We now have in place a much better policy. It is more responsive to industry, it is more active for industry, and it is much better for the people of Australia. This Government has put in place positive measures not only for the people in this State but also for other people throughout the Commonwealth. Almost three years ago, with the support of industry, this Government drafted a drought policy, which was finally accepted by the whole of Australia and became the national drought policy. Other Governments of other political kilts supported that policy because there are no political considerations in a drought. That policy provided an opportunity for State and Commonwealth Governments, together with communities and industries, to try to look after people who are experiencing this disastrous situation, which has occurred before, and which will occur again.

The best aspect of this Queensland Goss Government policy is that, through its property planning measures and other drought management programs, it is putting in place strategies that will take us into the future. It is the best managed drought policy in Australia.

Time expired.

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

LOTTERIES BILL

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (5.14 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to provide for the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation and the conduct and administration of lotteries, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr De Lacy, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (5.15 p.m.): I move—

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

The major objectives of the Lotteries Bill 1994 are to streamline the administration of lotteries conducted by the Government through the Golden Casket Art Union Office and to enhance the integrity of lotteries in Queensland. Currently these lotteries are administered and conducted under the authority of the Golden Casket Art Union Act 1978, the Lotto Act 1981 and the Soccer Football Pools Act 1976. This Bill will also change the name of the Golden Casket Art Union Office to the Golden Casket Lotteries Corporation, which will be a statutory body in terms of the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977. All profits of this corporation, as is currently the case with the Golden Casket Art Union Office, will be included within the State Public Accounts as directed by the Minister. The Bill will also formally authorise certain activities and expenditures that have been undertaken by the Golden Casket Art Union Office over a number of years.

The Bill changes the method by which a lotteries agent is appointed. Rather than an agreement being entered into, the corporation will licence adults to conduct lotteries on behalf of the corporation. The Bill permits the corporation to invite tenders for a lottery licence, either generally or in a specific geographic area. The corporation may also invite persons to apply for a lottery licence if it believes that there is insufficient coverage in an area. The Bill also permits persons to apply for a lottery licence, as is currently the case.

The evaluation of an application for a lottery licence will be based upon criteria, to be set by

regulation, which will stringently adhere to the commercial objectives of the corporation, except where it is recognised that a demographic region of the State may be disadvantaged by not having a lottery licensee. In considering an application the corporation will have the ability to inquire about the applicant's character and standing, financial position and business training and experience. In this way the corporation will ensure that licensees are of the highest calibre possible for the Queensland commercial lotteries environment. Each lottery licence granted will be based on a legally binding written agreement between the corporation and the licensee.

The Bill also provides grounds for the cancellation or suspension of a lottery licence. The corporation must provide written notice of its intention to cancel or suspend a licence and allow the licensee time to show why the cancellation or suspension should not take place. However, if it is considered that the actions of the licensee impinge upon the protection of the public or the integrity of a lottery, the corporation may issue a notice of immediate suspension of that licensee's licence. The rights of those applying for a lottery licence and existing licensees will be protected through an appeal process to the District Court.

All current lottery agency agreements will be continued for at least one year after the commencement of this Bill at which time lottery licences will be granted to those agents who have satisfied the stipulated base criteria.

The Bill also sets out how lotteries will be conducted by the corporation. For instance, the corporation may use security codes to determine if a ticket is a winner. The use of such security codes has not previously been included within any lotteries legislation in the State and should put a stop to many of the frivolous and costly claims pursued by some people.

This Bill stipulates that a minimum of 50 per cent of moneys received for a lottery must be paid out in prizes for that lottery. It should be noted that this is a minimum requirement and that there is no intention of reducing the levels of prizes applicable to a lottery, for example, Gold Lotto which currently pays 60 per cent of moneys received in prizes.

The Bill also provides that unclaimed prize money will remain with the corporation. This unclaimed prize money may be utilised by the corporation to, for example, promote lotteries in Queensland by providing extra prizes. However, the original unclaimed prize may be claimed by the rightful winner up to seven years after the drawing for the relevant lottery.

The integrity of lotteries in Queensland is of paramount importance to both this Government

and the lottery playing public. In this Bill offences for actions which may violate that integrity have been enunciated. For example, for too long the lottery playing public has been enticed to purchase devices or systems which imply they will increase the chances of winning a lottery. The chances of winning a lottery have always been and will always be based on chance or skill—no device or system will improve the odds of winning. In the Lotteries Bill the advertising of such devices or systems for reward will be an offence.

The conduct of unauthorised gaming schemes will also be an offence against this Bill. Other actions which will be an offence against this Bill include under or overcharging for an entry form, knowingly selling entry forms to minors, promoting a lottery conducted by another State or country, altering a condition on an entry form, selling entry forms without a lottery licence, selling entry forms after the draw for that lottery, impersonating a licensee and forging an entry.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Bill, on motion of Mrs Sheldon, adjourned.

TREASURY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 30 August (see p. 9014).

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (5.22 p.m.): The purpose of this Bill is to bring friendly societies under the prudential supervision of the Queensland Office of Financial Supervision. On the surface, this sounds like a fine idea, as it will bring about increased accountability and security for clients of Queensland friendly societies; of course, things are not always what they seem.

The problem with this Bill is that the increased prudential and liquidity supervision means that every friendly society in Queensland will now be hit with a wave of new bureaucratic costs. That should hardly surprise anyone. After all, nothing this State Government does when it comes to the private sector comes without a cost. Whenever this State Labor Government moves its legislative finger, someone in the private sector is hit with a new bill.

It is hardly a surprise that the friendly societies are less than happy with this Government's latest bureaucratic disease. They are the latest to be hit, following on from the building industry, the banking industry, the auto industry and many other industries which have been hit with new Government charges under Labor.

Friendly societies are non-profit organisations. Any increased costs from the State Labor Government must be passed directly on to the society's customers and members. The only other option for a friendly society is to shut its doors if it can not meet the increased Government costs.

Friendly societies also face the prospect of losing customers because friendly societies, which have been attractive due to their low consumer costs, will now lose much of their market edge and niche because of increased Government costs. The industry believes that these changes will force many existing friendly societies to go to the wall.

Not only does the Government use this as a way to regulate an industry; it also uses it as a way to raise more new taxes. Yes, that is right, this so-called low-tax Treasurer has been caught out once again with his hand in the cookie jar.

The Bill stipulates the creation of a supervision levy. This levy is placed on the friendly societies on an amount decided by the registrar. The amount of the levy is extremely flexible and can be either a stated amount, a stated percentage, or both. The levy can also be fixed at different levels for different friendly societies, or friendly societies can be exempted from paying the levy at all. Talk about a level playing field! This allows the registrar and/or the State Government to create the most mountainous of playing fields.

While I am sure that everyone has the best interests of all concerned at heart, the fact is that this piece of legislation leaves the door open for massive differences in the ways friendly societies are treated by the Government. This Bill leaves the door open for the State Government to play favourites, or to even persecute selected friendly societies if it so wishes.

Mr De Lacy: What rubbish!

Mrs SHELDON: What are we going to do? Are we going to rely on the Treasurer's good nature? Is he going to say, "Trust me"?

Mr T. B. Sullivan: I trust him.

Mrs SHELDON: Yes, but that shows the honourable member's incredible stupidity in all matters.

Many in this House may not realise the benefits that friendly societies offer within the financial community. In fact, if one were relying on the Treasurer's second-reading speech for information, one would be ignorant indeed.

There are about 14 friendly societies in Queensland. Friendly societies were first created more than 100 years ago as a venue for mainly working-class people to provide some financial

security for themselves. That is what is so surprising about this Bill. Here we have a State Labor Government attacking some of the very institutions which were set up by their traditional support base. Friendly societies were originally established by labourers, miners, carpenters, stonemasons and other tradespeople. All assets of friendly societies belong to the members, and that has not changed over the years.

Friendly societies today are primarily insurers and fund managers, with more than one million members across the country and total assets of almost \$10 billion. There are almost 97 000 members of friendly societies in Queensland alone. So we are not talking about some fringe element here; we are talking about a large sector of the finance industry in this State, although we do not compare with Victoria, where there are more than 700 000 members.

It must be stated that the friendly society industry believes that this Bill will have a devastating effect on its future. The industry now awaits the decision by Victoria, which is meant to be introducing national template legislation. However, Victoria is baulking at introducing a Bill which could devastate such a long-standing finance industry.

I wish to quote from a letter written earlier this year by Teresa Bonnell, the grand secretary of one of Queensland's biggest friendly societies, Manchester Unity. Ms Bonnell details just how poorly the industry has been treated by the State Government. She said—

"A new Friendly Societies Act came into force on the 1st August 1991. One of the most important features of this Act is the greatly increased powers of supervision given to the Registrar. This society supported this, believing that good supervision and high prudential standards are in the best interests of all concerned, especially the members."

She went on—

"Less than three years later we were informed that major changes are planned, including another Act and the abolition of the office of the Registrar at the close of the current financial year. This society believes the proposal to divide the industry, and place segments of it under separate supervisors with different standards and different Acts of Parliament, will be detrimental to the whole industry."

Ms Bonnell said that the friendly societies had supported the establishment of AFIC as a common regulator and now faced yet another supervisory body.

She raises some good points about an industry which has been forced on the defensive now for three or four years—on the defensive from a State Government which has asked the industry to play the game of regulation and monitoring, and then kept changing the rules. This is not just the coalition beating the drum.

Industry sources have stated to me in no uncertain terms that this Bill threatens the very livelihood of friendly societies. By forcing more costs and more regulation on to friendly societies, they will be forced to abandon their traditional function to operate as non-profit cooperatives and instead become profit-focus financial institutions. That way, even those friendly societies which manage to survive this Government's bureaucratic attack will be forced to change their operations so much that they will cease to be, in essence, the friendly societies which have operated in Australia since the middle of the nineteenth century.

Although I have serious concerns about the effect of this Bill on the future of friendly societies in Queensland, the coalition will not oppose the Bill. The Bill is part of a national push for regulation, and Queensland should be a part of that national industry. Whether or not Victoria will come to the party is still to be seen. In the meantime, I urge the Treasurer to work with the Queensland friendly society industry, and not against it—and I wish he would listen to a bit of this speech—or this Bill could lead to the destruction of an integral part of Queensland's finance industry.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes) (5.30 p.m.): We have just heard yet another fluffy speech from the opponents to reform from the fowl house opposite. Again, that speech continued with the negative harping, even though Opposition members support the Bill. It is just incredible that the members cannot help themselves and have to harp, complain and whinge about very positive reforms that this Government is bringing to Queensland.

Even though the member recognises that this Bill brings into place increased accountability and security, she still whinges about how that is being done. I cannot believe that the main problem that the honourable member for Caloundra sees with it is the fact that a regulatory superstructure is set up with it and that charges are to be levied under it. What a complaint! Anyone would think that the member was hibernating during the eighties. Throughout that decade, there were huge disasters involving friendly societies and such bodies. We saw the failure of major financial institutions around the country, as a result of which small investors and small stakeholders were severely disadvantaged.

A crying need has been expressed by the financial and investing communities for sound regulation of building societies and similar institutions. Nevertheless, the member for Caloundra bemoans the introduction of such regulation and the fact that friendly societies will have to comply with it.

The member for Caloundra complained also about the fact that some charges will be associated with that regulation. I can confidently assume that those charges are consistent with this Government's user pays principle. It is a constant source of amazement to me that members opposite object to the user pays principle—that those enjoying the benefits of a particular Government service must help offset the charges relevant to that service. Members opposite seem to be against that principle. One cannot know for sure whether that is the case, because they never outline which principles they support and to which principles they are opposed. We are left to wonder whether this is one of the "things that matter". Members opposite merely whinge about the implementation by this Government of principles such as user pays, but they seem to be unable to tell us whether this is one of the "things that matter".

Mr J. H. Sullivan: The Opposition in Queensland doesn't have things that matter, just things that natter.

Mr FENLON: I take that interjection from the honourable member. Perhaps members opposite should send Mr Downer a telegram and ask him whether this is one of the things that matter. Should this be added to the list? That is a valid question. We are here to help members opposite. We suggest strongly that they take our advice and contact Mr Downer urgently to see whether this is one of the things that matter.

It is apparent that having a clear set of principles is one of the things that does not matter to members opposite. They seem to be unable to come to grips with fundamental issues such as user pays. Devoid of principles, members opposite can only whinge. As soon as this Government takes any action to change the status quo, members opposite see an opportunity to have a whinge. In the great principle void, members opposite can do their best whingeing. As the honourable member for Caboolture said, the only skill of members opposite is having a good natter.

This legislation tidies up a range of issues in connection with the National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland, otherwise known as the RNA. The legislation will facilitate the passage of template legislation that will

regulate the friendly society industry throughout Australia.

I was amazed at the criticism by the member for Caloundra of the level playing field. If anything is a move towards ensuring that the level playing field exists, this is it. Yesterday, the member complained that somehow we were impeding the level playing field; today, she has claimed that the level playing field cannot be established under this legislation. I cannot see where on earth the member is coming from in her criticism of this legislation, but once again she just had to have a whinge about something.

The legislation refers to the provisions of the Financial Administration and Audit Act and complies with the requirements of that Act. It provides that all references in the legislation to the "Consolidated Revenue Fund" and the "Loan Fund" become references to the "Consolidated Fund". This legislation is timely. I support it, and I commend the Treasurer for bringing it before the House.

Hon K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (5.38 p.m.), in reply: I thank the two members who contributed to the debate. I understand that the Opposition is supporting the legislation, although one would not have—

Mrs Sheldon: We said we are not opposing it.

Mr De LACY: The Opposition is not opposing the legislation, although one would not have picked that up from the speech made by the Deputy Leader of the Coalition. In fact, she implied that it is the end of the world as we now know it; that friendly societies are finished; that this legislation will destroy them; and that they can no longer play their traditional role. Nevertheless, the honourable member said that the Opposition will not oppose the legislation!

I suspect that the Leader of the Liberal Party has been contacted by some people who are a bit disaffected. It is true that, whenever we make changes to the supervisory regime of an industry, some people find it difficult to accept those changes. I recall that, when we changed the supervisory regime of building societies and credit unions, we had that experience. I can remember the Opposition saying that that was the end of the world as we then knew it; that it would be the end of building societies; and that they would not be able to play their traditional role. Members opposite ought to talk to the building societies these days.

Mrs Sheldon: Tell us about the money you stole from Metway.

Mr De LACY: The member should talk to the building societies about that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat. Under Standing Orders, I ask the honourable the Deputy Leader of the Coalition to withdraw that comment.

Mrs SHELDON: If you so request, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would like to replace the word, if it is of concern to you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs SHELDON: Very well; I withdraw.

Mr De LACY: The Leader of the Liberal Party referred to placing a levy on friendly societies. I point out that the user pays system for supervision applies universally in this country now, as well it should. I cannot see why taxpayers ought to be subsidising friendly societies or anybody else. That is a principle that I support, and I am surprised that a spokesperson for the Liberal Party would be opposed to it. Building societies and credit unions pay for their own supervision; banks pay for their own supervision—everybody pays for their own supervision.

The move to supervision by the Queensland Office of Financial Supervision—QOFS—precedes the introduction next year of national legislation which will allow for prudential supervision of friendly societies on a uniform basis throughout Australia. As the Leader of the Liberal Party said, template legislation is currently being drawn up by the Government of Victoria. I think honourable members would be aware that Victoria has the largest friendly society industry by far in Australia. We believe it is appropriate that the Victorian Government draw up the template legislation, but of course that is being done in consultation with all other States because there is not much point in passing template legislation unless it has universal agreement.

The new legislation will replace existing prescriptive legislation. Prudential supervision under the new legislation will reduce the cost of compliance with the legislation and assist in enhancing the efficient operation of societies. So after this new legislation, friendly societies will in fact be more efficient rather than less efficient. In Victoria, friendly societies are supervised by their equivalent to our QOFS, which is the Victorian Financial Institutions Commission, and they are already subject to a supervision levy. This legislation and the new national legislation will allow for a rationalisation of the industry and greater flexibility in responding to the rapid changes that occur in financial markets.

I put it to the honourable member that if we retain the prescriptive legislation that controls and supervises friendly societies, it will not make them more flexible or more able to respond to

changes; it will make them less flexible and will ensure their demise if we do not move with the times. It is a fact that very often friendly societies do not play their traditional role of just delivering social welfare. To a large extent, that is now delivered by the Government. In the days when friendly societies were established, they primarily provided a whole range of social services to particular groups in the work force. Many friendly societies like Manchester Unity, to which the honourable member made reference, are very sophisticated financial institutions these days and they require the kind of non-prescriptive, prudentially based supervision that applies in the case of building societies. I thank honourable members for their support for this legislation.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. K. E. De Lacy (Cairns—Treasurer) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—

Mr FITZGERALD (5.45 p.m.): I just seek clarification from the Treasurer regarding the amendment to the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977. I see here we are inserting a new section, section 119 (1), which says—

"To remove any doubt, the standards and regulations that have effect under the sections 117 and 118 need not be notified in the Gazette nor laid before the Legislative Assembly to have effect as subordinate legislation."

I do not have a copy of the Financial Administration and Audit Act with me. Of course, we are amending a number of Acts in this legislation, and I do not have a copy of them all here. Could the Minister please explain exactly what is in sections 117 and 118?

Mr Hamill: It's a hard "Act" to follow.

Mr FITZGERALD: I do not doubt that it is a fairly hard Act to follow. I will let the Treasurer get some advice, obviously, but why is it that these regulations are not going to be notified in the Gazette or laid before the Legislative Assembly? I am shocked and horrified that, under this legislation, regulations and standards will not be presented to this Parliament. I would really like a detailed explanation as to why this amendment is contained in the Bill. I have not seen what is contained in sections 117 and 118 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, and I would appreciate a fairly comprehensively answer as to why this Parliament should grant the

Executive the right not to have regulations laid on the table of this House.

Mr De LACY: The honourable member might not be getting a comprehensive response. What it does is validate the Public Finance Standards that are in place under the Financial Administration and Audit Act. It provides that the standards and regulations that have effect under those two sections of the Financial Administration and Audit Act need not be notified in the Gazette. In other words, it merely validates what is the current situation. I cannot go beyond that, because I do not have a copy of the Financial Administration and Audit Act here.

Mr FITZGERALD: The Treasurer does not know what sections 117 or 118 refer to. However, as I understand it, regulations under an Act always have to be tabled, and this amends that particular Act so that they do not have to be tabled when a new section is put in. Obviously, my reading of it is that sections 117 and 118 are required to be tabled at present because we are putting in a new section, section 119, which states—

"To remove any doubt, the standards and regulations . . . need not be notified in the Gazette nor laid before the Legislative Assembly."

Maybe they do not have to be, but this removes any doubt. Maybe the Treasurer is correct in saying that at present they do not have to be tabled. Have they been tabled under sections 117 and 118 at this stage, or are we actually amending that Financial and Administration Audit Act to that degree?

Mr De LACY: I cannot be precise because, as I said, I do not have a copy of the Financial Administration and Audit Act here, but the insertion of this clause is to remove any doubt. My understanding is that it is not intended to change the substance of the Financial Administration and Audit Act in any way, shape or form because it is not something that I have been advised we were required to change. As it says here, it is to remove any doubt. I am trying to find the person who actually was responsible for the drafting. If I can get some advice before this debate is finished, I will let the honourable member know. It is just a clarification clause; it is not changing any substance and there are no policy implications.

Mr FITZGERALD: For the last time, I express my grave reservations. Obviously, the Bill is going to be passed. However, I place on record my grave reservations with regard to this piece of legislation. If at some future time the standards that are expected of this place are not met, I will obviously tell the Treasurer that I was

not very happy with the inclusion of this provision. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, I am not very happy about this Parliament losing the power to have a regulation tabled. I am in the dark; I do not know what is in sections 117 and 118. I do not like passing legislation that I do not understand. I think that is a responsibility we have as members of Parliament.

Mr Hamill: You should be used to it.

Mr FITZGERALD: I do not like approving legislation that I do not understand. I have tried to understand it and I seek explanations. I know it is difficult for Ministers, but they should actually be briefed well enough so that they have all the information available. Generally, they have running sheets. Ministers should try to have with them copies of the Acts that they intend to amend. I think this is very sloppy work, and I think that the Treasurer is taking this Parliament for granted.

I do not believe we should ever take legislation for granted. I do not believe it is right to take legislation for granted. I believe that the humblest person in this Chamber, even though that person might have difficulty understanding the legislation, should eventually be satisfied and understand what is going through if that person puts his or her mind to it. I do not believe that I am very dull. I believe I have average intelligence. I am not convinced that what we are doing is correct.

Clause 14, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 15 to 23, as read, agreed to.

Clause 24—

Mrs SHELDON (5.52 p.m.): I refer to proposed new section 8.35 (1). This clause, which contains various subclauses about the levy, states that the levy can be fixed by the registrar; that it is a stated amount; that it is a stated percentage; that it is both a stated amount and a stated percentage; and that the registrar may include in the decision directions about how the levy is to be decided. More importantly, it states that the registrar may fix the amount of the levy differently for different friendly societies. Indeed, it also states that the registrar may decide that the levy is not payable by stated friendly societies. The clause also sets out how the registrar may require the levy to be paid in one amount by a stated time or permit the levy to be paid by stated instalments. It goes on to mention late payment and what the levy includes.

I am a little concerned about this, and perhaps the Treasurer can explain this to me. It seems to me that the Treasurer has an absolute and unfettered ability to set whatever

percentage of levy he wants in any way he wants. Proposed new section 8.36 states—

"In deciding the amount to be paid . . . the Registrar may consult with industry bodies and friendly societies"—

not that he must. So it seems to me that a friendly society could have any form of levy and any amount of levy imposed upon it without consultation. Surely, that is an unfair and unnecessary restriction on friendly societies. Could the Treasurer please explain that?

Mr De LACY: That is normal drafting language—to talk about "may consult". I assure the member that the registrar would always consult. The levy will be based on the supervision levy for building societies and credit unions code, which is a very strict code. It is spelt out in that code. It deals with the asset base, the number of members and what have you. It is a common tactic for members of the Opposition to say that the Treasurer can do this and the Treasurer can do that. I guess that, up to a point, the Treasurer can.

Nevertheless, this legislation is here for the benefit of the friendly societies industry. It is the registrar who sets the levy, not the Treasurer. It is based on covering the costs of supervision. We have been through this exercise with building societies and credit unions in Queensland. We have proved that we can supervise these financial institutions at minimum cost—certainly at a much cheaper rate than New South Wales and Victoria. That is our objective, and it always has been our objective. Our total interest is the welfare of the industry. That is the way it will be, and that is what this particular clause and the whole piece of legislation reflect.

Clause 24, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 25 to 27, as read, agreed to.

Clause 28—

Mrs SHELDON (5.56 p.m.): Proposed new Part 12A.1 (1) states—

"This Part applies to a friendly society that does not provide a benefit or keep a benefit fund."

I thought that all friendly societies did actually provide a benefit.

Mr De LACY: No. Sometimes they just provide some sort of social service.

Clause 28, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 29 to 58, as read, agreed to.

Clause 59—

Mr De LACY (5.58 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 41, lines 18–21—

omit, insert—

'19.(1) A member of the Council does not incur civil liability for an act done, or omission made, honestly and without negligence under this Act including the Association's rules.

'(2) If subsection (1) prevents a civil liability attaching to a member of the Council, the liability attaches instead to the Association.'"

This amendment is being moved as a consequence of representations made to me by the RNA. The Parliamentary Counsel has used the opportunity in this legislation to update, if one likes, into 1990s language, or to put into plain English, a 1971 provision. The RNA was concerned that the new wording of the provision changed the effect of the old provision. I am not 100 per cent convinced that that is the case; but I asked my legal counsel to have a look at it, and we have agreed to introduce the amendment so as to ensure that the amending Act has exactly the same effect as the original Act.

Firstly, this amendment is necessary to make reference to the association's rules, as these rules also confer powers on the council as the ruling body of the association. Also, it is more correct to attach liability to the association itself rather than the ruling body of the association, as it is the association which has legal personality. I ask honourable members to support this amendment on behalf of the RNA. There was no intention to change the legal status of the RNA, and the amendment will ensure that that is the case.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 59, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 60, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Third Reading

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

Sitting suspended from 6.01 to 7.30 p.m.

TRANSPORT OPERATIONS (PASSENGER TRANSPORT) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 30 August (see p. 8965).

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory) (7.30 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Bill 1994. Honourable members

should be well aware that this is probably one of the most important pieces of legislation affecting the private transport operators and the public transport operators to come before this House. The current legislation in respect of the provision and control of public passenger transport is vested primarily in the State Transport Act 1960, the Urban Passenger Service Proprietors Assistance Act 1975 and the Urban Public Transport Act 1984.

I think the most important thing to recognise tonight is that there has been consultation with industry. I understand that there has been consultation right throughout industry and also with people representing the Government. This Bill addresses driver authorisation and regulations, the introduction of a system of service contracts under which operators in restricted markets are to be held accountable for providing minimal levels of service, and also unrestricted market entry except where it is not in the public interest. The Explanatory Notes state—

"Specifically these objectives will establish a system of passenger transport that:

is responsive to the needs of the community;

provides an attractive alternative to private transport, thus reducing the overall environmental, economic and social costs of passenger transport;"

It is absolutely paramount to recognise not only the needs of the community but also the needs of the people who are trying to provide that service to the community. We have private operators in the bus, taxi and the private vehicle hire industries, along with the public transport services. I believe that all of the people involved are endeavouring to the best of their ability and finances to provide services that are beneficial to the whole of the community, as well as their own productivity and profitability come 30 June or any other part of year.

I believe, as stated in the Explanatory Notes, that the challenge of future growth needs to be addressed. When one considers the growth in south-east Queensland and the fact that some 1 000 people a week are coming to this part of the State, it is clear that the Minister for Transport—who is also the Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development—must address the transport needs in other parts of the State in order to shift the population away from the south-east corner. I believe that places such as Cairns, Townsville, Bundaberg and Rockhampton are being considered, but there are other places in this State where people can enjoy a good quality of life. The transport needs in those areas need to

be addressed so that growth is not confined to the south-east corner of the State and, at the same time, a reasonable level of access and mobility has to be provided for the transport disadvantaged.

Many people in this State are transport disadvantaged. I believe that up to 30 per cent of the people who live in the south-east corner do not hold a driver's licence. Those people are transport disadvantaged. Their needs must be catered for. We must cater for the needs of underprivileged people, and we must also cater for the needs of privileged people. The needs of people who use the services of taxis have to be catered for. At the same time, steps must be taken to protect the interests of the taxi, bus and PVH operators.

I consider passenger and coach transport to be a vital element of the State's transport infrastructure. The industry has long had the impression that it is a money loser—there is no doubt about that; it has been a money loser—and that passenger transport was viable only if one could secure a Government subsidy or secure a monopoly over a certain Government route.

This Bill goes a long way towards ensuring a much-needed overhaul of the industry. However, I am concerned that it does not go quite far enough. I will address those concerns as I proceed.

I draw the attention of the House to clause 42 (1), which includes a long list of provisions regarding service contracts. These cover the fare setting and the quality of a coach vehicle. They are quite detailed. What is missing is a list of services that the Government will provide to the operator. This is conspicuous by its absence. I hope the Minister might address that in his reply or during the Committee stage. There is a long list of requirements on the part of the service provider and nothing in return from the Government other than the usual sweetness of a monopoly route or a taxpayer-funded financial enticement.

In relation to bus routes—we have to ensure that one group of operators does not handle the cream of the routes while another group picks up the dregs. I believe that in any industry—and the transport industry is no exception—operators must take the good with the bad, the cream with the dregs. We have to provide a service both to those who live in the urban sprawl and to those who live outside the cities where there is currently no public transport at all.

Queensland is an expanding State in which population growth is greater than in any other State in Australia. I might add that that is a result

of the economic foundations laid down by previous Governments, especially their initiatives in the mining and extractive industries. That expansion would have allowed this Government more flexibility in the inducements it offered to operators. Those inducements might be business opportunities that cost taxpayers nothing. Indeed, business opportunities raise money after they are developed. That is something that we have to be well aware of, because no matter what the business is, the people involved are going into those business to make a profit. At the same time, they are going into those businesses to provide a service—in this case passenger transport service to the people who need it. If that service is a quality service then that business will survive. If it is not a quality service, I know I will not use it and I think many other people in this House would treat it in the same way. I believe that we are about providing quality, no matter what service people are seeking.

Those inducements might be business opportunities. As I just said, business opportunities raise money after they are developed, because they create employment, stimulate demand for support industry and generate foreign revenue from export industries. Nowhere is this more true than in the Queensland passenger transport industry. With our expanding tourism industry, the passenger transport industry has an exciting future in Queensland. Why then has the Government limited itself to funding service contracts when many business operators would welcome the opportunity to participate in an expanding tourism industry and gladly operate some non-profitable route or routes if the Government would provide the required infrastructure to facilitate their later entry into the more commercial tourism industry?

The tourism industry can be accessed by many different operators. No doubt the coach industry has an important role to play, as well as the private vehicle hire industry. Recently, I noticed that the Government has now allowed the PVH people to be able to wait at airport terminals to provide that luxury service—the more up-market service—for people travelling to the five-star hotels and to the Gold Coast. That is the type of market that the PVH industry caters to.

Mr Hamill: And Cairns.

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, and Cairns, because that industry is a growth industry in Cairns. I will return to the PVH industry. I believe that industry also has its problems. The industry has flaws and it is not so much a form of deregulation but a form of regulation or requisitions that could make it a

little more difficult for some of those operators to take full advantage of providing that up-market service to our Japanese, Asian and European tourists or to our own people.

I believe that the performance specification terms are all one sided, and that is not good. Clause 42 of the Bill lists the various service or performance dimensions, if I might term them that, such as performance dimensions for coach quality and safety, for demonstrated business management skills, and the list goes on. However, no part of that clause states that the Government reciprocates. If a coach operator is required to demonstrate a certain level of skill in the operation of a management information system, to use the example of a performance dimension from clause 42 (1) (h), or the conduct of a market-based need assessment as per clause 47 (4), then why is there no requirement on the Government to support the operators in the development of those skills? The Bill merely says that the operator "will provide". There is nothing to say that the operator has the right to require a counterproposal from the Government. That is quite unfair and, I believe, an abrogation of the Government's responsibility. I hope that the Minister might refer to that matter in his reply.

