TUESDAY, 21 MARCH 1995

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. Fouras, Ashgrove) read prayers and took the chair at 10 a.m.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I have to inform the House that I have received from Her Excellency the Governor a letter in respect of assent to certain Bills the contents of which will be incorporated in the records of the Parliament.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,

BRISBANE

7th March, 1995

Dear Mr Speaker,

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty on the dates indicated:

"A Bill for an Act to protect Queensland's marine and coastal environment by minimising deliberate and negligent discharges of ship-sourced pollutants into coastal waters, and for related purposes"—3rd March, 1995

"A Bill for an Act to amend certain Acts administered by the Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs of Queensland, and to repeal certain Acts"—3rd March, 1995

"A Bill for an Act to amend the *Crimes (Confiscation of Profits) Act 1989*"—3rd March, 1995

"A Bill for an Act to continue Anzac Day as a day of commemoration, and for other purposes"—3rd March, 1995

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd) Leneen Forde

Governor

The Honourable D. J. Fouras, M.L.A.,

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly,

Parliament House,

BRISBANE QLD 4000

PAPERS TABLED DURING RECESS

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I have to advise the House that the following papers were tabled during the recess in accordance with the details provided on the Daily Program circulated to members in the Chamber—

7 March 1995—

Explanation for the granting of an extension of time for the tabling of the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Annual Report 1993-94; and

Queensland Industry Development Corporation—Government Schemes Division—Venture Capital Fund—Financial Statements for the period 1 July 1994 to 31 October 1994.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Agricultural Mulch Disposal

From **Mrs Bird** (357 signatories) praying that immediate action be taken to introduce control measures for the disposal of agricultural mulch (black plastic).

Parking Stickers for Disabled

From **Mr Davidson** (6 signatories) praying that action be taken to waive the $10 fee to be paid by pensioners for the new disabled parking stickers.

Hemmant Port Road Environmental Impact Assessment

From **Mr Purcell** (826 signatories) praying that serious consideration be given to extending the time frame for the proposed Hemmant Port Road Environmental Impact Assessment.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

Acting Minister for Primary Industries (Mr Gibbs)—

Queensland Fish Board—Final Report for the period 1 July 1994 to 27 January 1995.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

In accordance with the schedule circulated by the Clerk to members in the Chamber, the following documents were tabled—

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Act 1994—

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act that are not in force commence 15 March 1995, No. 51

Agricultural Standard Act 1994—

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act that are not in force commence 15 March 1995, No. 50

Credit Act 1987—

Credit Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1995, No. 48

Environmental Protection Act 1994—

Environmental Protection (Interim) Regulation 1995, No. 46

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act that are not in force (other than the provisions mentioned in the Schedule) commence 1 March 1995, No. 47

Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981—

Exotic Diseases in Animals (Avian Influenza) Amendment Notice (No. 2) 1995, No. 44

Fisheries Act 1994—

Fisheries (Changeover Day) Regulation 1995, No. 56

Fisheries Regulation 1995, No. 34

Justices Act 1886—

Justices Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1995, No. 45

Land Act 1962—

Land Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1995, No. 49

Local Government Amendment Act 1994—

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act that are not in force commence 10 March 1995, No. 54

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1995, No. 42

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1995, No. 55

Nursing Act 1992—

Nursing Amendment By-law (No. 1) 1995, No. 40

Officials in Parliament Act 1896—

Proclamation declaring that certain officers of the Crown liable to retire from office on political grounds are capable of being elected members of the Legislative Assembly and sitting and voting in the Legislative Assembly at the same time, No. 30

Place Names Act 1994—

Place Names Regulation 1995, No. 39

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act that are not in force commence 1 March 1995, No. 38

Public Sector Management Commission Act 1990—

Public Sector Management Commission Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1995, No. 31

Residential Tenancies Act 1994—

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act that are not in force commence 3 April 1995, No. 35

Residential Tenancies Regulation 1995, No. 36

State Housing Act 1945—

State Housing Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1995, No. 37

Sugar Industry Act 1991—

Sugar Industry (Assignment Grant) Guideline 1995, No. 52

Superannuation (Government and Other Employees) Act 1988—

Superannuation (Government and Other Employees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1995, No. 33

Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990—

Superannuation (State Public Sector) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1995, No. 32

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1989—

Workplace Health and Safety Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1995, No. 41

Workplace Health and Safety (Certificates) Exemption Amendment Notice (No. 1) 1995, No. 53

Workplace Health and Safety (Codes of Practice Approval) Amendment Notice (No. 1) 1995, No. 43.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Appointment of Ministry

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier and Minister for Economic and Trade Development) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: I desire to inform the House that on 23 February 1995 Her Excellency the Governor appointed Frederick Warren Pitt as a member of the Executive Council of Queensland and as the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development.

I lay upon the table of the House a copy of the *Queensland Government Gazette Extraordinary* of 23 February 1995 containing the relevant notifications.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gold Coast Indy Car Grand Prix

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Bundamba—Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: It gives me great pleasure to be able to inform honourable members that the 1995 Gold Coast Indy Carnival has proved to be yet another outstanding success for Queensland.

Preliminary financial estimates for the event show that Indy continues to live up to its reputation as Queensland's premier sports and entertainment event and justify the Government's ongoing support for the Indy concept. Record corporate sponsorship and ticket sales, perfect Gold Coast weather, phenomenal television interest and a nail-biting race finish this year all combined to make 1995 Indy's best year to date. No-one who attended the four great days of the Indy Carnival, or watched Sunday's race on television, can possibly dispute that Indy has truly cemented its future as a feature of the Queensland events calendar and a major drawcard for overseas and interstate tourists.

Preliminary figures prepared by financial consultants Ernst and Young indicate that the total economic impact of the 1995 Indy Carnival on the Queensland economy will exceed $45m, compared with the total of $37.8m achieved in 1994. I will now detail some of the figures that show why Indy is such a winner for the taxpayers of Queensland. I must emphasise that these figures are preliminary and essentially conservative, but are expected to increase when Ernst and Young completes its final report next month.

Predictive figures for 1995 identify that the direct economic stimulation to the Queensland economy from Indy can be conservatively placed at $31,787,260 gross State product. This figure is more than $8m higher than the $23m result achieved in 1994 and is expected to grow even larger when catering and merchandising returns for the 1995 event are finalised and added to the account.

The Gold Coast region alone can expect direct economic stimulation in excess of $29,434,900 from Indy this year. So much for the misguided critics who claim that Indy is no good for the Gold Coast and is merely an annual inconvenience to local residents and tourists!

Record corporate sponsorship and ticket sales for the 1995 Indy also prove beyond doubt that Indy gets better every year and is here to stay. Net ticket sales for 1995 will be approximately $3.5m, compared with last year's takings. Corporate support for the event continues to grow each year, and this year corporate sponsorship sales will be a net $5.7m, compared with $5.4m net in 1994. In anyone's language, that is an impressive result for an event that, at present, does not have a naming rights sponsor.

Taken together, net corporate sponsorship and ticket sales for 1995 will total $9.2m—at least $600,000 higher than the 1994 net revenue figure of $8.6m. In addition to the $31m in direct economic benefits to Queensland, preliminary estimates indicate that the $14.8m promotional impact of overseas media coverage for Queensland that the event achieved last year will be matched and surpassed in 1995. Television interest in the 1995 Indy race, both at home and abroad, was phenomenal and reflects the event's growing stature as a national and international sporting attraction. The race was shown in some 130 countries, 25 countries more than the previous year, with a potential viewing audience of approximately 1 billion people.

Once again, this proves that Indy is unquestionably a cost-effective promotional tool for Queensland in the world's largest outbound tourist markets, with North America obviously chief among them. Indy was also a big television hit with Australian viewers. Figures provided by the AC Nielsen group show that the 1995 Indy race rated 24 in Brisbane at its peak on Sunday. The coverage also rated solidly in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, with peak ratings of 16, 15, 16 and 12 respectively.

I turn now to the question of the Government's investment in the event. The Government's investment in this year's event is estimated to be between $8.1m and $8.6m—at the very least, a $500,000 saving on the $9.1m invested in 1994. This investment takes into account the additional $1m spent on improving facilities in the track and race precinct, including $300,000 for hire of the 10-metre high Trident big-screen televisions to ensure that race patrons missed none of the action.

Our support for the Indy concept has always been on the basis of a medium to long-term investment in an event which is far more than just a car race. Even our most churlish critics cannot claim that a $45m return on an $8m Government outlay is not a sound investment for Queensland taxpayers.

In many ways, 1995 was a watershed year for the Indy Carnival. Confirmed Government investment, a four-year promoters agreement and a more stable management structure at Indy, under chairman Ron Richards and chief executive Glen Jones, are providing a sound platform from which to increase the quality and economic benefits of the event. It is high time that the leaders of the National and Liberal Parties got fully behind what I believe is an event with a spectacular international future that will help to enrich our State's future.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Mr D. F. Lane

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier and Minister for Economic and Trade Development) (10.09 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this State by the late Donald Frederick Lane, a former member of the Parliament of Queensland and Minister of the Crown.
>
> 2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the Parliament of Queensland in the loss they have sustained."

Donald Frederick Lane was born on 18 July 1935 in Toowoomba—the son of Frederick and Mary, who were both Warwick retailers. Mr Lane was educated in Brisbane. At the age of 16, Mr Lane joined the police force as a cadet, serving initially in the remote regions of Queensland. In 1962, as a detective senior constable, he was awarded the Queen's commendation for brave conduct for his role in disarming a man threatening to shoot police in an incident at Highgate Hill. In 1962, he married Beryl Pankhurst, and together they had a son, Steven, and a daughter, Robyn.

Mr Lane was serving within the police Special Branch when he was chosen as the Liberal candidate for the Merthyr by-election in 1971. On 24 July 1971, he was elected to represent Merthyr in this House. In January 1980, he was elevated to Minister for Transport, a position he held for three years until August 1983. Honourable members will recall that, following the 1983 election, he left the Liberal Party to join the National Party and so enabled the National Party to gain office in its own right. He was soon reappointed as Minister for Transport—a position he held until December 1987. Mr Lane resigned from this House on 30 January 1989.

As Minister for Transport, Mr Lane will be most favourably remembered for achievements during his tenure as Minister, which include the electrification and modernisation of Queensland Railways; initiating the air-space development of Toowong Railway Station; and as Chairman of the Queensland Road Safety Council from 1981 to 1987.

In more recent times, Mr Lane was engaged as a freelance journalist and was by all accounts successful in his agricultural endeavours. Sadly, Mr Lane will probably be more remembered in history for his dramatic admissions to the Fitzgerald commission of inquiry and subsequent conviction. Mr Lane has certainly left his mark on Queensland and on this place. Let us today remember the man for his significant accomplishments. Mr Lane is survived by his wife and children and their families. On behalf of the Parliament, I extend my sympathy and that of this House to his family.

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (10.13 a.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the Honourable the Premier. It is with sadness that I speak on the passing of Don Lane. Don was born in Toowoomba on 18 July 1935 and joined the Queensland police as a cadet when he was 16. He was awarded the Queen's commendation for bravery in 1964 when, as a detective senior constable, he disarmed a man who threatened to shoot police in an incident at Highgate Hill in 1962.

Don entered the Queensland Parliament, winning a by-election on 24 June 1971 for the seat of Merthyr. This followed a career spanning nearly 20 years in the Queensland police force. As a backbencher he worked hard for issues, both minor and major, with notable representations on issues ranging from hoteliers serving watered-down scotch to the funding of fire brigades. His strong sense of self seemed to underlie much of his motivation in the parliamentary arena. He was a strident advocate of a member's right to an unencumbered point of view free of partisan pressures. The responsibility to act as a private member was the overriding rule, not the exception, in his book. As a backbencher and a Minister he maintained a high profile as a hard worker and an innovator.

Rail and road reform under Don Lane as Transport Minister from 1980 was both forward thinking and inspirational. There was never a too-hard basket in Don Lane's office. He made decisions, and he delivered. He was both a visionary and a builder. The modern Queensland Rail is his monument. As a result of the PA Consultants report he personally commissioned into the railway administration and industrial management, the Queensland Government realised Queensland Rail's huge earning potential. An operational profit of nearly $118m in 1986 was followed by a $1 billion windfall in his last year as Minister in 1987. He was overseer of the State's railway

mainline electrification scheme, which was revolutionary for its time. He secured the development of the Brisbane Transit Centre and the Toowong Village air-space development—both strategically placed to mask stark rail lines in the middle of the city and a busy suburban district. Reform of road transport through the State and reliable air services to regional Queensland were other priorities of his term in office.

Don was not a whinger. After matters arising from the Fitzgerald inquiry, he said that he accepted the jury's verdict. He wrote and published an account of his time as a young policeman and later as a politician in *Trial and Error*. This provided some relief for him during his period of incarceration, albeit traumatic at times, recounting the later years as a Cabinet Minister. This book is not a stream of recriminations, nor does it serve as a tool of self-justification or delusion. He quite lightheartedly included as the first line to the introduction a quote that reflected his stoic wit and his incisive intellect. It reads—

> "There are moments when everything goes well—don't worry it won't last."

He was also once quoted as saying that "there is nothing so ex as an ex-politician." At the time of his resignation from Parliament on 30 January 1989, he was the second-longest serving member on the Government side. This was a tribute to his contribution to the Parliament and the State of Queensland and also a testimony to his resilience, dogged determination and commitment to public life.

I came to know Don Lane well. As a new backbencher in 1980, I served on his ministerial committee. I came to respect his depth of knowledge and his pragmatism. He could be very different from his public image. At his memorial service last Friday, mention was made of his gentle side, his commitment to the Italian community, to his electorate and to his family. This was the other side of a man who was a formidable parliamentary debater, a competent and astute Minister. Don Lane had a sad end to his political career—very much a victim of the times who deserved much better. This period of enormous strain placed great pressure on his family—a very close-knit family. A large and widely representative congregation attended his memorial service last Friday at St John's Cathedral, proving that respect for Don Lane stretched beyond political, social and economic boundaries. I offer my sincere condolences and those of the Opposition to his wife, Beryl, son, Steven, daughter, Robyn, and family during this sad time.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Education) (10.18 a.m.): I join in this motion of condolence on the death of Don Lane and refer particularly to his time as Transport Minister in this State. As a person who has attended quite a number of ministerial councils in transport over the years, I have found that it is certainly one of those portfolios in which one sees a fairly high turnover of Ministers. But Don Lane had the honour to serve in that portfolio for almost seven years. As has been mentioned by the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, he will be remembered chiefly for his work in Queensland Rail.

No-one could say that Don Lane was very far from controversy. Indeed, I remember that as a newly elected backbencher in this Parliament in 1983, Don Lane was one of those hard men of the old National Party Government. My early recollection of him in this place is that, just after he changed sides from the Liberal Party to the National Party to deliver the National Party that majority in 1983, that earned him the enmity of many of his erstwhile party colleagues and certainly did not lift the respect within which the Labor Opposition held him, either. However, I believe that it is important to give credit where it is due. Don Lane felt very strongly for the Transport portfolio. He had a vision of where he saw that area of reform going. As a member who had a large railway constituency in Ipswich, I can assert that at the time the PA Consultants report was a very controversial document and one which did not earn Don Lane too many friends in Queensland Rail. Indeed, the Transport portfolio was dogged with controversy. Nevertheless, in the early 1980s, very important reforms were put in place which assisted the ongoing reform of that great public enterprise.

I occasioned some contact with Don Lane following his time in this place. It was quite obvious that he enjoyed maintaining an interest in matters pertaining to transport. I would often see him at functions of the Chartered Institute of Transport or at functions organised by societies such as the Railway Historical Society. His interest, therefore, was not simply an occasional one because he had held the Transport portfolio, but one of a deep-felt interest in the welfare of the transport industry as a whole.

I recall that, upon being sworn in as Minister for Transport in 1989, a communication came to me from Don Lane

wishing me well for that portfolio. Although one could never have said that we were political friends by any means, I certainly appreciated that message of well wishing, because it demonstrated that the gentleman actually did have a concern for the area for which he had been responsible during his time as a Minister in this place.

Although, as I said before, Don Lane was never far from controversy, on an occasion such as this it is indeed proper and fitting that we remember the positive contribution that he made, particularly in the area of transport, to the future of the State.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.21 a.m.): I rise today to offer my condolences to the family and friends of Don Lane. He was a member of the Liberal Party for 16 years and a Liberal Minister for three years before moving to the National Party. He was a member of the Liberal Party State Executive and was elected as the member for Merthyr in a by-election in 1971. Before entering Parliament he made his name in 1962 as a detective senior constable of police when he won an award for bravery for his part in disarming a man who threatened to shoot police.

Don Lane was particularly interested in the individuality of members of Parliament and was opposed to the caucus system. As Transport Minister, he pushed through the electrification of the Brisbane rail system, a major achievement and one of which he was very proud. He had a right to be proud. Don Lane also perfected the integration of public transport within the city, making the system much more effective for Brisbane residents.

After his dismissal from State Parliament and his gaol term, Don Lane remained dignified and refused to debase the system which had judged him. He suffered much during and after the Fitzgerald inquiry, but was more concerned with the effect on his family and friends. In a submission he made to this House after his dismissal he stated—

> "The humiliation and public scorn that my family and I have suffered as a result of these events, many of them beyond my control, has been devastating. In addition it has been both abhorrent and distressing for me to have had to name former colleagues."

I think this quote sums up Don Lane's feeling about the difficult period leading up to and after his leaving this place, and I say no more about it.

Apart from his dedication to public service and particularly to improving the State's transport systems, he had one other love. Don Lane spent the last few years on his much-loved farm near Warwick, where he died. I again offer my condolences to wife, Beryl, and Don Lane's children, Steven and Robyn, on the loss of their husband and father.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (10.24 a.m.): I wish to join in expressing my sympathy to Mrs Beryl Lane and her family on the very sudden passing of Don Lane, whom, I believe, I knew longer than most members of the House. We met some years before he won the Merthyr electorate for the Liberal Party in 1971. At the time he was actively involved in the party's campaign for the Ashgrove electorate, where the sitting member was the late Doug Tooth. I was involved in the campaign for Col Miller, the member for the adjoining seat of Ithaca.

After I was elected to the Brisbane City Council in 1976, Don Lane gave the new Liberal council team a tremendous amount of assistance. Anyone who has been through a major split in their party, or a coalition to which they belong, will know it is a divisive and difficult experience, with those whom one regarded as colleagues and friends becoming political enemies virtually overnight. We went through that unpleasant experience in 1983, when the coalition which had served this State so well split, and subsequently when Don Lane changed parties.

However, it must be said that, when the Liberal team led by Sallyanne Atkinson was voted into office in Brisbane City just 18 months later and I became the deputy mayor, we were able to develop a sound and necessary working relationship with the then State Government and with Don Lane as Transport Minister. It was then that I came to appreciate even better his political and administrative skills. In the deputations we took to him, and the various meetings between the council and the Government which took place, the advisers and bureaucrats were on tap, not on top. There was no doubt that Don Lane knew his Ministry well, just as there was no doubt that his word was final when it came to putting the State's position.

Given the events which had taken place in 1983, the relationship between the National Party State Government and the Liberal Party city council could have been a very difficult one. It was through the efforts of people such as Don Lane that we were able to work together reasonably well for the good of the

city. Even though I differed with him on some of the projects he implemented, there can be no doubt that he was a very successful and effective Transport Minister, especially in areas such as rail electrification, modernisation and road safety. Even some of his harshest critics have acknowledged that fact since his death.

When I was elected to this House in 1986, I was the Liberal spokesman on Transport. Even though we clashed at times, I appreciated the highly competent way he went about his ministerial duties. When he became one of the victims of the Fitzgerald inquiry and the prosecutions which followed, Don's life changed dramatically. I believe it ought to be said that, regardless of those events, one had to admire that he accepted his penalty without complaint. When he was taken to prison, he refused protective custody which would have been available in view of the positions he had held, including that of a police officer. Many have said that Don Lane was a tough man, and I am sure he would never contest that claim. No doubt that toughness actually served him well in the prison system, as it did after his release when he published a frank account of his political life and his period in prison.

He went about renewing acquaintances and getting his life back together in a robust and successful way. I saw him only occasionally, at the races or past members functions, and it was quite evident then that he was doing all he could to rebuild his life, as he was entitled to do, having paid his penalty.

The late Don Lane as a politician gave no quarter in debate, nor did he ask for any. He was an extremely effective grassroots campaigner, something amply demonstrated by the fact that he won the marginal seat of Merthyr in seven successive elections. The fact that some 700 people attended his memorial service, which was presided over by Archbishop Peter Hollingworth, demonstrates that he did rebuild his life and did gain proper recognition for his significant achievements in public life as Minister for Transport.

He is survived by his wife, Beryl, who stood most loyally by him in good times and tough times, his son, Steven, and his daughter, Robyn. I extend my sympathy to them, to the other members of his family and to his many friends.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (10.28 a.m.): I wish to speak briefly in this condolence motion for Don Lane. As members would be aware, I now represent in this Parliament a large part of Don Lane's former electorate of Merthyr covering New Farm, Teneriffe, Merthyr and Newstead. Accordingly, it would remiss of me if I did not make some comments on the public record from a local perspective.

I do not intend to refer to matters before the Fitzgerald inquiry or Don Lane's subsequent conviction or gaoling; although I was present during the Fitzgerald inquiry with barrister Matt Foley when Don Lane confessed to the inquiry his misuse of ministerial expenses.

Don Lane brought out strong passions and views—some positive, some negative—from his former constituents. As members would expect, views were especially strong in the Labor Party, particularly from families such as the Dawson family, which included some legendary Labor Party people such as former Brisbane City Councillor Beattie Dawson and her daughter Barbara, who ran against Don Lane in Merthyr on several occasions. I recall, as ALP secretary, having to mediate and become involved in a number of disputes which arose because of the level of intensity of those contests between the Dawson family and the Lane camp. I remember those instances only too vividly.

Nevertheless, there was an acceptance by many locals that Don Lane had worked hard to try to assist his electorate, from the construction of the oval at the New Farm State School to financially assisting the Metropolitan Senior Citizens Centre in the Valley.

Indeed, Sunday 19 March, the festival of St Joseph, is a very important day for the Italian community in New Farm. While I was at that festival, a number of people spoke to me about Don Lane's passing. Don Lane's passion was New Farm Park, and in particular the rose gardens in the park. I think it was in 1992 that he rang me and arranged an appointment to discuss New Farm Park and, of course, the rose gardens. He made repeated references to a Cabinet decision initiated by him that he said provided for the extension of New Farm Park into the old power station adjoining it. Even though Don Lane was no longer a member of Parliament, had served time in gaol and knew my view in relation to matters involving him in the inquiry, he still maintained his love of New Farm Park. In fact, when he visited me he took the opportunity to be critical of the former Lord Mayor Sallyanne Atkinson for not implementing that Cabinet decision, which he supported, to extend the rose garden.

I pass on my condolences to the Lane family and the condolences of those of his

former constituents in New Farm who remember him well.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.31 a.m.): I wish to support this condolence motion, and I do so with much sadness. Most members in this place would appreciate that I knew Don Lane well. In fact, it pleases me to say that Don Lane was one of only three or four Queensland politicians who had a fundamental impact on the way I operate as a parliamentarian in this Parliament and in my electorate.

Today, I wish to focus my remarks mainly on Don Lane when he was the local member of Parliament and as a member of the Liberal Party, for it was within those contexts that I came to know Don very well. In doing so, from the outset I wish to acknowledge the magnificent contribution that Don made to the greater good of Queensland. Others who have spoken before me in this debate have made fulsome reference very adequately to Don's achievements as a Minister of the Crown. I think achieving that status of Minister was Don's crowning glory and one which allowed him to define the concept of public service in a way that was admired by the vast majority of Queenslanders.

Today we often hear mention of the lack of proper planning and major infrastructure development by previous National Party and coalition Governments—a notion that I reject implicitly and one that certainly did not apply to Don Lane as a Minister. In Don Lane's final speech in this place, which was incorporated in *Hansard* on 14 March 1989 by the then member for Mulgrave, Mr Menzel, Don Lane produced a brief list of what he thought were his achievements as a Minister.

That list was kept brief deliberately but was still an impressive one and included achievements such as obtaining Government approval for and supervision of the State's railway main line electrification scheme, which cost approximately $1 billion but which became virtually self-funding and which introduced significant new technology to Queensland; the construction of the interstate railway across the Brisbane River to the city and securing the development of the Brisbane Transit Centre and the leasing of railway land for that purpose; initiating the $100m air-space development at Toowong Railway Station, now known as Toowong Village; the appointment of industrial safety officers, occupational nurses and a medical officer in major railway workshops; personally securing Federal and other funds to expand Brisbane's electrified railway system to Caboolture, Doomben, Cleveland and Beenleigh; the construction of new railway stations at Boondall, Carseldine, Bray Park, Birkdale, Thorneside and Albion; the deregulation of road transport throughout the State; reducing the annual road toll from 609 in 1981-82 to 442 in 1987, when Don Lane ceased being the Minister for Transport; the extension of Brisbane River ferry services; the introduction of school crossing supervisors; the introduction of share riding in taxis; and the negotiation of reliable air services to western Queensland.

Those are impressive achievements by anyone's ministerial standards and a clear indication of the reasons why Don was fiercely proud of the contribution that he made to the greater public good.

However, at the same time, and right from the time he entered Parliament on 24 July 1971, Don showed singular and unswerving commitment to his electorate of Merthyr. He showed up-and-coming politicians how to look after what, after their families, is their most important constituency—that which enables us all to serve in this place—their electorates.

It is perhaps because I had much to do with him in the five years leading up to 1983 that I came to regard Don as one of the best grassroots politicians I have known. For him, the electorate was in a political sense everything, for he, like us all, understood intuitively that if our electorates do not stand behind us, we will go nowhere in politics. He was immersed totally in the life of the many communities of Merthyr and his interest and support for what they were about was recognised and reciprocated amply. The most obvious example of this interest and support perhaps was his intimate association with the very substantial Italian community of Merthyr and wider Brisbane. Many associations within the Italian community, including those within Don's electorate, benefited greatly from his interest and patronage. Those associations included the Corale Guiseppe Verdi, Casa Italia, ANFE, Fogolar Furlan, the Italo Australian Centre, Brisbane City Soccer Club, the bocce clubs and the many other culture and sporting clubs and associations that called on Don regularly for assistance and counsel.

Don Lane was also very heavily involved with the churches and cultural and religious festivals. As only one example, the annual spectacular of the Feast of St Joseph just would not have been the same without the appearance of Don and the delivery of a fiery speech which, although not delivered totally in

Italian, was invariably understood almost entirely by all present. That was Don's public association with the Italian community. His less public association was equally recognised and appreciated, and it also brought him much credit. Many Italians still appreciate the assistance Don gave the many sons, daughters and breadwinners of families to find a job. That assistance was also extended to many others within his electorate irrespective of racial origin. As a result of those associations, many members of the Italian community came to regard Don and his family as very close friends. That fact was very evident at many a wedding, christening and funeral within the Italian community.

Those members of this place who remember the composition of the old seat of Merthyr will also remember that the make-up of the seat boasted a very senior population—very senior not only because it was the home of many captains of industry and commerce, senior members of the judiciary and senior public servants—all of whom were extremely well served by their local member, Don Lane—but also very senior in terms of age. In fact, the seat of Merthyr—and, to a similar extent, the current seat of Clayfield—had within it a great number of nursing homes, retirement villages, war widows units and homes, senior citizens centres, pensioners clubs and many other organisations and situations within which senior citizens lived and associated. Those organisations and senior citizens were paid a very special form of attention by Don Lane, who always maintained that if we look after the young and the elderly within our community, then society will be the richer for this.

Given Don's background as a policeman, security of person and property as it applied to senior citizens was a prime concern to him, as was his belief that senior citizens should be encouraged to participate fully in the life of their local communities and that they should be kept well informed of developments within the Governments of Queensland and Australia. The residents in the many halfway houses, hospitals and welfare associations were also looked after extremely well and served very well by Don. He was one who cared for the lot of the mentally impaired within our community and for the lot of those who had come upon hard times.

As I said before, Don loved to make connection with the kids, he loved to be with them and to be more than just the local politician. He was a constant visitor to the schools within his electorate and all received his full attention and support. Irrespective of whether it was Ascot State School, New Farm State School, the Newstead Special School, the Spastic Centre or the dozen or more other private and State schools within his electorate, they all knew that Don Lane was interested in promoting their interests within Government and he obtained many concessions for them through his diligent and effective representations.

I have mentioned particularly Don's dealings and connections with the Italian community, the elderly, the young and the disadvantaged within his electorate. However, that should not take away from the fact that all organised groups and individuals in Don's electorate were important to him. The sporting clubs, such as the Australian Rules Football Club in Mayne and Brothers Rugby Union Club, service organisations such as Rotary and Lions, cultural organisations such as the English Speaking Union and, most importantly, individuals all benefited from Don's attention to their concerns and requests for representation to the Government and the bureaucracy. Even today, many of my constituents speak to me affectionately about the work of Don Lane long after he stopped representing them. I think that all honourable members would agree with me that that is a great tribute to a man who claimed to be, and indeed was, a servant of the people.

I now wish to turn briefly to Don Lane's service to the Queensland Liberal Party. In fact, I first met Don when in 1978 I was campaigning for preselection for the then safe Labor Brisbane City Council ward of Central City. During that preselection and in the election which I subsequently contested, Don gave me much support and encouragement and I learned many a campaign skill as I watched Don the politician in action. Don believed in nurturing young people with political interest and ambition, and the fact that he did that with me is something for which I will always be grateful. From 1978 onwards, and particularly through our joint interests and work within the Italian community, our relationship and friendship grew right up to 1983 when, unfortunately, events and decisions made in that year overtook many a personal and political relationship.

The year 1983 was a difficult year for Queensland Liberals. It was in that year that I made the decision that I would seek to contest the next election in the seat against Don Lane. That he beat me in the 1986 election by 31 votes was because of the relationships that he enjoyed with his electorate, about which I have spoken already.

I will not pretend and say that the contest was a smooth one and devoid of bitterness. There certainly were some very tense moments during that eventful campaign, including the two re-counts of the close vote, when I learned much about scrutineering as I watched Don in action. In fact, the 1986 campaign showed clearly to me what an effective and consummate politician Don was, and one had to admire the sheer determination with which the Minister and the member went about his re-election business.

It was the same determination and single-mindedness which contributed to keeping the north side of Brisbane a Labor-free zone for much of the 1970s and 1980s. Together with Bill Knox and Brian Austin, Don Lane formed a triumvirate in north Brisbane, which eventually saw the north side boasting three senior Liberal Ministers in the former coalition Government and a demoralised Labor Party. In fact—and I am sure that members opposite will not mind my saying so; indeed, the Honourable the Minister for Education said this also—Don Lane really fought the Labor Party and fought it hard. He was never overly boastful of his successes, but he always enjoyed winning the political battles against his ideological enemies.

Within the Liberal Party his achievements were many, and the positions he held within the organisation were very senior ones. Apart from occupying at one time or another every possible position for office bearers at a branch and campaign level, Don served as a member of the State Executive between 1969 and 1975; Chairman, Brisbane Area Executive; Parliamentary Delegate to Central Campaign Committee; Parliamentary Delegate, Redistribution Committee; and the Parliamentary Delegate to the Liberal Party State Executive from 1971 to 1975. Through these positions and his genuine involvement and interest in Liberal Party affairs, Don had a fundamental impact on policy debates within the party, preselection outcomes, the election of party office bearers, electoral redistribution submissions and membership development.

Through his pursuit of his parliamentary and ministerial duties, he was very much a public face of the Liberal Party and a face which brought much credit to it. In spite of his decision of 1983, no Liberal who knew and worked with Don Lane can deny this, and today I am pleased to go on the public record as one of these Liberals.

As the Honourable the Minister said earlier, Don Lane's interest in politics and the performance of the departments that he once ran remained strong after he left Parliament. He remained on my *Hansard* mailing list, and every year I forwarded to him copies of annual reports and other documents that I thought would be of interest to him. From time to time, he visited my office, and we enjoyed a cordial personal relationship right up until the time of his death.

Don Lane will be remembered for many things that he did during his time in politics and in this place. He can be remembered for many good things and he can be remembered for many controversial things. As someone who benefited greatly from the good things that he will be remembered for and who also suffered at the hands of his political skills and expertise, I will choose to remember him for the great amount of good that he did for the general public of Queensland and in particular for his electorate of Merthyr. To his wife, Beryl and his children, Steven and Robyn, I extend my sincere sympathy and wish them well for the future.

Motion agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

QUESTION UPON NOTICE

Brisbane Exhibition and Convention Centre

Mr LINGARD asked the Minister for Administrative Services—

> "With reference to the report to the Parliamentary Committee of Public Works on the selection of the operator manager at the Brisbane Convention Centre which detailed how 27 submissions were received and this was finally reduced to two proposals and the committee set up to do the selection then explained how it did detailed evaluation of those two submissions which were Convex and Brisbane Expo Centre—
>
> What the report did not tell the Parliamentary Committee of Public Works was the fact that those two companies were both subsidiaries of the same group, which is International Facilities Group which is part of Queensland Leisure Group.
>
> (1) Why didn't he give this advice to the Parliamentary Committee of Public Works?
>
> (2) Will he outline to the House what projects this company, with shareholders such as the Ryan Family, the Lister Family, Jacobsen Holdings, Pilbeam Family, Michael

> Edgley and Leo Williams, are involved in with your government?"

Mr MILLINER: This question demonstrates how lazy the honourable member for Beaudesert is. Had he taken the time to do some very fundamental research, he would have seen that the premise on which the question is based is incorrect. In his question, the honourable member referred to the operator of the Brisbane Convention Centre and the short-listing of the companies. He said that the two companies that were finally short-listed were both subsidiaries of the same group, the International Facilities Group, which is part of the Queensland Leisure Group. I am informed that that is totally incorrect.

Of the two short-listed companies, it was discovered that there was a joint shareholding by one of the participants, and that was fully divulged to the assessment committee. That information was passed to the Parliamentary Committee of Public Works. Interestingly, the Parliamentary Committee of Public Works examined this matter and produced a unanimous report. Members of the Opposition were on that committee. I repeat that it is interesting to note that it was a unanimous report.

That unanimous report stated that "this committee has examined the evaluation documentation and has no criticism of the final decision". That was the unanimous finding of the Parliamentary Committee of Public Works. Interestingly, when this matter was being considered, a letter was written to the secretary of the convention and exhibition centre, which I now table. That letter stated—

> "On behalf of the State Opposition, I would like to indicate that IFC has, in my opinion, demonstrated that it has the appropriate expertise and proven track record to competently carry out the role sought."

It also went on to say—

> "Without seeking to prejudice the deliberations of your committee, I wish to indicate the Opposition's support for IFC's capability to fulfil this important role and the associated economic benefits it would bring to Queensland."

It is signed by none other than Mr Kevin Lingard, Acting Leader of the Opposition.

Had the member done some very basic research, he would have also found out that the reason that I had not provided the Parliamentary Committee of Public Works with any information at that time, which was about August 1993, was quite simply that I was not the Minister for Administrative Services in August 1993.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mater Hospital

Mr BORBIDGE: I refer the Premier to the fact that the Mater Children's and the Mater Adult Public Hospitals will close, in the case of Mater Children's for the first time in its history, for purposes of elective surgery for two weeks over Easter and again for two weeks in May because of underfunding by his Government. I ask: will he ensure that these hospitals receive sufficient funds to avoid these closures?

Mr W. K. GOSS: Although I was absent during this public debate, I point out that it is clearly yet another case of an emotive and misleading public debate generated by people such as the Leader of the Opposition and his Health spokesman. I think it is instructive that people understand the record of this Government in terms of funding hospitals in general. I have referred to that before, and I will not give members opposite chapter and verse unless they really ask for it.

Mr Beanland interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: However, I think it is instructive that we give the history in relation to this Government's very strong support of the Mater public hospitals. Funding from the State Government for the Mater public hospitals has increased from $84m in 1989-90, when the Leader of the Opposition was in Government, to an allocation of $119.43m in 1994-95. That is an increase of over $35m, or over 42 per cent, on the level of funding that the former Government provided. Our record is dramatically superior. Those are the facts.

Furthermore, that 42 per cent increase in funding to Mater public hospitals compares very favourably with the 36 per cent to 37 per cent for other public hospitals. In other words, the Mater public hospitals have done dramatically well under this Government compared with the funding that they received under the former Government.

Mr Horan interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: They have also done better than the State public hospitals. Furthermore, contrary to the misleading assertions by some members opposite in the media, during recent meetings between the Director-General of Queensland Health and the chief executive officer of the Mater public hospitals, the chief executive officer clearly stated that the Mater was not demanding additional funds but that it was seeking a responsible means of balancing its own budget.

With the very strong and much better support—the much improved support compared with the record of members opposite—that we are giving the Mater public hospitals, those hospitals will continue to provide an excellent public service, as does the whole of the Queensland public hospital system. We have an excellent public hospital system in this State, as was confirmed recently by former Liberal Health Minister Llew Edwards.

Mr Cooper: You're having to dig deep now, aren't you?

Mr W. K. GOSS: What sort of a slur is that on Dr Edwards? Russell still hates all Liberals with a passion.

An Opposition member: Bring back the Tories.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The honourable member suggests that we should bring back the Liberals to clean up the mess. I thought that Llew Edwards was a pretty good Health Minister. Obviously, the member does not share that view and does not think that Mr Edwards has a contribution to make. Obviously, the member does not believe in bipartisan support. He is into trying to scare members of the public and trying to undermine confidence in the public hospital system.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, the level of interjections is unacceptable and I will not allow it to continue.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I conclude by endorsing the very competent way in which the Minister for Health has handled this matter——

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: —which is underlined by the joint statement issued by Mr Elder and the chairman of the Mater health service's governing board, Mr Ryan. One section of that statement reads—

> "The chairman of Mater Hospitals, Mr Kevin Ryan, said he appreciated the priority attention given to the Mater Hospital situation by the Minister."

I am sure that Mr Ryan appreciated also the extra funds on top of this Government's record financial support for Mater Public Hospitals.

Public Hospital System

Mr BORBIDGE: I refer the Premier to the crumbling public hospital system in this State, highlighted by the planned, historic closure of the Mater Children's Hospital and the Mater Public Hospital for two weeks over Easter and two weeks in May. I ask: can the Premier assure the House that no other public hospitals in Queensland will close over this period?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I can assure the House—and the Leader of the Opposition—that, as I have indicated, the Government will continue to provide record support for public hospitals in this State—in terms of both the Mater hospital and public hospitals. However, the day-to-day management of hospitals and adherence to budget is a matter for managers, not a matter for politicians.

Evatt Foundation Survey

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I refer the Treasurer——

Mr Elliott interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Cunningham under Standing Order 123A. Honourable members are aware that I will not allow interjections to be made while a question is being asked. The member for Cunningham is well and truly warned.

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I refer the Treasurer to the Evatt Foundation state of Australian Government survey, which rates South Australia ahead of Queensland. I ask: can the Treasurer inform the House whether this is an accurate portrayal of Queensland's economic and social performance?

Mr De LACY: The Evatt Foundation has come to the conclusion that South Australia is the best-performing State in Australia.

Mr W. K. Goss: Who'd swap?

Mr De LACY: As the Premier said: who would swap? In fact, if South Australia had not qualified to play in the Sheffield Shield final,

we would have hardly known that that State existed!

As I said earlier this morning, I believe that the only way in which the foundation could come to such a conclusion is if its members spent all day in the Barossa Valley and wrote the report that night. The Evatt Foundation is one of those groups that believes that, if taxes or debts are increased, that is good social policy. If that is how the foundation measures good social policy, it is no wonder that it put Queensland at the bottom of the list.

I am disappointed most of all by the fact that the foundation used the Commonwealth Grants Commission for its basic statistics but then deliberately misused those statistics. The survey referred to social policy and stated that Queensland is underfunding in relation to the rest of Australia. To a certain extent, that is right, but where the foundation is wrong, and where it is dead wrong, is in the fact that Queensland is increasing spending in social areas at a much faster rate than the other States of Australia. The foundation does not give credit where credit is due.

The Leader of the Opposition asked questions this morning about health, and the Premier said that we are increasing funding in health at a very much faster rate——

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr De LACY: It is in respect of the Mater. Is the Leader of the Opposition saying that the Mater is not properly managed?

Mr Borbidge: No, we're saying the Health Department isn't properly managed.

Mr De LACY: We are talking about the Mater. Is the Leader of the Opposition saying that it is not properly managed? We have done our job. We have increased funding by 40 per cent. If the Leader of the Opposition is saying that it is not working, he is saying that the Mater is not managing it properly.

The Evatt Foundation measures good social policy on inputs—the amount of money that is spent. In respect of health I will take figures from the report by the Commonwealth Grants Commission brought down just a couple of weeks ago. In the past five years, Queensland has increased spending in per capita terms—so this is taking account of the fact that we have the fastest population growth—by an average of 14 per cent per annum; Victoria by 2 per cent; Western Australia by minus 7 per cent; South Australia, which got top marks, by 7 per cent; and New South Wales by 12 per cent—Queensland first, daylight second. In respect of education, again in per capita terms, Queensland had a 34 per cent increase per annum. The next best was New South Wales with 24 per cent, followed by Western Australia with 19 per cent, South Australia with 18 per cent, Tasmania with 18 per cent and Victoria with 9 per cent.

In conclusion, allow me to refer to the best measure of social performance, that is, the creation of jobs. If there is one thing that a Government can do for the people of its State, it is to create jobs. Since we have been in Government, 169,000 new jobs have been created in Queensland. In other words, two-thirds of all new jobs created in Australia over the past five years have been created in Queensland. I rest my case. It does the Evatt Foundation no credit at all to put together a bodgie study which endeavours to prove the unprovable.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Ipswich West to ask his second question.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have just warned the member for Cunningham about interjecting when a question is being asked. Now the Leader of the Opposition is doing the same thing. I ask him to restrain himself.

Mr C. Skase

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I refer the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing to reports from Spain that Christopher Skase is planning to relaunch his tourist business from the island of Majorca. I ask: how does the Minister view these reports, and would any business associated with Mr Skase be welcome in Queensland's tourist industry?

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Southport!

Mr GIBBS: Whatever it is that Mr Skase has been sniffing through the oxygen bottles for the past 18 months, the Opposition obviously needs a healthy whiff of it. Look at the difference it has made to Mr Skase!

In short, Mr Skase would not be welcome in Queensland, and neither would anybody associated with his businesses. The fact is that Mr Skase left a trail of debt in this State from small to major investors through the Qintex organisation. In addition, along with people such as Bond, Mr Skase did an incredible disservice to the tourist industry in Queensland in terms of casting doubt on financial institutions, which during the 1980s were prepared to put money into tourism development and infrastructure. All

honourable members would be aware that it has been very difficult to encourage financial institutions and superannuation funds back into investing in the tourist industry, particularly over the past six to eight years.

I can only reiterate what I have said. I can assure the House that Mr Skase is not welcome here—although I am sure that he would be very welcome on the basis of being answerable to his former shareholders—and any company which believes that it has some contribution to make to this State's economy or to the tourist industry and which is in any way associated with Skase is also not welcome in Queensland.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Annual Hospital Closures

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (11 a.m.): Today, the Opposition calls on the Premier to find immediately a small sum of money—a sum that the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing would regard as mere petty cash—to prevent the impending closure of elective surgery at the Mater Children's and the Mater public hospitals for a month. They will be closed for two weeks at Easter and two weeks in May. What a disgrace!

I am sure that there will soon be announcements from other public hospitals in Brisbane in relation to what has become an annual ritual—an annual feature event—of the Goss health system, that is, annual closures for a number of weeks of all elective surgery. That is the Wayne Goss 45-week-a-year, hospital system.

For two reasons, the Mater is a particularly poignant case in point in relation to this chronic onset of closures. Firstly, this will be the first time in its proud history that any element of this magnificent hospital complex has actually had to shut down services even temporarily. Secondly, these closures come on top of another set of problems for the hospital in delivering the degree of service for which it is famous in a second major area, thanks again to this Government's ongoing and monumental mismanagement of the health system. I refer, of course, to the recent dramas concerning the maternity section, where the hospital was forced into considering cancelling the confinement of literally hundreds of women because it simply did not have the money to provide a bed for them in which to have their babies. Only after protracted consideration did the Goss health system manage to come up with a few hundred thousand dollars to keep a reasonable level of access to those services in place.

It has to be stressed that the problems for the Mater Mothers elements of the complex under the Goss health system simply are not going to go away and are likely to steadily worsen. That is because the problems which threatened the recent reductions in confinements were linked to far more than the cut in allocation for the hospital from the 1994-95 Budget. They are to do, as is almost everything, with the universal and chronic mismanagement of the entire Health portfolio, which has had a domino effect right across the entire public health system. I refer in particular to the loss of maternity beds which occurred with the closure of maternity services at the QE II Hospital, which added massively to the pressures on the Mater's maternity facilities. That was a simple, clear lack of planning to take into account basic commonsense. If the Government lops off maternity services at QE II, then other hospitals providing maternity services are going to come under increasing pressure and are going to need more, not less, funds to absorb that pressure. One does not need to be Einstein; a degree of commonsense is all that is needed. Did we see that from the custodian of the Goss health system this morning in this place? Again, no! It was nowhere to be seen.

The fact is that the mismanagement of the massive taxpayer investment in the health system is now so chronically locked into a spiral of bureaucratic nonsense—and a lack of coordination under the leadership of Wayne Goss—that, under this Government, the Mater's hopes for reasonable funding are now accepted by it to be so forlorn that it is now considering long-term constraints on maternity admissions. Even for the final months of this financial year, the hospital will provide confinements only to women who are already booked in.

So the problems in the maternity area are anything but temporary, and the same is true of the surgical list. Exactly the same lack of commonsense applies to the evolution of this problem. On a declining budget under this Government, it was expected to absorb the impact of the loss of six operating theatres across the city. In this place this morning, the stupid, foolish Treasurer hops up and seeks to blame the management of the Mater. He said that it had nothing to do with the Government; he accuses the Opposition of misrepresenting

the facts. Six theatres have been lost at the PA and at the RBH, and the Government is alleging that the Opposition is saying that the hospitals should not have to live within their means. It is not the hospitals that are closing the theatres, it is the Government.

Again, we have the situation where the Mater Public and the Mater Children's Hospitals are supposed to deal with more patients with less funding, and the Treasurer and the Premier say that it is nothing to do with the Government. Again, it has been the Mater's bid to meet that demand foisted upon it by the lack of planning and the domino effect of hospital budget cuts, not some alleged disrespect for the budget itself within the hospital, as implied by the Government, which has created the problem that the entire Mater complex now faces.

So in that sense, the fate of the Mater is a microcosm of all that is wrong with Queensland Health under the Premier's alleged leadership, and in fact a fair microcosm of all that is wrong with the entire leadership of this State under the Premier. The ingredients are increasingly common and chronic. First, as we heard again this morning, take a fistful of dollars. Second, invent some fiction about how it is going to be spent. Third, distribute the fiction widely. Fourth, forget about the problem—walk away from it. That is the story of the Goss Government. That is evidenced everywhere, in any portfolio one may care to examine.

Today it is Health, but tomorrow we could write the same speech about the Police Service. There is a lot of money, press releases and rhetoric, but no police! The same applies to the Education Department and the Department of Environment and Heritage. We have national parks but no rangers. The Mater, the PA, the RBH, Prince Charles Hospital and the Maryborough Base Hospital—wherever one looks, it is exactly the same story. There is lots of money but no management, and when it goes wrong, as the Premier said in this place today, it is always someone else's fault. As he said, "It is nothing to do with me, it is a matter for management." What about his management? What about the Queensland Health Minister's management? Time and again we see the common ingredients. There is lots of money but poor management.

When it comes to Health, we see the ultimate irony. The Government's logic is, as usual, so tortured. Allegedly, the health system has not been destroyed by this Government. This Government says that it fixed up this dreadful mess that it inherited. The Government's argument is that it was actually the coalition that wrecked the health system. That is what we have been hearing for six years. So what is the Government's response? It appoints a former conservative Health Minister to fix it up. It takes one of the men from one of the parties that allegedly created the problem in the first place and gives him the up-front job. What a vote of no-confidence that is in the Director-General, Dick Persson.

An Opposition member: And Mr Elder.

Mr BORBIDGE: I am coming to Mr Elder. What is Mr Persson doing in Health fresh after giving Queensland the disaster of HOME? What have all those legions of well-paid bureaucrats, spread through 13 Taj Mahals the length and breadth of the State, been doing that Sir Llew has had to come to the rescue? What a vote of no-confidence in this Minister, his Director-General and his department.

The challenge from this side of the House is for the Government to actually find a very small amount of money and do something genuinely constructive with it. For this mob opposite, that would be a novel experience. The Government should find some money and fix something. It should avoid the shut-down. The Premier should stop trading public relations stunts for leadership. It is his Government that redesigned Queensland Health. It is Wayne Goss' health system and his health crisis. It is his creation. He can sprout about how much extra money he is putting into the Mater and the Mater Children's Hospital; that is not the issue. During the lifetime of the previous coalition Government, the Mater Children's was never closed at Easter. It has never been closed before. It is not a question of money, it is a question of management.

Government members should remember that, back in 1988, Bob Hawke commissioned the Economic Planning Advisory Council to carry out an assessment of the standard of health care across Australia. That EPAC report to Bob Hawke said, "Yes, the Queensland National Party Government is spending considerably less than the national average on health." However, in terms of primary patient care and service delivery, the council rated the Queensland public health system in this State as equal to or better than that being provided anywhere else in Australia.

Government members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Government members cannot argue with EPAC or Bob Hawke.

Time expired.

Police Resources

Mr ROBERTSON (Sunnybank) (11.10 a.m.): Following that speech of fiction, I intend to inform the House of the facts about police resources in Queensland. Nobody could deny that law and order rank among the most important issues in the world today. Equally, nobody could deny that this is not a Queensland phenomenon; it is a worldwide phenomenon. There are countless theories to explain why criminal behaviour has been flourishing, and there are many hypotheses about the ways to counter the problem. But one thing that is certain is that there is a need to get more police out and about. When police are visible in the community, they serve the dual purpose of providing a deterrent to some and, for those who are not deterred, a quick response when needed. The Goss Labor Government has been very successful in both. Not only have we seen an increase in our crime clear-up rates, but our police are also catching more offenders in the act of committing crimes. There is absolutely no doubt that the Goss Government takes law and order very seriously and has boosted the Queensland Police Service in response to the problem.

Contrary to the claims made by the Opposition, the Goss Labor Government has confronted the law and order problem and is taking positive steps to address it. To demonstrate that point, the first fact to consider is that the Queensland population has increased by 11 per cent since the Goss Labor Government was first elected in 1989. Since 1989, the number of police officers in Queensland has increased by 18 per cent. More importantly, the number of operational police officers—that is, the police who are visible in the community, as opposed to being hidden away behind desks in office buildings—has increased by 35 per cent. That gives us a 35 per cent increase in real policing strength, while the population has increased by 11 per cent. Put another way: 78 per cent of the total police force of 5,282 officers in 1989 were on operational duties; today, more than 89 per cent of 6,224 police officers are on operational duties. So there are more police overall, and more of them are doing the kind of work that matters to most Queenslanders. Statewide, there are now 1,500 more police carrying out operational duties than there were in 1989.

In order to get more police officers out from behind their desks and onto the streets and highways of Queensland we have increased by 50 per cent the number of civilians employed by the Queensland Police Service. The additional civilian staff are freeing up police officers to devote their time to fighting crime. That is the pattern across the State. Of course, police numbers in some regions have increased more than in others, and the reason is very simple. Generally, they reflect the fluctuations in local population numbers. In situations in which there are special circumstances, these have been taken into account when establishing police numbers for the districts.

A sampling of some of the increases in police numbers around the State includes: a 51 per cent increase on the Gold Coast; a 43 per cent increase on the Sunshine Coast; a 27 per cent increase in Cairns; a 36 per cent increase in Ipswich; a 34 per cent increase in Mareeba; a 30 per cent increase in Toowoomba; a 27 per cent increase in Maryborough; and police numbers have more than doubled at the police stations that service the Sunnybank electorate.