The Opposition has concerns about certain aspects of this legislation. However, I will say that the briefing that we received from the Minister's departmental officers resolved much of our unease about it.

I shall be urging strongly any transport operator who is encouraged by the Department of Transport to enter into a performance contract to read the specifications carefully and call for a variety of options in the contents of the contract. I will give every assistance that I can in directing the operators to the relevant industry associations. In particular, if the Government is asking for performance criteria in areas outside the direct area of the operator's expertise, such as the operation of computerised management information systems or the application of theoretical management principles, in which the operator may have limited expertise, he or she should seek the advice of his or her industry association before entering into the contract.

I am not saying for one moment that the Minister has not consulted with the industry. However, I believe that the bus industry, the taxi industry and the private vehicle hire industry have to have their own consultative committees. They have to liaise with the Government—with the Minister and his departmental officers—about matters relating to their respective areas. Although the Minister says that his consultation with the industry has been beneficial to it in general, I believe that

consultative committees are a more precise and reasonable way of letting the industry have more input into the everyday functioning of its operations.

As the Bill is phrased, there is no requirement on the Government to train an operator or staff of the operator. I do not believe that the Government has the right to be training people, anyway but, at the same time, I am saying that, because of the requisitions that are laid down by the Government, it has to make facilities more accessible so that people can put their staff through the necessary training. In that way, if there is a failure to demonstrate the capability of the operator, at least the person who is in charge of the operator has the chance to prove that that particular employee can perform to the standards of the industry.

I believe that this Bill is about providing a quality service. No doubt, that is what the Minister is about also. Those standards are paramount to the passengers who travel in those vehicles, whether they be buses, coaches, taxis or vehicles in the PVH industry. We want the best for the people of this State. I can assure everybody in this House that we in the Opposition will do everything in our power to make sure that we have a quality passenger transport system in this State, and we will be working closely with Government to achieve that. I know how hard all members of this House have worked over the last few years to try to eradicate the problem of road deaths. Road safety is paramount and close to the hearts of each and every one of us. Whether it is our own private vehicle, public transport, or the private transport industry, we want to see the best system functioning.

The House would be aware that I have spoken many times before about the need for increased training and professionalism in the transport industry. As I have said, training is an active process, not a passive one achieved by passing the relevant legislation, as the Government seems to think. Indeed, throughout this Bill we see no clause that commits the Government to industry training. However, I believe that we have to encourage the industry to take advantage of those training skills. I do not believe that the industry should be penalised at this time. We want the best operation. I know that the Government has been training drivers employed in the heavy vehicle industry at the Mount Cotton Driver Training Centre. That concept has been successful, and I applaud it. I believe that the results will be beneficial in the long term.

I refer to further examples of grossly one-sided performance specifications that are

contained in the Bill, such as clause 41 (1) (k), which states that an operator can be required to pay compensation for a service that he does not provide in accordance with his service contract. I do not consider that that provision should be included in the Bill when section 47 (10) states that, if the operator has his contract terminated, he has no right of compensation. I believe that that is a little bit unfair and greatly one sided. Even if we put aside the inequity issue, I still consider the liability for contract failure to be incorrect. Most operators in the industry would make every possible effort to meet or exceed the minimum requirements in their contracts. However, they cannot be made liable for anything that could happen, and will happen, in the passenger transport industry in a State such as Queensland. Operators are bound to fall down in the frequency, regularity and punctuality of their service, as provided in clause 42 (1) (a). I am not saying that they will do that on purpose, but they could do that through unforeseen problems, such as floods, bushfires, cyclones or whatever. At the time, I believe that we have to be sympathetic to their cause. Some small businesses will fail, and some people will find it so hard to make a living that they will simply close up shop. I believe that it is wrong to make these people liable for damages when they have been giving of their utmost to their industry, their Government and their people.

I now turn to the qualifications for obtaining and holding accreditation. Clause 18 of the Bill makes it clear that an accreditation may be held by anybody who wishes to be accredited to operate such a vehicle; by a partnership, that is, a number of men or women who are jointly and severally liable to each other; or by a corporation, that is, a propriety limited company. It is this last-mentioned classification that gives me concern. These are qualifying offences that preclude an individual, that is, a man or woman from holding an accreditation. However, it would appear that the classifications of criminal offences involved would apply only to an individual, not to a corporation. I will ask the Minister to elaborate on that. I agree strongly with the criteria with which the Minister proposes to preclude persons from accreditation, namely, on the grounds of a history of drug offences or inappropriate conduct with juveniles. However, the problem is that the offence classifications apply only to the executive officer or officers of the corporation.

It would appear also that the offence classifications would be more appropriately applied to those employees of the company who interface with the public. There is nothing to say that an unaccredited person cannot be employed by a corporation holding an accreditation. That employee may be a person

totally unsuited to employment in the industry. The Opposition would have preferred to see the application of a two level system of accreditation. I trust that the Minister will look at that suggestion.

The first level would be applicable to a company, partnership or a natural person. That would be referred to as a primary accreditation. The accredited party would be the party to enter into a contract with the Minister, and the qualifications would be based on commercial and business skill considerations. Needless to say, we do not encourage persons with a gravely undesirable history into the industry. However, there is nothing to say that a person, for example, with a history of drink-driving would not be capable of effective company directorship. In accrediting people, we have to be very careful about the way in which we judge those who have a chance of entering into this industry.

At the same time, I am not for one moment saying that we are inviting the cowboy element to take control of this industry. That is something that we in the Opposition will not support and are totally opposed to in every shape and form. In this industry, it is absolutely paramount that we get it right the first time. There will be no room for the cowboy element. I hope that the people who are fair dinkum in the industry—whether it be the PVH, the taxi or coach industries—will be given a fair go when it comes to this level of accreditation.

The second level would apply to men and women in the industry who operate vehicles and deal with the travelling public. The main consideration in this regard would be a person's history of social behaviour. Inappropriate conduct, such as repeated drink-driving offences, drug dealing and so on, would preclude admission. The Opposition has a great concern about this aspect. I trust that the Minister will look at that two-tier suggestion. It would be quite appropriate for anybody to hold both first and second level accreditation simultaneously, or for a man or a woman holding a second level accreditation to be a director of a company or a partner of a partnership holding a first level accreditation.

The next point that I wish to raise is the liability on an operator's estate to provide a service for the unexpired portion of the contract tenure, in the event that the operator should die part way through the term of a contract. Many operators are owner/drivers and clause 42 (1) (k) would appear to place the obligation on the contractor to provide the service or compensate the Government for any failure to do so. In this situation, it should not fall upon the widow, the widower, or his or her life insurance to pay a sum

to the Government equal to the difference between the contract price paid by the person who takes over his route and the original price. I believe that we should have some clause built in to address this situation. No doubt the Minister will elaborate on that, too.

I note also in section 45 (1) that a term of a contract is five years, and that the only exception to this will be the special circumstances as referred to in section 45 (2). We have looked long and hard at this aspect. The Opposition goes along with the five-year contract. We have discussed this with departmental officers. I believe that it is satisfactory to the industry. However, at the same time we do suggest that caution be exercised in some instances. I ask the Minister to be aware that there could be irregularities further down the line with this five-year contract concept.

The next point I wish to raise is whether a contract has a core component—the identity of the party. This has important implications for the value of a business to an operator. If a person wants to retire, go into a different industry or operate in the industry in a different locality, will this give rise to the Minister renegotiating the contract with the subsequent buyer of the business? If the five-year condition that applies under section 45 (1) is to be upheld, five years would be a long time to ask a person to commit his energy and to build up goodwill and so on, only to lose the lot if he wants or needs to sell out part way through the term. I believe that there are a couple of irregularities within this contract concept, which is something that concerns us. I urge the Government and the Minister responsible to pay particular attention to the needs of these people when these contracts are issued.

I will return momentarily to the PVH industry. Earlier, I mentioned that deregulation is not opposed, but the consideration of the positions of operators now in the industry is essential. Borrowing against licences could be an issue that has to be looked at, because bankruptcies could be the end of the line, as I mentioned in relation to the five-year contracts within the bus industry. The PVH industry is unique in a lot of ways. As I said earlier, the industry should have its own consultative group that deals directly with the Minister of the day or with the departmental officers to make sure that that industry is getting a fair go, in the same way as any other part of the transport industry. I will elaborate more on the PVH industry during the debate on the clauses at the Committee stage.

However, there is one thing that I do wish to touch on briefly before I conclude, and that is the taxi industry. In the different places where it

operates, the taxi industry is unique to the needs of people. A bus or a coach industry provides a service that is subject to a route, or is based on a contract which specifies where they can operate. At the same time, the taxi industry provides a very safe, secure service to the travelling public. These operators pay up to \$250,000 to \$260,000 for licences. The industry, the Government and the people of this State recognise that a lot of these people buy these licenses as a form of superannuation. Deregulation is something of which we have been fearful. We have made noises about it on this side of the House for a long while, and I have mentioned it in the press. It is something that we are totally opposed to. I believe the Minister has addressed the regulations and requisitions of the taxi industry but, at the same time, I would like to hear him say that there will definitely be no form of deregulation. These operators drive their cabs for extremely long hours. As I say, this is their form of superannuation. When they retire, they sell those cabs and live on the proceeds. It concerns me greatly that we will see that industry subjected to a lot of problems if the operators are not allowed to continue in the current vein.

There is another point that I wish to raise in relation to the taxi industry. The recent Hilmer report into national competition policy identified that Government regulation that restricts numbers of taxis and fixes maximum prices also restricts competition. I believe the Hilmer report could be very damaging to the taxi industry. If, as it recommends, restrictions are placed on competition—and unless this is clearly demonstrated to be in the public interest—the taxi industry will suffer in the long term. The department, the Minister and the Government should recognise what the Hilmer report is saying. Once a form of deregulation creeps into that industry, it will mean damage forever and a day.

Mr Connor: It is starting to be now.

Mr JOHNSON: I will take the interjection from my colleague the member for Nerang, who said, "It is starting to be now." I believe that certain elements of the taxi industry are suffering. I trust that people will recognise just what a service the taxi industry provides to the people of Queensland, and to the people of any part of Australia for that matter. However, we are talking about Queensland. People can catch a cab at any hour of the day or night. Being able to take advantage of such a service, particularly at night-time, is of great comfort to the women in our society. They know that they can catch a cab at one o'clock or two o'clock in the morning. That cab can deliver them to their home and its light can illuminate the path to the front door. The security that the industry offers is one of its

particularly positive features. The taxi industry has many safety aspects that other industries do not. It is of paramount importance that we look after the interests of the taxi industry and those who are trying to provide the best possible service to it. As I mentioned earlier, we are not inviting the cowboy element into the industry.

The Opposition supports this legislation. We are totally in support of providing a better public transport service to the people of Queensland. As was pointed out to me earlier this evening, once this legislation is passed, it could be another couple of years before amendments are made to it. I point out to the Minister and his departmental officers—who many times have provided an input into legislation—that we must get it right the first time. This legislation will be beneficial not only to the people in the south-east corner but also to the residents of this State in general.

In closing, I must thank Peter Ferris, Bill Upton and Greg Goebel from the department for the very in-depth briefing that they recently gave Opposition members. The Opposition supports the legislation.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes) (8.02 p.m.): I rise to support the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Bill. I want to touch on two key components of the reforms provided in the legislation—operator accreditation and driver authorisation. Both of those measures are designed to standardise training within and therefore entry to the public passenger transport industry. The measures will replace existing requirements and will be monitored and administered by a combination of Government and industry representatives.

The arrangements developed for implementing operator accreditation and driver authorisation are the result of consultation and cooperation between industry and the Government and are designed to reduce the level of Government intervention through proscriptive regulation and to allow industry a voice in the setting and maintenance of standards that will apply to its members in Queensland. That is consistent with the overall approach of this Government of involving specific groups in all forms of legislative reforms that are undertaken. The consultation undertaken during the drafting of this legislation has been genuine, effective and ongoing. The result is legislation that contains no surprises for industry.

As to operator accreditation—under the legislation, only operators who attain and maintain accreditation will be permitted to operate public passenger transport services. This will apply to operators of scheduled

passenger services, including school services; long distance scheduled services; tourist services—which are becoming a specific element of the tourist industry in this State—including specialised tour services such as motor cycles; charter bus services; taxi services; luxury limousine services; and courtesy transport services. Not so many years ago, we hardly would have imagined that many of those elements of the public transport industry would be significant industries in their own right. In the tourist centres of this State, more and more operators are offering those services to guests of certain hotels.

Operator accreditation will ensure that operators are fit and proper people to operate a public transport service and that they are aware of their safety responsibilities to their clients and to the drivers of their vehicles. This legislation contains significant public interest considerations. The State has an enormous responsibility to ensure that the public is protected and that its expectations as to reasonable safety standards are guaranteed and met.

This legislation has an international dimension. Nowadays, the use of public passenger transport vehicles in the tourist industry is widespread. Our State's reputation as a safe tourism destination must be maintained. A very important element of that is ensuring that overseas visitors are guaranteed reasonable safety standards on public passenger transport vehicles.

Specifically, the purpose of operator accreditation is to encourage the high-quality operation of public passenger services by raising standards and awareness of operators in the areas of safety, service delivery and business skills and by ensuring that public passenger service operators are held accountable for complying with appropriate standards. At present, we place a great deal of trust in public passenger transport operators to conduct their operations in an ethical manner. This legislation will enshrine that trust and will involve the industry in maintaining high standards. Each of the objectives to which I have referred is reasonable and desirable and has full industry approval.

Operator accreditation will take the form of a certificate of qualification from an approved training course delivered by industry. Courses are to be delivered through tertiary institutions with the objective that only practical, relevant and current training is provided. One aspect of the accreditation course will feature vehicle design, safety and operational requirements. All operators must receive the same training in

regard to these and other aspects of the responsible operation of a passenger transport business. This will ensure standardisation of safety aspects throughout the State. Accreditation will be a fundamental ingredient to guaranteeing the safety of residents of and visitors to this State who utilise public passenger transport services.

In terms of driver authorisation—all drivers of public passenger transport vehicles will be required to undergo training to become authorised. The purpose of driver authorisation is to ensure that drivers of public passenger transport vehicles are capable of safely operating the relevant type of vehicle, are aware of their customer service responsibilities and conduct themselves appropriately.

This legislation will provide that all authorised drivers will hold an appropriate driver's licence; have an acceptable driving record; show an understanding of and capacity to comply with all relevant regulations under the new legislation; meet appropriate standards of character and medical fitness; be trained in customer service standards appropriate to the type of service, and again this is very important in terms of the tourist aspects that have I referred to already, and our international standing. Where appropriate, the authorised drivers will demonstrate safety knowledge and skills and specialist driving requirements. Again, as the tourist industry in this State diversifies and as our requirements for various innovative vehicles in the State continue, there will be a framework here to ensure that the drivers are properly regulated and the legislation copes with those changes.

Course arrangements for both operators' accreditation and driver authorisation will be developed in conjunction with industry representatives. The joint Government/industry approach to these training programs will ensure that they are practical, relevant and promote Statewide consistency and compliance with the legislation. In terms of safety—operators and drivers of vehicles have a responsibility to other transport users to act in a safe manner. The Government will therefore maintain an interest in ensuring that operators are both skilled in using vehicles and vessels and are aware of how to operate them safely. Thus, an understanding of aspects of safety will be a prerequisite for involvement in the public passenger transport industry. This measure can only complement our road safety initiatives and is to be welcomed.

The legislation seeks to maintain a healthy balance between industry independence and Government intervention. However, I am sure that all parents of school children who use buses regularly, all passengers who commute and all

pensioners who ride on the bus to the shops will be reassured to hear that the Government will maintain an active role in setting and monitoring safety standards of passenger transport vehicles used in the State. Experience in New Zealand and America shows us that total deregulation of both bus and taxi industries throws up a wide assortment of vehicles and a range of safety and service standards which vary from very good to absolutely disgraceful. In this regard, the Government believes it is no good having the cheapest bus system in Australia if safety standards are compromised. The legislation before the House encourages high levels of public passenger transport service performance and cost efficiency, while at the same time paying full heed to safety requirements through the new system of operator accreditation and driver authorisation. I support the Bill before the House.

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North) (8.15 p.m.): In rising to speak to Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Bill, may I firstly reiterate the comments made by my colleague the member for Gregory and place on record my thanks to Department of Transport officials Bill Upton, the Executive Director of Transport Operations and Greg Goebel, the Director of Passenger Transport, as well as Peter Ferris from the Minister's office, for their courtesy in providing what was a most comprehensive briefing to me and my colleague the member for Gregory in relation to this Bill.

Mr Beattie: What damned good officers they are.

Mr HEALY: They are very good officers. One thing that Mr Goebel said at that briefing was that as he was heavily involved with the planning for and drafting of the legislation, he was emphatic that the legislation be presented in a form that, firstly, he could understand and, more importantly, that people in the industry could understand. I think that sort of attitude is extremely important.

In February of this year, during the second-reading debate on the Transport Infrastructure Bill, I spoke on that exact same subject. If honourable members remember, that particular legislation was fairly difficult to understand. As most members know, when a Bill is about to be introduced in draft form, various interest groups want to get a copy and read it and, of course, when they get it they sometimes cannot understand the legislative jargon. I can remember that at that time I particularly quoted part of the Minister's second-reading speech on that particular Bill. It was—

"This family of legislation contains a hierarchy of objectives which become

progressively more specific. In particular, the Bill contains mode-specific legislative objectives and further objectives are to be contained within the mode-specific strategies which give effect to the higher level objectives.' "

Mr Hamill: Now you understand it.

Mr HEALY: Now, after reading it several times, I do understand it. At the time, the member for Brisbane Central turned around with a resounding, "Hear, hear!" when I suggested that perhaps we should be presenting legislation in a form that was much easier to understand. May I say that at least this Bill is very easy to comprehend, and I am sure that most people involved in the transport passenger industry would agree.

It is my opinion that a lot of problems that are being faced by not only this Government but indeed Governments everywhere in relation to things like road building, land resumptions, compensation payouts, protest meetings, angry residents, environmental disasters, koalas and much, much more, would be alleviated if somehow we could encourage more people to use our public transport systems. I am sure most members would agree with those statements. In fact, in the Minister's second-reading speech on this particular Bill he said—

"Demand management strategies in CBDs and key urban centres designed to constrain car use and encourage public transport use have been virtually non-existent. For instance, in the Brisbane CBD, between 1986 and 1992, the cost of car parking increased on average by less than 3 per cent per year. Not surprisingly, in the same period, the number of people parking in the inner city increased by more than 6 per cent per year."

He then went on to say—

". . . a lack of commitment to public transport has seen the percentage of transport trips made by public transport in south-east Queensland decline from about 12 per cent in the mid-1970s to less than 9 per cent at present. On current trends, without remedial action the public transport share of total trips will decline to around 7 per cent by the year 2011."

Yes, I agree that they are fairly frightening statistics. I have to say that perhaps there are a lot of things contained in this particular piece of legislation that may go a long way to persuading many people in this State to choose to use public transport rather than private motor vehicles. But let me make it quite clear that, as my colleague the member for Gregory has stated,

there are quite a few things in this Bill that the Opposition and indeed many industry people are still concerned about, and I will come to them a little later.

As I said before, I am sure members on both sides of the House would dearly love to see more people using public transport and fewer private motor vehicles continuing to clog up our highways, particularly those close to major cities such as Brisbane. One particular instance that I can recall—and I see it every time I drive from my electorate to Parliament House—is on the Western Freeway. As one approaches the Toowong Cemetery, inevitably, every single morning there is a major hold-up on that highway with traffic virtually reduced to a crawl. There are other instances, of course, but I think it also comes down to a matter of promotion. It is my belief that any product, if it is a good product promoted well, will be a success. Perhaps the reason why public transport in this State is not promoted nearly enough is because the product often times has not been good or has not been quite right for the market. However, there is no doubt that this legislation will have an enormous influence on passenger transport—buses, taxis and PVHs—right around this State.

Since the passenger transport review began, and particularly over the past year or so, the taxi industry in this State has unfortunately been strung along by this Government with nothing but uncertainty and a fear that the Minister was going to make a decision to deregulate.

Mr Hamill: Ha, ha!

Mr HEALY: If the Minister hops into any taxi anywhere in the State and he asks the driver, whether he or she is an owner/driver or a commission driver, he or she will say that despite his apparent honest bleatings, they still fear deregulation. The average person with a taxi licence still fears deregulation. If it did happen, it would have a disastrous effect on many cab owners who, as small businessmen and investors, would have the value of their licences reduced to just the value of the vehicles they drive. Those people have, in some cases, invested up to half a million dollars, and they plan on a return on their investment for some time in the future—and deservedly so. This Government, through some sections of this legislation, has really done nothing to allay those fears, with many operators still fearing deregulation by stealth. That is exactly what they are saying.

I hope that this legislation will fix a lot of the problems that many people experience when they get into a taxi and find that they have a

relatively inexperienced driver behind the wheel. Quite some months ago, while I was here at Parliament House, some friends of mine invited me to dinner at their residence in Sunnybank. I was not quite sure of the address, so I ordered a taxi—and I will not mention the company. I got into the taxi, and the driver did not know where to go. In fact, I asked him how long he had been in the country, because I recognised his accent, and he said he had been in the country for four weeks. I asked him what he did for a living, and he said he was a Polish economist. After about two hours, we eventually found where I had to go because I was using the UBD with a torch. That sort of thing does happen, and it does frustrate many people.

I turn to the PVH industry and what is happening to that industry under this legislation. In the Minister's second-reading speech, he said—

"In relation to the private hire car industry, the review found that no PVH licences have been issued since 1988, which has led to high plate values, particularly in tourist areas."

This might be true, but the plate values have come nowhere near the value of a taxi licence. The Minister then went on to say—

"Another problem is that PVHs have begun to encroach on the taxi industry, taking the cream of the fares without having to pay the licence plate fees required of the taxi industry."

That is somewhat of a contradiction because, under this legislation, luxury limousine services—or limousine services, as they will become after the amendment—and private hire cars will be virtually deregulated and will still be able to compete with taxis. As the member for Gregory said, I take the situation at airport ranks as a perfect example, even though PVHs will have a limited scope in relation to destinations. In the eyes of the taxi industry, it is still a case of unfair competition between two facets of the industry, where one of the players has paid a lot more for the right to deliver a service than the other.

With this legislation we find the first stage of a three-way overlap—no new taxi licences to be issued unless it is for a vehicle that is able to carry more passengers than conventional taxis. So we have the proliferation of the larger taxis: the medicabs and the maxi taxis. The second overlap is that buses with reduced passenger availability will be able to compete with taxis and PVHs, even though they will be restricted to service areas. The point is that, somewhere down the track, this overlap must create some sort of problems and certainly additional and

unnecessary ill feeling between the three facets of the industry. What is wrong with taxis being taxis, PVHs being PVHs and buses being buses?

However, some initiatives in this legislation are very welcome. I am sure that the scope for flat-fare operations with taxis and perhaps, with due consideration by the department, pensioner discounts would be welcomed by many fare payers. Whilst the taxi industry still needs to be regulated, the decision to remove a lot of heavy and unnecessary rules and regulations is very much welcome.

I agree with the comments made earlier by my colleague the member for Gregory in relation to each of the industries having its own industry advisory council. Perhaps the Minister could consider that some time down the track, so that each of the three industries could have a much fairer way of negotiating with Government.

Another problem that the PVH industry seems to face is in relation to courtesy vehicles, which are owned and operated by tourist attractions and hotels. The PVH industry quite rightly feels that a lot of business is being taken away by those courtesy vehicles which, at times, provide a free service not only for pick-ups and deliveries to hotels but also by conducting tours around an area. It seems to me that, in this particular legislation, there is no real definition or regulation in relation to those particular operations. In some cases, the vehicle from that tourist destination or hotel might be driven by Fred the cook, who might have a day off. It appears that he does not have to have any accreditation whatsoever and does not come under the same rules and regulations as perhaps those involved in other facets of the industry come under.

I can understand the thoughts and feelings of people within the PVH industry who feel that courtesy vehicles need to be looked at in terms of some sort of future regulation or legislation. After all, we have three various facets of the industry: the bus, taxi and coach industry. They are competing against each other, and sometimes that can be seen by each of those industries to be a little bit unfair. Then we have a fourth player coming in, who is providing a service—if it is a good service, we do not know, because there do not seem to be any regulations—who seems to be taking the cream off the cake for those operations.

In relation to the bus industry—the Opposition sees some fairly positive initiatives in this legislation. However, I believe that a couple of things need to be highlighted and perhaps

clarified at the Committee stage. In his second-reading speech, the Minister stated—

"Bus operators have become fairly heavily reliant on Government subsidies instead of their own business and entrepreneurial skills that ought to be directed towards increasing patronage levels by providing the types of services that people want and need."

The Minister said also—

"In some areas of the State, services do not commence until after 9 a.m. and finish before 5 p.m.—therefore making it very difficult for people to commute to and from work. Night-time and weekend services are, with few exceptions, virtually non-existent."

That might very well be the case. Perhaps it is the case in some areas. But I suggest that that particular scenario to which the Minister referred might indicate the necessity for sufficient subsidy to continue in the private sector to fund unprofitable or non-viable service times to ensure their continuation.

It is accepted that the passenger transport review found that in many rural areas the school bus is the only form of public transport available and that, in the past, the use of the bus has been restricted to only those school children eligible for free school transport, while excluding other students and fare-paying passengers, even if the bus has space available on it. Changes to that particular part of the legislation are certainly welcome.

If the Government is serious about promoting public transport, perhaps all primary school students should be made eligible to travel to the nearest State primary school, and subsequent reduction of eligibility criteria for secondary school students to the nearest State high school could be considered. This could help from an early age to educate youngsters to rely on public transport and to be shown the convenience of public transport, if the Government was prepared to concede in that regard.

No doubt the issue of service contract areas for buses is going to cause some problems, particularly in areas where only one contract is awarded and several operators are currently in existence. I know the system under this particular legislation in relation to compensation that is to be paid to operators who do not receive the nod in relation to a contract. It seems unfair that the successful operator should have to pay the entire compensation to displaced operators without any form of Government assistance whatsoever. Then, of course, a problem is

created if the successful operator and the displaced operator or operators cannot come to an agreement on the amount of compensation to be paid. Under this legislation, the matter then has to go to arbitration. Again, there is no suggestion of Government assistance. So, by the time the operator who is awarded the contract pays compensation to the other operators in the area or, if they do not agree to a compensation figure, it goes to arbitration, someone then has to pay those costs. Again, there is no Government assistance.

Whilst everyone realises the importance of having bus operators who have a clean slate in relation to any sort of offence, particularly a disqualifying offence, under the terms of this legislation I believe—as happened in the not-too-distant past with several schoolteachers—it appears that someone could be deemed guilty without a trial. For someone to be charged with a disqualifying offence before going to trial and having his or her driver authorisation suspended, that could cause a lot of unnecessary trauma to that driver.

As I said at the beginning, the legislation will mean many obvious changes to the passenger transport industry and that will probably not be without a few headaches. I am sure the department knows that. A few people within the industry will have their noses out of joint as a result of some changes that are to be made. That is probably inevitable. The Government has to get it right the first time. Hopefully, we will not see any amending legislation coming into this House in the near future to correct any fundamental mistakes that may become apparent.

Mr DAVIES (Mundingburra) (8.31 p.m.): I rise to support the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Bill 1994. The main reason that this Bill has my support is that it marks the beginning of a new era for public transport in this State. The new policy framework for the reform of the public transport passenger industry in this State, as embodied in the Bill currently before the House, will feature greater application of commercial principles within the industry than has been evident under the current Government subsidy arrangements.

Commercialisation of the industry will be built into service contracts between operators of services and the Director-General of Queensland Transport. I will elaborate on those in a short time. The legislation proposes two types of service contracts: Government funded and commercial. Commercial service contracts will typically be offered in urban areas with populations large enough to sustain commercial interests. Government-funded contracts will apply where services cannot be provided commercially and

where the Government deems they should be available for access, equity or other reasons. Social justice principles will not be overlooked in the effort to reform the public passenger transport industry in this State.

Government funded contracts will include the carriage of school children in sparsely populated areas. The aim of the service contracts is to ensure that providers and operators of public transportation services are held accountable for providing higher levels of service performance at an acceptable cost. Services for which contracts will be required include scheduled passenger bus services, taxi services, ferry services, air services or any other services prescribed by regulation. The service contract will provide an operator of any one of those services with the exclusive right of operation in a defined area or a prescribed route in exchange for meeting several basic requirements. Those requirements are: meeting minimum service levels, demonstrating business planning, maintaining vehicle standards, demonstrating customer responsiveness, use of innovation, demonstrated patronage improvements, setting of performance standards, meeting safety standards, obtaining and maintaining operator accreditation, using authorised drivers and successfully undergoing a mid-term review.

Under the new legislation there will be no Government fare-box subsidy of public passenger transport. However, given the extent of the reforms, the current subsidy to operators will not cease immediately but will be phased out over five years. That will allow operators time to adjust to the new system and give them the incentive to build up patronage levels as a primary source of income. Operators who meet the requirements of their service contract will have their contract renewed for a further five years.

The new system of service contracts will ensure that higher levels of service, performance and access will become a permanent feature of Queensland's public transport system. As I said at the outset, this Bill marks the beginning of a new era for public transport in this State. I commend it to the House. Finally I would like to congratulate the Minister and his staff within the department for the long and painstaking effort that has gone into producing this Bill.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore) (8.34 p.m.): I welcome any genuine move to improve public transport on the Sunshine Coast and anywhere else Queensland. I believe that quality of life depends heavily on access to services, and certainly good public transport is a key to accessing those services. I think we will

not really know how well this legislation is going to work until we see how the negotiations go between individual operators, how the details of the various bus services are worked out and the ascertainment of the basic bottom line of what is a public need and what are commercially viable routes.

There has been consultation with the industry, but really we are more at the start of much more intensive consultation because there are many more details to be finalised. I know through talking to individual operators that there is a deal of concern. I think that is understandable. One concern that does pop up relates to areas in which a number of bus operators are operating, particularly in a region such as the Sunshine Coast. The operators are seeing the zones rationalised and more cooperation between themselves. There is a very real possibility that some bus operators could be forced out of business. I believe that, wherever there is Government restructuring that forces people out of business, there needs to be fair consideration of compensation. If there is going to be rationalisation that forces some of those operators out in unfair circumstances, it is not right for those people to bear the brunt of the overhaul that is necessary in the public transport system. That is something I will be watching very carefully in my area. I will be continuing to talk with the local operators and the local people in the Transport Department who will be handling the negotiations.