Funding for police work in the various police districts around the State has increased by a range of 12 per cent to 78 per cent since 1989. The total budget for the Queensland Police Service has increased by 70 per cent, from $295m in 1989 to $503m in 1994-95. In other words, the Goss Labor Government is spending $208m a year more on policing than the National Party spent when it was last in Government. What is particularly important to note is that we are not just putting additional resources into the Police Service; we are making much better use of the resources allocated in the Police budget. One of the initiatives we have introduced is an on-line computer system called the Crime Reporting Information System for Police, or CRISP, which was successfully trialled last year in areas including Sunnybank. That computer system has effectively put 400 more officers on the street by replacing the amount of paperwork involved in advising police around the State about the details of police activity which may affect their districts.

These days we hear a lot of criticism from the Opposition about police numbers. But unlike the hysterical statements of the Opposition, the information that I have provided today is the true picture. Let me add to that picture the fact that, in the Opposition Police spokesperson's own electorate of Crows Nest, the Goss Government has provided 40

per cent more funding for police work and 41 per cent more police officers than his former National Party Government provided. In the Surfers Paradise electorate of the Opposition Leader, Mr Borbidge—and unfortunately he has left the Chamber, so he will not hear this particular fact——

Mr Beattie: He doesn't want to hear it, anyway.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Beattie is quite right; the Opposition Leader does not want to hear the truth. In his own electorate, funding for policing has increased by 60 per cent, and police numbers have increased by more than 50 per cent since 1989.

Mr Bennett: And he whinges.

Mr ROBERTSON: And the Opposition Leader has the hide to whinge.

With those facts about police numbers in mind, it is worth recalling this—

> "As I see it, it is not the job of members of Parliament to make loud noise in the media about a possible shortage of police when so much can be achieved by quiet and constructive work behind the scenes."

Who said that? It may surprise those people who have heard him carrying on about police numbers as if it were his favourite subject that this was the view expressed in this House by the Leader of the Opposition when he was in Government in 1981. It does not surprise me, because I have grown accustomed to his capacity to hitch a ride on any bandwagon; it is one of his most endearing qualities. But it may surprise some people who thought he was sincere in 1981. What was it that the National Party Leader said again? He said—

> "As I see it, it is not the job of members of Parliament to make loud noise in the media about a possible shortage of police when so much can be achieved by quiet and constructive work behind the scenes."

Now look who is making the loud noises!

Mr Johnson: Because there is a shortage.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Johnson clearly was not listening when I talked about a 50 per cent increase in police numbers in the electorate of the Leader of the Opposition. Mr Borbidge never made a sound about the lack of adequate police numbers on the coast when he was in Government; but almost as soon as he found himself in Opposition he started whingeing about a chronic shortage of Gold Coast police. The empty vessel making the most noise is a tag worn with distinction by that honourable member.

The Goss Government has not only increased police numbers on the Gold Coast by 50 per cent, we have also provided a new Gold Coast district headquarters, which is located at Surfers Paradise, upgraded communications equipment at Broadbeach and introduced Police Beat shopfronts in the Cavill Mall and Australia Fair in Southport.

At this juncture it is worth informing the House about another duplicitous statement made by another party leader in this House, namely, the Liberal Party Leader, Mrs Sheldon. Over the past couple of months, there has been a virtual parade—dare I say "circus troupe"—of Liberal Party spokespersons whingeing their way through my electorate of Sunnybank making the dogs bark and scaring the children. Their favourite topic seems to be to knock the announcement of a police shopfront soon to be opened at Sunnybank Plaza. I would have thought that any initiative to increase the police presence in Sunnybank would have been welcomed by the Liberals; but no. In their desperate and tawdry attempts to win votes, they have whinged and whined about this worthwhile initiative. Clearly, the Liberals do not support police shopfronts, or do they?

In the absence of any announced policies by the coalition, we can only go by what the respective party leaders say on any particular issue. What has Mrs Sheldon, the Liberal Party Leader, had to say about police shopfronts? Recently, on a visit to the south coast, that media junkie from Caloundra could not help herself and let the cat out of the bag. On the John Miller radio program on 2 March this year, the Liberal Leader was asked what additional police resources were needed, in her opinion. What was her reply? "They needed a shopfront presence." There it is; the Liberal Leader's endorsement of the Goss Government's Police Beat shopfront program. The only question that remains is why the Liberals think that a police shopfront is such a good idea on the south coast but not in Sunnybank. Perhaps it is just another example of the dishonest electioneering tactics that we have come to expect from the Liberal Party. I hope that if the Liberal Party Leader wants her party to be seen as a credible alternative to the Goss Government, she will immediately contact the Liberals' candidate in Sunnybank.

Time expired.

New Tax Burden on Home Buyers and Builders

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (11.20 a.m.): For some time the Opposition has warned the Labor Government that it is losing sight of the economic fundamentals in Queensland. Labor policies are focused not on the needs of business and industry or the needs of the community in general. The Labor Party in Queensland is not about catering for the needs of this State. It is about using Queensland resources to cement itself in power. It is about using the wealth of this State to cultivate its own political patronage. It is a Labor Government of the old school—a tax-and-spend Government that uses backdoor methods to burden the community. It redistributes those funds according to a political agenda designed to curry favour for the Labor Party and to serve its interests above all others.

Those are not the priorities that built this State. Our State Government should appreciate more than most the importance of small business and a strong and vibrant housing sector here in the Sunshine State. Across Queensland, the housing sector, along with private sector spending, contributes the lion's share of growth to our gross State product. Their only rival is in-house bureaucratic activity, of which too much is directed at traditional red tape and political activity and too little which contributes to the public good.

Years ago, Australia was said to ride on the sheep's back. Today, Queensland rides on the back of the building industry. Yet in the late 1990s, the Goss Government treats builders, subbies and home buyers like sheep. Sure, Mr Speaker, if you were a subbie, you would not have four legs but, according to your Treasurer, you could live on nothing and every year Treasurer De Lacy and his boss cocky in Canberra would fleece you for every cent they could get their hands on.

The building game in Queensland came of age many years ago. Of all Australian States, our building industry is unique in that for more than a decade it has been driven by strong interstate migration. In its privileged position, with the good fortune of having a thousand new clients coming across the border every week, the Queensland housing industry, which flourished under previous conservative Governments, should be steaming ahead. Yet, under Labor, it is treated as merely another source of State Government revenue, and it is suffering.

The latest Goss Government impost is the introduction of grossly inflated charges on every new housing estate—charges that are to be passed on to home buyers through a savage increase in the price of each lot. The first of these charges is now on trial around Cairns. It is the so-called transport infrastructure levy. It will be followed by new levies on house blocks for schools, police stations and dozens of other services that are the responsibility of the State.

The transport infrastructure levy is adding up to $12,000 to the cost of housing allotments in Cairns. It is to be spread Statewide and the consequences will be higher home prices, especially for first home buyers, more building industry bankruptcies, and unemployment.

Those consequences should be of vital concern to the Treasurer and his mates, but they are not. In this case, Mr De Lacy is revelling in the misery of home builders and buyers because he will have succeeded in yet another move to keep tax increases hidden from the public. The levies are a huge slap in the face for home buyers and the building industry. Already both are reeling from the impact of higher interest rates. If I turn to Saturday's *Cairns Post*, I find a warning to far-northern builders from the Housing Industry Association. Its Cairns manager, Geoff Smith, stated in an article in the *Cairns Post* that they could "severely mark down their sales expectations and job hiring plans." In the article, Mr Smith further states—

> "Cairns has been leading the percentage increases in building approvals in the State quarter by quarter, but we've finally hit a wall."

What a coincidence that the wall should appear in the wake of interest rate rises introduced by Labor Prime Minister Keating and new development levies imposed by Treasurer De Lacy, the member for Cairns.

Do not take my word for it, Mr Speaker. There are plenty of others around Cairns who have seen the impact of this new levy and are concerned about the consequences. The new Mayor of Cairns, Tom Pyne, also had his say in the *Cairns Post* on Tuesday. The article stated—

> "I am quite concerned that this does have a big impact on the price of housing and blocks of land in this area. I will be very concerned about the level of costs imposed on development because in lots of cases, first home buyers bear these costs."

He supported exactly what I said, and he supported it publicly in the press.

This is a selfish, short-sighted grab for cash by Treasurer De Lacy. It strikes at the very heart of the Queensland economy. Our housing sector is in a slump, but the Treasurer wants it on its knees. The article in the *Cairns Post* stated—

> "Only one in four builders reported current sales at higher levels than six months earlier, while sales had fallen for 42% of tradesmen."

The article continued—

> "Sales were expected to fall across all sectors of new home building with 35% of multi-unit builders and 30% of builders in the first home market looking at reduced sales.
>
> By contrast, Queensland builders had a gloomy view of their sales prospects with nearly half anticipating fewer sales in the next six months. On the jobs front, about four in 10 builders in Queensland and WA intended to lay off people in the next six months."

Mr De Lacy stood in this House today crowing about his great supposed record of finding jobs. Yet he is going to lose a massive number of jobs by not supporting the builders and subbies and first home buyers in this State, and he does not care.

Against this dismal background, Mr De Lacy has launched a scheme to take thousands of dollars from the pockets of every young family trying to establish a home in new estates from Gordonvale to the Marlin Coast and all over Queensland when this project is put in place. Soon, under the guise of infrastructure payments, he will have his hand in the pockets of almost every new home buyer in the State. He has authorised those recessive charges on the grounds that they will pay for massive new roadworks, as grandiose in size and scale as they are ugly and of questionable worth.

Up on the Marlin Coast at Poolwood Road, the so-called transport infrastructure cost is adding up to $8,000 to the cost of allotments a stone's throw from where earlier developments paid a maximum of $350 a lot in headworks. We have not heard one word from the member for Barron River, Lesley Clark, against this move by the Treasurer to tax the ordinary Queenslander and people in her electorate to the level of $8,000 to $12,000 a block. She obviously does not care and certainly does not care about first home builders.

I have been given copies of the State Government's plans for LA-style flyovers and roundabouts, not paid for by vehicle registration or other associated charges, but built into the cost of every new housing block in the far-north region. Across Cairns and the surrounding areas the figures vary, but, with prices already through the roof, the impact is devastating. Buyers will pay an extra $1,500 a lot in the Redhill to Edmonton corridor, $5,000 a lot around Gordonvale, $12,000 a lot in the Goldsborough Valley area, $4,500 a lot in Redlynch Valley and between $6,000 and $8,000 on the Marlin Coast. New child-care centres around Cairns have been required to contribute $40,000, while other commercial and light industrial developments have had to pay in excess of $100,000. So this new tax extends beyond housing to strike at small business and business investment in general and, of course, hits at jobs.

That such a policy would be considered in Queensland shows how far Labor has strayed from the path of economic responsibility. Treasurer De Lacy will have the joy of filling the State Government money bin with the proceeds, but the only person cheering him on will be his mentor as Treasurer, Prime Minister Keating. The prospect of a slump in the housing industry has brought a smile to the face of the Prime Minister. In the *Cairns Post* on Friday, he was crowing about how a "declining trend" in the housing sector was proof that the national economy was slowing. He must be over the moon with the performance of Treasurer De Lacy. He must be ringing the Goss Government to congratulate them. Here they are in the State most dependent on housing and they give their loyalty not to young Queensland first home buyers but to the Prime Minister. They are working to help Mr Keating's desperate attempts to fix the national economy by sacrificing the Queensland economy.

The best one can say for Mr De Lacy is that he does have a guilty conscience. He will not own up to his actions by applying the levy directly. In Cairns and elsewhere throughout this State, the levies will be applied by local authorities whose hands will be tied. They will be obliged to pass on the Government's backdoor taxes or pay the difference out of their own pockets. In very little time, this disgusting scheme will cripple the State's vibrant housing sector at a time when it is most vulnerable. To the tens of thousands of builders, subbies and suppliers across Queensland this scheme is poison, introduced by a Government that cares nought for the consequences, apart from the short-term

impact on its own coffers. It is a great worry to see Labor turn against the industry that contributes to so many jobs and opportunities in Queensland.

On many occasions Treasurer De Lacy has begrudgingly acknowledged that, compared to other State economies, Queensland's is especially reliant on the housing sector. He has said that our reliance on housing will decrease, but until now Queenslanders have expected the change to occur through added growth elsewhere, not through Government-induced cuts to housing. In the December quarter, housing starts in Queensland dropped 7.8 per cent, compared with drops of 5.8 per cent in South Australia and 4 per cent in Western Australia. The number of housing starts increased by 1.8 per cent in Victoria and 4 per cent in Tasmania.

More than one in four young people in Queensland are out of work, yet the State Government is resigned to massive cutbacks, as well as bankruptcies and lay-offs in the housing sector. This new State-imposed burden will simply accelerate the trend.

For the past three years, Queensland has reaped a huge windfall in stamp duty and other collections because of the housing boom. It did so because it physically increased the burden of stamp duty to maximise its return. If we compare these last three years with the previous three, we find stamp duty revenue rose from $2.13 billion between 1989 and 1992 to $2.64 billion between 1992 and 1995. That is an increase of $506.2m or 23.7 per cent. The Government should be thinking about reinvesting that money for the good of the economy and for the good of Queenslanders. The cash should be put to work to build stability in the industry and for the thousands of Queenslanders still looking for a job.

Time expired.

Health

Mr DOLLIN (Maryborough) (11.30 a.m.): When discussing health matters, one often hears Opposition members, and in particular the member for Toowoomba North and shadow Minister for Health, Mike Horan—a nice enough chap but terribly misguided and misled——

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DOLLIN: The member for Toowoomba South. He has been terribly misguided and misled by the AMA. It is a great pity that Mr Horan is not present in the House. The member makes statements such as, "The once great Queensland health system." What a furphy!

All honourable members will be familiar with the shocking revelations that came out of the Townsville Ward 10B inquiry. The shocking treatment that was handed out to patients at the Maryborough Base Hospital, in particular the residents of the Wahroonga Nursing Home, was equally bad. One would expect to read about such happenings in one of Hitler's concentration camps. Upon my election to Parliament in 1989, I was inundated by people informing me of the terrible goings-on at the nursing home. I found many of the accusations hard to believe but they were so persistent that I asked the then Health Minister, the Honourable Ken McElligott, for an investigation. The then Minister ordered a report into the operations of the Wahroonga Nursing Home, which was subsequently tabled in this House on 10 November 1992.

I now ask honourable members to prepare themselves to be shocked when they hear these allegations. Some were proven to be correct; others were not. The complaints covered a wide spectrum of treatment ranging from cold showers and delays in the provision of medical aid to callous, vicious treatment of inmates. I will outline the details of the complaints in the form in which they were handed to me. Firstly, sick patients at Wahroonga Nursing Home have to wait up to two days before a doctor can see them. Sisters tell patients that there is only one doctor to go around and, "You can die for all I care." A gentleman whose mother is 91 and currently resides in the home feared that if he identified himself, his mother would be victimised further. He did not visit her for 10 days and when he did visit her, he found that her eyeglasses were so dirty that she could not see out of them. The nurses did not clean her teeth or brush her hair.

Secondly, relatives complain of old, lazy staff. Patients are propped up in bed and in chairs. Numerous people have complained about seeing patients falling out of chairs and not being picked up for some hours, despite witnesses approaching the staff and requesting assistance. One lady informed us that when she approached the staff, who were busy playing cards, she was told to "piss off". Almost all complaints involve bumps, bruises and cuts on patients as a result of rough handling.

Thirdly, staff who were employed at the nursing home have claimed that they have left because they could not instigate any changes

to the place. They claim that patients were stripped in their rooms and, totally naked, were wheeled in their chairs down corridors to showers. They were then showered and, still naked, brought back to their rooms and dressed again.

Fourthly, relatives claim that they visit their families at meal times so that they can prop them up to eat. Otherwise, the patients are left flat on their backs and there is no physical way they can eat. They are then viciously growled at by staff when they do not eat their meals. Fifthly, no-one cut up any meals for the patients. If they were incapable of cutting up their own food, most of them did not eat.

In the sixth instance, almost all callers, including staff, told of people being given cold showers if they wet the bed. It was claimed widely that buzzers were put out of the reach of patients. Hence they soiled themselves. When staff discovered what had happened—often hours later—patients were yelled at and given cold showers. Others claimed that patients who had false teeth had them removed as punishment if they were naughty. That made eating difficult for them. People witnessed patients ringing buzzers for literally hours before they received attention.

In the seventh instance, one person who went to visit her mother found her missing from her bed. Upon reporting this to the staff they said, "She'll come back, the silly old bitch." The daughter then spent one and a half hours looking for her mother and was on the verge of reporting her missing to police when she found her on the road at the bottom of the grounds. She was very distressed.

In the eighth instance, many callers have been concerned about the financial affairs of the patients. They claim that, in some cases, the hospital takes all of the patient's pension. Recently, the increase in pensions was taken up in full by the hospital. Others say that they received a few dollars a week from their pension.

A previous staff member, who is sending written evidence, claims an account called an accrued patients amenities fund, which was supposed to be used expressly for the benefit of the patients, was a slush fund for the hospital and/or the board. The staff member claimed that, although the home did buy a bus for the patients, when that staff member left, there was in excess of $200,000 in the fund.

In the tenth instance, patients within days of death are being forced to feed, shower and care for themselves.

I wish to inform honourable members that the great majority of the nursing staff of the home were caring and professional, but the management was slack, non-caring and perhaps even lazy. The board was stacked with National Party members, as was the management. I was told by several relatives of patients that when they complained to the National Party member for Maryborough at that time about their concerns, he would reply, "If you believe the care is not up to standard, take them home." That had the effect of shutting them up.

Mr Ardill: It's not the only place where this is happening.

Mr DOLLIN: It is not the only place. I could go on about that nursing home, but I turn now to the Lady Musgrave Maternity Hospital. This is the great hospital system that Opposition members skite about! I refer to an article about gynaecologist Dr Stokes that appeared in the *Maryborough-Hervey Bay Chronicle* just prior to the election in 1989. It states—

> "Conditions at Maryborough's Lady Musgrave Maternity Hospital are so grave and facilities so inadequate that patients' lives are at risk, according to a city obstetrician and gynaecologist.
>
> The doctor's concern was serious enough for him to withdraw his services until the situation improved and emergency operating facilities were made available.
>
> In the doctor's opinion, all that was required to open a temporary emergency facility was the provision of surgery gowns, surgical instruments and the corridor around the emergency theatre clear of clutter.
>
> . . .
>
> For the past fourteen months, if a patient needed an emergency caesarean section at Lady Musgrave, an ambulance is called, the ambulance then has to drive to Lady Musgrave, the patient has to be transferred from the bed to a trolley, loaded into the ambulance, driven to the main hospital, transferred to another bed, carried up a flight of stairs, into the elevator and up to the main operating theatre.
>
> The doctor was angry that he had been forced into taking the action he had.
>
> . . .
>
> My major concern is that both the foetus' and the mothers' lives are put at

> unacceptable risk. Complications such as a prolapsed umbilical cord, a severe abruption, placenta parevia or foetal distress may arise suddenly and under such circumstances, maternal transfer is unacceptably hazardous.
>
> The doctor said that before he came to Maryborough about two years ago Lady Musgrave had been managing for years with an operating theatre at the end of a corridor. He said there were several problems: A hole in the roof through which insects flew during a caesarean section operation, congested working area which restricted anaesthetic supervision and paediatric resuscitation, complete absence of a clean area around the operating room and inadequately organised storage for drugs and instruments."

In contrast, in the time remaining to me, I would like to outline briefly what this Government has done in Maryborough since it came to office. Opposition members may be able to make a comparison between the sloppy system that existed under their Government and what we have now. State Cabinet has approved a regional health capital works package of about $60m for Wide Bay, including the redevelopment of the Maryborough Hospital area; a new 130-bed Hervey Bay Hospital at an estimated cost of $30m; the redevelopment of Bundaberg Hospital, at an estimated cost of $18m; the redevelopment of Maryborough Hospital, at an estimated cost of $6m; and the establishment of the Wide Bay hospitals group laundry at Maryborough at an estimated cost of $4m. The services offered at the new Hervey Bay Hospital will address the projected needs of the expanding Hervey Bay community and complement the services provided at the redeveloped Maryborough Hospital.

The anticipated commissioning date for Hervey Bay's new hospital is mid 1997. The redevelopment planned for Maryborough will enable the hospital to provide a broader range of specialist services at higher levels and will include the development of a regional acute rehabilitation service. The details of exactly which services are involved will be finalised in conjunction with the final planning of the new Hervey Bay Hospital.

I think the report into the Wahroonga Nursing Home would be the most damning thing honourable members would ever read. I could go on like *Blue Hills*; the report is 58 pages long and contains cases of neglect similar to the ones to which I have referred. The Nationals should be like Tom Dooley; they should hang their heads and cry in shame.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order! Before I call the honourable member for Western Downs, I point out to the honourable member for Maryborough and other members in this House that the honourable member used two terms that the Chair considers to be unparliamentary. I ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mr DOLLIN: I quoted exactly from the report.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! It does not matter whether the honourable member quoted from a report.

Mr DOLLIN: How am I to quote from the report?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have asked the honourable member to withdraw.

Mr DOLLIN: I withdraw.

Intervention in Fire Services by Minister for Emergency Services

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Western Downs) (11.41 a.m.): Today, I want to talk about an overzealous Minister and allegations of a huge bungle by the Queensland Fire Service. Bureaucratic bungles are becoming so common in the Goss Government that they are now a feature of that administration. These two issues fall into that category.

The first issue that I raise today involves the Deputy Premier and his role as Minister for Emergency Services. Mr Burns overstepped his role and ignored his own Act. He showed scant knowledge of correct departmental procedures and trod all over the authority of an officer of the QFS. Let me elaborate.

On 9 February 1995, Mr P. Stafford of Wynnum West wrote to his local member, the Honourable Tom Burns, whom he knew to be the Minister for Emergency Services. Mr Stafford complained about smoke coming from timber being burnt on a nearby property. It appears that bulldozed timber had been placed in a pit and then burnt. Mr Stafford complained that the correct procedures for such a burn had not been followed.

As any good local member would, Mr Burns wanted to help, and he promised to intervene. Firstly, he found that the application form for a permit to burn under the Fire Service Act 1990—his Act—needed to be redesigned completely. That is fair enough. As the Minister, he has the right to order the

design of new forms. He can change the regulations and amend the Act; he is the Minister.

Mr Beattie: There is nothing wrong with that.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: No, wait. Mr Burns wrote to Mr Stafford on 17 February 1995 and advised him of his intentions. He went on to say that he told the fire officers at Wynnum that they were not to issue another permit without first talking to him. This is where Mr Burns acted in an overzealous manner. In particular, the words "without first talking to me" are the words that led Mr Burns to create a minefield.

Are honourable members to take it from that that any fire warden anywhere in Queensland when issuing a permit to burn must first seek the Minister's permission? Will a fire warden at Boulia, Muckadilla or Woop Woop ring Tom every time he wants to issue a permit? That is what Tom was indicating. The Act and regulation do not specify that procedure.

Government members interjected.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: It is hurting. All of this information came from the office of a good Labor Party member.

The Act allows the Fire Commissioner to overrule a warden, but certainly not the Minister. I think Tom—the local member—was throwing his weight around! In fact, I have proof of it. On the same day, 17 February 1995, Mr Burns rang the fire station at Wynnum West and gave an officer a real serve. I have in my possession a QFS memorandum from Senior Station Officer Noel Smith dated 17 February 1995, which states—

> "Subject: Phone call to Wynnum Fire Station by the Minister.
>
> Sir, I wish to advise I received a phone call at Wynnum Fire Station at about 0815 hours this morning. On answering the phone I was speaking to the Minister Mr Tom Burns.
>
> He told me that several complaints had been received in relation to a permit issued for a pit burn at 120 Crawford Road Wynnum West.
>
> I advised him that the conditions of the permit were satisfactory and he told me the permit should be revoked."

The Minister does not have any right to say that such a permit should be revoked. The letter continues—

> "I told him that the burn was completed last week. Mr Burns stated that any one wanting a burn off permit must be approved by him."

The letter continued. In that statement, it should be noted that officer Noel Smith insisted that the conditions of the permit were met satisfactorily. In spite of this, Mr Burns insisted that the permit should be revoked. "Too late", Mr Smith lamented, "It was completed last week." The overzealous Minister came in over the top, yet it was too late to help.

I make this point: Mr Burns acted quite improperly in interfering in this issue in the way he did. He showed scant regard for the proper procedures, and was just plain bullying an officer of the QFS. The firefighters of the QFS were not impressed. I now quote an open letter that officers wrote to the Minister, which stated—

> "Tom you are a likeable old bloke but your handling of the 'Burn Off' issue has left your credibility in tatters. At the very least you owe your loyal Fire Officers an apology. If you have again been mislead by your 'little mate', then be man enough to see the fault and clean out the 'rats nest' at Forbes House."

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: It is not bad stuff at all.

The second issue that I raise is better. It involves the Commissioner, Mr Geoff Skerritt. Some weeks ago, an article appeared in the *Courier-Mail* headed "State's new fire trucks fail to measure up". In that article the QFS Commissioner, Geoff Skerritt, admitted that there had been "crossed wires" on specifications for tankers ordered by the QFS from Victoria. The article went on to admit that a pool of Victorian-built tankers worth almost $1m had been grounded in Brisbane when the Department of Transport refused to give them clearance for road use. In this article, Mr Skerritt claimed that only five of an order of 17 trucks did not comply and needed modification.

He is reported as saying also that it would cost only $5,000 per vehicle to modify them. On first impressions, one would admire the honesty of the commissioner. However, I must admit that at the time I wondered whether he was taking the rap for his Minister. After all, the buck stops at the top. But then again, if it is bad news, if it would reflect badly on Mr Burns, why not have someone else cop the blame?

Maybe that was the reason that the commissioner made this small admission.

Since that article appeared, serious allegations have been made by the editors of the publication *CODE=INE*. That publication stated—

> "The Queensland purchase of the standard Victorian, Country Fire Authority pumper/tanker was complicated by the officer responsible, Assistant Commissioner Stan Harrison, insisting on a severe alteration to the standard CFA design. The standard CFA model, which has been proven in service over some ten years in that State, is based on an Isuzu truck body and chassis which is then assembled as a standard rural/urban fire engine. In extending the contract, Skerritt and Harrison had made a mysterious 'arrangement' with Mitsubishi to supply the chassis for the appliances. Thus it evolved that against wise counsel to the contrary from the CFA designers, the Queensland version was at Harrison and Skerritt's direction, to consist of a Mitsubishi chassis to which was added AN ISUZU BODY! The consequence of the unlikely mating, was that the all up appliance was too heavy because the body and the chassis loadings were NOT THE SAME! So much for the attempt to blame the CFA with the 'crossed wires' and 'paper work bungle' story!"