A number of people have been transport disadvantaged. Those people include the elderly, young families who have only one car, and young people who do not yet have a driver's licence or who cannot afford a car. It is virtually impossible to live without a car in an area such as the Sunshine Coast, which is much more decentralised than an urban area such as Brisbane. It is very frustrating for people to not be able to get to Noosa or Caloundra in less than a couple of hours. If anything, we have lost services in the past couple of years because of changes in the operations because the intercity bus licence was sold off to another operator.

One aspect that has caused a bit of concern is the unfairness that has occurred in the past. Obviously, an urban area such as Brisbane has a greater population. It does have a far better public transport system. It also has a very heavy subsidy level. I believe that, where there is a subsidy level to give that service access, we need to see the same subsidy levels being available to other areas in Queensland. The reality is that in the case of buses some routes will be commercially viable but on many routes the provision of a basic public service will not be commercially viable. There needs to be fair

consideration when determining the runs of those bus lines—whether it is fair for them to carry so many non-viable routes. Basically, it will take much negotiation. I hope the Department of Transport will play an understanding and sympathetic role. I hope that is not too much to ask, because much capital is tied up in providing any bus service.

Basically, if Brisbane is receiving subsidies, why should other areas such as the Sunshine Coast not receive a level of subsidy. We do not have the same population base as Brisbane.

Mr Beattie: It is growing quickly.

Miss SIMPSON: We might have a growing population, but the reality is that we do not have the same delivery of public transport service because the area is just so decentralised. There has been a problem trying to get bus services as simple as routes from the coast to the hospital or to the train line.

The previous coalition speaker, Mr Healy, mentioned the need to market any changes in public transport. This situation is really like the chicken and the egg. The bus lines will not get the passengers until a better service is provided but a better service is not provided until there are the passengers to fund it. While the push for better public transport continues we need to consider effective marketing. People would not look at the public transport services or even consider a bus if they knew that it did not meet their needs. Perhaps those people have not investigated whether there have been good changes in the past. We need to look at this as a whole new era and I would suggest that the State Government—not just the operators who are providing these services—has to put funds into a very thorough marketing campaign on radio and television. I believe there also need to be some financial incentives towards information centres in shopping centres, such as teleprompters that allow people to very quickly dial up the information about public transport systems in their area.

Mr Robertson: Have you written to the council about that?

Miss SIMPSON: I am sure that these are issues that will involve local councils as well as local shopping centres and the transport operators. I think it is essential that we have some input from the State Government. The Government's large media corps has marketing expertise, and I believe that it is only fair that it channels some of that PR towards providing better knowledge and understanding of public transport throughout Queensland.

Mention has been made of concern in the taxi industry about the possibility of deregulation.

I certainly do not support deregulation of the taxi industry, and nor does the coalition. That concern heated up because of the Hilmer report, and I believe that that has been mentioned by the Minister. Hilmer is really out of touch with the less centralised States such as Queensland. We cannot have a pure economic rationalism approach to public transport. There will be some services that are commercially viable, but in order to achieve equity of access, we have to provide some level of regulation, some level of subsidy and some level of fare setting. From time to time, such matters may need to be reviewed.

I have a lot of problems with some of Hilmer's suggestions. People who have understood the costs involved in acquiring a taxi licence know that it is a couple of hundred thousand dollars for the initial licence plus add-on costs for buying into a share of their operating company. Operators have outlaid a lot of money in order to operate a business to provide a service. It is in their interests to make a return and, when they have outlaid such a large amount of money for a licence, it is in their interests to know that they have some security of that return. I certainly will continue to liaise with taxi operators on the Sunshine Coast to make sure that they get a fair go if any changes occur. It is worrying when changes are made, but I think that there is no doubt that in many areas there was a need for an overhaul of the system. There will be much need for sympathetic negotiation by Transport Department officials, and I hope some understanding, on their part, that people who have outlaid such large amounts of money have concerns.

Basically, I welcome any changes which result in a better public transport system. However, I acknowledge that we will have to watch very carefully how this is implemented. The reality is that individual bus routes and people's licences and contracts cannot be totally standardised. Obviously, a lot is going to depend upon those people who are doing the grassroots negotiating. I hope that there is an appreciation of the need to take into account that a lot of public transport operators are wanting to provide a good service. We need to keep those lines of communication open, and accountable as well to the public need.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (8.44 p.m.): Tonight, I rise to support the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Bill 1994. In 1989, the Goss Government inherited a legacy of poor infrastructure and transport planning. This Minister, David Hamill, has sought to overcome those past difficulties through legislation such as the Transport Operators (Passenger Transport) Bill and also the Transport

Infrastructure Amendment Bill (No. 2), which we will debate either tonight or tomorrow.

Clearly, with the massive growth in the south-east corner of Queensland, there is enormous pressure on the Government for future planning. Recently, I read an article in the *Australian Financial Review* dated 6 September headed "Sydney, Melbourne lose people and jobs". That article highlights the extent of the growth in the south-east corner and the problems that we are confronting. I will read part of it and then I will table it for the information of the House. The article states—

"Queensland is the boom State. And Brisbane's suburbs are the hot spot. Specifically, Brisbane's north and west.

As Australia's largest cities—Sydney and Melbourne—experience the 'doughnut effect' of population and job loss in the centre, what were smaller, often resort areas at the fringe are growing rapidly."

It goes on to state—

"Brisbane stands out as the major city to gain."

Further on, the article states—

"In the five years to 1993, employment growth in the statistical district of north and west Brisbane exceeded that of any other area in Australia. Not only was its rate of job growth faster, but its employment growth matched a rapid population gain."

I table that article for the information of the House. That is all well and good, and something that we think is important. Nevertheless, that growth brings with it a lot of problems. Obviously, infrastructure and planning problems top the list.

I note in the Minister's seconding-reading speech that he deals in part with this matter. I will highlight a couple of paragraphs because they are worth repeating. They are the central theme for the need for this legislation and the next Bill that we will debate. The Minister said—

"If the SEQ 2001 land use projections emerge there will be an additional 1.12 million people in south-east Queensland alone in 20 years' time, with close to one million of that increase in the population of south-east Queensland being located outside of the City of Brisbane."

So the problems of planning and transport are clear. He went on to state—

"Demand management strategies in CBDs and key urban centres designed to constrain car use and encourage public transport use has been virtually non-existent. For instance, in the Brisbane

CBD, between 1986 and 1992, the cost of car parking increased on average by less than 3 per cent per year. Not surprisingly, in the same period, the number of people parking in the inner city increased by more than 6 per cent per year."

That is a matter for the Brisbane City Council to address.

Mr Ardill: Why don't they put up the parking fees?

Mr BEATTIE: I take that interjection. The Minister stated further—

"Inappropriate policies and a lack of commitment to public transport has seen the percentage of transport trips made by public transport in south-east Queensland decline from about 12 per cent in the mid-1970s to less than 9 per cent at present. On current trends, without remedial action the public transport share of total trips will decline to around 7 per cent by 2011.

The decline in public transport use, rapid population growth and increasing dispersion in land use has placed intolerable pressures on our road system, particularly in south-east Queensland."

That was the legacy that this Government inherited from the National Party and that is one of the problems that it has to deal with on a regular basis.

During the term in office of the National Party Government, the Surfers Paradise Country Party was more interested in building up its support among the white shoe brigade than in long-term planning in this State, and that is why we have the sorts of problems that we face today.

This Bill will equip Queensland's public transport for the next century. Indeed, it is long overdue. However, it is part of an overall package. The Government has been planning for other forms of transport such as bikeways. It has been trying to encourage people to use bikeways, which reduce congestion, as a means of getting to work. I am delighted to see that, in my area, the State Government has spent a considerable amount of money on bikeways, which was long overdue. The Safe Bikeways Program announced by the Government in September 1992 has resulted in the expenditure in metropolitan Brisbane of \$.3.2m in 1992-93 and \$3.3m in 1993-94, a total of \$6.5m. Prior to September 1992, the Traffic Engineering Trust Fund, a local authority road subsidy, provided substantial funds for bikeways in Brisbane between 1991 and 1992—an

estimated total for the metropolitan region of \$1,356,000. So this Government has supported that alternative means of transport in a very direct way.

The Queensland rail system, to which I will refer again later, has had unprecedented amounts of money spent on it in terms of capital expenditure, and that speaks for itself. In addition, there has been an increase in the amount of money that has gone to the Brisbane City Council bus subsidy, and I will leave my colleague the member for Mount Coot-tha to deal with that, as well as the ferry subsidy to the Brisbane City Council. Of course, road funding has also been increased.

Before I move on to the issue of the taxi industry, which is what I want to speak about at some length tonight, I wish to deal briefly with the issue of rail transport. Last week in this House in an Adjournment debate, I talked about the unprecedented increase in expenditure in the rail area. In total, this State Government is investing \$778m in the south-east Queensland passenger rail network. Part of the reason for that added expenditure is not only the lack of planning that I referred to before by previous Governments but also the fact that in the 1960s the State Government ripped up the railway line to the Gold Coast. Even in the 1960s, the future growth of the Gold Coast should have been obvious to any responsible—

Mr Stephan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Talk about ripping them up! Members opposite are the masters of it. When they were in office, they used to rip up rail lines, tear them out and throw them away. I have tabled a list in this House before. Let us go back to what the former Government did. Ripping up that line to the Gold Coast was an absolutely dreadful waste of money.

Mr Budd interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Exactly! I take that interjection.

Even in the 1960s, the future growth of the Gold Coast should have been obvious to any responsible administration, yet it would appear that the coalition had no understanding of strategic transport requirements, and it had no better understanding then than it does now.

Mr Ardill: I know why he is complaining; they even closed his railway station.

Mr BEATTIE: The member for Gympie should be supporting me. It should be remembered that it was one of the National Party's experts in planning activities who suggested that the rail line should close if funds could not be found to upgrade it—one Russell Hinze, who was then the Albert Shire Chairman!

The Opposition Leader, Mr Borbidge— and I am delighted to see him in the House for this important debate; he was not here last night, and I am pleased to see that he is making up for it tonight—has been begrudgingly forced to admit in retrospect that that was a wrong decision. He admitted that in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 30 June this year. I was delighted to see his honesty about that decision.

The reality is that that is the problem we inherited. This State Government has moved significantly to improve the amount of expenditure. We have state-of-the-art technology being introduced in rail. That will bring about an improved service. There will be a high-speed service operating between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. That will mean that the Brisbane to Helensvale journey will take about 60 minutes, and the extended trip to Robina about 70 minutes. This state-of-the-art technology will be complemented by state-of-the-art comfort, as these new trains will boast the appointments of a mobile office.

Honourable members should listen to this. Facsimile machines are among the features of the rolling stock, which is currently being constructed at Maryborough engineering firm Walkers ABB. The new carriages will feature improved seating and luggage storage, passenger toilets and facilities for hearing-impaired passengers. Stations are being designed and built with a focus on security and accessibility. Video surveillance cameras, emergency help phones and security lighting will be standard features, with stations designed to enhance visibility and openness. Access for passengers with disabilities will be enhanced through wide stairways and ramps, glass lifts and high-level platforms, which will remove the current requirement of ramps for wheelchair and stroller access onto the trains.

In the peak periods between 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., Queensland Rail will run half-hourly services, and in the off peak services will run every hour. We can be confident that this investment is money well spent, as initial patronage forecasts indicate that passenger journeys in the first year of operation will reach approximately 3 million, with further growth as services to Nerang and Robina commence.

History records the coalition's short-sightedness in relation to the Gold Coast rail link, but this reflected its approach to transport planning generally. So inadequate was the coalition's response to the need for additional capacity in the suburban network that the Queensland Government is now spending \$200m for the expansion of track and quadruplication of inner-city rail tunnels.

In addition to all this, the trains will have emergency intercoms between passengers and the crew. That is a very important initiative of this Government. These intercoms will also be fitted to CityTrain's current fleet of 264 suburban electric cars. With this system, in an emergency a passenger will be able to speak to the driver, who can in turn ensure that police if necessary are contacted. This reflects the Government's very serious concern that passengers are safe when travelling on the urban rail system and, equally importantly, that they feel safe while doing so.

The Government's \$22m rail security package announced by the Transport Minister in July was a vital step towards improving public transport patronage levels. The Government has acknowledged that people cannot be expected to leave their car at home in favour of rail travel if they do not feel safe on its trains. Accordingly, the security package will improve station security through the installation of surveillance, improved lighting, motion detection and other alarm systems and emergency help phones. Better car park security will be provided through the introduction in selected car parks of access systems controlled by a customer's personal identification number.

Finally, staff will take a more active, high profile role as new technology allows the guard position to be released to fulfil a security and customer service role. These initiatives are changing the face of rail travel in Queensland, ensuring that commuters are provided with a safe, fast, comfortable alternative to the personal car.

As Queensland continues to absorb approximately 1 000 people per week—my initial point—research such as the SEQ 2001 study leaves no doubt that the south-east Queensland region's service and infrastructure will be under enormous pressure towards the turn of the century. With the far-sighted approach that this Government has brought to rail infrastructure investment, we can be confident that the rail network is in a prime position to cope with the projected demand.

Those now on the benches opposite do not look ahead. They did not buy a new suburban carriage for 15 years and did not change the timetable over the same period, despite the change in population demographics around the suburban area. Unlike the coalition, this Government will not be caught out when it comes to transport planning, because we are investing the money now to meet the needs of the year 2000.

The other matter that I want to deal with, which is very central to this Bill, is the taxi industry. The legislation before the House is

designed to put in place the reform of passenger transport in Queensland, as I have said, of which the taxi industry is a vital component. There are currently 13 000 taxi and private hire vehicle owners and drivers in Queensland, operating 2 424 metered taxis in 42 taxi districts. A further 120 unmetered taxis operate in 64 areas. The estimated total market value of taxi licences in Queensland is \$480m. In south-east Queensland alone, taxis account for approximately 6.7 per cent of all trips by public transport. Queensland's taxi industry is leading the nation in meeting the needs of its customers, particularly those in the tourist industry.

However, the population of Queensland is growing at a rapid rate, as I have already said, and will continue to do so well into the next century, when Brisbane will end up being bigger than Melbourne. The growth taking place in provincial, coastal and south-east Queensland areas will place increasing strain on both our road networks and our passenger transport system.

In addressing these future challenges, the new legislation will provide for the following reforms to the taxi industry: firstly, the introduction of service contracts; secondly, the introduction of operator accreditation; thirdly, introduction of driver authorisation; fourthly, the review of licence numbers and taxi areas boundaries; and, fifthly, the establishment of taxi advisory groups. I will address each of these provisions in turn.

However, I would firstly like to address the issue of deregulation of the taxi industry. The passenger transport review found that deregulation of the taxi industry would not deliver the results which the Government was seeking. The review team examined the impact of deregulation in a number of countries, including New Zealand and the United States. The review found that, while deregulation increased the number of taxis, it did not result in lower fares; customer-oriented services improvements were marginal and vehicle age increased.

There is little evidence to suggest that passengers or operators would be better off in a deregulated taxi industry, and that is important. Hence the legislation does not give effect to full deregulation of the taxi industry, although it does reduce Government intervention in aspects of the industry which are of decreasing relevance, such as dress standards for drivers.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: If the honourable member gives me half a chance, I will totally deregulate him.

The legislation will simplify the level of regulation and focus more on industry responsibility for the setting of standards for the appropriateness of vehicles, safety and availability of a vehicle for use. The legislation seeks to provide operators with the freedom to expand services and to develop innovative ways of attracting new customers. A principal vehicle for this reform will be the introduction of service contracts, and this is important.

The review found that the taxi industry needed to offer a wider variety of services and be more attentive to its role as a vital service provider. As with the public passenger bus industry, the most appropriate way of achieving this is through service contracts. The contracts will require companies or organisations that want to provide a taxi service to meet minimum standards and to demonstrate innovation and adaptability in their fare structures and the service they provide. Operators will be made more accountable and will be encouraged to continually improve services. Existing taxi companies will be given the first opportunity to express interest in the new contracts.

I turn to operator accreditation and driver authorisation. Operator accreditation and driver authorisation will replace the current licence to hire and hire drivers' licence respectively. The benefits to the taxi industry of these new measures in terms of performance and operational standards and consumer responsibilities will be substantial.

I turn to licence numbers and taxi boundaries. Taxi service licences will replace the current licence to hire. Operators will be eligible for the new licences only once a number of conditions have been met. These conditions include: firstly, holding operator accreditation; secondly, having access to a 24-hour booking service from a company that has entered into a service contract with the State Government; thirdly, adherence to a reasonable request by the contract holder; and, fourthly, use of vehicles which are of an approved type, do not exceed a specified maximum age and, where appropriate, provide access for people with disabilities, which is very important. New licences in any area will be issued through open tender, rather than a fixed price tender or ballot. Eighteen months after the initial changes have been made, the Government will review taxi boundaries, licence numbers and values to monitor the progress of the reforms.

I turn now to taxi advisory groups. To address the ongoing debate about the number and cost of taxi licences throughout the State, the legislation provides for taxi advisory groups comprising representatives of Queensland

Transport, the taxi industry, consumers and the tourist industry. These groups will be regionally based and will play a vital role in determining any changes to taxi service area boundaries which may be required in growth areas of the State—an issue that I have addressed previously. The groups will provide a more practical and realistic method of determining licence numbers, one based on the input of a number of interested parties—an approach with which I am sure all members agree.

It must be stressed that the Taxi Council of Queensland will be consulted on any changes to taxi service area boundaries, as it has been consulted in the preparation of this legislation. Indeed, the Taxi Council of Queensland has worked closely with Queensland Transport on the development of these reforms and has acknowledged that a review of the role of the taxi industry is necessary to respond to the changing needs of the community. Both the taxi council and the Government will continue to work closely to ensure a smooth transition to the new system. This cooperation is to be applauded. Ultimately, this legislation will provide the taxi industry with the ability to strategically plan for future operation and the freedom to be more responsive to innovation, technological change and the needs of passengers, particularly in growth areas.

The review of public passenger transport which prompted the drafting of this legislation recommended closer integration by the taxi industry with other passenger services. This objective will be realised by the new legislation. I have had the opportunity to discuss this legislation with a number of people in the taxi industry as well as some involved in the limousine industry. They are very supportive of the legislation before the House.

Bus, taxi and ferry services have been operating under legislation which is out of date and out of step with the current and future needs of Queenslanders. This Bill goes a long way to redress those problems. The new Act will replace the passenger transport provisions of the State Transport Act 1960 and will repeal the Urban Passenger Transport Act 1984.

Time expired.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (9.04 p.m.): I rise to make a contribution that is partly my own and partly that of the honourable member for Aspley, Mr John Goss, who is ill and who is under doctor's orders to stay in bed this evening.

The Transport Operation (Passenger Transport) Bill 1994 is a document which leaves the end result as generally unknown, but one fact we do know is that the whole thrust of the Bill

is to reduce the Government's contribution to public transport and to place that burden back on the operators and passengers.

Let us consider bus transport. The whole thrust of the Government is exposed by the recent announcement of new toll roads in south-east Queensland. This Government is more than happy to set up a motorway company, yet it rejects its responsibility to assist with public transport outside the areas serviced by the suburban rail network. We on this side of the Chamber do not deny that there are areas in which bus transport operation should be improved. Over the past few years in some areas of the State, bus operators have sought mutual changes to their routes and services, and this has been done in conjunction with local Transport Department officers. However, the proposals were either rejected or ignored by central office in Brisbane so as to justify the heavy-handed approach in this Bill.

There is no doubt that as a result of this Bill we will see many smaller bus fleet operators and the family businesses with five or six buses disappear. The Government constantly reminds us that there is a need for a more flexible transport service, yet we must remember that the bus operator needs a large bus for peak demand times—costing in the vicinity of \$250,000—and a smaller bus for off-peak periods—costing \$40,000—and at the same time the fare box subsidy disappears.

The Government is saying that bus operators will have to buy new or late-model buses, provide more and better services, particularly after hours, and streamline their routes so as to reduce running time. However, this proposal does not take into account the new subdivision design, which encourages pocket development and circuitous road layouts to prevent motorists from rat-running. Of course, that new design will add to bus running times. The Government is demanding of bus operators that they purchase new buses at \$250,000 each, provide more services after hours, run buses day and night and provide new routes. The Government is telling operators in the industry that they will have such a flood of passengers that they will hardly be able to cope with the demand. I will say more on that topic in a moment.

The Hilmer report hangs like an axe over the passenger transport industry in Queensland. As soon as the Federal Government provides enough dollars to the State Government, I am sure that the chop will arrive. I believe that the passenger transport industry is the pawn on just how much the Federal Government will pay to have this State implement the Hilmer report.

The Brisbane City Council has one of the most modern bus fleets in Australia, with half-hourly Cityxpress services along major routes and regular after-hour services in many suburbs, yet its loss is in excess of \$50m a year. It is clearly a case of a Minister who has probably never travelled in a suburban bus but only in a luxury chauffeured limousine and highly paid public servants who are supplied with Government cars telling the transport industry how to run its business.

One issue of concern is the service contract period of five years. A bus operator would have to purchase his new buses at the very beginning of the contract period—a large financial risk for both the operator and the lender. It would have been far more viable if the contract period was set at seven years. If the Minister were to sit down and analyse the position, he would have to agree with that statement. Most businesses prefer a period of longer than five years to enable them to write off equipment for tax purposes. A longer period would give the operator time to recover the value of the vehicle. Second-hand buses are not good value. An overview of the bus proposals would indicate a similar model to that of New South Wales, without the school transport provisions on which so many New South Wales operators rely.

In recent times, the Minister has mentioned the poor service levels in a number of locations throughout the State. Let us consider one of those areas—Logan City. Who in their right mind would catch a bus from, say, Logan Hyperdome to Brisbane City when 50 minutes later one reaches one's destination? The State Government should be providing transit corridors—for example, guided busways—from the Hyperdome to Brisbane City so that bus operators can offer a true service. For example, a journey that currently takes 50 minutes could possibly take only 22 minutes. While buses are caught up in traffic congestion and continue to share traffic lanes with motor cars, more people will continue to use their private car.

The introduction of the maxi taxi was seen by many people as a threat to the bus industry. However, I believe that many bus operators now see the minibus as an excellent opportunity to compete with the taxi. For example, a taxi operator in Brisbane is up for \$180,000 for his licence and \$40,000 for his commuter bus taxi. However, the bus operator can see the opportunity of a Hail 'n' Ride or even a home pick-up service, and the fare structure will not have to include a \$180,000 licence fee. As it is, many taxi drivers work 60 hours a week for between \$300 or \$400, and those are taxi operators who have leased a licence and are finding it tough in the current economic climate.

Mr Barton interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Briskey): Order! If the honourable member for Waterford wishes to interject he should do so from his own place in the Chamber.

Mr BEANLAND: Without a doubt, Queensland would have the best presented and most efficient taxi service in Australia. The new technology currently being installed will again improve the service. Most drivers and owners will tell people that the profit for the week is made on Friday and Saturday evenings. The Government has threatened to introduce more licences if there are delays for taxi passengers on Friday and Saturday nights. That will be the death of an excellent taxi industry; it will be the destruction of another small business in Queensland. It will be the excuse to introduce the Hilmer report recommendations to deregulate the taxi industry.

I am pleased to see some action being taken in regard to the present situation in which hotels, motels and clubs provide free limousine and bus pick-up services to guests and patrons. These services are usually provided to and from airports, transit centres and entertainment centres. On most of these occasions the vehicles, for example, the limousine, are not properly licensed and would not have 4C compulsory third-party insurance. As well, the vehicles would not be subject to machinery inspections in the same way as taxis and PVH cars, which I understand have to be serviced every six weeks. One big concern is that these courtesy vehicles are usually driven by whoever is available: the drink waiter, doorman or anybody who has a driver's licence. To deregulate the PVH industry by selling off more licences to operators with an appropriate vehicle can only be described as totally irresponsible. Selling off more licences is just a case of more revenue for the Government. There are enough PVH licences now to cover the demand. The problem is that the PVHs need to be located at PVH ranks where there is a demand for them. The PVH market is so competitive now that most operators are trading at prices well below that of four or five years ago. If the Government were to sell more licences, the situation would become worse. There are some problems within the PVH industry, where a few cowboys with leased licences are operating illegally by touting from taxi areas such as the Radisson Hotel, QE II Stadium and city night clubs.

There is probably a need for PVH vehicles to be able to service certain key tourist and luxury locations, but this should be done in a manner befitting the luxury limousine industry. With our thriving international tourist industry there is a

demand for vacant PVHs to be available for hire at terminals. International visitors who want a luxury limousine find it annoying because quite often they have to experience a considerable delay before the vehicle arrives. As the Minister has said, this Bill is about providing a service. Also, provided the fares are a reasonable percentage above taxi fares, I would support the provision of PVH ranks in the city to operate only on certain days between set hours. These ranks could be at key locations such as luxury hotels, the Cultural Centre and the proposed casino.

This Bill contains an attack on the future security of hundreds of small businesspeople in Queensland—bus operators, taxi operators and PVH operators; people who have invested their life savings in a business believing that it is their superannuation. This Bill could well put in jeopardy the financial security of many people who, over the next five years, plan to retire from the passenger transport industry. It is all very well for the politician and the public servants to introduce radical change—

Mr Hamill: Are you supporting the Bill?

Mr BEANLAND: The Minister will find out in due course—because it does not affect their security and it does not affect their superannuation pay-out. So let us show some concern for the people who have committed their whole life to the passenger transport industry and let us not dump them for a quick political fix.

It is quite interesting that when one looks at this particular piece of legislation called the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Bill, one sees that the Government has not placed greater emphasis on rail services. After all, rail does play a very important part in transport services. I understand that it is being covered elsewhere, but nevertheless if we are talking about passenger operations, buses, taxis and private vehicle hires, then there should have been reference in this piece of legislation to the rail service.

After all, people will look at this particular piece of legislation and believe that it covers passenger transport operations. On page 12 of the legislation the Minister sets out the criteria, and one would have expected that included there would have been some reference to the rail services in this city.

Mr Ardill: What do you suggest?

Mr BEANLAND: I am pleased that the member for Archerfield has interjected loudly and is joining the debate. What I am concerned about is the cutbacks in the rail services in my area. This legislation talks about strategies for greater public transport systems. Well, the

people in my area have seen very significant cutbacks in peak hour services, particularly on the rail system. We have seen cutbacks of over a half on the peak hour passenger services on the Sherwood, Chelmer, Graceville and Taringa Railway Stations. Over half of the service has been totally cut. That is a fact. Many of the people who used to use those services now have to drive their cars when they would have otherwise caught a train. I invite members to go and look at the Chelmer Park 'n' Ride. It is now only about a third full due to the lack of service. A good service was provided; however, it is no longer adequate. That is why people are taking their vehicles down Coronation Drive, clogging up the roads and polluting the environment. We hear a lot from this Government and this Minister about the environment and the need to get people out of motor vehicles and into public transport—I totally agree with that—but it is something that is not being put into practice at all. Indooroopilly Railway Station is another good example. We are trying to get more people to catch the train from that station. It is in urgent need of a Park 'n' Ride. I think it is a fine example of where we should be attracting people onto public transport. It is fairly close to the city, but here we are cutting out those services.

I would have thought that there would have been greater reference to rail services in this legislation. I know that the Minister will say that it is covered in other places, but I do believe that if we are covering these responsibilities and having a strategy, then we need to have an all-in-one strategy. We do not need to have part of the strategy in one place and another part somewhere else. Because the rail service is going through a corporatisation process, I would have thought there would have been a greater need and requirement for services. We hold corporatisation up as being one of those things that is almost privatisation, even though we know it is not—it is far from it. Corporatisation is held up as being one of the great achievements of this Government. Just as private buses, taxis and PVH vehicles are included in this piece of legislation, so too should the rail passenger service should be included.

In conclusion, I was pleased to see that the Minister has just sent around an amendment to the legislation—the "Dictionary" heading on page 101 in Schedule 5. I thought it was rather cute and quaint to have this new term "Dictionary" for the definitions. We normally find the definitions in the front of the legislation—normally clause 3 or 4—but it is now in the back in this legislation under the term "Dictionary" and there is no separate Schedule spelt out for it. I am pleased to see that the Minister has called it Schedule 5. I support that

amendment because a lot of people will have trouble trying to cope with that reference if it is not tidied up.

The other thing I want to say in closing is that I notice the Minister refers a great deal to SEQ 2001 and the population growth of the city. Sure, we have to have passenger transport systems in place, but we also have another limiting factor and that will be the lack of domestic water supply in south-east Queensland as time goes by. That is also something that will limit the growth, regardless of the development of the Minister's public transport system. The lack of domestic water supply will control and limit the growth of south-east Queensland because we do not have the long-term water supply that will cater for the huge growth that was once proposed for this part of the State.

Mrs EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha) (9.20 p.m.): I am pleased to speak to this Bill, and I agree with the Opposition spokesperson that it is indeed a major, far-reaching reform Bill. The debate today is the result of several years of planning and widespread consultation and is a major leap forward in the area of public transport reform as has never before been contemplated in Queensland.

While the armchair critics who, when any form of change to transport infrastructure is mooted—whether it is roads, rail or whatever—start squeaking, "There should be more planning." and were still talking about it, this Government has instituted a range of planning procedures. We have had, firstly, the SEPT study, examining passenger transport in the south-east corner of Queensland from the border to the Sunshine Coast and west to Toowoomba. The SEQ 2001 study and the RPA group study have examined a wider range of issues, including the problematic land use and infrastructure issues, in increasingly detailed forms. These studies, including the wide-ranging community consultation that formed a major part of them, also led to specific area studies, such as the passenger transport review. From these studies, in particular those relating to passenger transport, has emerged the data that is being reflected in this Bill.

Traffic, transport and their related problems are probably the most significant problems we will have to face in the south-east corner as we try to address the current rate of growth and aspirations of our society. Nowhere are these problems more apparent than in the inner-city suburbs, such as the ones I represent. It is because of this that, in this debate, I would like to emphasise one aspect of the reform process involving one of the largest operators of public passenger transport in this State—the Brisbane City Council.

The review of public passenger transport undertaken during 1993 identified a range of difficulties in the delivery and management of transport services in this State—

services were not responding to the needs of the growth areas;

Government assistance to the industry lacked accountability and value for money; and

urban bus services were of a poor standard.