That was the story reported in the *Courier-Mail*. The article continued—

> "Apparently, the most economical solution which could be found in order to rectify the 'Mitsu/Suzu' fiasco was the purchase of new Mitsubishi bodies to fit the Harrison ordered Mitsubishi chassis. Accordingly, new Isuzu chassis would be bought to mate the original order of Isuzu bodies. Each of the replacement bodies will cost $40,000 and the replacement chassis $30,000."

That is a long way from the $5,000 admitted to in the *Courier-Mail*. That is a very convenient admission to take the heat off. These are very serious allegations from people in the know in the Fire Service.

Mr Beattie: It's very serious.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: My word it is. These are serious allegations. They are so serious that it is imperative that the Honourable Tom Burns respond and table the documents relating to the purchase of these vehicles, the replacement bodies, the real cost of this bungle and the waste of public money. It is imperative that he reveal whether disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: It's so serious that you don't have the facts.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I heard an honourable member say that I do not have the facts. Interestingly, the publication *CODE=INE*, which I seek to table, is closely associated with the United Firefighters Union, which has been associated closely with the Government on many occasions. The word is that the publication is printed in the office of a local Labor member. I seek leave to table those documents. However, before I do, I will refer to them further. The documents refer to certain vehicles that could not be put on the road because they did not comply with weight limits. This was around the time of the bad fires on the north coast, on Stradbroke Island and in the southern parts of Queensland. Despite the fact that they did not have approval from the Minister for Transport, those vehicles were deployed to fight those fires because things were so desperate. Those vehicles were found to be dangerous. In a couple of cases, the people driving them experienced real problems and as a result they were recalled. However, in the article which appeared in the *Courier-Mail*, the commissioner claimed that the muck-up over the "crossed wires", the delay in having the vehicles put on the road and their having to be modified did not really interfere with the firefighting capabilities of the Queensland Fire Service. What a lot of rot!

I reiterate that the Honourable Tom Burns, the Minister for Emergency Services, has to meet his responsibilities. He has an obligation to inform Parliament of exactly what occurred over the purchase and modification of these vehicles, who was responsible and what has been done about it.

Mater Hospital

Hon J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—Minister for Health) (11.50 a.m.): I feel that it is important to respond on the record to the scaremongering drivel that we heard earlier from the Leader of the Opposition about the Mater Hospital. The tactics adopted by the Leader of the Opposition were typical of those that have been adopted by the Opposition on health issues for some time, that is, the politics of fear. On health issues, members opposite have been employing scaremongering tactics for some time now. We have seen those tactics adopted regularly by the member for Toowoomba South and again today by the

Leader of the Opposition with his prepared text.

The simple fact is that the Mater Hospital has increased its services in a whole range of areas, including day-surgery services. The Mater offers a first-class service in many fields. At times, the hospital has difficulty managing the demand for its services. I will not stand back and whinge. From the first day that I took over the Health portfolio, I stated that I am prepared to get in and solve problems. At the end of the day, I have been successful in doing so, and that is what irks members opposite. I successfully resolved a problem that the Mater Hospital was experiencing with the demand for its services.

Today, we saw only the third policy statement to be enunciated so far by the Opposition. From the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition, it is obvious that the Opposition intends to take over the Mater because it is not happy with its management. I do not manage the Mater Hospital, and neither does Queensland Health. The Mater Hospital manages its own affairs. This year, the Government has provided the hospital with funding to the tune of $120m. This morning the Leader of the Opposition stated that, because I sat down with management and resolved certain difficulties and those extra funds were provided, the Mater cannot manage its budget.

The outrageous claim that the Mater Children's Hospital will be closed this year over Easter for the first time in history is factually wrong. If members opposite would wake up, they would realise that over holiday periods, because of a lower demand for its services, the Mater Children's Hospital has from time to time scaled down its operations. This year is no exception. Quite simply, all that will occur is that elective surgery will be wound back over Easter. That is a practice that occurs in hospitals right across the State——

Mr T. B. Sullivan: That happens all around the place.

Mr ELDER: As the member says, that occurs all around Australia, whether it be Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide. That is common practice over Easter and other holiday periods.

Three weeks ago, the scaremongerer opposite, the member for Toowoomba South, claimed that the Mater Mothers would close. He stated, "If you are 30 weeks pregnant, start looking for another hospital, because they are cutting services back at the Mater. You won't get a spot. Look for another bed." Wrong! Today, the Opposition Leader was reinforcing that point. That claim was wrong, it was scurrilous and it was yet another example of the politics of fear.

When he found out that he was wrong on that issue, what did the member for Toowoomba South do? What did that scaremongerer do? What did that person who has no pride in the Queensland public hospital system do? He came out with another outrageous claim. He stated that all services offered to adults would close, including the accident and emergency section—an integral part of the hospital's operations. The member claimed that the outpatients section would close for a month and that ambulatory services would be redirected for a month. Wrong again! But did we hear an apology from the member for Toowoomba South for undermining the system? No, we did not!

Mr Purcell: He is a liar.

Mr ELDER: I take that interjection.

We have managed to resolve a problem by working with the professional management team at the Mater. As I stated earlier, from time to time the hospital does experience some demand-management problems—as does every hospital. There are 150 public hospitals in this State, a $25 billion budget for health and from time to time we will encounter problems. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Toowoomba South, when problems occur I will not stand back and whinge and whine and knock. That is all that the Opposition has going for it. It has no policy except the policy of fear.

I challenge the Opposition to outline its total health policy. So far, it has claimed only that it might replicate this Government's capital works program. Recently, the member for Toowoomba South claimed that the Opposition would do away with regionalisation and once again centralise the decision-making processes, as occurred under the National Party years ago. Were such a policy adopted, the rural and regional electorates of members opposite would be disadvantaged. The only other policy that the Opposition has been prepared to outline is that it will place the Mater Hospital under the wing of Queensland Health. The Opposition had better get on the front foot and state whether it denies that that is its intention.

The member for Toowoomba South constantly undermines the public health system in this State. Recently in the *Toowoomba Chronicle*, the member made some outrageous claims about the

Toowoomba Base Hospital. I have checked the claims that he made in that newspaper concerning a shortage of anaesthetists at the Toowoomba Base Hospital. I have discovered that the member was wrong again. In fact, an adequate number of anaesthetists was available at that hospital.

Without checking the facts, the member for Toowoomba South attacked the professional integrity of those who work in the public health system in Toowoomba. He attacked the people who underpin the system: our doctors and our nurses, the people who have pride in the public hospital system—pride that the member for Toowoomba South and the Leader of the Opposition lack. The member for Toowoomba South attacked those professionals with deliberate, misleading and untrue remarks. At the end of the day, I did not have to correct the untrue statements made by the member. Dr Ken McLeod, the director of the department of anaesthesia and intensive care at Toowoomba hospital, did the job for me. Does the member for Toowoomba South disagree with the remarks that he made? Was he wrong? Even if he will not admit it, I can assure the House that the member was dead wrong.

Dr McLeod chastised the member for Toowoomba South in the *Toowoomba Chronicle*, and deservedly so, because the member ran those professionals down. I will inform the House what Ken McLeod said about Mike Horan. He stated firstly that the member's remarks were irresponsible—as all his remarks have been to date—and secondly that they cast aspersions on the professional integrity of all members of his department. In other words, the member for Toowoomba South is off side up there in a big way.

Whom is the member for Toowoomba South going to knock this week? What "constructive" policy will he come forward with this week? As usual, we will probably just see more evidence of the politics of fear.

Mr Horan: Get back to the Mater.

Mr ELDER: I have been through the Mater. The Opposition should have directed any question on that subject to me, but it did not have the courage to do so. The Leader of the Opposition went straight to the Premier. If the Opposition had any courage, it would have asked me the question.

The member for Toowoomba South is the scaremongerer who worried those pregnant women and the other people who use the services of the Mater. As I have travelled around Queensland, I have discovered that the member for Toowoomba South is on the nose with our doctors, with our nurses and with the professionals in our system. He is on the nose in a big way because he is prepared to say anything to undermine the system. The member has no pride at all in the public hospital system. As I travelled around for those three weeks, that is what I learned. I have not been sitting at the headquarters of Queensland Health; I have been out there in the Opposition's territory, listening to doctors and nurses about the approach that the member for Toowoomba South and the Leader of the Opposition take to health. I can inform the House that the member for Toowoomba South is on the nose in a big way.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition say this morning that it was the Opposition's fault. He was so right! It is the Opposition's fault, and it has been its fault for 32 years. In the past five years, this Government has increased health funding well beyond the national average. This Government has been driving the capital works program. I will cite a classic example in terms of capital works. In its last five years, the previous Government spent $250m on capital works. That was during the eighties, and we all remember the booming eighties. In the five years since Labor has been in Government—during the recession, during a downturn in the economy—we have spent $350m, and in terms of the $1.5 billion, 10-year capital works program, we will be spending $150m for each year beyond that. That is the commitment that we made during an economic downturn.

During the eighties, the mob opposite spent 30 per cent less on capital works than this Government has spent so far. One sees the evidence of that underfunding when one travels around the State and visits hospitals. In some hospitals, I saw ventilators that had been sitting there for 20 years. Why were they sitting there for 20 years? I saw monitors that had been sitting there for 20 years and X-ray equipment that had been sitting there for 20 years. This Government had to take up the cudgels to ensure that that situation was rectified. We have led the charge in terms of re-equipping and rebuilding the hospital system. The Opposition let down the system. The Opposition let down the staff. It underpaid nurses. It did not provide enough doctors in regional areas. It left the hospitals bereft of equipment that was needed desperately. Yet members opposite have the nerve to knock the system!

The Opposition Health spokesman is a big joke, and he will remain so until the Opposition presents some policies and actually explains to the people of Queensland what it has to offer instead of knocking and whingeing. If members opposite direct questions on health issues to me, I will tell them what I have seen around the State in the public hospital system. If members opposite ask me questions, I will tell them just how much the Opposition spokesman is on the nose throughout Queensland. The Opposition should have the courage to ask me questions on health matters instead of the Premier. Members opposite do not have any bottle; they do not have any guts. They should ask me the questions and I will answer them.

Time expired.

REFORM OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Sessional Order

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (12 noon): I move—

"That the following sessional orders be agreed to by the House—

Omit Standing Orders 67A to 70 and insert new Standing Orders.

67A Questions to Ministers

Questions may be asked orally without notice or on notice for written reply.

Immediately prior to the time appointed for the House to proceed to the Orders of the Day, Questions may be put to a Minister without notice relating to public affairs with which he or she is officially connected, to proceedings pending in the Legislative Assembly, but discussion must not be anticipated, or to any matter of administration for which he or she is responsible.

The total period allowed each day for the asking of Questions without Notice shall not exceed one hour. Every Member is entitled to ask one Question on notice each sitting day, which should be lodged with the Clerks at the Table within two hours from the commencement of the day's sitting.

67B Questions to Members

A Member may put a Question of which Notice has been given, in lieu of a Question to a Minister—

(a) to any other Member of the House relating to any Bill or Motion, connected with the Business of the House on the Business Paper of which the Member has charge; and

(b) to the chairman of a committee relating to the activities of that committee, however such question shall not attempt to interfere with the committee's work or anticipate its report or refer to any evidence taken or documents presented to such committee.

67C No Debate on Asking Questions

In asking a Question, no argument or opinion shall be offered, or any fact stated, except so far as is necessary to explain the Question.

67D Number of Questions Allowed each Sitting Day

The number of Questions which may be asked by any Member without Notice, shall not exceed one on any sitting day except for the Leader of the Opposition who may ask two questions without notice.

67E Notice of Questions

A Question on Notice from a Member is to be delivered to the Clerks at the Table.

A Question on Notice shall be typed or fairly written, signed by the Member, and answered and supplied to the Table Office within 30 calendar days with a copy supplied to the Member and Hansard.

68 Rules for Questions

The following general rules shall apply to Questions.

(a) Questions shall be brief and relate to one issue.

(b) Questions shall not contain—

(i) arguments

(ii) inferences

(iii) imputations or

(iv) hypothetical matters

(c) Questions shall not ask—

(i) for an expression of opinion

(ii) for a legal opinion

(d) Questions shall not be asked which reflect on or are critical of the character or conduct of those persons whose conduct may only be challenged on a substantive motion.

(e) Questions shall not contain statements of fact or names of

persons unless they are strictly necessary to render the question intelligible.

(f) The Speaker may direct that the language of a Question be changed, if, in the opinion of the Speaker, it is unbecoming or does not conform with the Standing Orders.

(g) Questions shall not be unduly lengthy.

69 General Rules for Answers

The following general rules shall apply to answers:

(i) In answering a Question a Minister or Member shall not debate the subject to which it refers.

(ii) An Answer shall be relevant to the question.

(iii) If, in the opinion of the Speaker, the Answer is too long, he may direct the Minister or the Member to cease speaking.

70 Questions not put to Speaker

Questions may not be put to the Speaker.

Standing Order 219A is omitted and the following Standing Order is inserted.

219A Form of Petition

A Petition shall be in the following form:-

"PETITION"

TO: The Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland.

The Petition of ...

(a) citizens of Queensland

or

(b) residents of the State of Queensland

or

(c) electors of the Division of ....

(State Grievance)

draws to the attention of the House ...

Your petitioners therefore request the House to

(State action required)

(Here follows the Signatures)

Standing Order 238A is omitted and the following standing orders are inserted.

238A Copy of petition to responsible Minister

A copy of every petition received by the House is to be referred by the Clerk to the appropriate responsible Minister who may forward a response to the Clerk for presentation to the House. A copy of this response shall be printed in Hansard and be supplied to the Member who presented the petition.

238B Name of principal petitioner

Every petition must indicate the name and address of the principal petitioner on the front page.

PROTECTION OF PERSONS REFERRED TO IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

(1) Where a submission is made in writing to the Speaker by a person who has been referred to in the Legislative Assembly by name, or in such a way as to be readily identified:

(a) claiming that the person or corporation has been adversely affected in reputation or in respect of dealings or associations with others, or injured in occupation, trade, office or financial credit, or that the person's privacy has been unreasonably invaded, by reason of that reference to the person or corporation; and

(b) requesting that the person be able to incorporate an appropriate response in Hansard,

and the Speaker is satisfied:

(c) that the subject of the submission is not so obviously trivial or the submission so frivolous, vexatious or offensive in character as to make it inappropriate that it be considered by the Committee of Privileges; and

(d) that it is practicable for the Committee of privileges to consider the submission under this resolution,

the Speaker shall refer the submission to that Committee.

(2) The Committee may decide not to consider a submission referred to it under this resolution if the Committee considers that the subject of the submission is not sufficiently serious or the submission is frivolous, vexatious or offensive in

character, and such a decision shall be reported to the Legislative Assembly.

(3) If the Committee decides to consider a submission under this resolution, the Committee may confer with the person who made the submission and any Member who referred in the Legislative Assembly to that person or corporation.

(4) In considering a submission under this resolution, the Committee shall meet in private session.

(5) The Committee shall not publish a submission referred to it under this resolution or its proceedings in relation to such a submission, but may present minutes of its proceedings and all or part of such submission to the Legislative Assembly.

(6) In considering a submission under this resolution and reporting to the Legislative Assembly the Committee shall not consider or judge the truth of any statements made in the Legislative Assembly or the submission.

(7) In its report to the Legislative Assembly on a submission under this resolution, the Committee may make either of the following recommendations:

(a) that no further action be taken by the Committee or the Legislative Assembly in relation to the submission; or

(b) that a response by the person who made the submission, in terms specified in the report and agreed to by the person or corporation and the Committee, be published by the Legislative Assembly or incorporated in *Hansard*,

and shall not make any other recommendations.

(8) A document presented to the Legislative Assembly under paragraph (5) or (7):

(a) in the case of a response by a person or corporation who made a submission, shall be succinct and strictly relevant to the questions in issue and shall not contain anything offensive in character; and

(b) shall not contain any matter the publication of which would have the effect of:

(i) unreasonably adversely affecting or injuring a person or corporation, or unreasonably invading a person's privacy, in the manner referred to in paragraph (1); or

(ii) unreasonably adding to or aggravating any such adverse effect, injury or invasion of privacy suffered by a person.

(9) A corporation making a submission under this resolution is required to make it under their common seal."

Parliamentary reform in Queensland has always been promised, much discussed, greatly hoped for but seldom delivered. That is why today I am pleased to be associated with the Government's proposed reforms contained in this notice of motion. Under the National/Liberal Party Government, the Queensland Parliament had hardly altered in style, practice and structure from the nineteenth century.

The Fitzgerald inquiry clearly identified that there was a need to strengthen and revitalise this Parliament. As part of this Government's mandate, we have progressively introduced a number of new procedural reforms which are specifically aimed at enhancing the accountability of the Executive to the Parliament and improving the effectiveness of Parliament. Some of the significant reforms we have already introduced include: enhancing the Parliament's scrutiny of public finances and improving the accountability of public administration by the introduction of Estimates committees, giving backbenchers greater opportunities to speak in Parliament through the introduction of Matter of Special Public Importance debates each Wednesday and having a second Adjournment debate to close the sitting each Wednesday, introducing new sessional orders which provide that committees must comply with the rules of natural justice when dealing with witnesses, and changing the time limits for debates.

For many years there has been criticism of the operation of question time. Today, we are seeking to rectify the deficiencies by providing the opportunity for more members to ask questions without notice. In the past, questions without notice have been

dominated by a few members. By providing a system where members can ask one question on notice each day, members will be able to get access to more detailed information and more members will benefit from this new procedure. If all back bench members were to use this system of questions on notice, it would provide information and accountability on a scale never before seen in the Parliament.

I refer back to the system as it operated when I first came into this Parliament. Mr Speaker, as you would well remember, when Parliament first sat in February 1978, for the first time a roster system of members asking questions was introduced. That was the first time that it had ever been introduced. The reason that it was introduced by the political parties at that time was to enable all members of the Parliament to get the opportunity to ask questions because, under the system by which the Speaker simply called whomever he saw, if a member did not get on with the Speaker, he would never get the call and therefore never get to ask a question.

At that time, the system was based mainly on questions on notice. We had a system that, each day, members would get up and place a question on notice. Because of the way the Standing Orders read at that time, members had to actually read the question out. That was the only way to put a question on notice. Many times, the full hour would consist of maybe two or three questions without notice with the remainder of the hour being taken up by members putting questions on notice. They would stand up and read out the question; they would not receive an answer because the question was on notice. Members would have to wait until the next day to receive an answer. Sometimes up to 60 questions had been placed on the Notice Paper.

Under the Standing Orders, the only way that those questions could be answered was for the Ministers to stand up and read the answer. We all saw instances of that. I can remember one member, Claude Wharton, who had two questions to answer in one day and he gave one answer to a member which should have been an answer to a question half an hour later.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: I am not having a go at him. Because of the way the system worked, nobody knew the difference, anyway. It was just the way that the system worked. Members would ask questions on Tuesday and they would not receive an answer until Thursday because Wednesday and Thursday would be taken up giving answers to the questions that were placed on notice on Tuesday. That is how the system worked.

We then had a reform which enabled members to simply place questions on notice by naming the Minister to whom the question was directed. So the member would stand up and direct a question on notice to the Minister for whatever portfolio and the Minister had the right, the next day, to stand up and simply have it incorporated in *Hansard*. That was a right of which no Ministers ever took advantage. They continued to get up and read out their answers. It is only since we have been in Government that, in the main, we have seen Ministers incorporating answers in *Hansard*.

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: I did say that it was in the main. I am not criticising, I am looking back at the way the system has operated and the way it has changed. I think that the system that we are proposing now, which is one that we proposed when we first won Government in 1989 and which, at that time, the Opposition rejected, is one that I think is certainly worthy of a trial in this Parliament.

Tom Burns is the second longest serving member in the Parliament. I can remember Tom saying to me, "What are you doing that for? I would love that new system that you are proposing if I was in Opposition." I said, "I think that it is a fairer and better system for this Parliament."

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: Well, I had been in Opposition for 12 years and Tom had been there for 17 years. Having been in Opposition for that long, one certainly knows a good thing when it comes along. The system that we are proposing is a good system for the Opposition. In a full parliamentary year, there is the potential for an extra 3,000 questions to be asked in this Parliament. I do not see how any Opposition could knock back that opportunity to ask those extra questions.

Every day we will still get at least the same number of questions, if not more, asked without notice because we will still have the full length of question time. The Leader of the Opposition has said that question time is going to be cut in half. We are not cutting it in half, we are giving twice the number of members the opportunity to ask questions. I do not want to embarrass some members but, because of the way the system works, there

are members in this Parliament elected at the last election who have still not asked a question. It is not their fault, but because of the way the system works today, they have not had the opportunity to get into the pecking order within either the Opposition or the Government. At present, the system works against most members of this Parliament getting information that they want. The system that the Government is proposing will enable them to obtain that information.

In terms of time, the system works the same way it always has. Of all the Parliaments in Australia, the Queensland Parliament is the most generous when it comes to allotting time for question time. In most Parliaments, question time is 45 minutes, not an hour. In one Parliament down south, only 10 questions without notice are allowed on a particular day and then question time is over. On average, over a full year, about 16 questions a day are asked in this Parliament. Opposition members should not say that this Parliament should be like other Parliaments because, under the current system, they already get a fairer deal and, under the Government's proposal, they will get an even better deal. It surprised me that, when I gave notice of moving this motion, the Opposition knocked the reforms that we propose. If Opposition members vote against this motion, they will be voting against themselves getting a better and fairer deal in this Parliament.

I would like to explain briefly the way that the system will work. To ensure the smooth transition to this new system, the following operational guidelines will be adopted for questions on notice. Answers will be provided by Ministers on floppy disk to enable the material to be incorporated in *Hansard* without any rekeying. Departments will provide four hard copies: one for the Table Office, one for *Hansard*, one for the member and one for the media. The hard copies will be distributed to the member's office when the House is sitting. At other times they will be sent to a member's electorate office. Members might note that, in accordance with this motion, questions need to be answered within a month. That is not a parliamentary month; it is a straight calendar month. So, if we had a situation like the one that arose at the end of last year, when Mrs Sheldon put a question on notice, she would not need to wait three months, because she would receive an answer before then.

Questions and answers will be included in the *Weekly Hansard*. Answers that exceed more than a page in length or consist of tabular material will not be incorporated in *Hansard* but will be shown as—

> "A lengthy/tabular answer was provided. Copies are available from the Bills and Papers Office."

So the cost will certainly be kept down.

Mr FitzGerald: Why didn't you put that in the motion?

Mr MACKENROTH: I am just telling the member how the system will work. The full text of the answer will be provided to the member. This is a major reform to question time.

As to other parts of the motion—the popularity of the petitioning process has not waned over the years, and we still continue to receive over 200 petitions each year. Reviewing the language contained in petitions is long overdue. The new features of the petitioning process include identifying the principal petitioner so that people can be aware of the person and organisation sponsoring a petition. The other initiative provides that Ministers can table a response to the petition.

In relation to the right of response procedure—there have been complaints about the use made by members of Parliament of their right to freedom of speech. It is difficult to say why the phenomenon is a recent one, because freedom of speech in debate in Parliament goes back to 1688 and beyond. It may be that society has become more abrasive and that some believe that sensational claims are justified. But whatever the reason, there has been ongoing concern about the rights of those who may be subject to unfair attacks. There are powerful reasons that mitigate in favour of the argument that freedom of speech and debate in Parliament should be absolute. All matters that impinge on the public interest must be capable of being debated in Parliament without fear or favour. Freedom to speak out must not be inhibited by the possibility of legal consequences either by way of civil damages or criminal prosecution. The purpose of the privilege is to ensure that Parliament can carry out its function free from obstruction and impediment. If matters cannot be freely debated, remedial action in respect of them cannot be taken by Parliament.

As matters stand in Queensland, the only restraining influence against abuse of the freedom of speech and debate in Parliament are: the restrictions in Standing Orders governing the rules of debate, including prohibition of the use of offensive or disorderly words; the disciplinary procedures of the House itself, including the possibility of

members who abuse this privilege being censured or suspended; and the political consequences that may flow from flagrant or repeated abuse. These factors have not guaranteed that an individual, rightly or wrongly, will not suffer injury during parliamentary proceedings. We all know that even with the greatest care sometimes this can happen. In these circumstances, the only avenue available for remedying the difficulties that have arisen is for the Parliament itself to implement a procedure to moderate the waging of unwarranted and baseless attacks, but one that ensures that the power remains for parliamentary debate to be robust and wide ranging.

The new procedures would provide that a person or corporation referred to in the Parliament who claims to have been adversely affected by reason of that reference can seek to have a response incorporated in *Hansard*. Initially, the person would forward a submission to Mr Speaker, who would have to be satisfied that the issues raised were not trivial, vexatious, frivolous or offensive. If there is a legitimate concern, the matter would then be referred to the Privileges Committee. The Committee of Privileges would then have the discretion to either confer with the complainant or the member involved, and then the committee would report to the Parliament on whether no further action be taken or whether the person's response in terms agreed by the person and the committee should be published or incorporated in *Hansard*. Full details of this reform and its guidelines are clearly set out in the proposed sessional orders.

These are all significant reforms that deserve the support of the House. They introduce greater fairness and accountability and are a clear sign of this Government's commitment to the ongoing reform of the parliamentary process. These proposals are being introduced on a trial basis for the remainder of this term of Government and, in light of the experience that we have from that, they have the ability to be changed following the next election.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I place on the parliamentary record the work that you have done in ensuring that these reforms have come before the Parliament. Mr Speaker, you have been like the oil on the squeaky wheel, making sure that they did come forward. I know that, over the past couple of years, you have kept it at the forefront of my agenda to ensure that we did reach a position where we were able to introduce these reforms, which are in no small way a credit to what you wish to see in the reform of this House.

I ask all members to seriously give these reforms a chance to work; give them a chance to see how they operate and not condemn them before they have given them that opportunity. They should give them a chance for the remainder of this term, because I am sure that, following that opportunity for a trial, all members will welcome them as a permanent change to the Standing Orders of this Parliament. I commend the orders to the House.

Ms POWER (Mansfield) (12.16 p.m.): I have much pleasure in seconding the proposed sessional orders put before the House today by the Leader of the House. I reinforce the notion that these are sessional orders that are on trial to give members a chance to see how they work. They will then go to the Standing Orders Committee. So before Opposition members start barking about this not going to the Standing Orders Committee, I point out that these are sessional orders; they are on trial, and they should be used for that purpose.

I have been interested to hear some of the arguments about sessional orders. It seems that Opposition members are big on rhetoric but not too good on the reform process which they now suggest that, after a few years in Opposition, they would put into place if they were returned to the Government benches. While the Leader of the House was speaking, I noticed that Opposition members had not done their homework; they did not understand the sessional orders. That is probably indicative of why some Opposition backbenchers are not speaking during this debate. The big winners from most of these changes will be backbenchers—both Government and Opposition. I suggest to some Opposition backbench members that they have been sold out by the Leader of the Opposition and a couple of the big high-fliers on the front benches of the Opposition.

I turn firstly to question time. If members do their mathematics they will know that there are 54 Government members and 35 Opposition members. So every day, the chances of a Government member getting to ask a question are severely limited simply by the number of Government members compared with Opposition members. Basically, most of question time is taken up by questions from Opposition shadow spokespersons. Backbenchers on both sides of the House really play a minor part in question time if they get a chance to ask questions. Sometimes a

member wants to ask a question about a burning issue. If that member does not ask that question during that week, it is irrelevant by the next week, and the opportunity has been lost.

New South Wales and Western Australia have systems that are similar to our proposed system. The average number of questions over a period in New South Wales is 54, and the average in Western Australia is 53. On the other hand, Queensland's paltry effort is 18 questions. The member for Nerang and others say, "Well, if you gave us the full hour and you did not do this and you did not do that, we would get more questions asked." I point out to those members that the number of questions asked on any one day relates not to the time allotted but to how questions are asked and how they are answered. If the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party and the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party are always given a chance to ask questions, then a poor backbencher on the Opposition side has little or no chance of asking a question. Even as an Opposition shadow spokesperson, the member for Nerang must take a fairly quick draw to see if he can ask a question on any particular day.

It will not matter whether it is an hour or whether it is 10 minutes or 15 minutes; the members on the front benches will ask those questions. In the same way, we on this side of the House usually give preference to our Whips to ask the first four Government questions and the backbenchers take their turn. The changes to the question paper mean that, on any day, a backbencher who has a question about a burning issue can put it in writing and submit it to the Clerk and be given an answer that will be recorded in *Hansard*. Of course, because it will be recorded, the candidates in the Opposition will not be able to run around saying that we never raise an issue or speak to an issue in the House.

Out in the real world, people do not understand the processes of Government. They do not understand that members have to take turns to ask a question and that there are priority Government questions and priority Opposition questions. They think it is really important that the member for Charters Towers or the member for Mansfield asks their important question that relates to their electorate. No matter what I might say to them about how important all the other questions were, the people of Mansfield do not worry about whether mining was carried out in the Fitzroy electorate or whether the power was turned on in the Gladstone electorate; they are more interested in what happens to them in the Mansfield electorate. If I have not had a chance to ask their question, they think that I have let them down. The reforms that have been put forward today give backbenchers like me, and those on the other side of the House, a chance to put questions in writing and have them answered by the relevant Minister.

Many times we have had the argument regarding how many questions can be asked, and it always seems to be the same person playing the game. When the now Leader of the Opposition was deputy leader, question time was not changed because he wanted to ask his two questions. Today, he is still having his say; we have had to pander to him to allow the two questions. I know—and I have heard it around the ridges—that he thinks there is something wrong with the system and that he should be allowed to ask his two questions. In the other States, the Leader of the Opposition is entitled to ask the first question, with questions then alternating between the Government and the Opposition. In Victoria, the Leader of the Opposition asks the first question without notice, with questions then alternating between the Government and the Opposition. In Tasmania, the Leader of the Opposition has a really good deal; he gets to ask all the questions if he likes, because he can keep asking supplementary questions. The Leader of the Opposition might try Tasmania, which has a different system.

A Government member: Anywhere but here.

Ms POWER: Yes, anywhere but here would be preferable. In South Australia, the Leader of the Opposition asks the first question. In Western Australia, the Leader of the Opposition asks the first question and then the questions alternate. The same system operates in the House of Representatives and the Senate. So, in fact, we are not taking anything away from the Opposition; most of the States have a similar system. I think the Leader of the Opposition wants to ensure that he always gets his say, but he is not too worried about his backbenchers. As I have reminded people on my side of the House, a member does not become leader unless there are a lot of backbenchers behind that person keeping him or her in that position.

I think that there is a great deal of hypocrisy on the Opposition benches. They want to talk about the reform process. They want more questions but, for whatever reason, they will not allow the system to be changed.

They think that they will just be able to ask questions. On many occasions, the member for Nerang has said, "Give us the hour." That cannot always happen; protocols have to be followed. Major changes to the Standing Orders would have to occur if we were to have an hour of questions every day without other business being dealt with. I think that some of our former colleagues would think it a bit harsh of us if we were to suddenly say that we are not going to acknowledge in this House the passing of former members because Opposition members want to have an hour of question time because they think that that will enable them to ask a few more questions.

I turn now to the subject of petitions. As a member who has tabled a number of petitions and who has received numerous petitions in her office, I have always hedged around a little when people have said to me, "Well, what happens?" I give them that great phrase, "Well, they are tabled in the Parliament." They then say, "Yes, and then what happens?" Quite truthfully, if I was going to be really honest with them, I would say, "Nothing happens. They are tabled. We all know that they are on the table and we all sleep easier at night because that has happened." We take no responsibility for petitions and we do not have to provide a response. Yet somebody out in the community cared about an issue—and I know this has happened in my electorate—and walked the streets over and over at night-time or stood outside a shopping centre for three or four hours on a Saturday morning to get 600 or 700 signatures, and all that person got was a piece of paper that was then tabled in the Parliament.

The changes to the sessional orders require the petition to be written in plain English. In the past, because of the way in which they were worded, it was quite a difficult task to write some of the petitions. I guess that wording was probably included for a reason; it stopped some people from wanting to participate in the process. Now that petitions must be written in plain English, it will be much easier for people to write a petition and people will be keener to participate in that process. The petition will be tabled and referred to the relevant Minister. The relevant Minister will then have to respond. That response will printed in *Hansard* and it will be sent to the principal petitioner.

It is interesting to note that there will be a principal petitioner. While petitions are a right of citizens, I think that some citizens have exploited that right and have gone out willy-nilly thinking, "Anyone can sign this petition; who cares?" and nobody has actually taken responsibility for that petition. The changes to the sessional orders require somebody to take responsibility; there must be a principal petitioner. That will indicate how serious a person is about the issue. By the same token, the principal petitioner will receive a response to the petition. If those people are like some of the hardworking people that I know who have circulated petitions on issues, somebody will be responsible. The Minister will respond in regard to what action is being taken in relation to the matter that the petition pertains to. Over the years, thousands of people have submitted petitions, and those people are probably still waiting for a response. This is a big change that people will welcome, but the petitioners themselves will have to take some responsibility.

The third matter relates to the citizen's right of reply. I have heard the members of the Opposition say, "You can't have this; we don't have all those protections." Of course we do! As members, we have particular rights in this House. We are protected at all times by a series of Standing Orders. I know that there may be some members who do not know that we actually have them, but we do have Standing Orders.

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Ms POWER: The honourable member should not start to interject. The Standing Orders are there to protect members at all times. It is interesting to note that Standing Order 114 protects people from being interrupted while they are making their speeches. Under Standing Order 115 a member may rise to speak to a point of order or upon a matter of privilege, and under Standing Order 119 members are protected from offensive language. It is interesting that the members of the Opposition would make those comments because, in fact, the only time that a member in this House is not protected is the moment that that member leaves the chair to report to the Speaker—as the member for Beaudesert demonstrated in this Chamber not so long ago. However, at most times in this place, we are free to make our comments and have our say with little or no recourse on the part of the general public.

Unfortunately, members of the public do not have that same right. I have sat in this Chamber and heard members make comments about public servants, members of the public in general and business houses, with little or no recourse being available to those people. Certainly, some of those people

may not be all that they are cracked up to be. They may not be the worthy citizens that we would have hoped they would be, but they still have a right to reply to the comments that have been made in this House, just as we members have a right, if we feel that we have been maligned in the newspaper or in this House, to rise on a matter of privilege or to take a point of order.

So again we will see in the proposed sessional orders a chance for some reform so that the public, whether that be an individual or a corporation, can make some appeal to the House. Of course, the sessional orders outline that if the complaint is frivolous, the Speaker can rule accordingly and if the complaint is a serious matter then it can be referred to the Parliament's Committee of Privileges. So under those changes, people will have a number of opportunities to make their response.

I think that overall the proposed sessional orders that we see before us today are another attempt to reform the Parliament, to open it up to the public, for responses to be made by the public and for the public to participate in the Parliament. It is my pleasure to second and, in fact, commend the proposed sessional orders to the House.

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (12.30 p.m.): What we are witnessing in the Parliament today is another Labor con job. This proposed sessional order proves once again the arrogance of this Government and the high-handed way that it treats the Parliament.

Under the guise of some sort of benevolent parliamentary reform which will make life easier for the Opposition in the run-up to an election, what we see is a sham, a fraud and a blatant act of censorship of the Opposition in an election year. But worse than that, it is a blatant subversion of the proper roles, duties and functions of the Standing Orders Committee, which has not met in the life of this Parliament.

I place on record that, prior to this debate today, the non-Government members of the Standing Orders Committee requested a meeting of that committee. Regrettably, Mr Speaker, I have say that I am very disappointed that you decided not to convene such a meeting because the role of Speaker, above all else, should be to defend the role of members and the rights of members in this place from the excesses of Executive Government. Yet the non-Government members of the Standing Orders Committee requested a meeting—the first meeting of the Standing Orders Committee in the life of this Parliament—and that request was rejected.

Mr Mackenroth: You can't get a bigger committee than this Parliament to decide something.

Mr BORBIDGE: What we have is a Government which, in this election year, is trying to distance itself from parliamentary scrutiny. It is trying to prop up its weak Ministers; it is trying to shield them from questions.

Mr D'Arcy interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The interjection that the member for Woodridge has just made has been the longest speech he has made in this place for years.

This proposed sessional order is not about the rights of backbench members on either side; it is all about protecting Ministers. It has nothing whatsoever to do with parliamentary reform; it has nothing to do with accountability. If this were a proper and accountable reform, the Government would have progressed it through the proper channels. That is what the Standing Orders Committee is all about; it considers changes to the Standing Orders so that the interests of all members are taken into account and not trampled over by the Executive. Yet this is what this Government and you, Mr Speaker, have allowed to happen. I ask quite simply: what is the point of having a Standing Orders Committee? The Leader of the House interjected, "Well, we will talk about it in the Committee of Parliament." If that is his attitude, what is the point of having a Standing Orders Committee?

This is all about taking the Government's weak-performing Ministry out of the spotlight and out of the public glare—the Ministers who do not perform, have not performed, cannot perform and will never perform: the Haywards, the Wells, the Braddys, the Smiths, the Hamills—the list goes on and on—the failures, the duds of public administration in this State who must be shielded and protected in this crucial election year. They are the Ministers who the Premier and the Leader of the House are attempting to protect by rushing through this sessional order prior to the election so that Ministers can pass the buck to their public servants, who then have up to 30 days to prepare a response or to mask the truth in bureaucratic gobbledegook.

This morning, we heard the admission that we can ask a question that may be answered in 30 days. It does not even necessarily appear in *Hansard*. If people want

to find out the answer and if it is over one page in length, then they have to go along to the Bills and Papers Office. I am sure that the people in Winton, in Cooktown, or in other remote areas of this State would be delighted to go to the Bills and Papers Office to find the answer to a question.

Under this new system, we are not even going to have a complete *Hansard* of all the questions asked. The proper questions and the proper answers will not be contained in *Hansard*. If the answer is a bit too long or a bit too embarrassing—and I am sure that in 30 days Ministers will be able to provide an answer that is over one-page long—if people want to know about it they will have to knock on the door of the Bills and Papers Office because they will not see it in *Hansard*.

The Government simply does not want to answer questions about its failed Criminal Code, about the health crisis or the lack of planning for Queensland's future power supplies. It wants the public servants to answer the tricky questions.

Sure, there is a case for the reform of question time in this place. However, we have the situation now in which if an Opposition member—or, for that matter, a member of the Government—wants to pursue a matter, he or she can do so. In question after question in this place, a member can pursue that matter. If that member requires a follow-up question to be placed on notice the following day in Parliament, that member could ask the question today and receive the answer tomorrow and follow up those questions accordingly.

We all know, and the member for Mansfield admitted it, that what is an issue today is fish and chips wrappers in 30 days' time. Yet under this particular sessional order, that is the protection that the Ministers are giving themselves and that is what they are denying the Opposition and the backbench members of the Government. They want the public servants—the apparatchiks; the Kevin Rudds, the Dick Perssons—to be answering the tricky questions and 30 days later, that will do. What we have is a deliberate attempt to cut back the opportunity for members of the Opposition, particularly shadow Ministers, to follow through and follow up questions without notice.

After six years, the cracks have opened as to what is happening in this State. The trickle has become a flood. Nothing that Government members do in this place to try to dodge their accountability responsibilities will mask the truth. It is important in this debate to return to the heady days of 1989, when we had the promise by the Goss Government of more open and accountable Parliament. After two terms of Labor, what has been the reality? We have a Parliament that is less accountable, less responsive and controlled exclusively by the Executive. The Executive controls the Budget and it tells the Speaker what the cutbacks in services in this place will be. Now, instead of the Standing Orders Committee, it is controlling the rules of this place because it has effectively done away with that committee. The Executive effectively controls the administration of the Parliament. Like so many of the Government's 1989 promises, the bold new world which was promised has evaporated quickly.

Under these proposals, question time will simply be less effective. Already, we have a situation in which question time has become a farce. Ministers do not answer questions and when they do, they usually twist the questions around and focus on abusing the Opposition during their answers. Of course, Opposition members respond and then the Government tells us how we are bringing the Parliament into disrespect. For example, I ask members to consider a question asked recently by the member for Tablelands to the Minister for Minerals and Energy concerning the Moura disaster and the lack of mine inspectors. It is a serious issue, yet one which the Minister not only did not address but turned around into a diatribe of abuse directed at the member for Tablelands. I suggest that that is one performance of which the Minister should not be proud and one that in due course will rebound on him and his Government. I wish to touch on certain other matters contained in this sessional order.

Mr Cooper: It is very depressing, isn't it.

Mr BORBIDGE: It is depressing. I would have thought that, had this aspect been taken into consideration by the Standing Orders Committee, we could have had a workable package. I have referred already to the fact that a question asked tomorrow need not be answered until 30 days later. I have mentioned that answers to certain questions are not included in *Hansard* but are available from the Bills and Papers Office.

Mr Mackenroth: And available to the media, and they can do whatever they like. And if it's dynamite, it'll end up in the paper.

Mr BORBIDGE: Is the honourable member ready?

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: I have plenty of time.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the Leader of the Opposition seeking my protection? Order! I ask the Leader of the House to cease interjecting.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, with due respect, I will never need protection from Mr Mackenroth.

I express concern at the deletion of the prayer from petitions. We heard the member for Mansfield say that we will have a great new format for petitions. One of the great traditions of the Parliament is the inclusion of a prayer in the form of petitions.

Government members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Government members are laughing. However, many people take the issue seriously. Although the member for Mansfield and the Government members who are interjecting might support the deletion of the prayer, I happen to believe that, as is the case with the prayer at the beginning of each sitting day, this tradition is important. This is still a Christian country, and the prayer should remain in the format for petitions, even if the member for Mansfield wants to champion its removal.

Mr Ardill: Absolute claptrap!

Mr BORBIDGE: The member for Archerfield said, "Absolute claptrap!" Obviously, this issue is unimportant to him.

The other point that I wish to raise relates to the right of a citizen to respond to matters raised in the Parliament. What we are seeing today is basically embroidery, because this convention already exists. Although it is rarely used, I can recall an incident in which Mr Speaker Powell activated the right of a citizen's reply in this place. Effectively, the power to allow a citizen's right of reply is already vested in the Speaker.

Mr Beattie: Why are you opposing it, then?

Mr BORBIDGE: I will come to that.

In my view, what we are seeing is a situation which will depend very much on how Government members of the Parliamentary Privileges Committee perform their duties. Recently, we have seen a range of decisions in relation to which the Government has used its numbers in the committee system-——

Mr Welford: They were unanimous.

Mr BORBIDGE: They were not all unanimous. The Government has used its numbers to prevent inquiries and investigations and to steer something in a particular direction. I refer to the most recent example in which the Government numbers on the Parliamentary Public Works Committee were used to prevent an investigation into serious allegations of cost overruns.

Mr Santoro: They have a lot to hide.

Mr BORBIDGE: As the member for Clayfield said, they have a lot to hide. If we see the Parliamentary Privileges Committee and Government members of this House acting in the best traditions of this Parliament, that will be fair enough. However, if we are going to see a kangaroo court in which the Parliamentary Privileges Committee can be manipulated by the caucus or by the Executive, this reform, which has merit, will be absolutely and totally prostituted. I say that in all sincerity. The precedent has been set in this place.

Mr Welford: What a slur upon the Opposition members of the House!

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member was not even here when the power was used by a former National Party Speaker. The Speaker of the House already has the power to activate a citizen's right of reply.

I also happen to believe in the sanctity of parliamentary privilege. I ask Government members to look at the history of the Parliament. From time to time, there have been abuses, and members have or have not acted in good faith. But there is no doubt that parliamentary privilege has righted a great many wrongs. It has focused the attention of the Parliament and the public on injustice, criminality and corruption. I would be most reluctant to see a Government manipulating the Privileges Committee in order to protect people who may have a good case at the time but who down the track may be exposed for what they are, and for members of Parliament to be publicly castigated for fulfilling their constitutional and moral obligation.

Mr Speaker is nodding. Mr Speaker, you might like to participate in this debate. You have been the architect of part of these reforms. I remember the Kevin Hoopers of this Parliament and the early days of the Fitzgerald inquiry. Mr Beattie and the Albert Shire Council elections last year is another example that comes to mind. I am not saying that any of those people did not act in good faith.

Mrs Sheldon: Welford.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Welford is another one. What we have to defend in this place is the sanctity of parliamentary privilege.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: To the benefit of the honourable member who is interjecting, after he maligned someone during the election he had the decency to apologise.

From what I saw in the years that I have been in this Parliament, Kevin Hooper would have always been inside the Parliamentary Privileges Committee room. In great fairness to that late member of this Parliament, I point out that he righted a hell of a lot of injustices. He exposed a hell of a lot of corruption. He was fearless in seeking to right wrongs.

Before we start to play with these privileges, I point out that we have to be very careful, particularly when members acting in good faith can find themselves summoned before a kangaroo court on which Government members have the numbers to embarrass that member and, if they so wish, to protect those perpetrating an injustice.

Mr Beattie: Where does it say that in here? You obviously haven't read it. Where does it say that?

Mr BORBIDGE: I suggest that the honourable member read it.

Mr Beattie: It says "may".

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member says, "It says 'may' so don't worry; it is not going to happen." The Government's defence is that it "may" happen.

I am not saying that there is not merit in some of the proposals contained in this sessional order. What I am saying is that the proper role of the Standing Orders Committee has been prostituted. There must now be serious questions as to whether that particular committee should continue to operate; it has not met in the life of this Parliament. If we are to change the Standing Orders by a trial of sessional orders and if Mr Speaker, as Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee, is not prepared to convene a meeting to at least discuss these matters when he receives a written request from non-Government members in this place to do so, some very serious questions are raised as to the motivation behind this sessional order.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (12.49 p.m.): The Fitzgerald report highlighted the fact that there needed to be major changes in the operation of this Parliament to make it more relevant. The report indicated that parliamentary reform was long overdue and was very critical of the way this Parliament operated under the National Party and the Liberal Party for 32 years.

Mr FitzGerald: Where did it say that?

Mr BEATTIE: The member should go back and read it. The Fitzgerald report was very critical of the way the National Party used to run this place as a rort and a disgrace. One need only peruse the report to find reference to the fact that Fitzgerald wanted to see this place operate the way it was meant to operate. These changes to the sessional orders provide an opportunity to achieve that desire of Fitzgerald.

Page 45 of the EARC report of December 1991 referred to the fact that—

> "Question Time has traditionally been regarded as one of the key mechanisms in the process of executive accountability. Its importance has derived from its nature as an opportunity for the obtaining of information from the executive within the public forum of Parliament."

These changes provide a more effective question time and a better opportunity for the Opposition to do its job. It is an absolutely extraordinary state of affairs that the Opposition is opposing these changes. At no time in the 32 years that the National Party and Liberal Party were in office would they have even considered introducing such democratisation of the operation of this Parliament, but the Opposition Leader is opposing these measures.

Mr Mackenroth: They still don't know it when they see it. That's the real problem.

Mr BEATTIE: Exactly. The extraordinary thing is that Opposition backbenchers really are not in a position to make any determination on this. Most of them have never been involved in the process because they have never had an opportunity to ask questions; they are all hogged by the leadership of the National Party and the Liberal Party.

Ms Power: Where are they on the speaking list?

Mr BEATTIE: That is exactly right: where are they? They have not had an opportunity to contribute. The facts are that these sessional orders will give backbench members of the National Party and Liberal Party a greater opportunity than they have ever had before to ask questions in this Parliament. There are some Government members who think that some of us are crazy for supporting these changes because they provide the Opposition with that increased opportunity. I can see from their nodding heads that some of my colleagues agree with me.

Let us have the standing of these changes clearly on the record. The proposed changes are only sessional orders. They do not constitute permanent changes to the Standing Orders. If they did, then the Leader of the Opposition might have a point, but he does not, because they are not permanent changes to the Standing Orders. They are only sessional orders. These proposals are being introduced on a trial basis. In light of the experience of their operation, the Standing Orders Committee can then meet and make the appropriate recommendations for improvement or change. The Standing Orders Committee has not been excluded from this process. It will have an opportunity to make the final recommendations based on how these sessional orders operate in practice.

The reality is that this Parliament is the body that makes the decisions. There is no more important committee or meeting than this Parliament itself, and it is the body that should be making the decisions and is indeed doing so in terms of these changes to the sessional orders. The final changes, based on experience, will go back to the Standing Orders Committee and the final recommendations will come to the House. It is totally irrational and wrong to argue against a trial period, which is all that this is. No-one can deny that it will be useful and valuable to gather both experience and information before considering and deciding on permanent changes after the trial period. This action will give the Standing Orders Committee the practical experience of seeing how the new system operates. The knowledge and experiences will then be useful in making the final decisions when the changes come before this House.

It is important that we try to look at these types of debates objectively. Having heard the contribution from the Opposition Leader, it is very hard to understand where he is coming from. I am not trying to be smart when I say that. We all know that, on a previous occasion, the Standing Orders Committee endeavoured to change the question system. It failed because Mr Borbidge was then the Deputy Leader of the National Party and he was concerned that he would lose the opportunity to ask two questions a day. The proposal, as we all know, allows the Leader of the Opposition to ask two questions and one question from then on. His opposition was based on that. The reality is that he does not lose questions, but that was the way he saw it. Out of that opposition, we continue to see his opposition to the proposals before the House.

As the Leader of the House said, in essence this system provides an opportunity for 3,000 or thereabouts extra questions on notice to be asked each year. Who could possibly argue against that? Let us not talk in general terms about the situation in other States. Let us look at what actually happens elsewhere. Let us take the year 1993. As to the number of sitting days—Queensland had 58; New South Wales had 45; Victoria had 62; Tasmania had 69; South Australia had 51; and Western Australia had 53. So we were the third most regular sitting Parliament of all the States, but there was not much difference. As to the average duration of question time in 1993—in Queensland it was 50 minutes; in New South Wales it was only 45 minutes; in Victoria it was only 35 minutes; and in Western Australia it was only 35 minutes. Those were the time periods.

Let us consider the average number of questions without notice answered per day. In Queensland, they numbered 17; in New South Wales, they numbered 10.3——

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The member for Caloundra need not interject. If her prologues and introductions to questions were not so long, the Opposition might get a few more in.

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The member takes up the time of about three questions every day. If she did not carry on, the Opposition would get at least three more questions in. In New South Wales, the number of questions without notice answered numbered 10.3; in Victoria, they numbered 8.3; in Western Australia, they numbered 10.5; in South Australia, they numbered 16.2; and in Queensland, they numbered 17. In relation to the number of questions without notice answered in 1993, Queensland stood very well compared with the rest of Australia. Where do we need improvement?

A Government member: A better Opposition.

Mr BEATTIE: That is not the only area in which we need improvement! We need improvement in the number of questions on notice asked. Let us consider the average number of questions on notice that were answered in various States. In Queensland there were 113, and in Victoria there were 128. In the States that operate a similar system to that proposed in Queensland, the numbers of questions on notice asked present a stark contrast. In New South Wales there were 2,062, and in Western Australia there

were 1,762. That is the sort of benefit that will be gained under the mechanism suggested in the proposed changes. For the first time, every day Opposition backbench members will be able to ask a question that they are not able to ask now. I cannot believe that the Leader of the Opposition opposed these measures! If I were an Opposition backbencher, I know what I would be thinking. I would not be terribly well disposed to the leader of my party attempting to prevent me from having the opportunity to put questions on notice. It is outrageous that the Opposition is opposing these measures, and its opposition is based on petty political point-scoring and not on substance.

Let us examine a few of the other scenarios. We could talk about these statistics all day. When the Nats were in office in 1987, there were 496 questions without notice. As an aside, I mention that in that year there were only 45 sitting days.

Mr Lingard: What was the average per day in that year?

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to come back to that, because I have all those statistics. I ask the member to bear with me. I am happy to place them on the record.

Mr Lingard interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: If the member wants me to provide the information, he should just belt up and I will get to it. I happen to have it all here. The member should discuss this information in his party room tomorrow. He will find that he is better off supporting what we are doing rather than opposing it.