Services provided by Brisbane Transport, the agency responsible for public passenger transport within the Brisbane City Council, were not exempt from the findings of this review, although it was recognised that Brisbane Transport provided higher levels of service than other operators throughout the State.

The review found that the operation of bus and ferry services in Brisbane featured particular management, operational and industrial factors that were impacting on efficient delivery of bus and ferry services. However, it was also acknowledged that the Brisbane City Council had extra cost burdens in terms of the size of its operation and the level of congestion in some of its operating areas. Both the Lord Mayor and the Minister for Transport agreed that reform of Brisbane Transport was required.

The State Government contributes approximately \$27m per annum in subsidy to the Brisbane City Council for the operation of passenger transport services and is interested in maximising service delivery for this funding. It should be pointed out that the Brisbane City Council's operating costs are, on average, 40 per cent higher than the operating costs of private bus operators in south-east Queensland.

Similarly, the Lord Mayor of Brisbane has publicly acknowledged that Brisbane Transport must improve its operations to remain a public service. Councillor Soorley is also committed to increasing the attractiveness of public transport to assist with the development of his "livable" Brisbane and environmental awareness policies. I totally agree with those policies.

In order to incorporate the Brisbane City Council in the reform process, to address issues in regard to the level of State Government subsidy and to facilitate the Lord Mayor's concern for improvement to Brisbane Transport operations, a Brisbane City Council public transport reform package has been jointly negotiated and developed. The package has been endorsed by both State Cabinet and the Civic Cabinet and offers a blueprint for the future management of Brisbane Transport services.

The package will feature a capped State Government subsidy to the Brisbane City Council of \$26.9m per annum, plus CPI, for a period of five years on the basis of implementation of the following reforms to Brisbane Transport—

- improvements in productivity by 30 per cent over three years;
- significant improvements to patronage;
- the meeting of minimum service levels;
- the development of innovative services to respond to consumer demand; and
- restructuring of Brisbane Transport as a business enterprise of the council, operating under the requirements of a commercial operator.

The State Government will also consider a number of initiatives to provide greater support for public transport. These could include—

- joint funding of a consultant to examine Brisbane Transport operations;
- joint development with the Brisbane City Council of a central business district parking strategy for more appropriate pricing of inner-city parking; and
- the introduction of innovative demand management pricing mechanisms.

State Government finance may also be less restrictively utilised by the Brisbane City Council for the development of public passenger transport infrastructure or for measures that supplement public passenger transport strategies. Examples could be—

- funding of bikeways;
- improved ticketing systems; and
- the design and development of high-speed ferry infrastructure.

The reforms will also allow Brisbane Transport and other operators, such as Queensland Rail or private operators, to better coordinate services and to better target outlying areas of Brisbane. The reform package seeks to achieve improved performance by Brisbane Transport with benefits for residents of all areas of Brisbane through better existing services, better coverage of services and a greater flexibility in responding to consumer demand.

Both the Lord Mayor and the Minister for Transport have signed a formal agreement to give effect to the Brisbane City Council public transport reform package and remain committed to its full implementation. This is an important component of the Government's passenger transport reforms, and the legislation before the House will allow improvement and reform of Brisbane City Council services to proceed.

I am delighted that the Lord Mayor has very quickly picked up that State funding offer for a long overdue review of bus services in the city with the aim of improving services and efficiencies. In accepting this challenge, the Lord Mayor admitted that it was the first real review since the Brisbane City Council started running buses in 1921 and will take about nine months with a cost of about \$1m.

Many of the bus routes follow the old tram routes, which have not been used since 1969, and are not necessarily appropriate any longer. Timetables may no longer suit the changed structure of suburbs and society, and in some areas there are safety and security concerns. In August, Councillor Maureen Hayes, the Transport Chairman, announced that bus patronage was up 6 per cent—the only capital city to see such an increase, albeit from a low base—and ferry patronage had increased by 20 per cent. But Brisbane remains one of the world's most car-dependent cities, with over 48 per cent of the community who never use buses. A Brisbane Transport study showed that 77 per cent use cars, 11 per cent use cabs or buses, 7 per cent use trains and 1 per cent use ferries.

Recent initiatives such as Hail 'n' Ride—the 10-minute suburban services trial using minibuses—has been a success. Most of the 5 500 people who used the city's first Hail 'n' Ride service in Highgate Hill had not used buses before. Another such service has started in New Farm, and I would be pleased to welcome such services in my electorate or in nearby suburbs such as The Gap, where there is only one effective route in and out of the area—in this case, Waterworks Road.

Another option could involve minibuss feeder services running frequently around the suburb and linking to the major shopping centre and high school focus linking to a central line express service to the city. That could go a long way toward making public transport far more attractive and effective in that area than the current system. It would provide both a local and commuter-friendly service that would fit well with the bus priority system, which I understand is to be tested on Waterworks Road from the Normanby Fiveways to The Gap. This service would use bar codes on the front of the buses that would activate green lights at intersections and facilitate faster bus services.

I mentioned The Gap because it is a suburb that is targeted for substantial future residential growth, and this will no doubt seriously impact on the downstream suburbs of Bardon, Ashgrove, Red Hill and Paddington. The suggestions I have made are not new; they were originally made in 1988 to the Brisbane City Council and

repeatedly after I was elected in 1989. Maybe they will now be considered as part of this review.

In announcing these welcome Brisbane City Council initiatives, Councillor Hayes has indicated that Brisbane City Council studies show that, in Brisbane, people made 3.7 million private car trips in 1991, and this number is expected to increase to 6.3 million in 2011. This growth will, as I said earlier, impact heavily on the inner-city suburbs. While it would be wonderful to close our eyes and hope it goes away, this growth prospect is reinforced by all of the studies to which I have previously referred. It will not go away, so we have to manage it. SEQ 2001 indicates that of the predicted 1.12 million increase in population in south-east Queensland, one million will be outside the City of Brisbane, and this is already becoming obvious. This is not a real comfort, as it places huge demands on the State to provide increased resources and especially infrastructure to those areas.

There is also an increased demand on the State to fund regional transport initiatives as well as Brisbane City services. This is not a fact that is always recognised by Brisbane City critics.

The wide disbursement of this growth also substantially increases the difficulty and cost of providing such services and reinforces the need for strong land-use management, demand management and long-term planning to meet all forms of transport needs. It is disappointing that local government authorities can still make town planning decisions that will see tens of thousands of housing subdivisions in areas with limited transport corridor planning or public transport provision and believe that hooking up to the nearest road will adequately serve as transport infrastructure.

I always remember the former National Party Minister for Roads, Bill Gunn, telling me the best thing they ever did was build the Centenary Highway. I replied that it was the worst thing they had ever done. We now have a massive increase in population in the Centenary suburbs and beyond, jamming the Centenary Highway and Western Freeway and Coronation Drive, and no corridor reserved for a rapid transit system. Honourable members can blame the early planners of Brisbane for not foreseeing the way the motor car would take over, but by that stage even the dinosaurs of the National Party should have had a bit of foresight.

One of the major problems we face in Brisbane is the radial nature of existing roads, and this is especially true for the western suburbs. It means that all traffic is forced into the inner suburbs through the CBD before it can go south or north. In general, public transport also

follows this radial pattern with very little cross sectorial public transport. The only exception that I can think of is the Great Circle Line, which operates mostly to suit shoppers, rather than workers or commuters. That means that the very people who try to do the right thing—to live in more densely populated suburbs, closer to their work, use more public transport—and who are more likely to cycle or walk to work are the people who are most seriously penalised by the increased urban sprawl and the traffic problems it brings with it.

It always surprises me when I see the political greenies, as distinct from my very committed friends in the conservation movements, advocating the cause of the residential rural acreages, which bear so much of the blame for our cities' current traffic problems. I could also put on my farmer's daughter hat and speak of the impact these acreages have on farming, too, but not tonight. I will save that for another occasion. Many of those problems, of course, date back to previous Brisbane City Council and other authority administrators and will need firm management and, one would hope, sensible bipartisan approaches to solve the problems. Certainly, the previous Liberal Brisbane City Council had acknowledged the need for increased urban density to make city administration and transportation more viable, and it was disappointing in the recent Brisbane City Council elections to see the Liberal Party opposing sensible land-use management, against their own policies and predictions for short-term and, as it turned out, unsuccessful political reasons.

A number of the studies that I have read, such as the Australian Industry Commission report that was released this year, the Interchange Study by QUT academics Ferreira and Judge, and the Department of Transport Passenger Transport Study have all indicated a range of areas in general where increased efficiencies could be made, returning significant savings that would be retained by the Brisbane City Council transport. Indications are they could be in the order of \$21m over the first five-year contract. This could provide a substantial boost to the public transport services of the Brisbane City Council.

The AIC report listed many instances of outdated work practices where changes in line with world best practices could lead to significant efficiencies. The report said that urban transport systems needed urgent reform to reduce traffic congestion, which currently costs the community in the order of \$4 billion a year across Australia. The Interchange Study highlighted the fact that punctuality and frequency were the major prerequisites of public transport users. It also

indicated that 32 per cent of travellers used public transport for its convenience, 22 per cent because of the price structure and another 25 per cent only because they had no licence and were, therefore, captive to public transport.

This information also feeds the debate regarding the role of public transport. Some planners see this role as providing a strictly limited service carrying peak hour commuter traffic to the city and a few suburban centres and providing a limited service for the young, the old and the poor who have no other options. Consequently, the services provided are clearly only catering with any sort of convenience to peak hour commuters. But with changes to trading hours, lifestyle changes, etc., if we are serious about public transport we have to change its current status and make it acceptable, attractive to the consumer, easy to use and available.

Toronto is often quoted as the leader in public transport, and I was interested to note this remark from Juri Pill of the Toronto Transport Commission—

"The urban transportation decision is not between car and transit; cars will continue to dominate in all developed countries until energy is no longer available at acceptable cost.

The aim is to provide transit as a viable choice for a significant proportion of the population."

Certainly, in Toronto, they have established a realistic model with excellent ring-roads and inter-city links and a wonderful public transport system servicing "densified" suburban nodes.

As I have indicated, this Bill goes a long way to providing an incentive for the Brisbane City Council to undertake quite dramatic improvements in the city bus services. It provides the wherewithal to offer commuters the carrot of improved, accessible and user-responsive services. We can all detail urban services that seem to have been designed to maximise the inconvenience to the user. I hope that will soon be a thing of the past. But it will not be enough to change the long-term habits of the car driver. There will also need to be that stick applied of restricted access to parking and, as I have said, land-use management and planning.

During the debate over the Lang Park redevelopment, some constituents argued that large parking stations should be included in the proposal, quoting planning guidelines of one car park per three seats, and for Lang Park that would have meant a massive car park with over 13 000 spaces. To me, such a structure would be an ugly folly that would increase the number

of patrons attempting to drive to the major games with appalling congestion problems surrounding the area. It is far better to minimise parking facilities and maximise public transport options. A highly coordinated public transport system operating from major transport centres in the inner city and outer suburbs was decided on and proved highly effective. The utter chaos and predicted doom and disaster did not eventuate and, in general, residents agreed that the handling of traffic and crowd movement had been better than ever before.

Since 1991, this Government has increasingly subsidised the Brisbane City Council operated ferry services. Prior to 1991, only private ferry operators were Government funded. I welcome the plans to modernise current services and introduce new down-river services from Hamilton and St Lucia with the new reduced-wash, multi-hull ferries.

We cannot overestimate the importance of this Bill. It provides the surety of funding that the Brisbane City Council needs to undertake these significant reforms. In some States where increasing subsidies were relied on to make up for falling usages and increased costs, rather than improving services and increasing efficiencies, we are seeing a move away totally from publicly funded transport options. For example, in New South Wales, the 1990 New South Wales Passenger Transport Act utilises performance-based contracts for operators of public passenger bus services in designated public transport areas or routes. The State Transit Authority is currently being corporatised. It is intended to have bus operations organised as independent corporatised or private entities within five years. Fifty per cent of services in Sydney are undertaken by private operators.

In Victoria, the Kennett Government has put to contract all urban bus operations. These will feature five-year contracts and concession fare top-ups. Melbourne is currently serviced by private operators who will be put on performance-based contracts when current licences expire. The South Australian Government is currently considering options for the tender of all Government-owned services in Adelaide. Private operators provide services in the less densely populated areas of Adelaide.

The Western Australian Government will progressively tender out bus services over the next three years. The Tasmanian Government utilises agreements under licence for private operators to provide services equivalent to the Metropolitan Authority services. Even in the ACT they are moving to reduce the current annual subsidy by \$10m over the next three years.

This important Bill allows for improved efficiencies and services without handing those services to the private sector. I, for one, believe it is too important a public service to allow that.

Time expired.

Mr CONNOR (Nerang) (9.40 p.m.): In joining the debate on this Bill, I wish to speak particularly about taxis and hire cars. I think that probably the most relevant aspect of this Bill is that it fits in very much with the issue of the moment, which is, of course, competition policy—the Australian Industry Commission, the Hilmer report and the like. It would seem from the public statements of both the Minister for Transport and the Premier that they are at odds on this subject.

Before I refer to that matter, I will make a few comments in relation to the very diverse positions of the two sectors of the community. First of all, I will quote from a report by the Trade Practices Commission in relation to the taxi industry—

"The strict control over entry, through a licensing mechanism, has meant that the price of the right to operate a taxi, known as a 'plate', has been bid to very high levels, as potential taxi operators seek to capture the gains offered by the restrictions on entry. The capitalisation of these monopoly rents in the form of the high plate prices contributes to higher taxi fares to the extent that plate owners need to earn a commercial rate of return on their capital investment in the plates as well as in the car. Regulatory reforms which make taxi plates more freely available to applicants who meet minimum entry standards would reduce the capital value of the plates and result in lower fares in a more competitive taxi market."

That was a quote from Professor Alan Fels of the Trade Practices Commission. I do not necessarily agree with that proposition. The quote continues—

"In contrast, the ATIA argues in its initial submission that theories linking licensed values to higher fares are 'simplistic', and that the three main factors affecting the value of a taxi licence are:

- the demand for taxi services;
- the demand for taxi plates; and
- goodwill.

These factors are subject to such influences as the expectation of future licence values, the strength of the economy, the impact of unemployment on the costs of employing drivers, restrictions on taxi licence ownership (including the

number of plates allowed per person), population size and, most importantly, the number of taxis that are allowed to operate.

The ATIA went on in its initial submission to say that 'the demand for taxi services is not a factor in determining the value of a taxi plate'.

In its submission on the draft report, the ATIA strongly disagreed with the Commission's view that the need to obtain a commercial return on the investment in taxi licences means that fares are higher than they would otherwise have to be."

That is basically two very diverse positions on this subject. The Minister is trying to deal with the issue, which is a very difficult one. I do not take that away from him one little bit. It really comes down to the fact that most people agree that the barriers to entry and competition have to be dealt with, and the Industry Commission is trying to do that. That entity is not a creature of this Government or the former Government; it is a creature of the Federal Labor Government.

I would just like to quote briefly a few extracts from the Industry Commission's report in this regard, because I think it is important that members understand what the debate is really about. The report states—

"In the case of taxis, the difficult issues in promoting competition involves not the model itself but how to get there. Many taxi owners have purchased licences directly from State and Territorial Governments. In some cases, taxi licences represent a significant part of people's life savings such as those who have invested severance payments. Many people believe that the direct and indirect role of Government in supporting high taxi licence values places a moral and/or legal obligation to compensate them in the event that entry restrictions are relaxed. Clearly, major equity issues arise."

That is the case, because this debate has since ensued in Queensland and in other parts of Australia.

The issue was certainly brought to a head when Professor Alan Fels visited Queensland a few months ago. Since this has occurred, the value of taxi plates has dropped significantly. Many taxi owners, particularly on the Gold Coast, have reported to me significant drops—10 per cent, 15 per cent and even 20 per cent—in the value of their plates. This is a very important debate, because we are dealing with people's livelihoods and, in many cases, people's life savings.

As the Industry Commission stated, it is not a matter of what we are trying to achieve—which

is a more competitive marketplace—but how one gets there. The Queensland model, as described by the Industry Commission, is as follows—

"A further option comes from Queensland, where a new scheme is being introduced by the Government. Taxi organisations will have to meet certain performance standards under service contracts within defined areas. The performance standards may specify the types of service to be provided, minimum levels of customer service, service reliability and safety levels of accessibility for people with disabilities.

A taxi organisation is required to provide twenty-four hour service and is not allowed to refuse entry to taxis wishing to join it provided the newcomer is willing to pay a reasonable commercial fee. If the performance standards are not met, the Director-general of Transport may issue additional taxi licences so the standards are achieved."

That is really what we are talking about—the way in which the Minister is trying to achieve the competition by setting performance standards. If they are not achieved, the director-general will issue additional taxi plates. That is as I understand it, and that is how people involved in the industry have reported to me that they understand it. That was not the Industry Commission's preferred approach, but I will not go into it.

Mr Hamill: You want the Industry Commission approach, do you?

Mr CONNOR: No, I do not.

Mr Hamill: Nor do I.

Mr CONNOR: No. In fact, recently I spoke to the Taxi Council and suggested that the Queensland model could be improved upon. The Industry Commission had the same criticism of the Queensland scheme, and that was that the performance indicators, by necessity, would be arbitrary. If it is being determined by the department, that raises the question that if it is looking for some extra revenue, it is simply a matter of raising the performance standards. The department then issues more plates and the Government reaps more benefits. As I understand it, that is in consultation with the industry.

The industry does not have a right of veto—and quite rightly so—against the department. However, if the department disagreed with and overruled the Taxi Council, and if any additional plates in a particular area

were issued, the profits from those additional plates should be spread evenly among the existing plate-holders. That way there would not be any financial benefit to the Government for issuing plates over and above a realistic performance indicator. In turn, if the Government did that, the taxi plate owners would be properly compensated. That is just another version of this Government's scheme, and I believe that it would be the most equitable way in which to achieve a competitive and service-oriented outcome.

I hope that the Minister will comment on that proposition in his reply. Again, as I said, I am quite supportive of the Queensland model. However, I believe, as does the Industry Commission, that the performance indicators could become arbitrary, and that in the event of a disagreement, there would be a very easy way in which to deal with that, which I have already explained.

I now move on to an associated issue, and that is that, somehow, the Minister for Transport wanted the taxi industry to believe that I was in favour of taxi deregulation, which is the complete opposite of my position.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mr CONNOR: The Minister for Transport was the one who misrepresented me. He wrote to almost every taxi plate owner in Queensland saying that somehow or other I was pro-deregulation. As I said, nothing could be further from the truth. In suggesting that I was somehow pro-deregulation, the Treasurer quoted a statement that I made when Allan Fels was in Queensland a few months ago, in early April this year.

Mr Hamill: April Fool's day?

Mr CONNOR: It was, yes. I think the fool might be on the other side of the House.

At this breakfast, the media asked me what my position was. I said that the Premier's position was what was really important. At a COAG meeting, the Premier had been supporting the Hilmer report, which was clearly supportive of option one, which the Minister said earlier that he was not supportive of. We had two totally different positions. The Premier was supporting Hilmer.

Mr Hamill: Which position do you prefer?

Mr CONNOR: I have already told the Minister what position I prefer. It is the same position on taxi industry deregulation as the Minister's.

As I said earlier, this is the quote that somehow or other the Minister called upon to suggest that I was in some way supportive of deregulation. It was from *Business Queensland* of the week of 4 April. It stated—

"In the wake of Fels' comments, Ray Connor, Coalition shadow Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development, says it is now imperative for Premier Wayne Goss to state the position of the state government in relation to industry deregulation, specifically taxis, news agents and the legal profession.

'The current move by the Queensland government towards increased regulation of the taxi industry in Queensland flies in the face of the Trade Practices' position.

'While other States are deregulating, the Queensland Labor government has determined to increase regulation by requiring taxi companies to be licensed and accredited and that all drivers be accredited as well.

'This puts a totally new layer of bureaucracy into the system and hence further regulation.

An advisor to Goss says as part of the Hilmer Review . . . process, the states are still 'doing their homework' on deregulation and will meet in August to discuss the issue.

He says, as yet, the premier has not canvassed any view on taxi deregulation."

I have also put a question to the Premier in the House about that industry, and he was not prepared to state a position. As I said earlier, we have what are quite clearly two different positions on this issue. One wonders what will come from it.

The other question that I would like to ask—and the Minister might like to answer this in his reply—is whether or not he is prepared to give me the names and addresses of all those taxi plate-holders that he wrote to misrepresenting my position. Or would he be prepared to write to them presenting my true position, instead of misleading them as he has? Alternatively, if he wants to supply me with those names and addresses, I will do that myself. Clearly, the Minister does not want to interject on that point.

I will raise a few points that detail the Minister's position. I am referring to private hire vehicles and to one of the messes that the Minister will bring about through competition. By increasing the number of plates and making PHV ranks available at airports, international hotels and the like, he is basically bringing about level of competition into the taxi industry via private hire vehicles.

One thing that he has not really made public and gone on the record about is how many private hire vehicles he will allow. Has he worked

out a process and a schedule, or will this be part of the performance indicator mechanism as a result of the system of accreditation? When he finds that there are taxi delays, instead of just putting on more taxis, will he put on additional private hire vehicles? The other aspect is that, once he has determined how many licences he is issuing—and the schedule and the process by which he will issue more licences—how much will they be? Will the existing system apply, or will he have a new pricing regime for private hire vehicle plates?

As I said to the Minister earlier, I would hope that the industry has put to him—as I have—that process for dealing with the conflict over the number of new cabs. I am speaking about performance indicators. Will he also consider that process for private hire vehicles as well?

As I said before, the main issue, as I see it, is the potential for the chief executive to issue more taxi licenses than the council agrees with. If that does occur, will the Minister provide any mechanism for compensation?

Mr ARDILL (Archerfield) (9.57 p.m.): This Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Bill is a very belated response to one of the great problems facing the people of Queensland in the latter half of the twentieth century. In the five decades since the world changed forever after World War II and the expectations of the general public to have a share of the good life became entrenched in the Australian psyche, one of those expectations was, and is, general personal mobility.

The FX Holden changed attitudes forever, and what had been a privilege became a right. No matter how much some interest groups try to restrict that right to mobility, people will not accept it. That is not to say that Governments, planners and thinkers should not try to adjust the mode of transport to provide the best mode to suit the greatest number of people in an ecologically and economically sustainable way.

Public transport is the only sustainable way of moving large numbers of people in the same direction at the same time. Anyone who doubts this should look at the sheer incompetence of drivers and the chaos which occurs on the four-lane Pacific Highway on Sunday afternoons, and then reflect that the same number of people could be transported by 10 trains per hour travelling at top speed on one track, with a second track available for the reverse flow.

What also must be realised and accepted is that there is a role for private transport and that it must be facilitated after the needs of public transport take priority. This Labor Government and this Minister have responded to the

perceived needs of the metropolitan Moreton regions coming out of the south-east Queensland 2001 study in a responsible way. This Bill will facilitate work which should have commenced decades ago.

Confidence in public transport is a many-faceted figure. Public transport must be available locally, regionally and Statewide if the public is to have the necessary confidence that will make it work. Convenience and mobility must be personal and it must be all-embracing. And still there will be a role for the private vehicle. As a member of Parliament and as a citizen, I make use of all forms of transport and am able to choose the mode best suited to my purpose, whether it be bus, train, taxi, ferry or private car. This is possible only where there is confidence in the system, information is freely available and the service is adequate and reliable. The other two facets that must be considered and addressed are convenience and comfort. These are too often overlooked and neglected by authority figures who never use public transport. This Bill will address all of those facets—confidence, convenience, comfort, information, reliability and availability.

Although Brisbane City has Australia's best urban transport system, we have examples of very badly served areas in parts of Queensland, including the urban areas adjacent to Brisbane and in provincial cities. Some of our provincial cities, such as the Gold Coast City area and Redcliffe, have excellent public transport provided by public operators. However, in general, the State's provincial cities have an eight-to-five, Monday-to-Friday urban service that must be upgraded. Many of our countryside localities surrounding provincial and market centres have no public transport at all, and that will also be addressed by this Bill.

During a very interesting and informative investigation by Travelsafe into the safety of bus passengers, it became obvious that there was a very real need for public services in many country areas. This Government spends annually \$80m of taxpayers' funds on transporting children to and from school, and many of the buses sit idle for the rest of the day. We inspected the operations of some very efficient and dedicated operators—for example, Biloela Coaches and others—who contribute a great deal to the transport system. We also observed some others, usually licensed services, who were causing a great loss of confidence and support of public transport by showing young students how unattractive public transport can be. Almost universally, the school service contractors did a fine job which is deserving of acclaim. Using better planning methods by Government and

more flexibility by operators, this Bill will enable them to do better in many cases by conveying parents, teachers, ancillary school staff and also the general public on their services where this is possible.

I would like to draw attention to some positive aspects of the Bill in relation to school services. The ongoing assistance of conveyance committees will be required to enable us to take advantage of their local knowledge, particularly in rural, regional and remote areas. No eligible school student in Queensland will be disadvantaged by the new system. Full-fare paying adults will be permitted on Government-funded contract routes, subject to conditions. Conveyance committees provide vital local area knowledge which ensures that kilometre-based services are tailored to best suit the specific transport needs of individual rural, regional and remote communities. The only change to the current role of the committees will be the transfer of legal obligations for the signing of contracts with operators from the committees to the Director-General of Queensland Transport. This will ensure that all contracts for the provision of passenger transport services are negotiated, implemented and monitored consistently throughout the State. It will also allow conveyance committees to continue their important role in the effective management of transport services without the potential legal ramifications involved with contract administration, which the director-general is better placed to handle. However, the conveyance committees are of such necessity to the future of passenger transport services in this State that their role will be officially recognised in the regulations supporting this legislation.

School transport is a significant undertaking in a decentralised State such as Queensland. In total, about 100 operators using 2 000 buses carry primary and secondary school students and 500 taxis are used for special education students. Assistance is provided to more than 130 000 students to attend school by (a) kilometre-based contract services; (b) licensed, fare-paying buses or ferries; (c) conveyance allowances to parents for private vehicle services; and (d) specialised transport. Licensed-based services are provided by 120 operators carrying almost 45 000 students per school day. Broadly speaking, licensed operators cover urban areas. Kilometre-based services are provided by about 800 operators covering over 1 176 routes and catering for about 47 000 students per school day. Generally, kilometre-based operators cover rural and remote areas.

The major change for school transport operators under the new legislation will be that all

services will operate under the terms of a service contract. Under the terms of the five-year contract, operators will be required to meet all the requirements of that contract. They will have to be meeting minimum prescribed service levels, maintaining vehicle standards, demonstrating customer responsiveness, demonstrating use of innovation, meeting safety standards, attaining and maintaining operator accreditation, using authorised drivers, and successfully completing a mid-term review. In some cases, the contracts will apply in sparsely populated areas where services cannot be provided on a commercial basis but are to be provided for equity and access reasons as determined by the Government. In the majority of cases, they will apply to school transport assistance scheme routes which are not incorporated in a commercial service contract.

Although I believe that this Bill will correct some of the severe shortcomings in public transport in the outer metropolitan areas, I am not sure how the problems of low-density living as encapsulated in the Sunshine Coast hinterland can be resolved. With hindsight, the area of this operator's nightmare should have been planned instead of being allowed to grow with no thought to providing public transport. There is no doubt that some of the low-density areas closer to Brisbane will also create servicing problems. It could be that a higher fare structure will have to be devised and utilised locally.

Planning has been abysmally neglected in an area which should have obviously been considered as the Australian equivalent of southern California. Again, Brisbane stands out as the exception to this. Although it is fashionable for some people to suddenly discover land and town planning, it should be pointed out that Brisbane has had the benefit of good planning since Clem Jones' day and, even before that, back to the Chandler era of the green belt. Further, Brisbane had a fully professional town plan in 1976 which reflected the wishes of the people of the day for an open city with adequate open space, which is still pertinent today. That town plan made adequate provision for economic public transport within the city. In contradistinction to that plan, some adjoining shires failed dismally to consider public transport and allowed developers to subdivide with no concern for future provision of services.

It is now incumbent upon this Labor Government to try to correct the inaction of the previous National/Liberal Party Governments to provide adequate public transport services within and from these areas. The most efficient way in which services can be directed to the CBD is by coordinating local bus services with the rail services now servicing those dormitory suburbs

but not being used to capacity. The duplication of the Brisbane underground railway from Roma Street to Brunswick Street by this Government at a cost of \$140m will now enable these prospective passengers to be carried. There is no doubt that the congestion of major roads into Brisbane in the peak hour could be reduced and even solved if adequate public transport were provided in the outlying dormitory areas of Brisbane and commuters were channelled onto Brisbane's excellent electric trains.

Electronic ticketing to allow transfers from one mode to another is absolutely essential if regular commuters are to be persuaded to leave their cars in residential areas instead of cluttering up Brisbane roads and streets and Brisbane's real estate being turned into parking spaces. When I introduced the Cityxpress bus system to Brisbane in 1981, one of its important aspects was ticket transferability to and from other bus services. That was destroyed by the Liberal council administration and resulted in a loss of patronage. One of the worst features of public transport, except for a minority of travellers lucky enough to reside and work convenient to the same bus route, is the iniquitous impost of flag-fall charges in multiple fares. This Bill will enable a more equitable fare system not previously available to be applied to multiple-mode commuters.

Brisbane's bus service, which I described as excellent, is not fully understood by the travelling public. There are 17 radial trunk services with a 15-minute headway. They follow the original tram routes. Those trunk services have route numbers from 100 to 199. Nearly all pass through the CBD of Brisbane, and there is a heavy concentration of buses at City Hall. As I said, the service is made up of 17 services, each on a 15-minute headway during the day, that provides a very large number of buses available within the central city streets and a service to Fortitude Valley. This is not universally understood by the public of Brisbane. What the public does understand is the City Circle bus, the red bus service which stops right outside Parliament House. I urge members of Parliament to make use of this service. It costs me 35 cents for each trip up to town and back again on that service. I make good use of it and I urge members of this House to also make use of that service. It is a great service on a five-minute headway and it certainly is deserving of all members' support. After all, we pay for it—this Government subsidises that service very heavily.

In addition to the 17 major radial trunk routes around Brisbane, there are 10 in-fill radial routes in between those. They were originally started by private operators and taken over by the council between 1940 and 1950. They have a lesser

standard of service than the trunk radial routes because the patronage is just not there. Usually, they have a 30-minute or one-hour headway. It is unlikely that the headway on those services can be brought up to the standard on the other trunk routes because the patronage is just not there and is never going to be there. That could only be introduced at very heavy cost and very heavy subsidisation.

Beginning in 1981, Cityxpress was superimposed on the existing system as a fast 30-minute headway service to the outer suburbs. In addition, as mentioned by the member for Mount Coot-tha, the Great Circle Line linked up the major suburban shopping centres on a 30-minute headway during shopping hours. This Government heavily subsidises all of these services, with perhaps the exception of Cityxpress, which runs at less cost because of its better turnaround of buses. The ratepayers also provide a similar subsidy through the general rates that they pay. In point of fact, I believe the Government pays a subsidy of about \$27m and the council pays somewhere around about \$25m per year.

I have been a long-time advocate of a transport rate for Brisbane to clearly show the extent of the subsidy being provided by the ratepayers. Originally, electricity operations of the council paid for the huge loss on the tramways system, which everyone thought paid its way; it never did. It was then transferred to the main radial bus routes. When that was taken over by SEQEB, water rates started to pay the subsidy on the buses and, of course, the council then lost the dam operations. Now, that subsidy comes from the general rates, and I think it is time it was clearly identified by the use of a transport rate in Brisbane.

Speaking of Cityxpress reminds me of the "it won't work" attitude of many people at the time and also the opposition by people such as the member for Indooroopilly to express services by train from the outer suburbs. That is the only way to get out of suburban areas into the city in a speedy fashion. We cannot have all of those services stopping at every station. Mr Beanland actually misled the House. I tried to get him to correct what he said, but he would not. He said that he has lost services at Indooroopilly. In point of fact, under the present timetable, he now has more services at Indooroopilly than he ever had before. He has lost two services in the suburbs beyond Indooroopilly in the morning peak and a similar number in the afternoon peak, but I cannot see that he has the need to carry on about it the way he does.

No consideration of public transport would be complete without mention of the passenger

rail services provided for commuters in the metropolitan area, inter-urban commuters on the near north coast, and the Traveltrain passengers on the 10 000 kilometre network of Queensland Rail. In addition, as a public transport user and supporter all of my life, I must acknowledge the excellent service provided by Queensland Rail within the limits of tight budgetary constraints. It is the duty of Queensland Treasury to fund as a community service obligation passenger rail services throughout the State as part of the public transport infrastructure necessary for the mobility which is a part of our way of life. If public transport is deficient in one area, it reflects on public transport as a whole, and confidence is destroyed elsewhere in the system.

Queensland is such a vast State that many journeys involve overnight travel. This is where rail comes into its own, and the State must accept that sleeping cars are an integral part of adequate transport in this country, just as they still are in Europe, in America and in less developed areas of the world. Coaches and buses have a role to play in providing adequate transport and public mobility, but they cannot supersede overnight trains in comfort and safety.

The performance agreements and the training provisions of this Bill are going to revolutionise travelling in Queensland. The immense distances, the lack of planning in the past and the preponderance of passengers who require a subsidised fare because of their youth or being elderly will always necessitate the provision of public funding of transport. However, this Bill will ensure that that funding is used in the best way to provide better services.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (10.17 p.m.): The third paragraph of the Minister's second-reading speech sums up fairly well where we should be heading with passenger transport. The Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Bill states—

"From the SEQ 2001 project we know that by 2011 the regional population bounded by Noosa, Toowoomba and the border could increase by as much as 57 per cent, resulting in a 69 per cent increase in transport trips."

This emphasises the fact that we really need to have a close look at public transport.

The member for Archerfield probably summed up fairly well the feelings of most members in this House. To a large extent, Mr Ardill talked about transport services in Brisbane. However, in some other areas—and I know that passengers might be a little bit thin on the ground at present—there is still a lack of service. The service in the Noosa area has already been mentioned. In my electorate of Gympie, I receive requests fairly regularly for a train service running

from Nambour up to Gympie so that people can go into Gympie to shop and then return home in the afternoon. Many elderly people in the community do not have access to any form of public transport at all, whether it be train or bus. Emphasis should be placed on getting off the road cars that carry only one passenger and providing more public transport so that it is available to everyone.

Another problem that has received recent press is people, especially young children, being caught between the automatic doors on public transport. We need to ensure that people are safely inside trains and buses— whatever the case may be—and that they do not become caught between the automatic doors. As I say, recently, young people in particular have been involved in such incidents.

I believe that there is a need for more driver training. The Opposition spokesman, Mr Johnson, referred to the driver training centre at Mount Cotton. Previously in this House I have spoken about the Roadcraft Queensland Driver Training Complex in Gympie. That complex was started by the combined service clubs of Gympie and Cooloola with the idea of trying to ensure that people, and especially young people, know the limits of the vehicles they drive. At the Roadcraft complex, drivers are instructed on remedial action to be taken in an emergency. I know for sure that this has saved the lives of many young people who have taken part in that course and benefited enormously from it.

Over 10 or 12 years, I have been trying to get Governments to take more interest in driver training, but without success, although some money has been invested in those schemes. The biggest success has been that Government departments are now beginning to utilise that facility. For example, the Ambulance Service has been utilising the Roadcraft complex in Gympie to a very large extent, as have other organisations. I understand that Roadcraft is spreading its wings into other areas and, hopefully, offering its services and expertise to people who live closer to Brisbane. The instructors at Roadcraft, who have given almost their whole lives to helping drivers, live and breathe driver training and road safety. If they are given the opportunity, I believe they will be able to provide a great deal of assistance to many people, especially young drivers.

School buses and their operations have been mentioned. This legislation makes it difficult to determine how far the Minister intends to go with changes to school bus operations. There have been problems in some areas, particularly in relation to parents who want to send their children to private schools. A small

amount of money is provided to assist them to do that. In some cases, for whatever reasons, parents do not want to send their children to the nearest school to which buses operate. This can create difficulties. Many parents want to send their children to a school that is located in the opposite direction from the school to which subsidised transport is provided, but they cannot understand why their children cannot travel on school buses that service that area. I believe that this legislation will address that particular problem to a certain extent, because those children will now be able to travel on those buses provided they pay a fare and space is available. As to how much those parents are willing to pay for that service—we will have to wait and see how it pans out.

Many people in country areas have requested a service whereby parcels can be picked up and delivered by school bus operators. I am not sure whether they would be able to provide that service while transporting school children. This issue has generated a lot of interest.

I congratulate school bus operators and drivers on the way they have battled to stay afloat. A year or so ago they were threatening to strike because they wanted to highlight the fact that they have not received fare increases for a couple of years. Many of those operators are finding it difficult to keep their buses running—to purchase fuel and oil and to maintain their vehicles in a roadworthy condition. Those operators are safety minded. They are very conscious that they carry young children whose parents do not want anything to happen to them between school and home. If the monetary allocation to those operators is insufficient, we cannot ensure that they will be able to maintain their buses in a safe and sensible way.

I turn now to possible extensions of services in areas where one operator is given the first opportunity to provide public passenger services on a particular route. I wonder whether operators in the same area will be able to come to an arrangement about that. For example, in many areas, small bus routes crisscross. Those operators are usually transporting children from one school to another between half past eight and a quarter to nine. We must ensure that those operators will be able to coexist. Overall, I hope that there will be an improvement in bus services, particularly school bus services. Even though most operators are safety conscious, they need a bit of encouragement from time to time to maintain high safety standards.

Dr CLARK (Barron River) (10.29 p.m.): The current debate surrounding transport planning decisions in south-east Queensland

has highlighted the need to ensure that effective and efficient public transport is an integral part of a comprehensive transport strategy. However, members should be aware that a similar, urgent need exists in high-growth areas in provincial Queensland, such as Cairns.

The population of the Cairns/Mulgrave local authority area is expected to increase by some 60 per cent by the year 2011 to 147 540, making it one of the fastest growing areas outside south-east Queensland. The FNQ 2010 regional planning process currently under way includes the development of a strategy for urban expansion and traffic management, because these two factors are interrelated.

The work carried out to date as part of this regional planning process and Government reviews of public transport in Cairns has confirmed that the Cairns/Mulgrave region has very real and urgent transport problems. The Cairns/Mulgrave Regional Transport Study completed in 1993 was the first strategic study designed to assist in future transport planning for various population levels. That study concluded that constraints imposed on development by World Heritage areas, mountains and wetlands make it very difficult and probably undesirable to rely solely on developing road corridors to service demands. There is a vital role for public transport in meeting anticipated travel demands. Even with high levels of public transport use, there will be a major difficulty in establishing the necessary road and transport infrastructure.

This study suggests that to have infrastructure provision at manageable levels, policy measures will have to be vigorously applied. It will also be essential that policy measures be progressively introduced in advance of the high populations being reached for their full effectiveness to be reached when needed. The study indicates that the policy should be directed toward achieving efficient land use forms, managing travel demand to reduce the use of motorised modes; shifting travel towards public transport; dampening peak demands and deterring entry to highly congested areas; and protecting corridors required for the future. I certainly endorse the need to move in those directions. Referring to passenger transport in particular, the report concluded that the environmental constraints in the Cairns/Mulgrave area mean that there is a particularly important role for passenger transport services in meeting future travel needs.

It is expected that public transport will cater for around 20 per cent of motorised travel in peak hour as the population increases. This is a very high level of use for public transport and presents a very real challenge to us because at

present only 1 per cent use public transport for work. The study indicated the need in the future for a track-based system, such as light rail, to be introduced for population levels beyond 300 000. However, the report proposed that corridors will need to be reserved to accommodate the necessary systems ahead of that time. I personally hope that we do not see a population level of 300 000.

The study looked at a potential population of 500 000. To me, the concept of half a million people in that Cairns/Mulgrave area would result in a deteriorating lifestyle and cause a quite unacceptable impact on the environment. However, returning to public transport the report actually said that, if public transport is to fulfil its future role, services must be provided early in the life of developing areas. That is very important to recognise. In that way decisions locking people into car use might, in fact, be avoided. New subdivisions should be designed in such a way that they facilitate the development of viable public transport systems, not hinder them as has often been the case in the past. I welcome the provisions that exist in this legislation to ensure that public transport is properly considered by local authorities in their approval of subdivisions.

Whilst that study that I have just referred to was designed to assist in the planning of future transport needs, the consultation process that was part of that study revealed community concerns related to operational deficiencies in present Cairns public transport services. Two consequent studies on public transport in Cairns commissioned by the Department of Transport identified in considerably more detail the problems with the bus service in particular. Whereas options such as light rail may be needed in the future, our first challenge is to get a convenient, efficient, reliable and safe bus service for the Cairns area.

I have formed a transport advisory committee comprising representatives from the townships on the Marlin Coast to have input into departmental planning. Whenever I have raised local issues with community groups, it is inevitable that the question of transport comes up. It is one of those issues that affects the daily lives of people on the Marlin Coast, in particular the elderly and the young. For example, when we were looking at providing services to the elderly we found one of the major constraints was their inability to access public transport. That is similarly the case with the young people. Teenagers have real problems trying to access the entertainment venues in the centre of Cairns. They often feel very disadvantaged and isolated on the Marlin Coast.

The community committee was in fact readily able then, not surprisingly I suppose, to identify the problems with our present bus services and it provided me with some very valuable suggestions. I commend members of that committee for their contribution. I think it is interesting to note that the personal experiences of those residents actually confirmed what the experts had to tell us about our transport and bus services in the Cairns area.

The following summary of findings from the various studies and my residents' committee should give some indication of the real, serious problems that we are facing in the Cairns area. Firstly and most importantly, buses simply do not run frequently enough to meet people's needs—particularly on evenings and weekends. Even during the week, if a resident is living on the Marlin Coast and wants to get into work by 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock, that person would have a real problem because the first bus does not get into Cairns until 8 o'clock in the morning. As I said before because there is not a frequent enough service, teenagers have some real problems if they are trying to get into venues in town. Of course, it is the parents who usually are called on to be the chauffer.

Information about when buses run is not particularly easy to find or interpret. Because there are four different services and four operators, there is not one book that gathers together all that information. The timetable information is provided only at the City Centre Transit Mall—not at the bus stops in the suburbs. A person can be waiting at a bus stop at most places in Cairns and, unless that person has taken the trouble to acquire a timetable, that person would have no idea of when the next bus is likely to come along.

Getting across the Cairns region by bus is a journey taken only by those people with no choice or hours to spare. A 30 minute journey can take all morning. A person would need to first go into the Cairns city, wait around, catch a different bus and then go south. We live at Freshwater. My young teenage son needs to get to the Smithfield shopping centre for work. He has to go south into Cairns city, catch another bus and then go north to Smithfield.

Mr Nuttall: He should take mum's car.

Dr CLARK: He is dying to get the chance. He cannot wait to learn to drive. What a blessing that will be. But it may be a blessing in disguise that he cannot drive because I will worry what will be happening to him.

Mr J. H. Sullivan: Buy him a bus ticket.

Dr CLARK: I would if I could buy him a bus ticket that would get him there on time.

The Earlville shoppingtown south of Cairns has become a major retail centre in Cairns, with a \$30m upgrade presently under way, yet the existing networks of bus routes do not provide the suburbs or the northern beaches with regular, direct access. Some shopping centres such as the one at Smithfield have such terrible internal layouts that they cannot even get a bus into them. At Smithfield the bus stops where people have to cross a major road to get into the shopping centre.

It is quite clear that we need a considerable increase in the bus routes, because suburbs such as Mooroolbool have virtually no bus service whatsoever. Not surprisingly, local residents have lobbied very hard to get improvements in those areas. It has been suggested that the construction of the Lake Street Transit Mall in the centre of Cairns has actually acted as a barrier to adequately servicing the whole of the city centre. For a city the size of Cairns, buses should operate through the city, not terminate at one point in it. An inner city circle service is very badly needed.

There is no doubt that the existing boundaries between the four bus operators in Cairns contribute to the current inadequate bus route layout, to a lack of through routed services, to an excessive requirement for interchange between buses and to a lack of coordinated frequency levels along common routes. A survey of public transport commissioned by the two local authorities—Cairns and Mulgrave—is currently being analysed. Although it has some methodological limitations, it will provide some additional useful information.

It certainly confirmed that we are not going to get an increase in the number of people using buses until we have a more frequent and convenient service running at appropriate times. Of course, the situation that I have just described for Cairns is not unique. The Department of Transport review of the whole public transport system for Queensland found similar problems throughout the State and in provincial cities. This review also identified a problem with school transport that I have grappled with in my electorate since I was elected and which has caused me enormous frustration, not to mention the frustration that it causes parents. I am referring to the fact that buses licensed to transport students who are eligible for free transport cannot also pick up other students, who may in fact live only a few doors away from the eligible students and who would gladly pay but who cannot get on those buses. That is enormously frustrating. I know that many parents in my electorate will welcome the provisions in

this legislation that will put end to that practice and allow them to access those buses.

I can quite honestly say that the Bill that we are debating today has been eagerly awaited by the Cairns/ Mulgrave residents for quite some period. As I have indicated, they have been suffering considerable inconvenience as a result of the present services.

The elimination of the licensed areas and the introduction of service contracts that will provide the operator with the exclusive right of operation in a defined area in exchange for meeting several basic requirements is long overdue and will provide the foundation for improved bus services in our area. The contract requirements include meeting minimum prescribed service levels, demonstrating business planning, maintaining vehicle standards, demonstrating customer responsiveness, using of innovation, demonstrating patronage improvement, setting performance standards, meeting safety standards, attaining and maintaining operator accreditation, using authorised drivers and successfully undergoing a mid-term review.

As other members have mentioned tonight, under this legislation there will, in fact, be no Government fare box subsidy of public passenger transport. I know that that has been of some concern to operators, but given the extent of the reforms, the current subsidy to operators will not cease immediately but will be phased out over five years. That allow operators time to adjust to the new system and give them the incentive to build up patronage levels as the primary source of income. However, I would like to say that the Government does recognise the need on its part to initiate an intensive public education campaign at the same time as it introduces this legislation. No doubt, it is going to take a lot of work to get people out of their cars and on to the buses. I am quite sure that result of the new system of service contracts will be that high levels of service, performance and access will become a permanent feature of Queensland's public transport system.

The benefits will accrue to Cairns residents as a result of the introduction of service contracts include redesigning bus routes so that 85 per cent of residents live within 400 metres of a service that operates seven days a week; providing most areas with access to both the city centre and Earlville Shoppingtown; the provision of regular hourly frequencies throughout Cairns from 7 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. on weekdays, thus overcoming the inadequate service provided currently to many western and northern suburbs; the introduction of Saturday journeys throughout Cairns, including Saturday

afternoons; the introduction of full-time Sunday services between the northern beaches, Cairns North, the Cairns CBD, Westcourt, Earlville, Bayview Heights, White Rock and Edmonton; the introduction of evening journeys on week days throughout Cairns; buses operating at 15-minute intervals throughout the day between Cairns North, Cairns CBD, Westcourt and Earlville; the linking of the south-western suburbs with Cairns North and the northern beaches; and operating buses through the city centre instead of terminating at the Lake Street Mall.

White Car, which is the company that operates the Kuranda to Cairns service, will be offered a non-urban contract, but residents should not expect any changes to that service. Currently, it is very good and it is providing high levels of service.

As an indication of how dramatic the changes are going to be over a period as a result of introducing service contracts, I will just give some examples of the frequencies that are proposed. I will just take the example of Brinsmead. At the moment, in peak hour it has one return service. Off peak, it has two return services to Cairns City. At night, it has nothing, and on weekends, it has nothing. The proposed frequency during the peak hour is to have six return services and during off-peak times seven return services. At night, it is proposed to have one return service and on weekends to have nine return services. I could give other example of proposals for Smithfield, the northern beaches, Yorkeys Knob and Holloways Beach that indicate increases in services. I should say, however, that I am quite sure the bus service that is currently provided on the northern beaches by the Beach Bus, which is operated by Ralph and Diane Grant, is the best of the four services that we have currently in Cairns. Over recent years, they have upgraded their fleet and introduced weekend and evening services. They are to be commended for that.

As I mentioned, local operators have serious reservations about the possibility of actually achieving such levels of service without the subsidy, but experience in New South Wales country towns with less population than Cairns shows that it is possible to provide hourly and more frequent services with a full spread of night-time and Saturday and Sunday services. However, I know that some operators in Cairns have tried already to introduce weekend services and they have had very low patronage rates. So I think that that does reinforce what I said before about needing an extensive public education campaign.

However, the operators themselves need to be innovative. They need to try different things, such as maxi taxis and minibuses. For the small townships that are located in the area of the northern beaches, they need to consider using minibuses to provide a collector service to the highway connecting with a rapid express service into Cairns. So we have to get out of this mindset of the way we have been providing services and become really innovative.

I recognise that the implementation of this legislation with respect to the introduction of service contracts is not going to be easy. The departmental review recommended that only one service contract exist for the area between Buchans Point and Edmonton requiring the existing four operators, that is, the Beach Bus, Cairns West, Southern Cross and Cairns Trans, to work out a suitable commercial arrangement. When departmental plans for the service contract were first announced, there was quite some anxiety and a degree of hostility on the part of the operators. I have spent a good deal of my time with each of them, and I have worked to facilitate communication between the operators, the departmental officers and the Minister. I am glad to be able to report that we are now making some positive progress towards the operators finding an appropriate model for the Cairns area. It may be that two service contracts will be offered, but the department has asked the operators to advise them as to the most appropriate contract areas. Hopefully, we should be in a position to consult with the public in Cairns in the next three or four weeks. That will demonstrate to people that we are serious, and things can start to move ahead.

I know that it has been a time of frustration, anxiety and uncertainty for the Cairns operators. I commend them and the departmental officers such as Greg Goebel, who is the director of passenger transport, for their commitment to finding a just financial solution that will also provide a model, consistent with this legislation, that will provide the public transport service that the residents of Cairns need and deserve. Of course, the provision of public transport is more than a better bus service. The legislation recognises that, and there is no doubt that it provides an excellent framework for an integrated, modern passenger transport system involving buses, taxis and private hire vehicles. There is also provision for ferries and air services. However, that in itself is only just one element of a total package of measures that will be required if the people of Cairns are to be lured out of their cars. There is no doubt that if we want to retain our lifestyle and environment, we must introduce methods to encourage the use of public transport and not allow the future development

of Cairns to be determined by private motor vehicle use.

I congratulate the Minister on this legislation. It represents a milestone in the provision of an efficient, modern passenger transport system in Queensland. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate) (10.47 p.m.) One of the objectives of this legislation relates to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public passenger transport in Queensland, and I would particularly like to focus on that objective. Obviously, I want to relate it to events that are occurring within my electorate.

In the Minister's second-reading speech, he mentioned the fact that the usage of public transport is declining. He said that, back in the mid-1970s, approximately 12 per cent of the population was using public transport. Towards the mid-1990s, that figure is down to 9 per cent, and if that trend continues it will be down to about 7 per cent by the year 2011.

Certainly, the department has done a fair amount of work in my electorate in terms of trying to turn those figures around and encourage people to use public transport facilities. Actually, public transport within my electorate of Sandgate goes back as far as 1880 when the first rail line was built.

Mr Johnson: This is 1994.

Mr NUTTALL: The member should bear with me. I am saying that, back in 1880 when the first rail line from Sandgate to Brisbane was built, to take the train about 29 minutes to get to the city. In 1994, 114 years later, it takes 30 minutes. In those terms, I do not know how much progress we have made. However, in Sandgate, the bus/rail interchange has been upgraded. It was one of the very first bus/rail interchanges of its kind in Brisbane. It caters mainly for the Hornibrook Bus Line, which travels to Bramble Bay from Redcliffe. It transports a large number of commuters to the Sandgate Railway Station.

In conjunction with local government and the Federal Government, the State Government spent in excess of three-quarters of a million dollars upgrading that facility to make it more user friendly. The people who were also involved in the design of the bus/rail interchange and how it should be used were all players. Not only Queensland Railways but also the Hornibrook Bus Line and the local taxi companies that use the facility all had some input into the design of that bus/rail interchange and how it should work. I am pleased to say that, because of that consultative process and the way in which it was built, it is certainly helping public transport in my area. It has enhanced the appearance of the area

and has also encouraged people to use both buses and trains within my electorate.

Recently, I made representations to the Minister about the Deagon Railway Station, one of the oldest stations within my electorate. I am pleased to say that, due to those representations, the Department of Transport has agreed to upgrade that station to the tune of about \$80,000. That work will be finished towards the end of September. There will be additional shelter for people from the elements. There will be new fencing and some additional lighting to make it safer. There will be new signage at the railway station and better security. I believe that has been long overdue in the suburb of Deagon. Again, it shows the commitment of the department to upgrade existing facilities to encourage more people to use the railway stations.

Additionally, recently security fencing was put in at both Sandgate and Deagon Railway Stations so that commuters can park their cars at those stations. The gates are locked after a certain hour in the morning and are opened again at a certain hour in the afternoon. Since that facility has been put in, the number of cars stolen from the railway station has decreased by some 90 per cent. Obviously, that is very successful. It has encouraged people to park and ride, and I am pleased to see that it is working.

As well as that, we now have bike lockers. In the past, we had a problem with bicycles being stolen from the railway stations. The new bike lockers at Deagon and Sandgate railway stations have encouraged people to use the trains.

Better security on public transport is something that has not been mentioned in our debate this evening. Obviously, there has been and a strong commitment to that. Recently, the Minister announced that video cameras will be installed and that improved security will be provided for staff. For example, there will be a police squad on the late-night trains so that people can feel safe when using public transport. Phones and improved lighting facilities are being put in at the stations. All in all, that does make people feel confident when using public transport facilities.

The suburb of Bracken Ridge is probably the fastest growing area in my electorate.

Mr J. H. Sullivan: That suburb needs improved public transport.

Mr NUTTALL: Bracken Ridge certainly does need improved public transport. To that end, for some time now I have been lobbying the Minister about trying to do something about

improving that. Bracken Ridge is about to have a new development, with some 1 400 new homes, which will bring another 3 500 people into the area. Although the development is near the railway line, there is no usable railway station that is very close to it. There is a station at Bald Hills and the next nearest station is at Carseldine.

I wrote to all of my constituents in Bracken Ridge and urged them to sign a petition to present to the Minister urging him to consider putting in a railway station at Bracken Ridge. I presented that petition to the Parliament some time ago. I am pleased to say that the Minister has advised that he agrees that some careful consideration should be given to perhaps looking at putting a railway station at Bracken Ridge. A feasibility study is being done to see whether that railway station is warranted.

Mr Bennett: Good representation.

Mr NUTTALL: I thank the honourable member.

I am very hopeful that that railway station will be built eventually, but we will have to see how that feasibility study pans out. The other thing about Bracken Ridge is that it contains the Northpoint TAFE College, which is the second biggest TAFE college in the State. One has only to visit the college to see how busy it is. At any one time, there are up to a couple of thousand students there. They have approached me on a number of occasions and said, "Look, we've got a bit of a bikeway network. That is fine. We have some Brisbane City Council buses, and that is fine. But really it just isn't enough. We want to use public transport, but if you want us to use it you have to make it more user friendly." As I said, if after it has done its survey the department sees its way clear to eventually build that railway station at Bracken Ridge down towards the end of Telegraph Road, I feel very confident that the students at Northpoint TAFE College will certainly make good use of that facility.

To do that, though, as I said, it has to be user friendly. I am referring to all of those things that the Department of Transport, and in particular Queensland Rail, is doing in that regard. It is saying, "If we are going to build railway stations, we want to put in better lighting so that people can use them. We want to put in phones. We want to make it safe. We want to encourage people to use those." Certainly, that is the way it is going about its work.

In my electorate, a large number of my constituents rely fairly heavily on public transport. They are voting with their feet and are using the public transport that is available. We did have a few hiccups with the new train timetables, but we managed to work our way through those.

As to the commitment given by both the Minister and the department in relation to improving facilities, particularly within my electorate—the people are very pleased and proud to have such facilities. I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank the Minister for listening to my representations and looking after the constituents in my electorate. Certainly, it has enhanced the area, both in terms of usage and appearance. This Bill is long overdue. It has taken quite some time to bring it together, but it is a Bill that at the end of the day will enhance public transport in the State of Queensland.

Ms SPENCE (Mount Gravatt) (10.59 p.m.): I am pleased to speak in support of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Bill. At the outset, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Minister for Transport on this sensible and long-overdue piece of legislation.

The Bill comes to the House after years of public consultation, consultation with the various sectors of the transport industry, user groups and planning agencies. I acknowledge the hard work and enormous contributions of many people throughout the process. This legislation provides the Government with the legislative basis to tackle the problems of public transport in this State and the ability to make the necessary changes to ensure public transport becomes more accessible and relevant to the people of Queensland.

In my electorate of Mount Gravatt, I know there is a growing feeling that a proper and sensible balance must be achieved between developing road infrastructure and encouraging greater use of public transport. The people who talk to me about this issue are very aware of the increasing pressure on the road system and the damaging effect of private motor vehicle usage on the environment. But it is indeed a challenge to leave their cars at home and use public transport when the public transport system is overcrowded, expensive or non-existent when one needs to use it.

I think it is a sad indictment on the decision making of our forebears when people who live only 15 kilometres from the CBD in the capital city of the State feel that they cannot access a public transport system suitable to their needs. I know that in other great cities of the world such as London, Hong Kong and Paris, people really do not need cars because public passenger transport systems meet their needs at a reasonable cost. However, in Queensland generally and in the south-east corner particularly, we have always tolerated a less than adequate public transport system. Thus, generation after generation of Queenslanders have grown up with a car mentality.

What we have seen in Queensland is a catch-22 situation in which a poor public transport system brought about by a lack of commitment to public transport by previous Governments and inappropriate policies regarding the provision of public transport has seen the percentage of trips made by public transport in south-east Queensland decline from about 12 per cent in the mid-1970s to less than 9 per cent at present. On current trends, without remedial action, the public transport share of the total trips will decline to around 7 per cent by the year 2011.

Those figures do not surprise me, when people in the Mount Gravatt area tell me that they use public transport only when they have to. We are not fortunate enough to have access to trains in the Mount Gravatt area, so Brisbane City Council buses are the only form of public transport on offer. I am told that the buses are crowded in peak hour, infrequent late at night and on weekends and rarely connect with other buses. Students tell me that it takes them an hour and a half to travel from Macgregor to the Queensland University and two hours to travel to the Carseldine campus of QUT, and some tell me that it even takes them half an hour to travel from Macgregor to Griffith University. I am not surprised that those young people will take to using a car as soon as they can afford one. They are wasting a lot of their young lives waiting around for buses. That is the situation in an inner-city area which I know is a lot better serviced in terms of public transport than the outer Brisbane suburbs, where public transport may be nonexistent or where services do not commence until after 9 a.m. and finish before 5 p.m., with night-time and weekend services virtually nonexistent.

The public transport services on offer in much of this State are simply not conducive to increasing public transport usage. Bus operators have come to expect that they have lifetime rights to provide exclusive services to an area irrespective of their performance and irrespective of the patronage levels that they achieve. They have become reliant on Government subsidies, which have been forthcoming irrespective of the operator's performance, and in many cases their fleets are ageing. What all this has meant for the Mount Gravatt electorate is the increasing number of vehicle trips on the major arterial roads such as Kessels Road, Mains Road, Logan Road and the South East Freeway, which are all facing the prospect of peak period gridlock. Residents of the south side who use those roads tell me that they notice the traffic along their roads becoming heavier by the week.

Obviously, there is no simple solution or single answer to the transport problems facing

this section of the city, but a planned approach to transport which ensures that public transport accounts for an increasing proportion of the trips we make, thereby reducing the pressure on the road system and reducing the impact on the environment, is one important solution. This legislation gives the Government the ability to make those changes. Members of the public can then accept the challenge to leave their cars at home when they can and use public transport.

Two important features of the legislation that I would particularly like to mention are operator accreditation and driver authorisation. The former will replace the current system of licences and permits and will be the only authority required to operate certain types of passenger transport services and is aimed at encouraging high-quality operation of public transport services by raising standards. Driver authorisation is aimed at ensuring that drivers of public passenger transport vehicles are not only capable of operating the vehicle safely but are also aware of customer service responsibilities.

This legislation also makes provision for the overhaul of the taxi industry. In his second-reading speech, the Minister said—

"It is not the Government's intention to deregulate the taxi industry."