Mr Santoro: You should be ashamed of yourself speaking in support of this motion.

Mr BEATTIE: I used to say to people that the member's leader was so bad that he would be better. It is a case of Tweedledum and Tweedledumber!

Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.30 p.m.

Mr BEATTIE: Before the luncheon recess I was referring to some statistics in relation to questions in other State Parliaments. Before I return to those statistics, I think it is important that I put on the record that members who listened to the Leader of the Opposition could well ask the question, "What would have been the point of taking the matter to the Standing Orders Committee, anyway?", bearing in mind his total opposition to this reform and change since it first went to that committee some years ago. His argument was really very fickle. He raised the issue about the 30-day period for answers to questions on notice. I will refer to that later, because if we look at the precedents in other States, we will find that the recommendation of a 30-day period is better than in any other jurisdiction in Australia.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to see the retention of a system in which a Minister can have a question put to him or her on notice at the end of one year with the possibility that it will not be answered until the next year. He whinges about a 30-day period which, as I said, will be the best in Australia, yet he is prepared to support a position where a question can remain on the notice paper from one year to the next, with a long period of delay. Under those circumstances, when the Minister answers the question, what does he answer? He answers a number on the notice paper. People in the gallery would have no idea of what the question was. The Minister would stand up and say, "The answer in relation to question no. 4 is . . ." Often, the answer will be incorporated in *Hansard*. That is a nonsense of a process, but that is what the Leader of the Opposition is supporting. For questions on notice, he supports the continued answering of a question by reference to a number.

Realistically, Mr Borbidge is saying that, unless he gets his way on the Standing Orders Committee or unless he gets his way in relation to these reforms, he does not want any part of them. He did not get his own way, so he wants to stop the reform of the Standing Orders and the process of this Parliament. That type of petulant behaviour is not acceptable in modern politics. If that is the view of the National Party—and we have not heard from the Liberals yet, but presumably their view will be the same——

Mrs Sheldon: But you're looking forward to it.

Mr BEATTIE: We are certainly looking forward to it. The Leader of the Liberal Party should actually pick up the spirit of liberalism, in its true form, and actually support the Government. She should demonstrate a bit of true liberalism and independence and support these reforms. If the National Party and Liberal Party oppose these reforms, they are simply scoring a few cheap points and stopping the desperately needed reform of this Parliament.

I return to the statistics. I referred earlier to the statistical position. If we examine the statistics, we will find that the Leader of the Opposition will be denying his back bench the opportunity to ask a question a day every time that this Parliament sits, which could amount to as many as 3,000 questions on notice a year. Last year, in New South Wales, 1,785

questions on notice were answered. In 1994, 3,117 questions on notice were answered in the Western Australian Parliament. Those statistics are similar to what is expected under these new reforms.

If the Western Australian model is followed, the Leader of the Opposition is denying the people of Queensland the opportunity for the answers to 3,117 questions.

Mr Welford: Give him what he wants!

Mr BEATTIE: At the end of the day, if we gave him what he wanted, he would deny his backbenchers the right to ask more questions. Let me be clear about this. I hope that every National Party and Liberal Party backbencher knows that their leaders are telling them that they cannot put questions on notice papers about their local schools, hospitals, police stations, fire stations and ambulance stations—all the questions that their constituents want answers to. The Leader of the Opposition is saying that they cannot put questions on the notice paper and get answers within 30 days. That is what the Opposition leaders are saying. If I was on the Opposition back bench, I would have a lot to say in the party room tomorrow, because I would not be happy. I say to the people of Queensland who are represented by Opposition members that the Opposition is in fact voting today against these provisions which will make its members less effective than they otherwise could be. They are voting to be incompetent. If they vote against these changes today, they are voting to be ineffective, incompetent members of Parliament. That is what they are seeking to do.

Mr Borbidge spoke a lot of nonsense about the 30-day period for answers to questions. The reality of that is that, if a member has put a question on notice, it is a matter of public record. Members can release the question. If the Minister takes 30 days to answer, the member can say to his or her constituents or the press, "Hang on, I put it on notice and I am waiting for an answer." Where is the pressure in that? Mr Borbidge said that that is letting Government Ministers off the hook. What that is doing is putting Government Ministers on the mat. It is the complete reverse of what he is saying.

I refer now to the position in other States. In New South Wales, Ministers are required to answer questions on notice within 35 days. They get only 45 minutes for question time, or the answering of 10 questions in the House. So there is no argument. The Queensland system will be clearly better than that in New South Wales.

I refer now to the Victorian Parliament, which has 45 minutes for question time on every sitting Tuesday and 30 minutes every other sitting day. That Parliament gets only 30 minutes of question time every other sitting day. There is no set time limit for the answering of questions on notice by the responsible Minister, however four weeks is the norm. The norm is four weeks, but there is no set period for the answering of questions. Our provision is better than that.

I refer now to the Tasmanian Parliament, which has 60 minutes for question time—the same as our Parliament—but there is no set time limit for the answering of questions by the Minister. Our reform states a limit of 30 days, which is better than the Tasmanian practice.

In South Australia there is no set period for the Minister to answer questions on notice. We are better than South Australia. In Western Australia, on Tuesdays 45 minutes is allotted for question time and 30 minutes on all other days. There is no set time limit for the answering of questions upon notice by the responsible Minister. Four weeks is the norm, but there is no set period. So we are better than Western Australia.

I refer now to the House of Representatives and the Senate. The position is the same; in the House of Representatives there is no set time limit for the answering of questions by the responsible Minister. So we are better than the House of Representatives. As to the Senate—there is no set time limit for the answering of questions in the Senate, either. However, after 30 calender days the senator asking the question may ask the Minister to provide an explanation to the Senate as to why the question has not been answered. So we are better than the Senate and any other State in Australia. So what is the Leader of the Opposition whingeing about? That is the question we have to ask ourselves.

My time is running out, so I would like to refer to a couple of other matters. The Leader of the Opposition complained about the removal of the prayer from petitions. He tried to jump on that bandwagon. That is a phoney argument. Petitions have not been able to be tabled in this House because the prayer on them was wrong. We are talking about empowering people so that their views are known in this Parliament. So because someone technically got the prayer wrong, some petitions have been knocked out and the views of the people have not been heard.

That is what the honourable Leader of the Opposition is supporting.

I do not know if he is appealing to the extreme Right Wing of the constituency when he complains about the prayer being removed. There happens to be a lot of Christians on the Government side of the Chamber, including myself, who are quite happy to see a prayer anywhere, but this is about simplification and empowering people so that technical procedures do not knock petitions out. That is what these reforms are about. It is a nonsense argument to come in here and get out the violin and try to pretend that taking the prayer out is in some way an unchristian act. What a lot of nonsense. This is about giving people their rights and empowering them and also getting ministerial responses to petitions, instead of, as the member for Mansfield said, having them thrown into the petition bin where they are never heard of again. This is about doing something about petitions. How Opposition members can oppose that amendment is beyond me.

Next, I refer to criticism of the Public Works Committee. While I am on the subject of committees, I am delighted to see that we are allowing the chairmen of committees to answer questions. Members would be aware that the first Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee in recommendation 1 in its report in December 1991, report no. 13, recommended just this. I am delighted to see that it is happening. However, I conclude by saying that I find it offensive that we have attacks on certain parliamentary committees when they do their job properly.

Finally, to give citizens a right of reply as part of the accountability process is long overdue. It has worked in the Senate. It does not take away a member's rights. We all have rights in this place to defend ourselves. Standing Orders provide members with the right to make personal explanations and raise points of privilege; we can explain ourselves in this House whenever we like. All those amendments do in terms of giving citizens a right of reply is to make it fair. It does not affect privilege in any manner, shape or form, it just gives them a fair go.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (2.40 p.m.): What an incredibly impassioned performance by the member for Brisbane Central. Is it not a great pity that he did not get it right? He has been asking us to believe that "Godfather" Mackenroth has the interests of the Opposition at heart. While I am prepared to listen to many of the things that Mr Beattie might say, I believe that he lacks a certain degree of credibility with Opposition members, and I am amazed that he could say it with a straight face.

I really do find it hard to restrain the anger I feel at having to debate this motion today. I find it difficult to restrain that anger, because even at its worst, its most cynical and its least accountable, there are few times that this State Labor Government has matched the depths it has sunk to with today's effort—and to think that this Government was elected on a platform of reform and a platform of accountability! I do not believe that anyone should forget that this Labor Government was elected on a platform of electoral purity. It was elected by the people of Queensland because it told the people that it would be clean, open and accountable. It has lied to the people again. Yet here we have that very same Labor Government—less than six years later—bringing in these cynical changes to sessional orders.

From listening to Mr Beattie, one might think that the Labor Party is looking after Opposition backbenchers. Mr Beattie must have mistaken the fact that, this morning, Mr Mackenroth said that if questions were over two pages long they would not be incorporated in *Hansard*. Call me a cynic, but I would think that if any answer that showed some flaw in that otherwise very pure Labor Government, that political point would be on page two and hence would not be incorporated in *Hansard*. If not, why is Mr Mackenroth limiting the answers in *Hansard* to one page when, again and again, the full 20 minutes or one hour of every speech made by members in this House is recorded?

Mr T. B. Sullivan interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: I know that the honourable member does not really understand any of the actions of Parliament, but Ministers have always been able to incorporate in *Hansard* their full answers to questions on notice, if they so desired. I believe that these answers should be fully incorporated in *Hansard*, because the Minister does not have to present them; they will be provided by bureaucrats. If they are wrong, I guess that the Ministers will blame the bureaucrats. Let us face it, this Government never blames itself for anything; it is 100 per cent wonderful, according to itself.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Point of order.

Mrs SHELDON: Is the honourable member interjecting, or not?

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Then the member should stand up—or does he not know what he should do in this House? Mr Speaker, I thought you said the member was taking a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No, the honourable member is not taking a point of order. He is asking you to take an interjection.

Mrs SHELDON: It is up to me as to whether or not I take his interjection, and I will not take it. Why should I take the rubbish he hands out?

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. What I wanted to say was that as Mrs Sheldon is complaining so much, and in the spirit of ensuring that this gets a fair trial, we will incorporate all the answers to all the questions for the rest of this term.

Mrs SHELDON: I am delighted to hear that Mr Mackenroth has seen the error of his ways, as pointed out to him by the Opposition. I give credit where it is due. He has been prepared to listen to this, but I do believe that we must have that in writing, otherwise it may never be delivered. I will have the promise of Mr Mackenroth in writing, thanks, as part of the motion.

Mr Borbidge: *Hansard* has been expunged before.

Mrs SHELDON: That is quite true. *Hansard* has been expunged before, so let us get this in writing from Mr Mackenroth.

Why is this Labor Government able to make these cynical changes to sessional orders? I will tell honourable members why—because it has bypassed the well-established and time-honoured conventions of Parliament in Queensland. Changes such as this should have been passed through the Standing Orders Committee, which includes representatives from both the Opposition and the Government, including the Premier, Mr Borbidge and me. But this cynical Government weaseled its way around these well-established precedents by claiming that these changes to question time are only a trial. Would I be too cynical by asking: is this trial only until the next election? When does the trial finish? Is Mr Mackenroth prepared to answer that question?

Mr Mackenroth: I said the trial will be up until the election, and then we will decide after that.

Mrs SHELDON: I thought so—until the election. Dear me! How appropriate. This Government has been in power since 1989, yet only a few months before an election these so-called reforms are coming into place. And this Government wonders why it has no credibility in the marketplace. People do not believe it. They are not as foolish as this Government may think. People realise that by no means does the Executive stamp of power mean democracy. So we will have this so-called trial.

How convenient to introduce such a trial when this Government has been under unprecedented attack for its failures in Health, law and order, Education and Transport. One can see them now sitting around the top floor of the Executive Building—the Premier, Mr Mackenroth, the general and others—trying to figure out how they can limit exposure to public questioning for their bunch of duds on the frontbench—duds such as Mr Elder, who keeps saying, "I am new to this. I do not really know what is happening in the Health Department. Please don't ask me any tough questions." Mr Hayward is saying the same sort of thing in Transport. Mr Pitt does not have the remotest idea what DBIRD really is all about. Those are the Ministers of the Crown who are supposed to be looking after the interests of the people of Queensland.

As the great minds ticked—and by golly, speaking of great minds, we have some sitting on the Government side of the House, do we not—someone came up with this wonderful plan to limit Opposition front and back benchers, with the exception of the Leader of the Opposition, to only one question without notice. In that way, if the Government continues its previous form of 15-minute answers to dorothy dixers, particularly questions from the two Whips, whom we could call Dorothy One and Dorothy Two, and time-wasting in every other way possible, the number and continuity of questions asked by the Opposition will be decreased. But that is only part of the plan.

The other part of the plan is to allow each member of the Opposition to also ask one question on notice during question time, but to give Ministers and their departments 30 days within which to answer those questions—one month to answer questions they previously had to answer in one day. Yes, there may be more questions, but nevertheless, if a member needs information, he or she needs it now, not 30 days down the track. One month should safely put any difficult questions out of the way until, hopefully for the Government, the issue

is no longer relevant when the answer comes back—one month to answer questions that the Minister does not even answer, because his department does. This means that, once again, instead of the Minister being responsible, the emphasis is shifted back onto public servants within the department. With the Ministers having to answer fewer questions without notice, and the departments being given a month to answer questions on notice, the Labor Ministers have much less scrutiny to worry about in this election year. That is what this is really all about. As I said, this is all about limiting public scrutiny and public accountability. This is about this Government attempting to hide its deficiencies and abusing the Parliament in the process.

Mr Speaker, I wish to draw attention to the letter sent to you and signed by me, Rob Borbidge and the Deputy Leader of the National Party, Kevin Lingard. We wrote—

> "Dear Mr Fouras
>
> I refer to the announcement to the media following yesterday's Caucus meeting and the subsequent Ministerial statement to Parliament by the Leader of the House concerning a proposed sessional order to change the format of Question Time.
>
> We, the undersigned, formally request a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee to consider this matter.
>
> As Chairman of the Committee and as custodian of the rights of members of the Legislative Assembly we consider that you have an obligation to take this course of action.
>
> We remain extremely concerned that the Leader of the House has indicated that you have had a high level of involvement in the proposed changes without reference to the Committee that the Parliament has appointed to consider such matters."

That Standing Orders Committee was appointed by the Parliament, yet it is being ignored. The letter continued—

> "It is now a period of years since you have convened such a meeting which is considerable cause for concern.
>
> We await your prompt response to this formal request for a meeting to be convened prior to the resumption of Parliament."

I table that letter.

Mr Speaker, I know that you did answer that letter, but the reply was, in the opinion of the Opposition, not satisfactory. We would have much preferred to have spoken to you and to the other members of the Standing Orders Committee about our concerns before this debate took place. It may well have meant that the debate was of a different nature, but we were excluded from meeting as a Standing Orders Committee. Of course, we have not met, as you would be aware, in the life of this Parliament. It is over two and half years since we have met. I wonder why that is so. If we need committees such as the Standing Orders Committee, surely we should meet and discuss the issues pertaining to the Standing Orders.

The Premier also has rejected these calls. He is a member of the Standing Orders Committee and has refused to convene that committee since September 1992. As I said, that committee was appointed by Parliament itself. It was established to oversee matters exactly like changes to the sessional orders.

There are other matters included in the proposed changes to sessional orders which are also worth considering. For example, under the heading "General Rules for Answers" are the following three points—

> "(i) In answering a Question a Minister or Member shall not debate the subject to which it refers.
>
> (ii) An answer shall be relevant to the question.
>
> (iii) If, in the opinion of the Speaker, the Answer is too long, he may direct the Minister or the Member to cease speaking."

These are classics! Numbers one and two are like extinct dinosaurs resurrected to remind us of how things once were, and maybe could be again. In answering a question a Minister shall not debate the subject. Can you imagine it? This crew opposite have never really answered a question without endeavouring to debate it.

They have all learnt from the Wayne Goss school of question time etiquette. The Wayne Goss school of question time etiquette also has three rules—

> (1) Never, never answer a question.
>
> (2) Verbally bash the person who asked the question as much as possible.
>
> (3) Drag the answer to the question out as long as possible, including debate, vitriol, meaningless statistics, electioneering and the obligatory verbal bulldust so the Opposition's time to ask questions is limited as much as possible.

Mr SPEAKER: They haven't been changed.

Mr Borbidge: Was there an interjection from the right?

Mrs SHELDON: I think there was. If members think back and check *Hansard* they will see that all other members of the Ministry have gone to Wayne's school, and they have all passed. For many on the Government frontbench it was the first thing they ever passed—or are likely to pass.

As to point (ii) of the "General Rules for Answers", which states "An Answer shall be relevant to the question", I again refer members to my three previous points from the Wayne Goss school of question time etiquette. In case honourable members have forgotten them, they are—

(1) Never, never answer a question.

(2) Verbally bash the person who asked the question as much as possible.

(3) Drag the answer to the question out as long as possible, including debate, vitriol, meaningless statistics, electioneering and the obligatory verbal bulldust.

Relevance is very rarely a strong point when it comes to Ministers answering questions. Rules for answers should be the same as rules for questions and not be able to include arguments, inferences, imputations or hypothetical matters. However, if they could not include hypothetical matters, I suppose that we would never get an answer.

What I find incredible about these changes is that the Leader of the House, Mr Mackenroth, described the changes as reform. I ask you, Mr Speaker, how can these changes be considered reforms? They are restrictions; not reforms. Reforms do not limit scrutiny; they do not limit accountability. Reforms are supposed to make the Government and the Parliament more accountable, not less accountable. Just to remind members, previously a member of the Opposition was able to ask two questions. Opposition members had the option of either asking two questions without notice, two questions on notice, or one of each. That flexibility allowed Opposition members to decide which forum best suited their question. Answers to questions on notice had to be provided on the next sitting day.

These farcical so-called reforms will mean that members of the Opposition have no option of how to ask their questions. They will have no option of whether to ask one question without notice, and then follow it up with a supplementary question without notice. Often, that is what one needs to do, because the answer that has come from the Minister sets itself up for a supplementary question through which we could really find out what the answer is.

These so-called reforms come from the Executive. They are the ones who make the rules and they are the ones who punch their rules through. It is a joke, and a bad joke at that.

I believe that these changes to the sessional orders introduced today are not reforms. They are a deliberate attempt by the Government to limit the scrutiny of Ministers by the Opposition and the public. They are a deliberate attempt in an election year to limit the public accountability of Ministers. They are a deliberate attempt to limit the number of questions without notice Ministers face during an election year.

If this Government was truly interested in parliamentary reform it would be making real changes—genuine changes. It would be making question time more relevant so that a definitive minimum of questions can be asked, regardless of time. Or it would be limiting the length of answers by Ministers so that time-wasting does not occur.

After giving us the questionable benefit of his input, Mr Beattie has left the Chamber. The reason members of the Opposition are not rising to ask questions—either shadow Ministers or backbenchers—is that Ministers filibuster and take up the time of question time so that, deliberately, the number of answers is limited.

If this Government was truly interested in parliamentary reform it would be allowing the broadcast of Parliament by radio and television. I feel very strongly about this. I brought this up at the first Standing Orders Committee that I attended and I have raised the matter subsequently. I believe that it is important that question time in our House is televised so the public can see how pitiful the bunch opposite really is and so the people of Queensland can properly scrutinise their elected representatives. If the Parliament has no problems with that, why do we not do it? I add that that is a move that the Premier would not allow, and one I pursued on the odd occasions that the Standing Orders Committee has met. A range of reasons was put up as to why that would not be acceptable. One reason was that the House, because it is a heritage building, could not be successfully wired. I subsequently found out,

Mr Speaker, as I am sure you are aware, that, when this House was renovated, provision was made to install cabling because those involved thought that that would eventually happen. The cost of televising Parliament was then raised. So I went to the various commercial channels and the ABC and asked whether they would be interested in putting up funds to do this and they were quite happy to do so.

Mr Mackenroth: I would support televising if they would promise that they would put you on every night.

Mrs SHELDON: I would support that, too. I am sure that that could only elevate the tone of this House. If the honourable member agrees with me that we should televise question time, I am sure that I can get the commercial channels and the ABC to pool their resources and record this place with one television camera. Similarly, we should be able to broadcast question time. If we really did believe in accountability then surely this would follow. I believe real accountability is a long, long way away in Queensland, despite the promises made by Wayne Goss six years ago.

Finally, I will refer to changing the format of petitions. People did have problems with the format of petitions, basically because they did not know the format and did not realise that one existed. Pamphlets have been published that show how a petition should be worded. In my electorate through the newspapers I informed people of this so they would not waste time filling out petitions incorrectly. They can collect a proper petition paper from our electorate offices and I am sure that all members, if they are properly serving their electorates, would let their constituents know that. I know that members of the Opposition have done so.

It is hypocrisy to say that because the words "we pray" was included in the petition it was not worded properly and the petition could not be submitted. That is a nonsense. I believe that it is another method of trying to get rid of tradition in this House. It is becoming a godless House, where traditions and Christian ethics are being ignored more and more. I am amazed that the member for Mansfield was quite prepared to ignore Christian ethics and throw them out of this place. So much for her commitment to anything that Christians really stand for.

All I can say is that I am disappointed that on this day this Labor Government, a couple of months out from an election, has seen fit to alter the proceedings of this Parliament under the guise of changes to sessional orders and will not allow the members of this House to be accountable to the people of Queensland who elected us.

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (2.59 p.m.): It is interesting to follow the member for Caloundra in this debate. I have observed that it is the conservatives who supposedly have a mortgage on Christian morals. It is interesting to note that, when they were in Government, they also believed that they had a mortgage on Christian morals. I can definitely say, from watching their behaviour for 10 years, that they have no mortgage on Christian morals.

This is not a permanent change to the Standing Orders; it is a change to the sessional orders. It is very important that members understand that this change to the sessional orders and the way in which it affects many important aspects of the procedures of this Parliament will be trialled and considered and then the Standing Orders Committee will make a decision on whether such a change should be put firmly in place.

It was interesting to hear the Leader of the Opposition imply that the period allowed for a reply to a question on notice is somehow immoral and in some way different from what is accepted in other Parliaments. In every other Parliament, plenty of time is given in which to reply to questions on notice so that they can be answered properly. For example, the Parliament of New South Wales allows 35 calendar days in which to answer questions on notice. Why does the Opposition declare that allowing 30 days in which to reply to a question on notice is somehow wrong? There is no basis upon which to say that in the Parliament of Victoria four weeks is the average time in which to reply to questions on notice, and there is no set time limit. It is interesting to note that members of other State Parliaments of the same party and convictions as members of the Queensland Opposition allow a reasonable time in which to answer questions on notice, but somehow that is not right in this Parliament.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: Perhaps their colleagues in New South Wales should be told of their position on this.

Mr CAMPBELL: As well as the Parliament of New South Wales, the Parliaments of Tasmania and South Australia have no set period in which to answer questions on notice, but members are usually given an answer in two weeks.

It is also interesting that the Opposition believes that somehow the Government would be more accountable if the proceedings of

Parliament were televised. I have never seen television coverage make any Government more accountable. However, what does make Governments more accountable is the ability of members to be able to ask more questions. However, it seems that, in this place, the Opposition is prepared to vote against a system that will allow for more questions on notice. Question time provides members with an opportunity to obtain information about what Executive Government is doing. It ensures a workable system of Parliament. The new system will be an even better and fairer one.

The Opposition wants to retain a system which, in the 1993 and 1994 parliamentary years, allowed an average of only 2.1 and 2.2 questions on notice per day respectively in the Queensland Parliament. It is interesting to note that the Parliament of New South Wales, which allows questions on notice to be answered in a manner similar to that which we are proposing, was able to have 46 questions on notice answered per day in 1993 and 41 questions on notice answered per day in 1994. Yet the Opposition in this State wants to retain a system under which very few questions on notice are actually answered.

In relation to the procedure of question time—since 1983, there has been no major change to the Standing Orders. In March 1983, the number of questions asked by members was limited. In August 1984, another minor amendment to the Standing Orders occurred, which actually ruled out supplementary questions. I have observed various Parliaments which allow supplementary questions, and I believe that those questions add a little bit of cut and thrust to question time which is often lacking in our Parliament.

Under the changes proposed, question time will now be comprised totally of questions without notice. To my knowledge, no other Parliament allows one hour for question time. Most Parliaments allow only 45 minutes. I can see the problem occurring—and we may have to rely on the use of the Speaker's discretion—that we will not be able to fill the hour with questions.

Mr Veivers: What did you say before—that we are morally corrupt?

Mr CAMPBELL: I am just saying that the Opposition has no mortgage on morals.

Mr Veivers: How come you are not still Deputy Speaker?

Mr CAMPBELL: The member is no better than anyone else.

Mr Veivers: You are saying I am corrupt?

Mr CAMPBELL: We will have to look at the time that we will allow for questions without notice. The member for Southport talks about being morally corrupt. I was a member of this House when the Opposition was in Government and I heard Ministers of that Government make those same accusations. So the member should not come in here pretending to be all white and pure. I had to sit in Opposition and cop it from his party. It is interesting to note that someone who is so moral has to have a loaded gun under the seat in his car.

Mr VEIVERS: I rise to a point of order. My point of order is that the gun was licensed.

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

Mr CAMPBELL: Honourable members, I want to set the record straight. The member had a licensed gun under his seat.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that we leave the gun out of the debate.

Mr CAMPBELL: Under Standing Order 67B, it is proposed that members be allowed to ask questions of other members, and this will include members of committees. We will have to be very careful to ensure that questions to members of committees are about procedural matters only. In fact, if members want to question a committee about something that is happening, it should be done by way of a proper debate. We have to be very careful to ensure that questions about committees are confined to questions about procedural matters such as the time when a committee may be reporting to the Parliament.

As the honourable member for Beaudesert would appreciate, members of the Opposition make references to Government members leaving this House after they have made a contribution to a debate. It is very interesting to note that the member for Caloundra, who highlighted an example of a Government member leaving the Chamber after contributing to a debate, left the Chamber herself immediately after she made her contribution.

Mr Santoro: Do you think it had anything to do with you getting up to speak?

Mr CAMPBELL: It probably did. The member probably does not appreciate good, logical debate. She is very cynical. The member for Caloundra is worried about whether we will publish two pages in *Hansard* or whether we will not publish it. She referred

to material having to be expunged from *Hansard*. One of the worst cases of having to expunge material was when a National Party backbencher incorporated in *Hansard* what could be regarded as nothing more than pornographic filth. We had to expunge that. Opposition members know the person to whom I refer. Members of the Opposition who have made accusations against the Government in this regard should look at the actions of their own members.

The member for Caloundra referred to the form of answers. It is accepted by Erskine May and the House of Commons that Ministers cannot be directed to answer questions in a particular manner. That is an accepted procedure and rule in all Parliaments. So, really, the member's argument does not carry weight.

Changes will be made to the format of petitions, and I think it is good that those changes have been included in the sessional orders. However, I am concerned that we have not gone as far as was proposed in the discussion paper on the petitioning process. When we were in Opposition, a committee called the Transition to Government Committee also looked at procedures. The recommendations of that committee and also those included in the discussion paper on the reform of the petitioning process put out by the Speaker may have been followed.

I will discuss some of the views about petitions raised in the discussion paper, and these would be shared by most honourable members. It stated—

> "The lack of any formal responses to petitions has been raised by several petitioners who feel a degree of frustration at the considerable effort spent in preparing and circulating petitions to have no further action taken.
>
> One way of redressing this situation would be to amend the standing orders to provide that Ministers should respond to petitions and to impose a time limit on the receipt of those responses. Once a response to the House has been received, it should be published in *Hansard* in a similar manner to answers to questions on notice."

It then went further to suggest a proposed change to the Standing Orders. The proposal suggested in the discussion paper stated—

> "A copy of every petition received by the House is to be referred by the Clerk to the appropriate responsible Minister who must forward the Government's response within 30 days to the Clerk for presentation to the House. A copy of this response shall be printed in *Hansard* and be supplied to the Member who presented the petition."

This would have been a more appropriate change to the Standing Order for petitions. That proposal also suggested that the name of the principal petitioner should be on the front page of the petition. That proposition is quite reasonable and I support it. When petitions are circulated, often the front page is not signed by petitioners, who often do not know who is circulating a petition; they just sign it. Perhaps the name of the principal petitioner could be on all pages so that, when individuals sign a petition, he or she would know who is sponsoring it.

Mr Veivers: Are you going to move an amendment?

Mr CAMPBELL: No, I am just raising points about which I would prefer to see some changes.

I now refer to the protection of persons referred to in a legislative committee. When the discussion paper on these proposals was released, I had a few concerns about giving a right of reply to an aggrieved person. After having looked again at the arguments for and against giving a citizen a right of reply, I now feel that it may be worth while if these procedures are adopted.

However, I wonder why we still need such a provision in an adversarial system. If a member makes a statement about someone in this place, an aggrieved person with a valid point to make could do so via a member on the opposite side of the House. That has happened quite often. If people are aggrieved and they have a valid point to raise, we have to ask why it has not been raised by other members of this House. Members of this Parliament have more opportunities to do so than members in previous Parliaments. For example, we now have two Adjournment debates. If someone is aggrieved, there is time for a member from another political party to put that person's point of view. That is what we are doing here; we are representing the people in our electorates. Those debates provide the opportunity to do that.

Mr Bredhauer: Would you trust them to put your message across?

Mr CAMPBELL: No, I would not. The standard of the performance in Parliament by members of the Opposition is probably why this provision has to be included.

Even if allegations are made against members in this place, we have to accept and understand that those members, under Standing Order 110, via a personal explanation, or under Standing Order 115, via a point of privilege, have the right to reply. Generally, we should not be too concerned about giving aggrieved members of the public an opportunity to have their views put in this House.

These changes are major, and we have not had major changes to the Standing Orders for a long time. We should commend the Leader of the House for introducing these changes via a sessional order. This will enable us to trial the provisions to see how they will operate. We will be able to see the pitfalls and advantages that will arise from this sessional order.

Question time will be improved, and members opposite will have a greater chance to ask questions on notice. All honourable members, especially those from the Opposition, will have the chance to put one question per day on notice. I find it very difficult to accept that members of the Opposition, for reasons other than some cynical point scoring, could possibly vote against these provisions. The Opposition's resistance to making our Executive Government more accountable by having more questions placed on notice is something that I cannot understand.

Mr LINGARD (Beaudesert—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.15 p.m.): The Goss ALP Government came to power riding on the back of the white horse of accountability. Continuously today we have heard the Leader of the House refer to accountability. However, the Opposition has asked continuously: how can the Government be accountable by means of a committee system when the Government has not even convened a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee to refer the decisions of the Standing Orders Committee to the House.

Today, we heard the Leader of the House ask: "What better committee is there than this Parliament itself?" And that is the difficulty that we in Queensland—and we in the Opposition—are now facing. As this ALP Government becomes extremely comfortable in power, it does not want committees to scrutinise it.

I refer to the editorial in the *Australian* of 24 January this year, which stated—

> "It is disappointing that more than five years after Labor was elected, there is still no fully-fledged committee system operating in the State's single-house Parliament . . . it is perhaps not surprising that as it becomes used to the comforts of the government benches, the Goss Government may be less willing to surrender to Parliament the breadth of powers necessary to properly scrutinise it."

It continues—

> "Equally important is the need to give Parliament the ability to play its role in scrutinising the actions of executive government. A unicameral parliamentary system needs adequate review processes."

We have heard today that the Standing Orders Committee has not even met. However, this Government is ready to go ahead—although, as one speaker mentioned, it is a sessional order—and use its power to implement this sessional order. We have seen over the past five years how many recommendations of EARC and PEARC have not been implemented.

One of the most important recommendations was in relation to the Auditor-General. We do not have an Auditor-General giving performance-based advice to this Parliament. This Government still makes its Auditor-General a person who checks the invoices and financial statements and says, "Everything is correct." However, the Auditor-General does not refer to the performance of departments. Recently, we saw the PAC and PWC acting in a blatantly politicised way by voting simply on party lines and not referring matters back to this Parliament for decision.

Later, I will criticise this Goss Government's failure to introduce a proper committee system, despite its promise of accountability, which was given to the people of Queensland. There is one aspect of the proposed sessional orders to which I wish to refer. There are many others, but they have been covered by the previous speakers.

One proposed sessional order states that questions may not be put to the Speaker. I know that four or five previous Speakers have made rulings about whether a question may be put on notice to the Speaker—Speaker Taylor, Speaker Houghton and Speaker Nicholson. Mr Speaker, you have made a decision that there will be no questions on notice put to you. This sessional order confirms that decision. This is one of my criticisms of what is going on in this

Parliament. I believe very much in the principle of the impartiality of the Speaker.

If I or anyone else wishes to ask a question about the Parliamentary Service Commission, we cannot ask the Speaker. We cannot ask the Speaker about any of the roles of the Parliamentary Service Commission. One of those roles is providing essential support in the processing of and assent to legislation. Another role is providing information, research, education, protocol, administrative and messenger support services to members of the Parliament. The Opposition will now have to ask questions on anything relating to the Parliamentary Service Commission of the Leader of the House. How is that upholding the separation of powers? The Leader of the House plays an active role in Cabinet, participates in budgetary decisions, serves on the Parliamentary Service Commission and controls the business of this House, yet we must direct any questions on the role of the Parliamentary Service Commission to him.

Another role of the Parliamentary Service Commission is to oversee the Table Office, which provides the procedural and administrative support necessary for the proper conduct of the business of the Legislative Assembly. However, in future we may direct questions relating to the operations of the Table Office only to the Leader of the House, because this——

Mrs Woodgate interjected.

Mr LINGARD: Under this sessional order, that is not possible. This sessional order does not allow a member to ask a question of the Speaker. That power has been taken away.

The committee office provides assistance to parliamentary committees in the conduct of their inquiries. Under this sessional order, the only person of whom members may ask questions about the committee office is the Leader of the House. What answer will we receive from the Leader of the House? We will be given the answer that reflects the attitude of the Cabinet, the answer that reflects the attitude of the Parliamentary Service Commission and the answer that reflects the attitude of this Government. That is not the role of the Speaker. The role of the Speaker is to act in an impartial manner to protect the role of Opposition members, regardless of what Government members believe the Opposition should be doing. But if members of the Opposition cannot ask impartial questions about the operations of a particular body, then I believe that the rights of the Opposition have been taken away. The position taken in this sessional order has not been sanctioned by any other Speaker, but this Speaker has made that decision and it is reflected in this motion.

I turn to the actions of this Government regarding the Standing Orders Committee and the committee system generally. The Goss Government's draft Parliamentary Committees Bill 1995 reveals its departure from key EARC and PEARC recommendations and flags a significant erosion of committee powers. Fitzgerald recommended the role of the committee system. EARC wrote a report which basically supported the Fitzgerald recommendations. The PEARC committee based its report on those recommendations. But now the Government has come up with its own Parliamentary Committees Bill outlining the procedure relating to committees.

The committees will play one overriding general role. There will be no power invested in them which is not invested initially by this Parliament. This Parliament will decide what the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Works Committee will investigate. It will decide how the Auditor-General will be selected. That is a move away from the recommendations of Fitzgerald, EARC and PEARC in this regard. The result will be a system that is incapable of vigorous and thorough review of Government policies and decisions.

The Labor Party always criticised the previous Government for not allowing a vigorous and thorough review of its policies and decisions. However, by endorsing these measures Government members are doing exactly the same thing. This Government has bypassed the Standing Orders Committee. It has not even convened it; the committee has not even met. These new sessional orders will be passed by this House without reference to that committee.

The 1989 Fitzgerald report and subsequent EARC and PEARC reports on parliamentary reform maintained that the introduction of a comprehensive parliamentary committee system was necessary to enhance the ability of Parliament to monitor the efficiency of the Government. That is not being done. The Auditor-General will not undertake performance auditing. The members of the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Works Committee will vote on party lines. The Premier has repeatedly affirmed that a strong parliamentary system is part of the Government's reform package, but he has rejected the Fitzgerald/EARC recommendation that the powers of the Auditor-General be boosted to include

performance auditing of departments on the grounds that the parliamentary committee system will perform that role. In terms of the draft Parliamentary Committees Bill, the Goss Government is robbing the parliamentary committee system of the tools with which to perform such a task. A similar situation has occurred with this sessional order. Government members know full well that the Standing Orders Committee has not even met. The committee has not sanctioned these measures; the House has instead a sessional order presented by the Leader of the House.

Following its review of the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission's findings, PEARC unanimously adopted a draft Queensland Parliament Bill in line with its own recommendations. However, the Government went against those recommendations in the draft Parliamentary Committees Bill. The Bill states—

> "The Legislative Assembly may authorise a statutory committee to call for persons, documents and things."

In the future, this Parliament will provide committees with their terms of reference. What will occur if the Standing Orders Committee does not meet? What will occur if the catering committee does not meet? What will occur if the Parliamentary Service Commission does not meet? Will we merely bypass all of those procedures and let the Parliament vote whichever way it likes? That is not what EARC recommended, it is not what Fitzgerald recommended, and it certainly is not what PEARC recommended, yet Government members are prepared to vote in support of this change to the sessional orders that has been proposed by the Leader of the House.

The proposal outlined in the draft Parliamentary Committees Bill represents a major departure from EARC and PEARC recommendations and represents a substantial curtailing of committee powers. EARC recommended that scrutiny committees have the following general powers—

> "the power to call for persons, papers and records and to examine witnesses;
>
> the power to generate their own inquiries and accept references from the House."

What role has the Standing Orders Committee played in formulating this change to the sessional orders? What role have we as Opposition members on the committee played? Absolutely none. We have not been consulted; this matter has not been referred to us. We simply must accept the wishes of the Speaker, the Leader of the House and whoever else had any part in framing this sessional order. The proposal provides only that, once the system has been tested, the Standing Orders Committee might be able to have a look at it—three years down the track.

PEARC supported the recommendations of EARC relating to scrutiny committees and incorporated those recommendations in part 2 of its Queensland Parliament Bill. That section states—

> "A person may be ordered to attend before, or attend before and produce a document to, the . . . committee"——

Mr Welford: What is the relevance of this?

Mr LINGARD: In effect, the power of committees to generate their own inquiries by calling for witnesses and documents has been subordinated by a requirement—and this is the relevance of it—that the Legislative Assembly must authorise such action. Of course, that is exactly what the Government has done today; it is exactly what it has done with committees so far and it is exactly what it intends to do with committees in the future.

The Government is saying that this House will authorise what the committee will do. It will authorise what the PAC will do. It will authorise what the PWC will do. It will authorise what the Auditor-General will look at. The Government is saying that it will not allow the Auditor-General to look at the performances of each department; it will merely let him check the invoices and statements and report back to the Parliament. That is not in keeping with the recommendations of Fitzgerald, EARC or PEARC.

This is substantially undermining the independence and powers of committees and leaving the door open for political interference in potentially politically damaging committee investigations. That is exactly what has happened. I do not want to go any further with that particular point, but I am sure that Government members would understand that there is merit in what I have said, and they have allowed that to happen today. They might think it is a joke that the Standing Orders Committee has not met; they might think it is a joke that Opposition members have not been consulted. At the end of the day, everyone will know that Government members supported a proposal drafted by the Leader of the House, the Speaker and a few other people.

I want to make a couple of other points. I believe that there should have been a 14-day

rule in relation to responses to questions on notice. The Government can introduce complex legislation to this House and it sits on the table for only seven days, or fewer in some cases. Opposition members, with the limited resources provided to them, must wade through such legislation and be ready to debate it in detail within that short time frame. In such circumstances, 30 days is far too long a period in which an answer to a question on notice must be provided to the Opposition.

It is common knowledge that, when a member asks a question on notice, that member is seeking detailed and relevant information. The member may need that information immediately for work within his or her electorate or work within this Parliament. For a question on notice to be answered 30 days down the line is absolutely ridiculous. It is irrelevant whether that is the same time period adopted in other States. Clearly, this provision reinforces the power of the Government to control the Opposition. The Opposition has only seven days within which to absorb major pieces of legislation—and the Budget is a pertinent example—yet this Government, with the massive departmental and ministerial resources at its disposal, claims that it cannot answer questions on notice in fewer than 30 days. Mr Speaker, I put it to you that the Government is either lazy, incompetent or quite simply wants to take the political heat out of question time.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr LINGARD: The Government will do anything to make sure that the Opposition does not have any advantage. If that is what the Government is doing, then clearly that is not what EARC, PEARC and Fitzgerald recommended. The current system of answering questions on notice in one day is a system that has worked fairly for both Labor and the coalition in Opposition. There is no logical or reasonable argument to dump it. Surely if the Opposition can debate complex legislation after seven days' preparation, Ministers can answer questions under 30 days, or indeed in one day, as has been the system in this Parliament for decades. Has the Government opted for this choice? No, it has opted for the unreasonable and unworkable 30-day model. It wants to do everything it can in its power to gag the Parliament and to gag the Opposition.

I am also concerned about members asking questions. Mr Speaker, before you were even elected as the Speaker, you made statements in the press about what you were going to do with question time. The Premier also made those statements, yet it has taken five years to do this. Why now? I believe it is clearly to gag the Opposition. The Government has had five years to fix this up. I quote examples of the number of questions which were asked of previous Governments. I refer back to 1987-88 when, on a daily average, the Government then answered well over 20 questions per sitting day. In 1988-89, the number was well over 20. Today, the numbers 17 and 16 have been quoted. In 1994, the average number of questions for a day was 13.7. I believe that that is something that could have been improved by the Government and the Speaker, even if the House adopted the system adopted for the Estimates committees. Members were allowed to ask a question within a certain time and a Minister had only three minutes to answer that question. Something could have been done to improve the standard of question time.

We have seen the Premier and some of the Ministers take up to seven minutes to answer a question. I do not believe that that shows good control of the House. I repeat what I said before: I do not believe that this Government has implemented the committee system as per the EARC or PEARC recommendations, and certainly not as per Fitzgerald's recommendations. It has come to power riding on the back of the white horse of accountability. Government members talk about that all the time, but there is no accountability in what this Government is doing in this House.

Mr WELFORD (Everton) (3.35 p.m.): Government members have had enough. We want a good Opposition. For the first time in the five and a half years that we have been in Government, we are saying, "We have had enough. We want an Opposition." For the first time since we have been in Government, we are saying to Opposition members, "Look, we want to help you. We are going to give you a leg up. We want to do something for you that you have never done for yourselves, that is, give you a question time which you might make some use of."

This sessional order is about doing the very thing that the Opposition has complained about for so long but opposed belligerently for so long. The only reason these issues have not come before this House before now is that the very Opposition Leader who now stands in this place and opposes these sessional orders opposed the very same proposals when they were put to him years ago. He has had ample opportunity to work for a so-called workable package which he said he could have nutted

out if only the Standing Orders Committee had met. Well, the Standing Orders Committee did meet years ago and he was not the slightest bit interested. The Leader of the Opposition had no interest in any reform to Standing Orders that would, through question time, make the Government more accountable. He had not the slightest interest in expanding the opportunities for questions from the Opposition because he was concerned with only one interest—not the Opposition's interest, not the interest of the Parliament to keep the Government accountable, not the interest for an expanded and more accountable question time, he was concerned only for his self-interest and preserving for himself the privileged position that he now enjoys above every back bench Opposition member in the Parliament.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr WELFORD: And he continues to sustain a position which deprives the honourable member for Southport, a lowly Opposition front bencher, and every other backbencher on the Opposition, the chance to get a decent say during question time.

Every member of the Opposition knows that this sessional order will expand their access to ask questions in question time, but they are not in the Parliament because they sit in their rooms in shame that their own leader would be so self-interested and so petty that he does not want to give them the chance to ask questions. Opposition members know that, at the end of the debate, they will have to come in here and vote against the very amendment to Standing Orders—temporary as it may be—that gives them, for the first time since they have been in Opposition, the chance to ask questions in the House every day.

Mr Lingard interjected.

Mr WELFORD: If the member for Beaudesert ever thought that there was a joke about Standing Orders, this has to be it, that he is standing up here and prepared to deprive all of the Opposition backbenchers of the chance to put questions to the Government every day.

The most disappointing feature of this debate today is that we see a desperate Opposition. It is a sign of a desperate Opposition that has given up before it has even started. Where else in the world would there be a parliamentary Opposition giving up before it has started?

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr WELFORD: The honourable member for Southport would appreciate the analogy. Opposition members are like members of a football team walking onto the field and undoing their laces as they walk on; they are giving up before they start. Opposition members are not saying to themselves, "There is an opportunity under this new mechanism for us to line up 3,000 questions a year. We will line up from the front bench for our backbenchers to whip in and ask questions on notice and questions without notice." They are saying, "We will not coordinate our questions to take advantage of this opportunity. No, we will give up." They are putting their feet in the air and saying, "Sorry, it is too hard; we don't want it. We do not want the opportunity for extra questions; we do not want the backbenchers of the Government assisting us in running a decent Opposition. We have given up." Mr Speaker, Opposition members have given up. This Government wants to help them. We want them to have the opportunity to ask questions. We yearn for a better Opposition, but members opposite just have not got what it takes, because they have given up.

We have heard Opposition members before me—and we will hear Mr Santoro after me—say, "We love the silver platter, thanks, but we just don't want it. We want to flick pass it. It is too hard. Don't give me the ball; it is a hot potato. It is too hard for us in Opposition. We don't want the chance to do any better as an Opposition than we do now. We are happy being a bunch of losers." That is what they are, and what they are doing today confirms in the minds of every one of us—and especially Opposition backbenchers—how pathetic their leadership is that they do not grasp this opportunity and run with it instead of running away from it.

The Leader of the Opposition said that this was a subversion of the Standing Orders Committee. He wanted to know what the point of a Standing Orders Committee is. That is a good question. As the Standing Orders Committee is currently constituted, one would have to ask what value it has been to the last Parliament. We know it has been of no value to this Parliament, because it has not met. But why would it meet when the one crucial test that it had during the course of the last Parliament was to try to get together—in Mr Borbidge's words—a workable package of reforms with respect to Parliament and question time? What did Mr Borbidge do? He stonewalled it from the start. He did not want to be part of it. Now he is asking questions about the Standing Orders Committee being

effective. Now that the Government has taken the initiative and said, "Look, we will do something about it with a temporary trial of sessional orders", Mr Borbidge says, "I now want the Standing Orders Committee to meet." He has not had the slightest interest in letting the Standing Orders Committee operate effectively in the past. Now that the Government has grasped the opportunity to do something about it, all of a sudden Mr Borbidge wants the Standing Orders Committee to meet. He even wrote to the Speaker obsequiously saying, "Mr Speaker, isn't this awful. The Standing Orders Committee has not met. Surely we can get together a workable package." The Leader of the Opposition has had his opportunity, and he knocked it back twice. We are going to do this and do it properly. That is what this motion is about.

There is another issue that Opposition members have raised. In fact, the member who spoke prior to me was very concerned about this. I refer to the rule that questions on notice must be answered within 30 days. I note that the Opposition has conspicuously avoided including backbenchers on its list of speakers——

Dr Watson: I'm scheduled to speak.

Mr WELFORD: I look forward with interest to the former Federal parliamentarian the member for Moggill ever having something to say about this. I presume he will tell us that the Federal Parliament's role and procedures are no good, because we are effectively putting them into place. Opposition members have raised the issue of whether answers should be given within 30 days. The member for Beaudesert needs to make up his mind. He wants the answers to be supplied within a day and says that this system has worked well elsewhere. On the other hand, he is always complaining about the adequacy of answers given by Ministers or the bureaucracy. If the member wants proper answers—full and accurate responses—to questions on notice, there must be a reasonable time within which Ministers can ensure that those answers are prepared. Thirty days for the provision of an answer to a question on notice is the standard practice in every other Parliament in Australia, give or take a few days, yet Opposition members want answers tomorrow—answers that are potentially inadequate. They cannot have it both ways. They cannot expect answers to be provided tomorrow and for them to be full and accurate.

The Leader of the Opposition says that questions answered within 30 days can be news today and fish and chip paper tomorrow. The sad tragedy is that most of the questions asked by Opposition members in the past five years that I have been a member of this place have been questions today and fish and chip paper in 30 seconds. That is how effective their questioning has been; it has been pathetic. We are trying to give them an expanded opportunity to improve the strategic approach they take to question time, but they are passing it up; and even worse, they are trying to resist that opportunity.

The proposition that this initiative is about Executive control is laughable. The reality is that if the Government took no initiative on this and if Mr Speaker had not been encouraging the Government to take any initiative on this no change would ever occur. Where is the change going to come from if the Government does not move the motion for the sessional order? The Opposition has not attempted to move a similar motion. Not once during his speech today did the Leader of the Opposition put forward any element of the so-called workable package that he reckons he could now get out of the Standing Orders Committee—if only it would meet at his behest. Not once did he indicate one element of a so-called workable package of reforms to question time which he says he wants. He was happily doing a bagging job of every element of the proposed sessional order, but he offered not one alternative—not one constructive suggestion as to how he and the Opposition could effectively use question time to make the Government more accountable. I believe that is indicative of the extent of the Opposition's seriousness about this matter. It is an indication of its genuineness. Opposition members could not care less if question time did not change for another century.

The very same situation applies to petitions. Opposition members are happy for the wording on petitions to remain the same, because they do not give a damn whether the petitions that members present are ruled out of order. They do not care. They did not care when they were in Government, and they do not care about the effectiveness of petitions now. If they did care, they would be saying, "Yes, we acknowledge the need to reform the wording of petitions to make it simple, plain English and accessible to all of Queensland's citizenry." But no, they want to keep the archaic language because it suits their interests not to have a more effective Parliament.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr WELFORD: The Parliament is not effective now to the extent that Opposition members are such failures; that is right. Everyone knows that the performance of this Parliament is limited by the weakness and incompetence of this Opposition. It is a tragedy that when opportunities are provided to improve the capacity of Opposition members to collect petitions and have them presented and ruled valid and when the opportunity is provided for every member of the Opposition to put a question on notice every day that Parliament sits, they run away from it.

I cannot for the life of me understand what motivated the totally misdirected attack by the Leader of the Opposition on some of the parliamentary committees of this place. The comments that the Leader of the Opposition made about the Privileges Committee are thoroughly without foundation. I cannot understand what he was driving at when he suggested that the Privileges Committee's role in respect of any of the matters dealt with by this sessional order could be anything other than a constructive role. Of all the reports that the Privileges Committee has submitted to this Parliament—and I think there are about four of them—three of them were unanimous. If I may be so indiscreet as to stray ever so slightly on the privacy of the committee's operation, I might say that the fourth one went very close, too.

Let me be the last to say that the fourth report lacked unanimity only because of the intervention of the Opposition Leader. Let me be the last to suggest that. Of course, when it suits the Leader of the Opposition he will complain all day, arguing by assertion that the Government intervenes in the operation of parliamentary committees by Executive pressure on Government members. I believe that the only pressure that has ever been exerted on the operation of the committees of which I have been a member has been exerted by the Opposition leadership for purely political purposes because, despite the fact that its members on those committees were wanting to reach unanimous decisions in committee, the Opposition had a political position it wanted to take and it would not allow its members to agree.

In the last few moments I have to speak, I will dwell on the citizen's right to reply. With respect to this matter, I must say that I and the Leader of the Opposition have some measure of agreement. But it only goes to the extent that I share the concern, which I think every member of this House might justifiably hold, that the privileges of members of this House should not be unduly curtailed. I do not see anything in the sessional order that amounts to that in any way whatsoever. The proposition that the Privileges Committee has any sort of serious adjudicative role in determining matters when a citizen applies for or makes a submission to have a right of reply is completely misguided. It will not be the role of the Privileges Committee to put the member on trial whenever a citizen makes a submission for the right to be heard. By and large, I think that all in this place should feel perfectly comfortable with the idea that, if we get up in this House under privilege and make criticism—fair or otherwise—of a person outside this House, all things being equal, their right of reply should be respected. Nevertheless, I think it is fair to say that that right of reply should be subject to some restriction. It should not be a completely unfettered right of reply.