I know that the Opposition parties in this State have long tried to mount a campaign of fear among taxi drivers that this Labor Government was going to deregulate the taxi industry. That has never been the case. The Minister for Transport has repeatedly told us that he has no intention of deregulating the taxi industry, and I am pleased to see that repeated in his second-reading speech. Instead, the Bill makes provision for taxi licence holders to be associated with a company which has entered into a performance contract with the Government.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Bill is the provisions that require local governments to take account of transport requirements when approving major residential and commercial developments and the provisions which allow the Minister to authorise local governments to undertake management measures such as establishing priority bus lanes during peak hours and ensuring that car parking fees in the CBD discourage private vehicle usage.

There are many more positive aspects to this legislation that I would have liked to cover tonight but, because of the lateness of the hour, I would like to conclude by congratulating the Minister yet again on taking up the challenge to reform the provision of public transport in this State.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (11.06 p.m.): Because of the lateness of the hour, I will not speak for very long, but I was motivated to contribute to this debate when I heard the honourable member for Mount Coot-tha mention the word "minibus". Suddenly, I realised that I should place on record a few comments in relation to the Eagle Junction/Pinkenba line saga that was visited upon my electorate and my constituents approximately 12 months ago.

Honourable members will undoubtedly recall that the passenger rail services along that particular line were terminated by the Minister under fairly provocative and controversial circumstances. I certainly will not revisit those circumstances and the angst and the acrimony that the termination of those passenger services brought about within my electorate. However, the Minister will recall that he and his bureaucrats guaranteed that the minibus service, which was set up to replace the dismantled passenger rail service, would deliver a quality of passenger transport service to my constituents at least equivalent to that which was being terminated. I said to the Minister that I would seek to provide him, his bureaucrats and this Parliament with feedback on how that service has performed since the rail service was terminated.

The chief executive of Queensland Rail, who was heavily involved in the transition of the rail service to a minibus service, basically said that the new service would be environmentally and user friendly and that, if we ever had any problems or if the new system was not working to the satisfaction of the users, then we should let him know. I wish to place on record a tribute to Mr Vince O'Rourke, to whom I have written on many occasions subsequent to representations that have been made to me by my constituents as the new system came into full swing. I find Mr O'Rourke to be very personable and helpful. He is one of those chief executives who will always respond by telephone or correspondence with information that actually addresses the issues that one brings to his attention. In many instances, many of the problems that I have brought to the attention of Mr O'Rourke have been solved as a result of direct intervention.

Obviously, I have monitored the performance of the new minibus passenger transport system in my electorate. I want to make several observations that I hope the Minister takes on board. These matters are repeatedly brought to my attention by various users of the system. As to patronage—several weeks ago, I was at the Eagle Junction rail station handing out to my constituents photocopies of a now infamous leaked departmental pamphlet. While undertaking that activity, I could not fail to note

that the patronage of the new minibus passenger transport service was considerably down on that which I had observed when the equivalent rail service was in operation. This is a matter that needs to be brought to the attention of the Minister. Quite often, the minibuses making their way along that route—and in a moment I will mention normal size Brisbane City Council buses—are totally empty.

I know that the Minister and others have boasted that there has been an increase in patronage on that particular route. I acknowledge that that may in fact be the case, particularly when one considers that the number of services running throughout the day has been increased in comparison with the number of services offered when the route was serviced by rail. I acknowledge that, if a lot more services are running throughout the day, the total patronage of a particular route will increase. However, in my view and from general observation, it cannot be denied that the patronage during peak hours—which were the times that were of greatest concern to my constituents, because they were the times when the service was used most heavily—has certainly decreased.

A recurring problem is the missed connections between the minibus service and the rail service at the Eagle Junction rail station.

As I said, Mr O'Rourke does respond very regularly, and in a positive way, to representations that I make to him in relation to this particular matter but it is regularly brought to my attention. It seems to me that perhaps this could be described as a chronic problem which, in view of the Minister's assurances about the quality control that he and his department would undertake in relation to the new system, I would encourage the Minister to have a look at.

Another issue of concern that I wish to raise, and this particular concern will become even more severe as the rainy season sets in, is the lack of shelters at many bus stops. The Minister would appreciate that, when the rail service was in existence, shelter from the elements was provided at each rail station. We were promised that commuters who previously used the rail service and the shelters available at the stations would certainly not be inconvenienced by a lack of shelter. From time to time, particularly during inclement weather, I have noticed constituents getting rather cold and wet as a result of the lack of shelters which we were told the Brisbane City Council—which has taken over the service—would erect.

The other point that is of concern, certainly to several constituents who have written to me, relates to the use of full-sized Brisbane City Council buses along that route. As I have said, it

is rarely that a minibus is in fact half full, let alone full, but when we see these great big massive buses rumbling along, it just seems to me that there is either mismanagement of the system—and good management of the new system was promised by the Minister and his bureaucrats—or in fact the vehicles that were promised to service the new system just have not been purchased by the Brisbane City Council. Perhaps the Minister may care to give us an explanation as to why, from time to time—in fact, quite frequently—we see full-sized buses rather than the more environmentally friendly minibuses in use along that particular route.

I am sure that the Minister will agree that when I get up in this place I seek to speak from an informed basis and with an informed point of view. In this particular instance most members would certainly acknowledge that point; I am sure that all honourable members who are fair would agree that I do so. To provide the Minister with further feedback, I inform him that during the next few weeks I intend to do a full survey of all the people who use that particular service. I see the Minister has a smile on his face.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mr SANTORO: The Minister was probably not too enthused about that because I think he will get some pretty good feedback; I hope that he accepts it in the constructive way that undoubtedly I will tender it to him. But perhaps if he really wants to be fair dinkum—and I extend this invitation to him—why does he not come out with me on those few mornings when I conduct that survey? I am sure that my constituents would greatly welcome his presence. He would get a lot of good feedback not only about the minibus rail service but also on one or two other issues that are current within my electorate and that are of obvious interest to him. I think it would be good PR for the Minister. I do not intend to make a nuisance of myself in relation to this issue. I certainly intend, despite some urgings from members opposite not to, to continue to represent the interests and the concerns of my constituents.

Mr Ardill: You are flogging a dead horse.

Mr SANTORO: I take the interjection from the honourable member for Archerfield, who believes that I am flogging a dead horse. To his credit, he was one of the people who lent some support—although not very strong support—to my fight against the termination of passenger rail services.

Mr Ardill: No, I did not.

Mr SANTORO: I will take that interjection also and let him go on the record as saying that he did not support the retention of that rail

service. He and the rest of the Labor Party can also be judged on that utterance. As I have said to honourable members, I will continue to do the intelligent thing, that is, to talk to my constituents, to formally survey, poll and interview them and to let this Minister, through this Parliament, know what their feedback is. If honourable members opposite want to knock that process, they can keep on doing so, but in the meantime, my constituents will keep on re-electing me with ever-increasing margins, because I certainly look after them much better than they obviously could do.

In conclusion, I wish to draw to the attention of the House a section of the Minister's second-reading speech in which he stated—

"Demand management strategies in CBDs and key urban centres designed to constrain car use and encourage public transport use have been virtually non-existent."

Somebody like Lord Mayor Soorley would probably regard it as very unChristian of me to suggest that this is a veiled criticism by the Minister towards him, but I will tell honourable members something. I get sick and tired of having the Lord Mayor come into my electorate, particularly when I help to organise public meetings about the proposed airport tollway, and absolutely castigate this Minister and this Government for not encouraging public transport alternatives and therefore decreasing the amount of passenger vehicles that go into the CBD. Let me say something to the Minister. I congratulate him for some of the provisions that are contained within this Bill because I think that he, in comparison with the Lord Mayor, is actually putting his money where his mouth is. We have a Lord Mayor who comes into electorates such as mine and castigates the Minister. He is the same Lord Mayor who constantly keeps on approving the erection of buildings with car parks of ever-increasing size. If a count was done within the city, we would probably find that he is the Lord Mayor who controls more car parks in an aggregate sense than any other land-holder, but yearly he comes into electorates such as mine and, mealy-mouthed, starts lecturing people such as myself and members of the State Government as to how to handle the CBD traffic problems.

So, I will give the Minister a bouquet. It is not often that I have done that over the past year, and deservedly so, but in this particular case I am glad that the Minister is taking on the Lord Mayor. I hope that he will appreciate that I am not being mischievous in trying to start an argument between the Minister and the Lord Mayor, because I believe that, between them, they do a pretty good job at that. I will keep the Minister

informed of what my constituents are saying about the Eagle Junction and Pinkenba Railway Stations and I hope that one day the Minister will come to his senses and restore proper rail services along that branch line.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development) (11.18 p.m.), in reply: I want to thank members on both sides of the House for the constructive way in which they approached the legislation this evening. Overall, I think that it is virtually the unanimous view of the House that this legislation is worthy. Some may have said that it was overdue, and I would be inclined to agree with that position because one of the problems we have been seeking to address through these reforms is in fact a neglect of our public transport system in this State over probably the last four decades. Whilst no-one is suggesting that the situation will change overnight, this legislation is a watershed; it is a very important part of this Government's plans to improve the transport system not only in south-east Queensland but also through the provincial cities of our State and, indeed, it also provides benefits in country areas as well.

I must admit, at certain times I was aware of a degree of inconsistency in the approach being taken by the Opposition. I was a little concerned when I heard at the outset the member for Gregory express his concern that the legislation perhaps did not go far enough, to be backed up, if I may use that term, by the member for Indooroopilly who seemed to indicate in his view that the legislation was heavy-handed and went too far. So we have the jockeying, if you like, of the coalition opposite—each not quite sure what they really believe but each trying to differentiate the view of one party from the other. I believe that we have taken the proper course, that we have not gone too far, and nor have we sought to dodge the important issues that beset public transport in this State.

There are a couple of points that I would like to address in response to comments by honourable members. An important point to address is the claim made by the member for Gregory that he saw the legislation as one sided, in other words, that we were putting obligations upon operators but that the Government was not putting obligations on itself. The honourable member also asked: in return for these obligations that operators would be required to meet, what do they get?

It is important to recognise that the legislation gives a lot to operators in return. It gives operators the right to run a business and not to have to wade through bureaucratic red

tape and a pervasive bureaucracy. It allows the industry to become more professional and to approach not only the running of the business but also the issue of customer service in a professional way. It gives security to operators through contracts and, very importantly, through the exclusivity that those contracts gives the operators. I contrast that with the sort of approach that has been talked about by bodies such as the Industry Commission, which talked about tendering each time for a contract of far less duration than the sort of contracts for which we have provided in the Bill. I believe that those sorts of measures have ensured that industry has supported these reforms.

The honourable member made another point about operator accreditation and driver authorisation. If the honourable member reads those provisions again, I am sure that he will realise that the sorts of provisions that we wrote into the Bill to cover circumstances in which an operator may not be suitable to run a business apply similarly in the Bill to individual drivers; that the standards in terms of a criminal offence, behaviour and so on that we require of an operator are also required of a driver. Ultimately, it is the operator who is charged with running the business, and it is the operator with whom we contract. That is why we have accreditation for operators and authorisation for drivers. We are not trying to run a dual accreditation system.

One point that arose repeatedly in this debate related to the taxi industry. I believe I have made abundantly clear my position and that of this Government in relation to the regulation of the taxi industry. We do not believe in regulation per se; we believe that, in the industry's interest and in the public interest, there should be sensible regulation of the taxi industry. We have steadfastly held to that position. In fact, I recall vividly attending a conference of the Taxi Council of Queensland in Bundaberg in 1989, when I was the shadow Minister for Transport. I stated quite clearly that when we were elected to Government—as indeed we were later that year—we would not deregulate the taxi industry. I know that some political mischief makers are running around saying that this Government wants to deregulate the taxi industry. That is not so. In order to overcome that sort of confusion, I have written to Mr Goodridge of the Taxi Council. I have also written to taxi operators. They understand the Government's policy. There should be no question of any confusion, as suggested by some members.

Another point raised by honourable members related to consultation. This Bill is the product of extensive consultation. I pay tribute to the mature way in which the industry came to the negotiating table and participated fully in the

development of these reforms. I pay tribute to the approach of the Bus and Coach Association. I also pay tribute to the bus operators association—the former school transport association. I also pay tribute to the taxi industry and the PVH industry, which all played their part in a constructive manner. That is why these reforms are enjoying such support in the industry.

This Government has an ongoing commitment to consultation. We did not write into the legislation that there should be advisory committees. But let me assure honourable members that they will occur as a matter of course because we value the input. We have to work cooperatively. It is important that that is undertaken in the public interest and in the interests of the industry.

I was intrigued by the member for Indooroopilly, who delivered the "John" Beanland or "Denver" Goss speech here this evening. He said that some new estates could not be served by buses. I agree with him. That is a real problem. I do not know whether the honourable member for Indooroopilly, when he was the Deputy Mayor of the Brisbane City Council, used to worry too much about whether public transport could access new subdivisions that were approved by that council. I assure him that this Government is very concerned about those sorts of issues. Councils must take into consideration access of public transport to new estates when they allow the design of the road plan by the developers in order to have it approved by council. That is why we have written into this legislation that local authorities must consider public transport access in their planning schemes.

The other point that I wish to address, which has been the subject of repeated representation to me by members such as the member for Cleveland, is that this legislation is important in terms of extending the principles of public transport to areas that hitherto had not been covered. I refer to the issue of isolation and lack of access that has existed in those areas of the State where ferry services are the means by which people could avail themselves of public transport. Whereas previously there was no coverage, this legislation brings water taxis and ferries under the umbrella of public transport provision. It will ensure that people who live on the islands in Moreton Bay or Cleveland bay will have access to public transport services. We will be able to support the disadvantaged in the same way as we support those who are disadvantaged in terms of access or their mobility to public transport in urban centres.

This legislation is a vital part of our overall transport strategy. I have made the point in numerous forums, and I make it here again this evening: there is no simple solution to our transportation needs, whether they be in Boulia or Brisbane; but in terms of the challenge that is before us, particularly in our rapidly growing urban and suburban areas, such as south-east Queensland and far-north Queensland and those provincial cities that line our coastal areas, we need to have a multifaceted approach to address the transportation needs in those communities. An important part of that is the development of an effective road network. I have repeatedly made the point that bypass roads are a vital part of an effective transport system. Anybody who says that roads are not part of the solution is kidding himself. But roads are not the sole answer. They are not the sole solution.

As a Government we have had a strong commitment to the development of our rail network, in which we have invested heavily. Indeed, three quarters of a billion dollars has been provided for our current program for urban rail expansion in south-east Queensland. Other public transport is also a part of the equation. That is where this legislation fits into the scheme. This is a vital plank in that overall transport strategy. That is why I have given the passenger transport review such a priority—to get the review concluded, to conclude the negotiations with the industry and to put in place a framework so that we can implement the much-needed reforms. I acknowledge the very good work that has been done by officers of my department in that regard.

The fourth plank is the issue of demand management. So roads, rail, other public transport and demand management are the four elements of an integrated transport strategy. It is all about planning, coordination and integration in the transport system; it is about promoting professionalism and best practice in our transport industry.

Finally, I think that nothing is more eloquent in indicating the support that exists in the industry than a letter that I would like to read for the benefit of the House. The letter states—

"Dear Minister

We have studied the New Transport Operations Bill and your second reading speech thereon.

Whilst the last twelve months have at times been trying for all involved in the post review process, we believe that the new bill and the stated philosophy of your Department herald in a fresh environment in the provision of public transit to Queensland.

As a company we are excited at the prospect of participating in these future developments, and assure you of our utmost support in achieving your Departments objectives.

On behalf of the board of Hornibrook Bus Lines Pty Ltd."

That letter is signed: G. T. Mountjoy, R. W. White and J. J. Cook. I table the letter, which demonstrates not only the benefits of the consultative process but also the fact that it has worked effectively—the fact that industry has come on board in what, after all, has to be our common objective. The common objective is about providing effective public transport and providing a quality and reliable service to the community.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. D. J. Hamill (Ipswich—Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development) in charge of the Bill.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Bredhauer): Order! Honourable members, there are 174 clauses, 4 Schedules and a Dictionary. The Minister has circulated 26 amendments to various clauses, Schedules 2 and 3 and the Dictionary. The effect of all the amendments is exactly the same, that is, to delete the word "luxury". To facilitate the orderly consideration of the Bill, and to avoid putting the amendments separately, I propose, with the concurrence of the Committee, to have the Minister move all the amendments together and for one question to be put on all the amendments. I will then call the clauses, Schedules 2 and 3 and the Dictionary. The question will be put that the clause, Schedule, or Dictionary as amended stand part of the Bill. I call the Minister to move his amendments.

Mr HAMILL (11.33 p.m.): I seek leave to move amendments 1 to 26 together.

Leave granted.

Mr HAMILL: I move the following amendments—

- "1. Clause 14 (1) (f)—
At page 16, line 9, 'luxury'—
omit.
2. Clause 26 (1) (f)—
At page 21, line 2, 'luxury'—
omit.
3. Chapter 8, heading—
At page 43, line 4, 'LUXURY'—

- omit.*
4. Clause 82—
At page 43, lines 6 and 7, 'luxury'—
omit.
5. Clause 83—
At page 43, lines 10, 11 and 12, 'luxury'—
omit.
6. Clause 84—
At page 43, lines 15, 16 and 17, 'luxury'—
omit.
7. Clause 85—
At page 43, lines 20 and 21, 'luxury'—
omit.
8. Clause 86—
At page 44, line 2, 'luxury'—
omit.
9. Clause 87—
At page 44, lines 4, 5 and 8, 'luxury'—
omit.
10. Clause 88—
At page 44, lines 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 20, 21, 22 and 27, 'luxury'—
omit.
11. Clause 89—
At page 45, lines 1, 3, 4, 6 and 8, 'luxury'—
omit.
12. Clause 90—
At page 45, lines 9 and 11, 'luxury'—
omit.
13. Clause 91—
At page 45, lines 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17, 'luxury'—
omit.
14. Clause 92—
At page 45, lines 18, 20, 22, 25 and 28, 'luxury'—
omit.
15. Clause 152 (3) (b)—
At page 78, line 11, 'luxury'—
omit.
16. Clause 153—
At page 78, lines 17 and 21, 'luxury'—
omit.
17. Clause 160 (1)—
At page 82, line 25, 'luxury'—
omit.
18. Clause 160 (2) (a)—
At page 83, line 1, 'luxury'—
omit.
19. Clause 169 (3)—
At page 87, line 21, 'luxury'—
omit.
20. Schedule 2—
At page 93, lines 8 and 10, 'luxury'—
omit.
21. Schedule 3, amendment of Traffic Act 1949, amendment 1—
At page 96, line 17, 'luxury'—
omit.
22. Dictionary, definition 'lease'—
At page 103, line 4, 'luxury'—
omit.
23. Dictionary, definition 'luxury limousine'—
At page 103, line 15, 'luxury'—
omit.
24. Dictionary, definition 'luxury limousine service'—
At page 103, line 17, 'luxury'—
omit.
25. Dictionary, definition 'luxury limousine service licence'—
At page 103, line 20, 'luxury'—
omit.
26. Dictionary, definition 'public passenger vehicle', paragraph (f)—
At page 104, line 29, 'luxury'—
omit."

By way of explanation, I might say that these amendments all do the very same thing, that is, remove the term "luxury" where it appears in the Bill as pertaining to the limousine industry. These amendments are being moved with the full knowledge and the full support of the limousine industry in the State. It is certainly a view about which the industry made representations to me and I am pleased to accede to their requests in this regard.

Mr JOHNSON: With reference to the Minister's moving those amendments, I draw his attention to page 44, clause (88) lines 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 20, 21, 22 and 27. I draw the Minister's attention to clause 88 (2) (b) which states—

"require the operator to use a luxury motor vehicle."

The word "luxury" is left in there. Is that an oversight, and if so, can the Minister explain how that will read? The way that I read it, if the word "luxury" is omitted that just leaves the words "motor vehicle". The situation could become a little confusing.

Mr HAMILL: Certainly in relation to clause 88 the amendment that I moved leaves the word "luxury" as it qualifies "motor vehicle" in line 16. That is in the amendment that was circulated. In the longer form of the amendment to clause 88 at page 44, the word "luxury" was being deleted at lines 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, where it occurs on two occasions, 20, 21, 22 and 27. If the member looks at the longer form of the amendment, which I had submitted, the word "luxury" would remain at line 16 where it is appropriate because it is referring to a specific standard of vehicle and not to luxury in the context of a luxury limousine service.

Mr JOHNSON: I take the Minister's explanation for that, but when the word "luxury" is left there it could refer to any motor vehicle. I believe that the words "a motor vehicle of a limousine configuration" might be more appropriate. I believe it could be confusing because vehicles other than limousines are luxury vehicles. That is the point that I was trying to make.

Mr HAMILL: Let us be clear about what constitutes a limousine. The standard of vehicle is, in fact, defined in the Dictionary. Certainly, the honourable member would be aware we are dealing with what is currently known as the PVH industry. The standard of vehicle used in the PVH industry is not the base standard vehicle, or the lower standard vehicle of any particular make. Basically, it refers to a higher standard of vehicle—whether it be in the Ford range, the Holden range or whatever. That is why it is important for the word "luxury" to remain there—it distinguishes a standard of vehicle higher than the ordinary vehicle that is produced by our motor manufacturers. That is also the desire of the industry. One of the things that is important to differentiate the limousine industry from the taxi industry is the standard of the vehicles that are used. Whereas we would not preclude individual taxi companies from using a higher standard of vehicle, we would certainly preclude the limousine industry from adopting a

basic sedan vehicle at the lower end of the scale of the manufactured vehicles on the market at present.

Amendments agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 15 to 25, as read, agreed to.

Clause 26, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 27 to 41, as read, agreed to.

Clause 42—

Mr CONNOR (11.41 p.m.): Clause 42 (1) (c) refers to the principles for fare setting. That is a very important issue for the taxi industry because it is competing, especially at airports, with the private hire vehicles. The Minister has stated publicly that the private hire service will be offering that service at a higher price. I accept that the taxi industry has set a maximum price, and I ask: is the Minister intending to use this clause to set a minimum price for the private car industry?

Mr HAMILL: In response to the honourable member's question—this clause contains a general measure that applies to more than taxis and private hire vehicles. Certainly, in our consultations, we have made it very clear that we would ensure that when a limousine is waiting on the rank at an airport, that limousine operator would have to charge a premium over and above the taxi fare which would be appropriate for the equivalent journey, otherwise we would have effectively put in place the deregulation of the taxi industry.

We have also maintained consistently that we would not allow open slather in the industry in terms of fare pricing, whether that be in respect of taxis or buses. As we have provided a framework of regulations—likewise, we would not simply deregulate the pricing mechanism. We believe that that approach is in the interests of the public. Certainly, this provision enables that to be a feature of the service contracts, which we enter into with operators.

Mr CONNOR: If I could just get a little bit more detail on that? The industry and I cannot quite understand the process that the Minister will use to ensure that limousines will charge higher prices than cabs. Recently, I was at an airport in Canberra, where the industry is almost deregulated. At the airport, a private hire car operator told me that he would do the job for the same price as the cab driver would charge. I am just wondering what process the Minister would use to ensure that that situation does not occur in Queensland.

Mr HAMILL: The mechanisms are contained in the legislation to provide for conditions in relation to the limousines car hire operator to actually apply for hire in certain circumstances. The normal practice with the limousine industry is that it does not apply for hire. Limousines do not sit on a rank and have a metre. Rather, a booking is made and a fare is negotiated by the person effecting the booking. So it is a limited exemption to that regime that would allow limousines to be on a rank near one or other of our major airports where there is major tourist traffic. We would use the licensing conditions, which are contained in the legislation, to make requirements when a limousine is being allowed to apply for hire to ensure that there is, in fact, a premium fare. Otherwise that pricing control—

Mr Connor interjected.

Mr HAMILL: Yes, the pricing control is in place in that special circumstance where the limousine operators are applying for hire. We would enforce that because, as I said, to do otherwise would be to effectively deregulate the taxi and limousine industries.

Clause 42, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 43 to 46, as read agreed to.

Clause 47—

Mr JOHNSON (11.45 p.m.): I refer the Minister to subclauses (9) and (10). I made reference in my speech to a failure by an operator or the person with the licence to continue a contract because of a disaster or a death. Clause 47 (10) states—

"Compensation is not recoverable from anyone (including the chief executive and the State) for or in relation to the termination of the service contract under subsection (9)."

If there is an insurance policy involved, will any compensation be paid by the department, or does the person involved have to be responsible for his or her own insurance?

Mr HAMILL: If the member had cared to look at the whole of the provision, he would see that we are providing for a mid-term review; in other words, a monitoring mechanism to ensure that operators who are providing services under a service contract are, in fact, performing.

A core principle in this legislation is that if a person has a contract, as a party to the contract that person is obliged to perform. To date, the whole problem with the industry is that there has been a lack of performance, and that has really been at the core of many of the complaints about services throughout the State. Under this legislation, we have the logical consequence of

the monitoring of a performance contract. The earlier subclauses state that if out of a review the operator has taken all reasonable steps to fulfil a contract and promote it but still has fallen short, then there is the opportunity to reduce the conditions placed on the operator. However, if the operator has not performed and has not taken reasonable steps to perform, then it is fair and reasonable that, if the operator has been given notice of that and still fails to perform, his or her service contract should be terminated. This is not some arbitrary decision on the part of the director-general, but it is quite clearly a straight out breach of a commercial contract.

The principles that are well known to the law of contract are enshrined in this legislation. Effectively, we are really talking about the rescission of the contract by the party who has been disappointed by the non-performance of the other party. Normally, the law of contract means that the disappointed party has the action for damages, not the party who has failed to perform.

Clause 47, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 48 to 53, as read, agreed to.

Clause 54—

Mr JOHNSON (11.49 p.m.): Clause 54 states—

"A government funded service contract about the transport of eligible school children must include a condition that the contract may be terminated or amended if the number of eligible school children using the service changes significantly."

I ask the Minister: who will monitor this situation and who will determine the criteria surrounding this clause? Nobody knows what the projections are going to be from one year to another. In a rural areas, such as Crows Nest, where there is a drought problem and families are moving away from the area, through unforeseen circumstances we may see those bus runs wound back drastically because there are not enough children to carry on. What is the situation there?

Mr HAMILL: This provision is very similar to what already prevails in relation to contracted services for schools. This legislation also enshrines the important position of conveyance committees in determining the need for school transport, particularly in rural areas. So the process would involve consultation with the conveyance committees, which are generally made up of people whose children are travelling on the bus. They are in a good position to advise the department as to the need and the number of eligible students.

Also, we need such a provision in the event, for example, of a closure or relocation of a school for whatever reason. Such a dramatic change in circumstances would require an existing contract to be determined and presumably some new contract to be negotiated. That is the purpose of this provision

Mr JOHNSON: I take on board what the Minister said. However, take the example of an operator who has a five-year contract. Let us say that two years into the contract the job falls over. He would be left with a bus that is, say, two years old and he has another three years to go. Where is the compensation? There is no compensation factor at all.

Mr HAMILL: No, there is no compensation there and, indeed, there is no compensation now, either. It is not a situation in which the law is changing; it actually enshrines a principle that currently exists.

Clause 54, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 55 to 64, as read, agreed to.

Clause 65—

Mr CONNOR (11.53 p.m.): Clause 65 states—

"A person administers a taxi service if the person carries on a business in course of which—

(a) bookings for taxi services are accepted;"

As the Minister would rightly know, quite often hotels, clubs and other businesses take taxi bookings on behalf of their clients. What we have here is the potential for hotels and so on to have problems in that regard. I hope that the Minister will comment on this issue about how he would deal with this anomaly.

Mr HAMILL: There is a significant difference between a person who goes up to the bar in a hotel and asks whether they can arrange to have a cab called. If, at the honourable member's behest, I were to say, "Can you arrange for me a cab?" that does not mean that I become the administrator of a cab company. That is hardly so. This provision relates to a person who is carrying on a business which involves a taxi service. It is the provision which identifies companies that are involved in the provision of a taxi service. With respect to our accreditation system, the accreditation extends to the company. There is an obligation there with the company and the individual operators of taxis to maintain standards of service. We are certainly not applying that, for example, to the kindly bar attendant who might make the phone call on behalf of one of the patrons of the public bar.

Mr CONNOR: That is as I understood it. I just wanted it on the record for future reference. That is all.

Clause 65, as read, agreed to.

Clause 66—

Mr JOHNSON (11.56 p.m.): In relation to clause 66, I want to speak briefly in relation to both the bus and taxi industry, because my question is applicable to both. A maxi taxi has a capacity of eight or so passengers. A bus has a similar seating capacity. What are the criteria for bus operators? How will they be policed to stop people with smaller-type buses infringing on the taxi licence. As I see it, one company is paying an exorbitant amount of money for a licence. A bus can be put on the road for, say, \$30,000 or \$40,000. Will the taxi be the loser if a bus can take a fare from that taxi? Will the taxi be out of pocket?

Mr HAMILL: Let us be clear: the nature of the vehicles may not be greatly different; however, one of the things we are seeking to provide with this legislation is a greater variety of services. There will still be a very clear difference between a taxi and a bus. Taxi fares are metered, and there is an increment for the distance travelled. However, buses do not operate under a metered service. Buses can operate either by way of a set fee for service or for some sort of segmented fares—the old notion of a charter or a route run. This provision is included to ensure that, if it is purporting to be a taxi service, a taxi service indeed it is—that is, it meets the standards that are set down for the provision of taxi services.

Clause 66, as read, agreed to.

Clause 67, as read, agreed to.

Clause 68—

Mr CONNOR (11.58 p.m.): This clause deals with the chief executive being able to extend and improve services. I would imagine that this is the clause that the chief executive would use for increasing the number of taxi plates. If not, I stand corrected.

Mr Hamill: You always stand corrected. It's not, if you look at the clauses dealing with the boundaries of taxi areas.

Mr CONNOR: What I might do at least is bring up a subject that is associated with that.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Bredhauer): Order! Is it relevant to the clause?

Mr CONNOR: It deals with the number of taxi licences.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: It is not relevant to the clause in that case.

Clause 68, as read, agreed to.

Clause 69, as read, agreed to.

Clause 70—

Mr CONNOR (11.59 p.m.): Again, on the same topic—I hope the Minister will at least deal with my query under this clause. I put a proposal to him before, and I may not have made myself quite clear. When performance indicators suggest that there is a need for increasing the number of cabs in a particular area, the principle, as I understand it—and the principle that the Taxi Council understands—is that the chief executive, in consultation with the taxi industry, will determine the number of new cabs that will be approved.

The taxi industry does not have veto power over the chief executive, and quite rightly so. But if we get into a situation in which they do not agree and the chief executive increases the number of cabs over and above the number of cabs that the industry believes is sufficient, would it not be reasonable that the existing plate owner should be compensated for that number over and above what the industry believes is sufficient?

Mr HAMILL: I refer the honourable member to clause 72.

Clause 70, as read, agreed to.

Clause 71, as read, agreed to.

Clause 72—

Mr CONNOR (12.01 a.m.): I refer the Minister to my comments relating to clause 70, and I ask him to respond.

Mr HAMILL: I refer the member to subclause (4).

Mr CONNOR: As I understand it, there is nothing in this clause that deals with the issue that I raised. Is the Minister not prepared to deal with the issue of the compensation to be applied if the number of plate licences is extended over and above that which the industry believes is sufficient?

Mr HAMILL: I find the proposition that the member is peddling in relation to this matter quite extraordinary. I have yet to find a circumstance in which the taxi company in an area welcomes the issue of new licences. Generally, one finds that the existing owners in the area are very happy indeed not to have the additional competition that new licences in the area brings.

Clause 72 (4) clearly shows the criteria which the responsible agency—that is, the department and in turn the responsible Minister—needs to consider when reviewing the number of taxi licences in a particular area. We should not be sucked into the idea that the local taxi company should have the final say as to whether the taxi services in the area are adequate for the local

community. Although we would listen to and evaluate the views of the local company, we must always consider the overriding public interest.

I do not consider that owners of cab licences in a particular area should be rewarded when the public interest in that area is not being adequately served. If we issue more licences to provide an improved amenity of service to the public, something which is obviously not happening by the number of licenses that already operate in the area, I do not see any logic—in fact, I find the notion quite repugnant—in rewarding those who are not providing a service.

Mr CONNOR: Obviously, this issue is very important. Some people have \$300,000 or more invested in a taxi plate. The Industry Commission was critical of option 3, which was the Queensland model. It claimed that, by necessity, any performance indicator would be arbitrary. Those are not my words; those are the words of the Industry Commission. As that body said, a performance indicator would be an arbitrary figure in that the Government has a vested interest in setting that performance indicator at a very high level, because the higher it is set, the more cab plates the Government can issue and the more money it can collect. As the number of cab licences in an area increases over and above the normal requirements of population growth, an existing licence is obviously devalued. In such a scenario, under all the models put before the Industry Commission—with the exception of the Queensland model—cab owners were compensated. I believe there should be a mechanism by which, if the arbitrary performance figure is set too high, taxi owners can be compensated.

Mr HAMILL: I am intrigued that the member for Nerang is hiding behind the skirts of the Industry Commission, the body from which he sought to distance himself during his contribution to the second-reading debate. I am also intrigued that the Opposition spokesperson on Small Business has not come to terms with the law of diminishing returns in economics. It really is a nonsense to assert, as indeed the member has asserted, that the Government or the Department of Transport would seek to collect a windfall by issuing taxi licenses willy-nilly.

The premise of the honourable member's claim is that, every time we issue a licence, we will make a substantial sum of money. I would have thought that, in managing the industry, that is the very thing one does not do—issue licences willy-nilly—because the payment that one would receive for each subsequent licence that is issued is likely to be less than the payment one received for the licence that was previously

issued. I ask the member to think about it. Furthermore, in my reading of the Industry Commission report, which has so enthralled the honourable member, a series of scenarios was offered, and not all of them involved compensation to the taxi industry for the issue of additional licences.

Mr Connor interjected.

Mr HAMILL: I suggest that the member be careful of Standing Order 124; he might find himself out on his ear.

Clause 72, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 73 and 74, as read, agreed to.

Clause 75—

Mr HEALY (12.07 a.m.): I have a question for the Minister in relation to clause 75 (3) (c), conditions of taxi service licences, which states—

"The conditions of a taxi service licence may—

...

require the operator to install and maintain stated equipment in taxis."

I ask the Minister whether or not the computer call-out system that the majority of taxis now use is part of that stated equipment. I am sure the Minister will agree that that is a very good system and one of the means by which the taxi industry can increase its business. I ask whether that system is part of the Minister's recommendations or whether that will be an industry-driven decision.

Mr HAMILL: The equipment to which this subclause is directed is taxi meters. It really is a matter at the discretion of a taxi company or individual operators whether they invest in sophisticated dispatch systems or not. I would have thought in this day and age that it is in the interests of individual owners and companies to maximise the number of fares and the turnover of fares in vehicles. More sophisticated dispatch systems are a mechanism for achieving just that.

Part of the other thrust of this legislation is to put the onus on individual operators to achieve a greater degree of professionalism and commitment to the quality of service they are providing. It really is a matter for individual companies and individual operators how they go about improving their level of service. Obviously, we have an interest, but it is up to them if they want to install the sorts of systems to which the member referred.

Clause 75, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 76 to 80, as read, agreed to.

Clause 81—

Mr HEALY (12.09 a.m.): I have a question in relation to the taxi subsidy scheme. Clause 81 states—

"A regulation may provide a scheme under which the State pays the whole or a part of taxi fares for particular groups."

I ask the Minister to define some of those groups.

Mr HAMILL: With pleasure. This Government has a strong commitment to social justice. One of the groups that relies very heavily on taxis are those who, through a disability or frailty, find themselves unable to access other modes of transport. Our taxi subsidy scheme is designed to cover people with those types of conditions. This provides a head of power for us to deliver our social justice and equity objectives by enabling us to put in place schemes such as the taxi subsidy scheme for those groups or individuals who would otherwise be grossly disadvantaged.

Clause 81, as read, agreed to.

Clause 82—

Mr JOHNSON (12.11 a.m.): I wish to speak about the private vehicle hire industry as we commence the first of the clauses in regard to limousine service licences. The position of courtesy vehicles needs clarification. The Minister made mention of this earlier, but the point I raise now is that the current abuse of this classification places the public in danger. Will the department make sure that, before it issues a licence, these companies do carry the necessary 4C insurance for their passengers and themselves as a whole?

Mr HAMILL: Again, let me make the point that another of the underlying principles of this legislation—whether it applies to limousines, taxis, buses or whatever—is that we have not adopted a laissez faire attitude towards standards in this industry; we have not deregulated these areas of passenger transport. The sorts of matters to which the honourable member refers are quite properly the sorts of matters which will be provided for in the service contracts which operators of these vehicles and others will be required to sign if they wish to operate in Queensland.

Clause 82, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 83 to 87, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 88—

Mr JOHNSON (12.13 a.m.): Clause 88 (3) (b) states—

"make other requirements of an operator."

Prior to that, clause 88 (3) (a) states—

"restrict the operation of the limousine service to particular occasions, including, for example, weddings."

Is this still confined to the luxury limousine industry, or can they diversify? What is the situation with regard to clause (3) (b)?

Mr HAMILL: From time to time, limousine licences relate to special vehicles. When we had the discussion earlier in relation to the use of the word "luxury", I mentioned that generally the industry is using a higher class of vehicle. There are, of course, other special licences which fall within the ambit of the limousine licence, for example, a vintage or veteran car that is used for weddings. This enables special conditions to apply to a particular class of vehicles which would otherwise not be able to be used as limousines for regular work. But, of course, it would be quite wrong—in fact, it would be rather foolish—to exclude luxury vehicles or vintage and veteran vehicles from being used for these specific purposes. Therefore, specially circumscribed contracts may be entered into in relation to the use of those vehicles.

Mr CONNOR: Clause 88 (2) (a) states—

"prohibit the operator from operating a limousine service unless an earlier booking has been made."

Just exactly how far that goes is obviously very important to the taxi industry. Earlier, the Minister said that there was an exemption for people who rent private hire vehicles at airports, etc. Firstly, I was wondering where that exemption comes from; and, secondly, I was wondering what exactly is meant by an "earlier booking".

Mr HAMILL: The Bill is actually drafted in plain English, and I think "earlier booking" means what it says, that is, earlier booking. In relation to the specific exemption—I draw the honourable member's attention to clause 88 (3) (c).

Mr CONNOR: I thank the Minister for his answer in relation to clause 88 (3) (c), but in relation to clause 88 (2) (a), the earlier booking, does that mean that it is as simple as ringing and calling for them? Is it just a simple phone booking in advance? Does it include the taxi-type computers on the dashboard? The taxi industry is concerned about the extent of competition from the hire car industry.

Mr HAMILL: I think that I canvassed this point during the second-reading debate, but let me make the point again for the benefit of the honourable member. The practice as it stands with the PVH industry is that there has to be a prior booking. Often, a person will ring up and say, "I want the vehicle to pick me up at a certain time at a certain place". That constitutes an earlier

or prior booking. It is that practice which is well known in the industry now that is being preserved in this provision.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr HAMILL: That is what it says. I draw the honourable member's attention to the words. It says—

"conditions of a luxury limousine service licence must—

(a) prohibit the operator from operating a limousine service unless an earlier booking has been made."

Clause 88, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 89 and 90, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 91—

Mr JOHNSON (12.18 a.m.): Clause 91 (1) states—

"The chief executive may amend the conditions of a luxury limousine service licence applying to a particular luxury limousine service area so that it applies to another luxury limousine service area."

In the south-east corner, for example, where a licence is around the \$50,000 mark, does this mean that a licence for this part of Queensland can be transferred to, say, the Cairns area where a licence is around \$70,000?

Mr HAMILL: If I could refer the honourable member to the documentation which has been issued and was subject to consultation with the industry—the intention was, and it has been accepted by the industry, that we would seek to deregulate the limousine industry, particularly in respect to the geographical areas in which it was operating, and that if the value of the limousine licence was within I think it was about 5 per cent in terms of two areas, then it would allow a licence which was issued. In the honourable member's example, if a licence plate in the Gold Coast was within 5 per cent of the value of a licence plate in Cairns, then we would treat those two areas as if they were part of the one area; therefore, one could indeed move across. This ensures equity on the part of licence-holders in that particular area. In other words, we are dealing with licences of equivalent value. It would not apply where there is a great disparity. For example, I think the value of a PVH licence in Moranbah is currently about \$5,000. We would not permit the holder of a limousine licence in Moranbah to transfer that licence to, say, the Gold Coast because of the great disparity that exists between the value of the plates in those two particular areas.

Clause 91, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 92, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 93 to 151, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 152 and 153, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 154 to 159, as read, agreed to.

Clause 160, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 161 to 168, as read, agreed to.

Clause 169, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 170 to 174, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 1, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 2, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 3, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 4, as read, agreed to.

Dictionary—

Mr HAMILL (12.22 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 101, 'Schedule 5'
insert."

This amendment will have the result of placing the heading "Schedule 5" above the heading "Dictionary". It is obviously a drafting matter, but I accept the rationale that it is important to distinguish the Dictionary—the section of definition—from the preceding Schedules, and this is an appropriate way to do that.

Amendment agreed to.

Dictionary, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

Mr SPEAKER'S RULING

Motion of Dissent

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (12.24 a.m.): I move—

"That Mr Speaker's ruling of 1 September not to order the tabling of certain documents pursuant to Standing Order 298 be dissented from. This was a ruling in relation to the Crown law advice to the Family Services Department on the Heiner documents. Standing Order 298 states—

'A document read or cited by a member may be ordered to be laid upon the table.' "

Mr Speaker, I would submit that once it is established that the Minister either read from, or cited, the documents in question, then it is an issue simply as to whether your use of the discretion granted by Standing Order 298 was

appropriately used. I will quote Erskine May on that point later. In the meantime, clearly, the Minister cited the document, and has done so on a number of occasions in the House. She did so on the morning in question, when she cited the document in these terms—

"My department sought the advice of the Crown Solicitor, who advised that the inquiry had no legal status and witnesses would not be indemnified."

I would add that the Premier, on the same morning, cited the document in considerable detail when he said—

"The Crown Solicitor subsequently advised the Acting Director-General of the Department of Family Services that the basis of the appointment for Mr Heiner did not provide any statutory immunity from legal action either for him or for his informants, and some of the information that had been gathered was potentially defamatory."

The Premier went on—

"The Crown Solicitor advised that, because the material was in the Crown's possession, it was a public record for the purposes of the Libraries and Archives Act 1988 and, therefore, the approval of the State Archivist was required before the material could be destroyed."

Later, during the same question time on 1 September, the Attorney-General, in response to a question from the member for Beaudesert, said—

"The advice of the Crown Solicitor was given to the Minister for Family Services."

That comment serves to indicate—if any further indication were needed—that the advice was, if not to the Minister specifically, then at least shared and considered by her. The Minister was subsequently, and immediately, asked if she would table the advice she had cited. Her answer, I believe, is very instructive. She said—

"I do not believe that it is good practice for the Government to table advice that is given to it in confidence by its solicitors."

She said in the same answer—

"The advice given by our solicitor is our privileged information, and it is on the confidential basis between a client and its solicitor."

Mr Speaker, I would submit to you that that practice does not in fact exist either as a generalisation—and certainly not in relation to this specific matter. If the Minister—or the Premier for that matter—was so mindful of the confidentiality of that client/lawyer relationship,

why would they have cited the advice—or at least one of the advices—as exhaustively as they have?

Of precedents in this place, perhaps the most powerful is advice from the Crown Solicitor of 9 February 1993 and, similarly, of 1 March 1993 to the Attorney-General in the form of a memorandum in relation to an issue concerning a proposed hotel development at Trinity Point during the tenure of the previous Government, both of which were tabled by the Premier: the first on Friday, 26 March 1993, and the second on 2 March 1993. Both of these advices were tabled without regard to drawing the views of the Crown Solicitor into the public domain, with the impact that the action was clearly a contradiction of any concern held then for the sanctity of that advice.

Similarly, the advice of the Chief Complaints Officer of the Criminal Justice Commission's Misconduct Division—who occupies another sensitive legal position—was tabled in the Parliament on Tuesday, even though that advice was headed "Strictly private and confidential", simply because it suited the Government's purpose to do so.

Most powerfully, in relation to the Minister's concern about the sanctity of the lawyer/client relationship, the advices of the Crown Solicitor specifically in question today—that of 23 January and 16 February 1990—have been at least sighted—and I mean "seen"—and, I believe, at least in relation to the advice of 16 February, were literally in the possession of a reporter from the *Courier-Mail* who has reported on the alleged substance of both advices.

I will table the newspaper report in which Mr Tony Koch reports on what he interprets to be the meaning of the first of those advices. I also table the memorandum of the Crown Solicitor of 1 March which, as I have indicated, has previously been tabled by the Premier and which contains the substance of his advice to a previous client.

In relation to the newspaper reports—it seems extraordinary that the Government should be able to selectively leak such material to the media while denying it to the Parliament. I would submit that that behaviour, as much as the repeated citing of the advice in this place, makes a mockery of the Government's bid to find protection from tabling of these documents in the alleged sanctity of the lawyer/client relationship.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I would refer you to the thoughts of Erskine May on this general topic. May states on page 382 of edition 21 that—

"It has been accepted that a document which has been cited by a Minister ought to be laid upon the table, if it can be done without injury to the public interests."

Mr Speaker, I would submit that the public interest in this instance is clear and that your obligations in the exercise of your discretion are equally clear. Similarly, while Erskine May says that documents that are opinions of law officers of the Crown, being confidential, are not usually laid before Parliament, equally, he says, they are not usually cited in debate or provided in evidence before a select committee.

I would forcefully submit that the Government has destroyed its own argument and any possible resort to Erskine May's qualifications in this arena through its repeated citings of the documents in this place and through selective leaking to the media. If there was a genuine reluctance to broach the alleged sanctity of the lawyer/client relationship, Mr O'Shea's advice on these matters would not have been so exhaustively canvassed either in the House or selectively in the media.

Also strongly combating the alleged private and confidential nature of the correspondence is the fact that the Criminal Justice Commission has referred to the advices repeatedly in its flawed ruminations on this matter over a long period. All that remains, given Erskine May's considered and respected opinion whereby documents cited in the House ought to be tabled—if it can be done without injury to the public interests—is consideration that the documents need to be in the hand of the Minister at the time the call for tabling occurs. This is a nonsense, as much as the Government's case for not willingly tabling these documents is also a nonsense. Clearly, the public interest would be well served by such tabling.

The Government has presented an interpretation of those advices which has been approved by a single journalist—to whom the material was selectively leaked—while the Criminal Justice Commission, which has also at least sighted the documents—and again I mean that it has seen the documents—puts forward an interpretation which, at best, does not support the Government's view and, at worst, via a still reasonable reading, contradicts it. I would submit that the public interest positively demands that these documents be tabled. There seems to be some confusion amongst honourable members as to the definition of "cite". The definition of "cite" in the *Oxford Dictionary* states—

". . . in support of a position; mention as example."

I would submit, as I indicated before, that the public interest positively demands that these

documents be tabled. This is an issue of major consequence and major public interest. This Government has created precedents before where it has tabled whatever it wants to to suit its own ends. The role of the Speaker is to protect the rights of the Parliament from the excesses of the Executive. On this, as on so many other occasions, you have failed to do that.

Mr LINGARD (Beaudesert—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.34 a.m.): Mr Speaker, I second the motion because I believe you have made a mistake in this instance. This is not the only mistake that you have made over the past few days, but maybe this mistake will not cost you as much as your mistake over the weekend cost you. It was quite obvious that Wests were going to defeat Souths. Therefore, it was quite obvious that you would be up for the cost of the balloon trip. I thank you for your cheque in an amount well over \$300. It is in my pocket and it will be cashed tomorrow. The Speaker made the bet and he paid up. I give him his due.

In this particular instance, I believe you have made a mistake. The Standing Order does state—

"A document read or cited by a Member may be ordered to be laid upon the Table."

The only people who can order something to be laid upon the table are the members of this House, not the Chair. The Chair does not make those decisions. Clearly, a Speaker cannot make a decision to either order those documents to be laid upon the table or not, but he can be asked to make a ruling on the Standing Order or on the motion. That is clearly what I asked him. The Speaker came back to me and said, "The Clerk has advised me that that document must be in the hands of the person who is referring to it."

Mr Speaker, there were three reasons why I asked you about the Standing Order. Clearly, I could have stood and moved a motion in this House that the document be laid upon the table and been beaten in the House. There is no difficulty in doing that. I can stand at any time and move that a document that is being read or cited be laid on the table, and the House can decide not to do it. But in this particular case it was a special document, because a Minister was reading from what he said was a Crown Solicitor's argument.

I turn to page 382 of Erskine May, which states—

"A Minister of the Crown may not read or quote from a despatch or other state paper not before the House, unless he is prepared to lay it upon the Table."

That is the first thing that we have to look in terms of Erskine May.

Mr Speaker, you should have also thought about the fact that it has always been accepted as a practice of this House that any advice from a Crown Solicitor does not have to be provided to the Parliament. There was a bind in this particular case. Therefore, it was my right to ask you what you believed about that particular document because that document had been cited; it had been read. It had been cited by the *Courier-Mail* because there had been a reference in the *Courier-Mail* to a particular document. It has been cited by the Minister for Family Services and it had already been cited by the Premier. The Leader of the Opposition has read what the Minister for Family Services said. I will read what the Premier said—

"The Crown Solicitor advised that, because the material was in the Crown's possession, it was a public record for the purpose of the Libraries and Archives Act 1988 and, therefore, the approval of the State Archivist was required before the material could be destroyed."

Clearly, we have two issues. No. 1—a Minister does not usually refer and detail a Crown Solicitor's advice, and No. 2—it is not usually asked to be tabled in the House. But it had been referred to. It had been referred to in the *Courier-Mail*. It had been referred to by the Minister for Family Services and it had been referred to by the Premier. Therefore, I asked you, Mr Speaker, whether was it right that we could move that this be tabled in the House. You came back very quickly, which I quite honestly think is a problem with some of your rulings, and you stood up and said that there was no point of order. That was never the question.

It is a point of order when a member stands and refers to a Standing Order. I was asking whether that particular document, because it is a reference to a Crown Solicitor, can be tabled in the House. Clearly, I believed that it could be tabled in the House because it had been referred to. It had been cited by the *Courier-Mail*, the Premier and the Minister. In doing so, the Premier and the Minister for Family Services have acted from a document. I believed that this would allow the document to be tabled. I asked whether that document should be tabled. I believe that your ruling should have been, "Yes, because the document has been cited; the House can decide." It is not your role to decide.

Mr Beattie: Well, why did you want to move a motion, then?

Mr LINGARD: Because I asked whether it could be tabled and, therefore, the House must decide. It is always the decision of the House. A

member never asks a Speaker to make a ruling. That is wrong. He does not make rulings in this House; we make rulings in this House. That has always been the rule. This should have been put to the vote and it should have been decided by the House.

Mr Speaker, I believe that you erred by making the decision that you did. It is not the Speaker's decision; it is the decision of the House. Your role as Speaker is to decide whether the motion is correct and should be put. It is not your role to make a decision which is a decision of the House. For the benefit of honourable members, I will quote page 383 of Erskine May. It states—

"It is the responsibility of the Government and not of the Chair to see that documents which may be relevant to debates are laid before the House and are available to Members."

It is the role of the Government; it is not the role of the Speaker. Mr Speaker, your ruling that it was not a point of order was entirely incorrect.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (12.41 a.m.): I think that we need to go through this Standing Order and the Erskine May precedent step by step. Today, we have heard a fairly confused argument. Let us go back to the beginning. On 1 September, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Borbidge, moved a motion of dissent from the Speaker's ruling under Standing Order 298 not to direct the Minister for Family Services to table the Crown Solicitor's advice. That is how the Opposition saw it. The *Hansard* record of the day is very clear. Mr Borbidge said—

"I am moving dissent. I give notice that tomorrow I shall move that Mr Speaker's ruling of 1 September not to order the tabling of certain documents pursuant to Standing Order 298 be dissented from."

Standing Order 298 states—

"A document read or cited by a Member may"—

and I emphasize the word "may"—

"be ordered to be laid upon the Table."

That Standing Order is not discretionary from the Speaker's point of view; it is discretionary from the point of view that the House has the opportunity to make up its mind whether it will, in fact, issue that order.

The honourable member for Beaudesert was partly right when he raised the issue of its being a decision of the House. That is right, but what went wrong in this instance was that the honourable member for Beaudesert asked for a ruling from the Speaker—and my colleague the

member for Caboolture and I have checked the record—in relation to Standing Order 298. What he should have done was move a motion. Then the House would have made a determination as to whether, under Standing Order 298, the document should have been tabled in the House. That is the appropriate procedure.

Having looked at the Standing Order, let us look at the precedents. I listened with some interest to the quotes that were given by both the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Beaudesert. Of course, in typical fashion, they did not read the full quote. That full quote states—

"A Minister of the Crown may not read or quote from a despatch or other state paper not before the House, unless he is prepared to lay it upon the Table. Similarly, it has been accepted that a document which has been cited by a Minister ought to be laid upon the Table of the House, if it can be done without injury to the public interest."

That is what both members read, but they did not go on to state—

"A Minister who summarizes a correspondence, but does not actually quote from it, is not bound to lay it upon the Table."

If we look at what, in fact, was said, at best the Premier and the Minister summarised what was in the Crown Solicitor's advice. The key word is "summarised". What does Erskine May say about it? I will read it again.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The member can use his own terms, but let us look at what the authorities say. It was summarised and that was something—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition wants to be cute, but in his contribution he actually accepted that the Premier and the Minister summarised it. The Leader of the Opposition used that word. He says that they summarised it and, therefore, they should table it. However, that is not what the authority Erskine May says, which is—

"A Minister who summarizes a correspondence, but does not actually quote from it, is not bound to lay it upon the Table."

Let me go on, because it is important that the record be set straight. I refer to page 383 of Erskine May under the heading, "Law officers' opinions." It states—

"The opinions of the law officers of the Crown, being confidential"—

and the Leader of the Opposition accepted that the Minister told the House that it was confidential; so there is no argument about whether or not it was confidential—

"are not usually laid before Parliament, cited in debate or provided in evidence before a Select Committee and, their production has frequently been refused; but if a Minister deems it expedient that such opinions should be made known for the information of the House, he is entitled to cite them in debate."

I table the relevant extracts from Erskine May because they clearly put to rest the argument that has been put before the House by the movers of this dissent motion.

The reality is that they are wrong in their interpretation of the Standing Order and they are wrong in their interpretation of Erskine May. That is the end of the matter in terms of the formal interpretation. I think that the selective reading of the quote was interesting, to say the very least, because the position is very clear.

Let me move to another matter. If we look at the previous rulings by other Speakers in this House, one would notice that on 21 September 1948, Speaker Brassington said—

"Mr Speaker has no authority to order a document to be tabled."

That was the precedent that relates directly to this dissent motion. There is also another relevant ruling from Speaker Fletcher, which I will leave to my colleague the member for Caboolture, which rams in the nail a little bit harder. So the position is very clear.

However, I turn now to the general issue. What happens when dissent motions are moved? The Speaker seeks the guidance of the Clerk, who is the independent Clerk of this House. Notwithstanding the fact that both the Clerk and the Speaker agree in relation to this matter and the Speaker accepts the Clerk's advice, we still have the dissent motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. What are we trying to do? Are we trying to discredit the Speaker or the Clerk? At the end of the day if we want to lift—

Mr Borbidge: Are you saying you want to limit the number of dissent motions?

Mr BEATTIE: I will come to the number of dissent motions in a minute. They expose exactly what the Leader of the Opposition has been doing. We are trying to lift the standard of debate in this place and lift the respect that this Parliament has in the community. This dissent motion achieves nothing.

I turn now to the precedents, which are very interesting. I conducted some research and found that, during the period from 1950 until 1989, a period of 39 years, 23 dissent motions were moved—23 in 39 years! How many dissent motions have been moved in the four years and nine months since the Labor Party has been in Government? Fourteen! That tells a story about the Opposition trying to bring this House into disrepute and also tells a story about the Opposition trying to discredit the most impartial Speaker that this Parliament has had in almost 40 years. However, it gets worse. Of those 23 dissent motions in the period between 1950 and 1957, two were moved by conservatives. One dissent motion was moved by Sir William Knox when he was in Opposition in the 1980s. If we take out the two dissent motions moved by the conservatives between 1950 and 1957 and the one moved by Sir William Knox, in 32 years of Opposition the Labor Party moved 20 dissent motions. We had respect for the Speaker. This lot opposite have moved 14 in less than five years. That says it all. It says that the Leader of the Opposition has no respect for Parliament, no respect for this institution and that he will do anything he can to bring this institution into disrepute simply to further his own short-term political gains. The fact is that Opposition members cannot not blame the Speaker for their incompetence and their inability to perform in the community.

So that there is no argument about them, I will table the material that confirms the research on the dissent motions to which I have just referred. I suggest to the Opposition that it is about time it lifted its game and stopped trying to bring this Parliament into disrepute. If people want to lift the standards around here, input from both the Opposition and the Government is required. We are doing our bit. It is about time that the Opposition decided to lift its game, otherwise politicians in this institution will not have the sort of community respect that they deserve.

The statistics speak for themselves. The Opposition's record on the number of dissent motions is a disgrace. Members opposite should be ashamed of themselves. They can sit there and crow all they like, but those are the facts.

Time expired.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (12.51 a.m.): I rise to support the dissent motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. After the speech from the honourable member for Brisbane Central, I dare say that we will get a great deal of support from the Government side, too, because in relation to some aspects the honourable member was certainly supporting our

side. For example, the honourable member showed us that he cannot count past 20 once he gets past his fingers, thumbs and takes his shoes off. So that is something that he has proven already.

Members on the other side of the Chamber have shown that they are concerned that the Executive continues to rule this Parliament. That is really the thrust of what has occurred surrounding the Crown Solicitor's advice on the Heiner documents. The Leader of the Opposition has already shown quite conclusively—and he referred to the point—that this legal advice was cited and referred to on a number of occasions. It was referred to continually that day by the Premier and the Minister for Family Services.

Also, it was pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition that, when it suits the Government of the day, it is no problem at all to table the Crown Solicitor's advice. He referred to the Trinity Bay Inlet advice of the Crown Solicitor. This exercise is all political; it is one of politics. There was a political decision by the Government not to table that document because it did not suit its secrecy, the secrecy surrounding the Heiner documents.

We have heard a great deal from the honourable member for Brisbane Central, who was talking about summarising. In fact, "sanitising" was the real word that he was looking for because that is exactly what the Government has done in this whole exercise, in particular with the Crown Solicitor's advice in relation to the Heiner documents. There is no getting away from that. There has been a sanitising exercise. The Premier quoted at some length from various aspects of that Crown Solicitor's advice. Honourable members should go back to look at what the Premier was saying.

Clearly, it did not suit the Government of the day to table that advice. Yet it suited the Government to leak that document, or to at least show that document to the *Courier-Mail* political roundsman, Mr Tony Koch. Whilst it did not suit the Executive arm to show the Parliament to which it is responsible, it certainly suits it for the political exercise to gain some publicity—perhaps favourable publicity, from its point of view—via that *Courier-Mail* reporter. So why not table this document in the public interest? This document is in the public interest. Mr Speaker, I am sure that you would acknowledge that. Considering the amount of contention and that in the past the advice of Crown Solicitors has been tabled, there can be no doubt that this document is in the public interest. There can be no getting away from that, so whether or not such a document is tabled really comes back to what suits the Executive arm

of the Government of day. Regardless of the public interest that would have been served by the document being tabled, because of the secrecy in this case it certainly did not suit the Government.

Therefore, we find yet again another example of the control of the Executive arm. It is all right for the honourable member for Brisbane Central to chatter on in this place, but all he shows is that he is not prepared to stand up and fight for his Cabinet position and to fight the Executive arm of Government. He soon went to water by supporting the Executive arm of the Government against the members of this House. That is what is at stake in relation to this issue: the role of the members in this House versus the Government going out and doing its own thing whenever it believes it ought to. That is what it is doing, as opposed to being a Government responsible to this Parliament.

Mr Speaker, the Opposition has clearly shown that your ruling in this case was inconsistent. It was certainly wrong. The decision was incorrect; the decision should have been in terms of the Standing Order and for the advice to be tabled in this Parliament.

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN (Caboolture) (12.56 a.m.): It is a pleasure to join this debate in order to lay to rest the puny excuse for argument that has been provided to date. As the Opposition members rose to speak in their places, it occurred to me that they were a bit shorter than they normally were. It has now transpired that that is because they have not had a leg to stand on.

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Borbidge, mentioned a number of things in relation to Erskine May, which my colleague Mr Beattie has rebutted. He mentioned selective leaking to the media. He also went on to say that the advice that the Clerk gave Mr Speaker was a nonsense. As usual, the member for Beaudesert, Mr Lingard, did not say much of import at all, although he did mention that a motion should have been moved, which he could have done.

Then the member for Indooroopilly, Mr Beanland, decided to tell us that the Premier actually quoted from the legal advice in this Parliament, which quite clearly he did not. Had he been quoting from the legal advice, I think that we would have some sort of argument with the Crown Solicitor over his legal language. He then took on the point that the Executive leaked or showed the document to the *Courier-Mail* but would not show it to the Parliament. How do he and Mr Borbidge know that the Executive showed that document to the *Courier-Mail*? Are we to believe that every document that the bunch of turkeys opposite tell us has been leaked to them has been leaked by the Minister?

I think not. There are all sorts of people who we know who leak.

We need to have a look at who the players in this little exercise are. Three Opposition members took part in the events leading up to and including the moving of the motion of dissent against Mr Speaker's ruling, as Mr Beattie pointed out. These included the Deputy Leader of the National Party, the member for Beaudesert, Mr Lingard; the Manager of Opposition Business, the member for Lockyer, Mr FitzGerald; and the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Surfers Paradise, Mr Borbidge—otherwise known as Tweedledee, Tweedledum, and Tweedle even dumber.

The member for Beaudesert is really something. There is no more bitter or twisted member in this Parliament. This attack, like all that have preceded it on the Speaker, is a consequence of his bitterness. Mr Lingard has on two occasions served this Parliament as Speaker. The record shows that his two terms rank as the second and fourth shortest terms of Speaker in this State. His behaviour since the election of the Goss Government in 1989 seems even to the most casual observer to be aimed at trying to do the impossible. He is trying to show that there has been at least one Speaker in this Parliament who was less deserving of the office than he was. In that endeavour he will fail, even if he lives to serve in this Parliament for 100 years.

Surely, one of the most comforting sights that you can see, Mr Speaker, is the sight of Mr Lingard rising to oppose your ruling armed with the Standing Orders. So poor is his understanding of the Standing Orders in this place that, since March 1990, he has taken points of order based on Standing Orders 11 times and 11 times he has been wrong. If he were a baseball player with that batting average, he would be cut from the team. But, as he pointed out earlier, he was a footballer. In truth, his behaviour in here is a bit more like the behaviour of a football thug than anything else. Take as an example his unsubstantiated attack on Mr Speaker and Mr Speaker's family during the debate to elect Mr Speaker at the commencement of the 47th Parliament. At that time, it was reported that his leader, Mr Borbidge, and his colleagues were "furious" over the attack, although Mr Borbidge would not ask Mr Lingard to apologise. One of the journalists cited several National Party members as saying that Mr Lingard was trying to settle personal scores, a view that is only reinforced when members are forced to witness the unending stream of sniping comment directed at Mr Speaker from Mr Lingard while this House is in session. Many of us on this side of the House were quite frankly amazed that Mr Lingard was re-elected in 1989 when the

National Party was decimated. The fact that he survived at all gives credence to the theory that a cockroach would survive even a nuclear holocaust.

In contrast to Mr Lingard, Mr FitzGerald is a nice bloke. He is not particularly bright, but he is a nice bloke nevertheless. Mr FitzGerald currently has the responsibility of managing Opposition business in the House. In this particular instance, he has shown that he is not up to the job and that we really cannot take him seriously.

That leaves Mr Borbidge—the "beach boy"—whose leadership style seems to be to slavishly follow Mr Lingard's and Mr FitzGerald's example. He is a "Jubilation T. Cornpone" style general who leads from the rear. He is the only coalition leader in Australia who is jealous of Alexander Downer's popularity rating!

Let us have a look at the events. During the answer being given by Ms Warner, Mr Lingard rose on a point of order and, quoting Standing Order 298, asked Mr Speaker to—

"make a ruling on whether that document should be tabled in the Parliament."

Of course, that point of order was a nonsense because, as Speaker Brassington ruled on 21 September 1948, Mr Speaker has no authority to order a document to be tabled.

Mr FitzGerald: What year was that?

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: 1948. That point of order was also a nonsense because, as Speaker Fletcher ruled on 21 November 1958—get the date: Speaker Fletcher, 1958—a motion that a document be tabled is out of order unless the document has been read from; not cited, not summarised—quoted, perhaps—but read from. If either member honestly believes that anybody has read from that advice in this Parliament, then they are a long way off. In fact, had the Opposition moved the motion that Mr Lingard suggested it could have moved, based on Speaker Fletcher's precedent, Mr Speaker would have had to rule that motion out of order. If the Opposition wanted the documents, it should have moved the motion suggested by Mr Lingard, but that motion would have been out of order. Mr Speaker's ruling that there was no point of order was correct in accordance with the Standing Orders.

The most objectionable aspect to all of this—and my colleague the member for Brisbane Central has raised this issue—is that the Opposition continued to prosecute its argument after the Speaker had taken advice from the Clerk by moving a dissent motion. That occurred on this occasion, and it occurred on the last occasion that a dissent motion was moved. The Opposition is not moving a dissent motion

against the ruling by Mr Speaker; it is moving a dissent motion against the advice of the Clerk. The Opposition is bringing this place into disrepute. It is perpetrating acts of vandalism on the Standing Orders and the conventions of this place.

The Opposition is seeking to disguise its lack of policies by slinging a bit of mud at the Speaker. This is an ineffective Opposition, and it thinks that it will be regarded highly by the people of Queensland if it can throw this place into turmoil. The truly disgusting aspect is that the Opposition has brought the Clerk into this matter. Through this motion, the Opposition is saying that the Clerk is partisan.

Mr FitzGerald took a further point of order. The substance of that point of order was this—

"The document certainly was cited."

Of course it was cited, but that had nothing to do with it. We accept that the document was cited earlier in the day by both the Premier and by the Minister, but at the time when Ms Warner was answering the question asked by Mr Lingard, she did not quote the document and she did not mention it in support of the answer she was giving. The Minister was giving an answer based on the advice outlined in Erskine May. We have seen that members opposite are prepared to quote Erskine May selectively, as they so often do.

Quite clearly, the earlier contributions of the Minister and the Premier did cite the document, but we have been through the Erskine May argument, and what is the score? The score is that, on every point, the Opposition was wrong. In accordance with the rulings by Speaker Brassington and Speaker Fletcher, the Opposition was wrong in its interpretation of the Standing Orders. In accordance with pages 382 and 383 of Erskine May, the Opposition was also wrong on parliamentary practice. Members opposite were wrong, wrong and, as the Treasurer would say, dead wrong.

What is this all about? It is an attempt by members opposite to cover up their own ineptitude. In 1989, the Cooper Government—does anybody remember it—bungled the set up of the inquiry. The inquiry sought advice from members of the public. Those people were supposed to be protected. However, under the inquiry set up by the former Government, those people were not protected. Now, in 1994, the National Party led by Mr Borbidge wants those people to be liable. That is wrong.

Time expired.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 28—Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Simpson, Stephan, Stoneman, Watson *Tellers*: Springborg, Laming

NOES, 46—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bennett, Bird, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Budd, Clark, Comben, D'Arcy, Davies, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Goss W. K., Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Mackenroth, McElligott, McGrady, Milliner, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Power, Purcell, Pyke, Robertson, Robson, Rose, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Sullivan T. B., Szczerbanik, Vaughan, Warner, Welford, Woodgate *Tellers*: Livingstone, Pitt

Resolved in the **negative**.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH
(Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (1.13 a.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Closure of Rural Rail Lines

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (1.13 a.m.): I draw the attention of honourable members to the situation raised by Government members approximately 12 months ago when they were going around the countryside closing railway lines and making sure that the people in the country areas were going to be as disadvantaged as possible. The terminology used by the Premier at the time was, "Use it or lose it." He used those words for the precise purpose of trying to encourage the locals to use the railway facilities as passengers and for transportation of their produce so that the lines in country areas would keep operating. At present, there is a very distinct move to try to undermine the "use it or lose it" principle by taking away the services and making sure that the people do not have the services when they are required. I refer particularly to the Mary Valley line.

The pineapple industry relies on a particular siding on that line to transport its produce to the Northgate cannery. An newspaper article from a few months ago states—

"Queensland Rail was deliberately trying to reduce rail freight on the Mary Valley Line, Valley fruit growers said this week.

The transport authority has offered pineapple growers in the Mary Valley cheap rail freights if they agree to load their produce at Traveston rather than Kandanga and Dagun.

The Valley's other major freight source, timber from the Melawondi Mill, has also

been taken off the line and is instead trucked to Gympie and loaded."

Here are two particular lines of produce that have been transported on that particular line, yet the Government is going out of its way to try to ensure that those lines are closed. It is using its freight figures to back up its move to close that railway line. Hardly a month goes by without my being asked, "Have you heard anything about what the Government is doing with the Mary Valley line? Have they made a decision yet?" Of course, the answer is always, "No, they have not." However, a very distinct move is being made to try to undermine the amount of produce that is taken out of that particular area. The article continues—

"Kandanga Fruit Growers' secretary Ken Ward said this week Queensland Rail had offered the concessions plus \$20,000-\$30,000 upgrading of Traveston siding if producers agreed to road-freight their pineapples to Traveston.

Though growers have so far rejected the offer, they have not completely ruled it out.

'It's is our opinion that Queensland Rail has gone out of their way to reduce freight in the line,' Mr Ward said."

Much the same comment was made by the Mayor of the new Cooloola Shire, Adrian McClintock, who said that the proposal appeared to be another step toward the line's eventual closure. The article continues—

"Its immediate future still depended on freight, he said, despite conclusions in a recently completed report that it would succeed as a tourism steam train operation."

But that would be a reasonably small section of the line and it certainly would need the other freight that is being transported on it for it to be a viable proposition. Honourable members should look a little bit further and consider the repercussions of taking off that line the 8 000 tonnes of pineapples plus the timber. That 8 000 tonnes of pineapples would have to be taken over an inadequate roadway and inadequate bridge over the Mary River. Both the road and the bridge would not stand the strain of that extra load without additional money being spent on them. I have not heard any suggestion that the Transport Department would in fact allocate any extra money at all to upgrade the roads to make them safe for the locals, particularly when they are driving their children to school.

Time expired.

Allegation by Member for Broadwater

Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (1.18 a.m.):

Those members of this Chamber who have come to know me over recent years know just what a sensitive person I am. Indeed, in the later hours of the day I am prone to bouts of nostalgia; an unbridled sentimentalist who tonight would like to take honourable members on a short journey down memory lane.

I would like members to cast their minds back just a short time to 31 August 1993, to 14 October 1993 and to 28 April 1994. What do these dates hold in common? In truth, I have to admit that the common thread between those dates does not really contain much substance. On 31 August 1993, the member for Broadwater called for an investigation into the alleged Medusa tapes which were supposed to contain information on a secret deal to pay out two detectives involved in investigations into former policeman John Huey.

On 14 September, Grice told Parliament—

"Recent events convince me of a close and sinister relationship between the Goss Labor Government and John William Huey."

He said that Labor was covering up things which should be brought out into the open. There was no sinister relationship and no cover-up, and an embarrassed *Sunday Mail* that had run the stories had to apologise. It admitted—

"We accept that there is no foundation for these statements and regret that they were ever made."

On 14 October, the member for Broadwater claimed to have been threatened by the Chairman of the CJC. In Parliament the member said—

"I will not concede his right to use threats as an inducement to me to change my tack on a matter which is clearly my duty as a member of this Parliament."

The claim was referred to the Privileges Committee. On 12 November 1993, a unanimous report by that committee, including two National Party members, found the claims to be without foundation. Not even National Party Leader, Rob Borbidge, could recall any actual words at the meeting which might have been threatening or intimidating.

On 28 April 1994, Grice alleged in Parliament that information provided to the CJC had been leaked to the Mafia by someone working for the CJC. The member's source for this pearl was Tony Grosser. CJC Chairman O'Regan described Grice's allegations as romantic fiction and said Grice had been briefed about Grosser's penchant for prolific

correspondence with Australian law enforcement agencies. Grosser was later arrested in South Australia by police there following a 40-hour siege and charged with shooting a constable.

The member for Broadwater was not to be denied. Also on 28 April, he alleged in Parliament illegal activity on the part of the Toowoomba Turf Club and its chairman, Neville Stewart. Stewart, the President of the Toowoomba South Branch of the Liberal Party and former Liberal State election candidate, was alleged to have been involved in bribing professional punters to conduct their business through the club's on-course tote facilities.

Honourable members will well remember the reaction of the Nationals' two Toowoomba-based MPs. The member for Toowoomba South said that Grice had never set foot on Clifford Park and that the matters had been investigated by the CJC and were found to be without foundation. The member for Toowoomba North said he was bitter at Grice's actions, and the two dissociated themselves from Grice. Form like this has not been seen in this House since the member for Nerang was the Liberal spokesperson for Corrective Services.

Undeterred by a string of failures, this week the member for Broadwater has once again waded into the mire of his own making. Let us look at some of his responses to questions on last night's *7.30 Report*. Asked if he thought that senior police and the CJC would do the Government's bidding to cover up the matter, he replied—

"I don't want to be that specific because I don't know all the information from their side of the fence."

He even admits that he does not know the facts. He was asked—

"When will we see more evidence?"

He replied—

"As soon as possible, but I can't be more specific because of the procedures in the House."

Today, he had his opportunity, and what evidence did he produce of a cover-up? None! Yet again, the member has struck out—no evidence; no foundation to his actions; just more muck.

The member—and I deliberately omit the adjective "honourable"—likes to portray himself as a crusader against corruption and maladministration of the criminal justice system. Only two things separate him from those seeking genuine reform. Those two things are honesty and integrity. If a fact knocked on his door, the member would not recognise it. The member for

Broadwater and the truth are complete strangers. Last night, on the *7.30 Report*, Cathy Job asked—

"You're not being the bunny in this; the one who is being used to spread the muck?"

He replied—

"History will tell who is the bunny, Cathy."

I have news for him: last night the jury was out, but today it is in, and the verdict for him is not good. I hope he looks good in big ears and a fluffy tail.

In conclusion, I refer to another suggestion during the interview that he was doing the dirty work of others. The member for Broadwater replied—

"I'm old enough, and ugly enough, to do my own dirty work."

In both a literal and figurative sense, who are we to disagree?

Brisbane City Council Budget

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly)

(1.22 a.m.): Recently, I was contacted by a school in my electorate in relation to a new charge that the Labor Brisbane City Council has introduced. This has taken the form of charging school children \$1.50 to tour the city hall. I believe that the council is becoming desperate. It is starting to charge school children \$1.50 each for visiting city hall. I can understand why members look shocked about this—as I was—because I cannot really believe that anybody would start charging people to visit city hall. Nevertheless, it is true.

Mr Mackenroth: You're joking, aren't you?

Mr BEANLAND: No, I am not joking. I have discovered that, as a result of the 1994-95 city council budget, students wishing to visit city hall will be charged \$1.50 each. Prior to this, tours to the city hall were always free. Now, school children are being forced to balance the big-spending Labor council budget by being charged \$1.50. One can imagine what would happen if this Parliament started to charge students coming to this place \$1.50 per tour!

This ties in with some other new charges that the Labor city council has introduced. Recently, I have been contacted by the colleges at the University of Queensland. It turns out that the council is now imposing a new toilet charge. Not content with charging school children, this Labor Lord Mayor wants to sock it to all the educational institutions around town. He is

proposing a new pedestal tax to apply not only to the university but also to the 10 colleges at the University of Queensland. Those 10 residential colleges have about 700 toilets between them. I am informed that will cost about \$388.68 per toilet and will amount to \$272,000, which those colleges will have to find between the 10 of them. That means that the students attending those colleges—students largely from country areas that are experiencing drought conditions; their parents are on farms—will have to find the money to pay those additional charges.

The colleges are non-profit organisations. Some of them are denominational, and they do not have cash to spare. They live from year to year, and there is no cash at the end of the day. Without additional reserves and funds, those colleges will have to increase their fees and charges to students. After all, they have students in residence there for only 35 weeks a year. Of course, they have obligations and responsibilities towards young people in their care and towards the University of Queensland. As I said, those students are mainly from country areas, and their families are struggling in the current drought conditions.

I thought I might have a glance at the rest of the city council budget for this year after being told about the two new charges on the young students and older students at the university. I have discovered that, in the council budget, revenue from rates has gone up \$54m. The rates discount has gone down 50 per cent since Councillor Soorley has been Lord Mayor of the city. Finance interest costs are up 17.8 per cent; basic infrastructure expenditure is down \$48m; development charges are up 18 per cent; cash reserves are down \$100m; cemetery charges are up 15 per cent in the budget; major drainage projects are down 57 per cent; all fees and charges are up 9.2 per cent; and expenditure on suburban parks is down 25 per cent. It makes one question the priorities of that council and where the funds are going when we have to stoop to charging school children who are touring city hall \$1.50 to rake in the cash to balance the books.

I find also that in relation to signs—and we all know that there are a lot of signs; small-business people require them—increases in sign costs have gone up 793 per cent in this year's budget for the licence fees. What a slug to small business that is in the current economic climate—another tax grab! Small-business people are forced to pay this. The local shopkeepers, restaurants and delicatessens are forced to pass on those additional charges. This means increased costs to consumers.

I have already said that the people of Brisbane have witnessed a decline in their rates discounts. This year I checked my rates notice, and I noticed that the discount has dropped from 10 per cent to 5 per cent. I had a look at some of the other figures, and I found that the average rate rise across the city has been jacked up five times the rate of inflation. During the last election campaign, we heard a lot from the Lord Mayor about keeping rate increases to the rate of inflation.

Time expired.

Hospital Services, Hervey Bay

Mr DOLLIN (Maryborough) (1.27 a.m.): It is time the Opposition spokesman on Health, Mike Horan, realised that he is being used by Maryborough gynaecologists to further their own ends. Dr Stokes, in particular, does not mind bending the truth to distort the facts when it suits him. He has claimed that he withdrew his services from public patients of Maryborough and Hervey Bay because of circumstances surrounding the Hervey Bay birthing facility. The truth is that he withdrew his services in 1989, prior to the election of this Government, because "The old Lady Musgrave Maternity Hospital is dirty, unhygienic, unsafe and someone is going to die if something isn't done."

In spite of this Government building a \$2m state-of-the-art maternity facility, Dr Stokes has not been prepared to service public patients. Dr Pomery gave a similar reason to Dr Stokes for withdrawing his services from public patients, but at the time he withdrew he gave the reason that his private practice was too busy to allow him to continue servicing public patients. Why can these gentlemen not stick to the facts?

Dr Stokes recently stated that caesarean births were being performed at the Hervey Bay birthing facility. This is an outright lie, and Dr Stokes knows it. That facility has been used successfully for 30 years as a low-risk birthing facility, and caesareans have never been performed there. Why the deceit?

I have information that Dr Stokes has performed several caesarean births at the St Stephens Private Hospital late last year prior to a licence ever being requested from Queensland chief health officers. This, of course, was clearly in violation of the private hospitals regulations of 1978 and placed a fine hospital that is delivering an excellent service to private patients in Maryborough at risk.

No doubt Dr Stokes would be aware that, in the event of any unfortunate incidents occurring in relation to patients cared for in unlicensed premises, insurance and indemnity provisions

may well have been null and void. The doctors involved in such care could also find that their medical indemnity cover is equally affected—not to mention that performing illegal procedures surely jeopardises the doctors' registration to practise.

I put it to Mr Horan: does he approve of this type of unlawful practices by doctors? Does he believe that the likes of Dr Stokes can thumb their noses at Queensland's chief health officer and the private hospitals regulations Act? If he were Health Minister, would he allow such goings-on? I would be amazed if the board of directors at St Stephens would approve such unlawful procedures to be carried out if they were fully aware of what Dr Stokes has been up to.

I understand that St Stephens has lodged claims under the guise of a medical admission to counter any difficulty in collecting payments from health insurance funds due to the fact that it was unlicensed to perform caesareans. That is deceitful and punishable by law. I ask again: does Mr Horan condone that sort of thing? Now he knows why we have been hearing all the noise from Dr Stokes about St Stephens not having a licence for elective caesareans. It was a smokescreen to cover up his operations in unlicensed facilities and he was depending on getting the licence to cover his tracks.

I think that it is interesting that Dr Stokes, who is stingy in providing a service for public patients, has no qualms at all in utilising all of the facilities of the new Lady Musgrave unit provided by the taxpayers of this State to service his paying private patients at no cost to specialists whatsoever. No doubt, Mr Horan has worked out what the two doctors are on about: money. If Hervey Bay gets a birthing facility that is serviced by gynaecologists, which it surely will as Bill Nunn has said so, they will lose 60 per cent of their business. That is the percentage of mothers from Hervey Bay who are giving birth in Maryborough. It is about a lot of loot, Mike! That is what it is all about. Haven't they had the honourable member on a string! It is a great shame that Dr Stokes has been prepared to put at risk the good name of St Stephens as well as the good and valued services that this hospital and its staff provide to the privately insured citizens of our city.

What is even more of a shame is that the National Party spokesman on Health, Mr Horan, is prepared to support them. I ask: is there a conspiracy between the AMA and the Nationals to remove the maternity service from rural mothers, forcing them into city birthing facilities, thus enriching the gynaecologists?

Former Bishop E. Kelly

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North) (1.32 a.m.): This morning I wish to pay tribute to the late former Roman Catholic Bishop of Toowoomba, Bishop Edward Francis Kelly, who died on Friday of last week in retirement at Tugun on the Gold Coast at the age of 77. To say that Bishop Kelly was a great man and a holy advocate of the Catholic faith is an understatement. He was a man who devoted his entire 50 years in the priesthood to service to God and service to his fellow man, particularly the young.

Bishop Kelly, or "Ned Kelly" as he was affectionately known throughout the Diocese, or simply Eddie to his clergy colleagues and to colleagues in other denominations, was Bishop of the Toowoomba Diocese from February 1976, following the death of Bishop William Brennan, until he retired at the age of 75 in 1992, a period of 16 years. He was a much loved leader of 60 000 Roman Catholic parishioners in a diocese which spanned some 300 000 square kilometres, stretching from Helidon in the east to the South Australian border in the west, and north to Taroom.

Edward Kelly was born in the western New South Wales town of Wellington in 1917 and was the ninth of 10 children. His family moved to Sydney in the 1920s and, in 1934, he responded to a long-felt call to the religious life and entered the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart at Douglas Park. He was sent to Rome for further studies in 1938 and returned to Australia with the onset of World War II. In March 1942, he was ordained and continued to work and administer at various levels until 1969, when he was appointed the Auxiliary Bishop to Cardinal Gilroy in the Archdiocese of Sydney. He became a consecrated Bishop in March of that year and served the Western Region parishes of Sydney.

In 1976, the Toowoomba diocese welcomed its new bishop, following his appointment earlier that year, and a new relationship between shepherd and flock was about to begin. The newly appointed Bishop Kelly was quick to learn about his new diocese and travelled extensively throughout south-west Queensland, mostly by car, and became a true friend for not only the clergy in remote areas of Queensland, but to the many parishioners who would welcome him each time he visited. It was on one such trip that he endured a rather serious car accident. He was laid up for some time. It did not stop him and he was back on the road within no time at all.

Apart from his diocesan responsibilities, Bishop Kelly loved his sport, and in particular the sport of golf. At one stage, playing off a handicap

of seven, he won many trophies, including clergy championship wins in three States. His other sporting passion was horse racing and he loved, when possible, to go to the Clifford Park Race Course. The annual racing mass on the eve of the Weetwood/Toowoomba Cup racing carnival was something the Bishop encouraged and participated in.

But Bishop Edward Kelly will always be remembered for the legacy he left to the young people of the diocese. He fought for affordable education for all people; he fought to keep fees at Catholic primary and secondary schools as low as possible; he fought for fair Government funding for Catholic education and fair access to school transport for those attending parish schools. One of his greatest victories was to establish a residential college for country students at the University of Southern Queensland. Today, Concannon College, with accommodation for over 100 students, stands as a material tribute to a real man of vision. Bishop Kelly also established, and provided for, a number of media scholarships at the University of Southern Queensland for journalism students. He always promoted responsible journalism and repeatedly championed for fair and balanced reporting.

In April 1993, during retirement, Bishop Kelly returned to Toowoomba to receive a unique and much deserved honour. He became the first person to receive an honorary degree from the University of Southern Queensland—a Doctorate of Letters. This was a fitting tribute to his love for learning and his interest in education.

The Bishop was not afraid to speak out, and wrote many letters to editors of newspapers all over the country, encouraging debate on many sensitive issues on which, perhaps, many of his colleagues were reluctant to speak out. The man who succeeded Bishop Kelly, Bishop William Morris, in his homily at the funeral yesterday said he will be remembered as a man of prayer. Yesterday's funeral and requiem mass and celebration of the life of Bishop Kelly at St Patrick's Cathedral in Toowoomba was a fitting tribute to this man of prayer. My colleagues the member for Toowoomba South and the member for Gregory and I were privileged to be able to join Cardinal Clancy, Archbishop Rush, Archbishop Bathurst, some 16 bishops, more than 90 priests and hundreds of people from the diocese who packed into St Patrick's Cathedral for the service. It was, indeed, a moving experience, and my congratulations go to administrators Father John Maher and Father Tony O'Keefe for their organisation of what must have been a logistical headache.

Finally, our sympathies are extended to the former Bishop's sister Maud and brother Hilary, and to their families. The Diocese of Toowoomba has been fortunate to have been touched by such a great man as Edward Francis Kelly.

Marlin Coast Development; Machans Beach

Dr CLARK (Barron River) (1.37 a.m.): The coastal part of my electorate known locally as the Marlin Coast is composed of a number of small townships strung out along the beaches north of Cairns or tucked into the foothills of the rainforest-covered mountains. Each township has its own distinctive character jealously guarded by its residents, but in many areas the influx of new arrivals and the growth of unit developments and tourist resorts is impacting on environment and lifestyle and changing their character.

At Freshwater, residents unsuccessfully tried to change the zoning in their street to prevent units replacing the old-style Queensland homes. At Trinity Beach residents were appalled last week when trees bordering a small creek were smashed down to facilitate the construction of tourist accommodation. In this case, the activity was unlawful and the council will, I understand, be prosecuting the developer, but it will take many years to restore what was destroyed in a matter of hours by a greedy, insensitive developer. In the foothills at Caravonica, residents have been fighting hillside development that threatens visual amenity and lifestyle. At Mount Buchan behind Palm Cove a property owner has threatened to bulldoze a road to the top of the escarpment to get access to a building site regardless of the scarring that it will cause.

Today, I would like to talk specifically about Machans Beach, called by some the Cinderella of the Marlin Coast, but treasured by its residents. Photographs taken in the 1950s show Machans Beach with a lovely wide, sandy beach but today Machans has an extensive rock wall built to protect the esplanade from erosion that threatened to wash away homes in the 1970s. Machans Beach is separated from the Cairns international airport by only the Barron River and, as air traffic has grown over the last decade, so has the noise and air pollution for most Machans residents.

Notwithstanding these factors, a tourist resort was planned near the mouth of the Barron River in the late 1980s and it seemed for a while that life would change forever for Machans residents, despite their protests. I was, in fact,

the only Mulgrave Shire councillor to vote against this development. But fortunately, when the corporate bubble burst, Capital Resorts was one of the casualties and in fact the Cairns Port Authority bought the land to use as a buffer between it and the township of Machans Beach. Since tourism development passed by the Machans Beach community, older residents have been able to stay on because rates did not rise and nobody wanted to knock down the small, older-style Queensland homes to replace them with modern better block monstrosities, units or duplexes. As a result, there has been a gradual change in the population at Machans over the past five years as young people seeking cheaper accommodation and artists and other people seeking an alternative lifestyle to the other beach townships have settled there. However, both new and long-time residents share a common commitment to the retention of the character of Machans Beach, its lifestyle and environment.

The ratepayers association has been revitalised as the older residents I first knew as a Mulgrave Shire councillor years ago have given over the reins to the new blood. An entertaining, informative monthly community newspaper now circulates in Machans and I have been pleased to support an application to the Arts Council for funding to document the history of this unique beach community.

The new sense of community and desire to retain the character of Machans was clearly evidenced last month when I attended a meeting of some 100 residents to hear about the plans of the Cairns Port Authority to establish a major recreational boat launching facility at the mouth of the Barron River to replace the main central city boat ramp—a proposal clearly inconsistent with the Cairns Port Authority's previously stated plans for the area to become an environmental buffer zone. It was abundantly clear at the meeting that the Machans residents did not want the extra traffic this development would generate. The roads in Machans are narrow and are not designed for heavy traffic, and school children would be at risk. Concerns were also raised about the impact of the constant dredging of the Barron River that would be required to keep a navigable channel open.

It seems clear to me that the Cairns Port Authority must reconsider its plans and look elsewhere for a boat launching facility. At Yorkeys Knob, some 10 minutes further north of Machans Beach, there is already a marina and boat ramp with adequate parking space that could be further upgraded to accommodate local boaties. A channel is already available and regularly dredged and, for those heading out to the reef, the distance is actually shorter than it is

from the Cairns ramp. The retention of the environment and lifestyle for Marlin Coast residents requires a cooperative approach by both local and State Governments. More stringent planning controls could be introduced by the Mulgrave Shire Council to ensure the retention of the character of townships like Machans and minimise the impact of hill slopes development.

A Marlin Coast State marine park will be gazetted as a result of my representations to

Government, and I hope that the Cairns Port Authority will agree to the inclusion of its freehold land at Redden Island in the marine park to ensure its protection for future generations. I have also proposed a scenic rim management plan that will provide a comprehensive management framework for all the agencies responsible for hillside land in the Cairns region. I am working closely with community groups concerned about hillside development. As a long-time member of the Cairns/Mulgrave Hill Slopes Protection Committee, I will continue to press for greater protection of the visual and ecological integrity of the forested scenic rim backdrop to Cairns. I believe that we must plan now to set aside land on the Marlin Coast for green corridors, both between coast and mountains and between townships, to be used by both wildlife and residents. If we act now, it will be possible in the future for people to cycle or walk along the length of the Marlin Coast and enjoy unspoilt wetlands and forests.

I will continue to work with local government and community groups to find the right balance between development and the environment on the Marlin Coast. Undoubtedly, that is our greatest challenge, but one we must meet for the sake of present and future generations.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 1.42 a.m.
(Thursday).