As experience is developed, we will need to look to the practice of the Senate in respect of the right of reply which is, as I understand it, granted very cautiously and very sparingly. Over time, we will need to develop some principles which will determine when it is appropriate and when it is not appropriate for a citizen to have a right of reply. I believe that the starting point should be that, all things being equal, the right of reply should be granted unless there is good reason not to grant it. Possible reasons for not granting it, and I am not trying to pre-empt the deliberations of the Privileges Committee or any future ethics committee in this regard, are the guidelines set out on page 5 of the discussion paper issued by Mr Speaker in October last year. The guidelines set out on that page are not repeated in the draft motion in that discussion paper, nor in the sessional orders motion which we are debating today. However, they are worthy of note. I will make clear what those broad, suggested guidelines are. Firstly, that the procedure be available to individuals and corporations; secondly, that the procedures relate only to statements made in the House and be available only in circumstances in which the statements can reasonably be considered actionable in a court of law had they been made outside the House; thirdly, that the Privileges Committee consider the submissions and in doing so adopt the practice of not attempting to determine the truth or otherwise of the initial allegation or subsequent response—that third element is, of course, in the sessional order—and, fourthly, that the rules covering the content of replies be similar to those for a

member making a personal explanation, that is, they must be succinct and strictly relevant to the issue.

All of those principles are useful starting points for the consideration of those matters. I particularly emphasise the one that is not incorporated in the sessional order formally, that is, the requirement that the procedure relate to those cases where the statements might reasonably be actionable outside the House. For example, if a member in the House makes a criticism based upon a proved fact or something that is an established fact and accepted as true by everyone in the community, then it seems to me to be pointless that the person who is damned by that truth should have a right of reply simply because the truth about them is reported in the Parliament. However, all other things being equal, where it has not been proved in a court of law or established in some other form, that right of reply should be allowed.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (3.55 p.m.): I will contribute briefly to this debate and I say from outset that I support totally the contributions made by the previous three speakers from this side of the House. I have never heard such repetitive diatribe as that which we have just heard from the honourable member who preceded me. It seem that when the Government is on a losing argument, its members repeat themselves in personal abuse against speakers such as the honourable Leader of the Opposition, who made perfectly good sense when he condemned the lack of action of this Government in relation to the Standing Orders Committee. It is no use the honourable member who has just spoken saying that this Parliament had to act because the Leader of the Opposition refused to give his support to exactly the same proposal when it came before the Standing Orders Committee, because it is obvious that the Leader of the Opposition finds it totally objectionable today and he rose in his place and said so. He obviously found it totally objectionable when it came before the Standing Orders Committee. He was well within his rights at that time to object to it and he did so. Nothing magical has happened since the time when, in the true spirit of bipartisanship, the Standing Orders Committee should have got together and tried to work out a solution that was sensible and acceptable to everybody on both sides of the House. That particular committee, for whatever reason—and only cynical people would suggest this and I suppose that I am reflecting the views of cynical people—wanted to please the Government, as opposed to coming up with something that was workable and acceptable to everybody. So it is no use the honourable member for Everton coming into this House and making the suggestion that it was in the court of the Leader of the Opposition to come up with something workable some time ago, because when a proposal is presented as a fait accompli before any committee, and particularly if there has been no consultation and no attempt to reach common ground, it is rejected by people on this side and that is precisely what the Leader of the Opposition did. He has the support not only of his front bench but also his entire back bench.

Today, we are witnessing a travesty of parliamentary procedure. In our view, this is another step by this Government to subjugate the Parliament to the will of the Executive. They are clearly the actions of a Government that is worried. The member for Everton suggested that the Opposition was out of touch, worried and had given up before the game is started. How utterly and totally untrue. The major reason the Government is resorting to introducing an order such as the one we are debating is that the Government is worried. It is worried about the effectiveness of Opposition questioning and it is worried because there will soon be an election. This procedural order seeks to reduce the effectiveness of Opposition questioning. If the Government was fair dinkum about achieving its often-stated goal, as repeated in this debate by members opposite, why did it not move for the amendment of Standing Orders by granting to each backbencher the opportunity to put a question on notice? If the Government believes that the Opposition is so ineffective under the current form of questioning, why not leave us to our own ineffectiveness? Why not very simply amend Standing Orders so as to allow every backbench member to put a question on notice every day?

Mr Welford: That's what we're doing.

Mr SANTORO: I take that interjection. That is not what the Government is doing. It is doing that by this procedural amendment, but it is also curtailing the effectiveness of the questioning that is occurring at the moment. It is doing two things. It is destroying the system of questioning that exists at the moment and it is implementing a system of questioning that suits the Government. The reason it suits the Government is that it is an election year and the whole concept of "temporary", as expressed and defined in this debate, is a facade. It is only temporary——

Mr Quinn interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I take the interjection from the honourable member for Merrimac. It hides the logs—the incompetence that is manifested every day by Ministers as they attempt to answer even the simplest of questions. They bumble and they fumble and want somebody else to get them out of it. Try as they may, they never quite succeed.

The whole concept of this procedure being temporary is rejected by this side of the House. It is simply a convenient ploy to protect the Government during the sensitive period of an election year and an election campaign. All I can say is that if the Government is really fair dinkum about wanting to amend question time, it has had six years in which to do it. As the member for Beaudesert has said, the Government has come into this place proclaiming that it is a reforming Government, yet it has taken an election year to do this. The Government knows that we have only another three weeks or four weeks of sittings in this place before we go to the people, and it knows that the Opposition is going to question it on the tough issues, such as the closure of hospital wards, the closure of police stations and the downfall in all areas of Government service delivery. The Government does not like that because it believes that the Opposition's argument is beginning to bite. It is right; it is beginning to bite. The Opposition is not going to submit to this facade. It is not going to agree that the Government needs to be protected. It will not support this procedural amendment. It is just not on.

I listened to some previous speakers tell us how we on the Opposition side, particularly on the front bench, deprive our backbenchers of opportunities to speak.

Mr Welford: You in particular.

Mr SANTORO: Day after day, the pattern is never broken in that the Whip and the Deputy Whip of the Labor Party ask the questions. Where are the opportunities given to Government backbenchers by those two people who hold official positions? Day after day, never once do they give way to the ALP back bench. It does not matter how much time is consumed, particularly on Tuesday, by the longwinded answers of Ministers. I ignored the honourable member for Everton when he said to me, "You in particular." However, let me remind members of the many times that Mr Lingard and I, as the deputies of our own parties, give way not just to our own shadow ministerial colleagues but also to our back bench when the need exists. We are the ones who, within the practical workings of this Parliament, show consideration for our backbenchers and not the two appointed people—the Whip and the Deputy Whip of the Labor Party—who never once in this place have given way to the rest of the Government back bench.

Mr Quinn: The invisible back bench.

Mr SANTORO: I take that interjection—the invisible back bench. The other point that has been raised in this place is the interstate experience of questions on notice. Government members have said that more questions are asked in other Parliaments than are asked in this place. The question that we must ask is, why in this place is the figure down to as low as 2.1 questions per day? Again, that is not because of a problem with the Opposition or because of a problem with the present Standing Orders. It lies in the problem of Ministers rising and answering questions in a longwinded and filibustering way, which means that question time in this place is not fulfilled in the way that the spirit of the Standing Orders intends it to be fulfilled. That is the major reason why the number of questions on notice asked in this place is so low in comparison with the number of questions on notice asked in other States.

Of course, throughout this whole debate, the Opposition has been leading up to the precise question: what is the role of Parliament? I have heard some arguments put by Government members and by other people in this place that one of the major reasons why questions can be excluded from *Hansard* is the cost. I say that there is no more permanent record of what happens in this place than *Hansard*, and Ministers should be eventually and essentially accountable to providing the answers to questions, whether they are on notice or without notice, asked in this place. It is in this place that the whole accountability process must essentially come to rest, not within the Clerk's office, not within the Bills and Papers Office—respectable as those offices and officers may be; I am casting no aspersion on them. Eventually and essentially the whole process of accountability must find its solace within this place. I do not accept that the cost of producing a slightly larger *Hansard* as a result of the incorporation of answers to questions on notice should be used as a reason to exclude the incorporation of those answers in *Hansard*.

If members of the Executive Government and members of the Ministry are fair dinkum about reducing the cost of incorporating answers in *Hansard*, they should make sure that their answers are relevant, that they do

not try to hide the truth—as these days they so often do within an incredible amount of meaningless verbiage—and that they give the Opposition proper answers. That is the answer to the question about the cost of incorporating many answers in *Hansard* and instead providing them to some other officers of the Parliament, not the officers who help us run this Parliament.

It is not on that the answers are available to the press and to other people who make inquiries. There is nothing more immediate to the press than an answer to a question that is presented in this place during question time when most of the members of the press gallery are, in fact, listening to what is happening. Government members may not like what I am saying, but it is the truth. Eventually and essentially it is in this place that the Ministers and the Government should be accountable.

When one looks at the way in which the Standing Orders Committee has been treated, I concur totally with other Opposition members who have said that the treatment of that committee, or the lack of meetings, is again representative of the attitude of this Government towards the whole committee system. I heard the honourable member for Everton have the hide to suggest that one of four reports of the committee which he chairs was not unanimous because of interference by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Welford: I said, "Let me be the last to say that."

Mr SANTORO: I take that interjection. In a facile, cynical, sarcastic and meaningless way, the member tries to cover himself, as he usually does. I should say that, always unsuccessfully, the member tries to qualify his inane comments and invariably he has egg and embarrassment on his face.

Let me remind Government members of the time when the full weight of Executive Government came to weigh very heavily on the shoulders of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee when he was forced to renege on the unanimous conclusions and findings of his own committee only to be reminded by members of his committee of what his committee's report was. He had the decency, and certainly in my eyes and in the eyes of other members of the Opposition he distinguished himself when he, in fact, reversed his public statements and decided to support the committee.

I urge honourable members to refresh their memories of the pressure that was placed on Mr Peter Beattie, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, when he, as a very ethical chairman of that committee, was subjected to enormous pressure to do the bidding of Executive Government. Government members know that, time after time, that occurred. So let us not have it from the honourable member for Everton or from other Government members that it is Opposition members who seek to influence the due process and the integrity of parliamentary committees. After all, it is the Government members who control the numbers on those committees and it is Government members—the latest example being the Public Works Committee—who use partisan means to come up with partisan results from the deliberations of committees.

Mrs Woodgate: Oh, rubbish!

Mr SANTORO: I take the interjection from whoever said that it was rubbish. The public record speaks for itself. It is available to everybody and all the intelligent, expert commentators on the workings of this place understand clearly that what I am saying is the truth. They will continue to write it up in that way and eventually it will sink in to Government members that the respect that they show for the system of parliamentary committees cannot be measured because it just simply does not exist.

Earlier, when the whole issue of telecasting Parliament came up, I listened with great interest to an exchange between the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Liberal Party. I support the telecasting of Parliament, because I agree with other members on both sides of this House that the broadcasting of Parliament would lead to a more decorous performance by all members within this place. Again, that exchange was another disgraceful attempt by members opposite to personalise the debate, to seek to render it meaningless and bring it down to a common denominator, something that members on this side of the House will neither participate in nor cooperate with.

I said that I would not take up my entire time during this debate. As I am always true to my word, I am about to conclude. The Opposition absolutely rejects that this sessional order is the way to achieve what the Government and members opposite want to achieve.

Mr Welford: What's your solution?

Mr SANTORO: I will tell the honourable member what my solution is. My solution is that, if the Government is fair dinkum about

giving back benchers their 40 questions per day, or whatever number of questions is possible, I suggest that the Government leave the Standing Orders as they are and amend them to the extent that every backbench member of the Parliament on both sides of the House will be allowed to ask a question on notice. I suggest that those answers should be provided within a reasonable time. In concurrence with other members on this side of the House, I suggest that 30 days is a ridiculous response time. That is how the Government gives effect to its major arguments in favour of this sessional order. I point out to the honourable member for Everton that this is my solution. I do not think that any reasonable member would argue with it.

Mr Welford: What about questions without notice?

Mr SANTORO: We want questions without notice to stay precisely as they are, because that is the way in which we have been keeping the Government honest and accountable. That is the crux of this debate. The Government wants to hide and does not want to be accountable, in particular during this very sensitive election year. We will do our very best to keep it accountable. Being as bankrupt as it is of any morality in relation to these issues, I am sure that we will succeed in that attempt.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (4.13 p.m.): I rise to support the motion. This reform is part of a long process of repairing the damage to the institution of Parliament done during the Bjelke-Petersen era. It is part of a process of attempting to restore this Parliament to its rightful place at the centre of debate on matters of public importance to the Queensland people.

It is a process that dates back to the reforms recommended by Commissioner Fitzgerald in 1989. Central to that report and to the endemic corruption which that report found was the need to restore this House to its central role in public affairs—the need to restore accountability of the Executive to the Legislature. When one reads the Fitzgerald report, it is important to remember that the vehicles set up in the wake of that report—namely the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission and the Criminal Justice Commission—were not ends in themselves but were means to an end, that end being the restoration of a healthy parliamentary democracy. The structure that Mr Fitzgerald, as he then was, recommended was one which involved accountability of those commissions to the Parliament by their parliamentary committees.

The point is that the role of Parliament in making laws, in making the Executive accountable and in determining the expenditure of public money is fundamental to the rights and liberties which we enjoy as individuals. But it must be said that the institution of Parliament does not go through history in a pristine, unchanged state. Each generation must reinvent the Parliament to make it relevant to modern times.

As I listened to the debate throughout the day and heard the arguments advanced by the Opposition, I was struck by the tender irony of an Opposition arguing against the availability of additional questions during question time. What a deep embarrassment it must be for the supporters of the once proud Liberal Party in Brisbane to have its advocates standing here without a blush of embarrassment passing across their faces arguing against additional questions being permitted in question time! Their argument is the argument for business as usual. If there is one thing we know from this debate, it is that business as usual is by no means the best of all possible worlds.

This is a reform. Throughout the world different parliaments try different ways to ensure that question time is meaningful and contributes to the public life of their jurisdictions. This is an attempt to ensure that we in Queensland make reforms to ensure that this institution remains relevant. Times change, workplaces change, families change and societies change, and Parliament must change with them if it is to remain relevant.

Let me turn to several matters contained in the motion. The provision for additional questions on notice will be strongly welcomed, I am sure, by all backbench members of the Government. I well remember in the previous Parliament the difficulties in ensuring that matters of topical relevance to one's own electorate could be aired at the time when they were relevant to issues of the day.

Mr FitzGerald: Thirty days later.

Mr FOLEY: I hear the honourable member for Lockyer referring to the 30-day rule. I would have thought that that is a necessary consequence of dramatically extending the range of questions capable of being asked. One really wonders at the logic of the Opposition that it is driven to such modes of argument. Of course there will need to be some further time. If one is to allow

every member of Parliament to ask a question every day, this will take a little more time. But the trade-off is the tremendously enhanced opportunity for each member of Parliament representing his or her constituency to ask the Executive about matters of importance, either in the general public interest or of interest to his or her electorate. I would have thought that that is a small price to pay and one that will be welcomed well and truly by Opposition back benchers who grace question time all too seldom in this House.

That having been said, I think that the motion has a message for all of us, both in the Opposition and in the Government. In the Government, the provision of general rules for answers reminds Ministers that answers are to be relevant to the question and that matters are not to be debated in answers. From time to time, we all need to be reminded of the importance of following these rules. I hope that that message is driven home to members of the Opposition. Also, the provisions dealing with rules for questions provide that questions shall be brief, relate to one issue and shall not contain arguments inferences, imputations or hypothetical matters.

Under the Bjelke-Petersen regime, we saw how Parliament could be damaged by an arrogant, overbearing Government. It is equally true that Parliament can be damaged by an arrogant, rabblerousing Opposition that fails to respect the dignity of the institution of the Parliament. I respectfully submit to the House that in this motion there are matters which both sides of the House could well take note of if we are to raise our game to a level that the Queensland people expect of us.

Finally, let me turn to the reform relating to matters of parliamentary privilege. As the Chairman of the Parliamentary Privileges Committee in the previous Parliament, this matter did cause me some trouble. The right of free speech in the Parliament was a right that was hard won indeed, and the English Civil War some three centuries ago burnt into the consciousness of the English-speaking peoples the need to ensure that people may speak freely in Parliament without fear of being called into question in the courts of the land. That is important because of the role that the Parliament plays in those three areas—the making of laws, the accountability of the Executive to Parliament and in the expenditure of public moneys. But it happens all too frequently that individuals can have their reputations damaged in the course of that debate, and the mechanism which has been proposed is an attempt to provide some remedy.

That is, I think, something which Parliaments around the world have tried to grapple with. There is no easy solution to the problem of reconciling the privilege of free speech with the rights of individuals to be free from defamation, but this mechanism is a serious attempt to strike that reasonable balance. This Parliament is a place for the debate of matters of public importance and public interest, for ensuring that the great debates of our time are conducted in a way which is representative of all interests in the community and not merely conducted through the organs of the mass media, who may represent only a very limited proportion of our community. So this function of Parliament as being a place of wide-ranging debate must be protected, but in the process individuals can be hurt. This is, I think, an important attempt to ensure that there is some redress of grievance.

In conclusion, I make the point that these are reforms to the letter of the Standing Orders. For real progress, we need continuous improvement not only in the letter but also in the spirit of Parliament. Reforming the letter of the law is an important step in ensuring a better spirit in the Parliament, and for that reason, I strongly support the motion and encourage all members of the House to do likewise.

Dr WATSON (Moggill) (4.24 p.m.): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to speak on the changes to the sessional orders moved by the Leader of the House. After listening to the contributions by some Government members, I wonder whether they were really listening to what the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party said. The central thrust of their argument was that this was a political stunt; that there was no attempt to use the existing instrument of the House, the Standing Orders Committee, to address this issue. Government members harked back to the previous Parliament. The affairs of the Standing Orders Committee of the previous Parliament are irrelevant to this Parliament. The critical issue is the role that the Standing Orders Committee could have played in this particular Parliament.

The question that needs to be addressed is whether or not this is a genuine attempt to introduce—or to trial, as the member for Brisbane Central and other members have said—some changes to the sessional orders or whether it is just a political stunt leading up to the next election. I suggest to the Leader of

the House that, if he is serious and if he is not being disingenuous, then he will accept the reasonable proposals which I have put forward and which I have circulated in the Chamber. I formally move the following amendments—

> "1. Standing Order 67A Questions to Ministers
>
> Add at the end—
>
> 'A Member may ask during Question Time a question on notice for the next day of sitting, in lieu of a question without notice'.
>
> 2. Standing Order 67E Notice of Questions
>
> Second paragraph, third line, omit '30', insert '14'.
>
> 3. Standing Order 69 General Rules for Answers
>
> Add the following sub-paragraphs—
>
> '(iv) Notwithstanding standing order 69(iii) an answer shall not be longer than 3 minutes;
>
> (b) If a Minister requests a question be placed on notice it is to be answered at the next day of sitting'.
>
> 4. Standing Order 70 Questions not put to Speaker
>
> Omit 'Questions may not be put to the Speaker' and insert 'A question on notice may be put to the Speaker relating to any matter of administration for which he is responsible'."

I want to address some of those amendments and some aspects of the motion moved by the Leader of the House.

The Leader of the Opposition did not suggest that there was no merit in the proposals presented by the Leader of the House. All members acknowledge that the procedures of the House ought to be changed. The point that was made by the Leader of the Opposition is that there has been no consultation. If the Government is serious about changing parliamentary procedure, it should sit down with the Opposition and try to come up with something that is acceptable to both sides of the House.

Let us assume for the moment that the Leader of the House is serious; that we have here a serious attempt to make the procedures of the House work a little better. I have suggested some amendments that would enhance this proposal even further. For example, in the first instance, I have suggested that Standing Order 67A should be adjusted not by changing its present provisions but simply by adding another alternative. The alternative is this: if a member wants to forego his or her question without notice by placing a question on notice during question time, that question will be answered on the next sitting day. What is wrong with that? If a member asks a question without notice and if the answer turns out to be more complex than expected or the member needs a slightly more detailed answer, that member should be able to say, "I forgo my right to a question without notice and place that question on notice." The Minister can then answer the question the next day. That is no different from the current procedure, and it seems to me to be a reasonable suggestion.

My second amendment is to proposed Standing Order 67E—the third line of that paragraph—and changes the response time from 30 days to 14 days. I have heard members get up in this House and say, "Look, no-one expects it to take 30 days for an answer; we all expect the answer to come a little faster than that." This is a trial period, so we should set a realistic time, and that time is not 30 days. That would be okay for this sitting, because we are sitting for two weeks and we will be sitting again in May—in more than 30 days' time. However, we sit again on 23 May and go through to early June. Potentially we would have finished that sittings before we get any answers to questions on notice.

The member for Everton spoke about the scrutiny of Government. If Government members are really talking about that, then during that Budget period they ought to be prepared to have questions put on notice and to have Ministers answer them within a reasonable time frame of 14 days so that they can be used again in the Estimates committee process or in the parliamentary process. What is the Government hiding from? When it comes to the Budget period and Estimates committees, why does the Government want to say that a question on notice does not have to be answered for 30 days? Why do Ministers not just answer the questions?

Mr Littleproud: These are the people who shut down Parliament after bringing down the Budget.

Dr WATSON: That might be right. Then it would not matter whether they had 30 days or 30 minutes to answer a question. Under those circumstances, any time would be too long. That is the question that has to be asked. Why do we not have a reasonable time period? It does not matter when the Parliament is dissolved for the next election.

Government Ministers will never be able to satisfy everyone by providing answers to their questions, but at least the Government could be a bit more honest and say that its intention would be to answer those questions within a reasonable period.

I accept that it would be unreasonable to expect details to be provided within one day if 50 or 60 questions had been put on notice in one day. Along with everyone else, I would accept that. Thirty days is too long. Under those circumstances, the onus is not placed back on the Executive to answer questions and, in the context of the parliamentary sitting period, it does not get the question answered within an appropriate time frame.

When it comes to question time, the thing that drives everyone crazy and makes the Government less accountable is not the way that the questions are structured, by either Opposition or Government members—even though I am sure that sometimes that could be improved—the abuse of question time comes from the length of Ministers' answers. Ministers often filibuster because they do not want to be asked another question, or senior Ministers filibuster so that other Ministers do not get cross-examined. That is the abuse of question time. If the Government is going to restructure question time, that central issue needs to be addressed. At the moment that is not being addressed. That issue is addressed in my third amendment.

Of course, sometimes Ministers filibuster right from the word go. In those circumstances, the Speaker ought to be given the discretion to sit the Minister down straightaway. It does not matter whether the Speaker believes it or not, we have to put the responsibility on the Minister that he or she has to give a relevant answer in a precise fashion. That is what my proposed Standing Order 69(iv) is designed to achieve. From that, the expectation is that a Minister ought to be able to answer a question in three minutes or less. They do not need to ramble on. They do not need dorothy dixers that go on for 10, 15 or 20 minutes. They do not need a Premier or any other Minister to ramble without addressing the central issue in the question. If Government members want to address question time, they have to put the responsibility on the Executive to ensure that answers are relevant and concise. That is what my amendment endeavours to achieve.

Finally, while talking about Standing Order 69, my amendment (v) proposes that if a Minister cannot answer a question—from time to time Ministers ask for questions to be put on notice—and it is agreed that the question be put on notice, it ought to be answered the next sitting day. The Government's proposed sessional orders do not refer to a Minister who wants a question to be put on notice—if it is agreed to by the member asking the question—having to answer that question the next sitting day. The only provision is that the question must be answered in 30 days because it has been put on notice. That is a particular weakness that ought to be addressed.

My final suggested amendment provides for questions on the administration of the Parliament being put to the Speaker needing to be on notice. The member for Everton mentioned the House of Representatives. If he looked at the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, my dear colleague would find that the Speaker can be asked a question without notice concerning the administration of the Parliament. As members, we ought to be able to ask the Speaker a question about the running of the Parliament. I agree that, to maintain the decorum of the House, the Speaker should not be asked questions without notice, that any question to the Speaker should be given only on notice. That would give him a reasonable time to investigate the issue and also ensure that the Speaker is not put in a politically invidious position during question time. I accept that position. I think that it is appropriate that the Speaker be given a reasonable amount of time in which to answer questions. However, I do not accept that a member of this place should be barred from asking of the Speaker a question about the administration of the place in which we all serve. I do not think that that is being sufficiently accountable.

One has to think that the issue that has been placed before us is a political stunt because, if Government members were really interested in reforming the Standing Orders of this place, they would ask a far wider set of questions than those that have resulted in the motion put forward by the Leader of the House.

Mr Welford: Will you vote with us if we accept your amendments?

Dr WATSON: Yes. If the Leader of the House accepts all of my amendments, I will vote for the package.

Mr Welford: Not all of them.

Dr WATSON: All of them. If Government members are serious about changing the sessional orders, they will accept

these amendments. It is only a trial period; if they do not like it, they can change it. They have got the numbers in the place; what are they worried about?

A Government member: Nothing.

Dr WATSON: Then the Government ought to be willing to accept the changes that I have suggested. If Government members want to address the issue of the Standing Orders, they ought to have a committee—I would suggest a backbench committee of equal Government and Opposition numbers——

Mr Beattie: Equal numbers?

Dr WATSON: Yes, equal numbers, because both sides are in the House. It is an appropriate time for a committee of equal representation to actually look at the Standing Orders and bring forward a proposal that could be debated in this place. Again, if the committee presents proposals not to the Government's liking, the Government has got the numbers and any proposal would not be adopted. It seems to me that, in that situation, it is appropriate to have a committee of equal representation.

Let us examine the issues. For example, let us look at the sitting times and the pattern of sitting. Why do we run our parliamentary business today in the same way that it has always been run? Before I came to this place, when Labor was in Opposition, I know that its members criticised previous Governments about how the place was run. Why do we not come up with something? Is it beyond our wit to come up with a reasonable set of proposals upon which we can have agreement across the House? We should look at the times we start and finish. We should look at the way and the order in which legislation is debated. We should look at when ministerial statements are made in relation to question time. All of those issues are central to running this House. They are issues that we should be able to deal with.

Mr Laming: Maybe it should go to a committee.

Dr WATSON: That is what I suggested. I thank the member for Mooloolah for reinforcing that point.

The member for Bundaberg spoke about the extra time that private members have in this place. That is an issue that we should address even more. How much time should private members or, if one likes, backbench members—non-Executive Government members—have to speak in this House, and on what issues? What opportunities should they be given to introduce Bills and have them debated? If the Government is really talking about reforming the Standing Orders of this place in a serious way—in a way that is designed to make this place function better and a way that is designed to ensure that the Executive and the bureaucracy are accountable to this place on behalf of the people—then those are the issues that ought to be addressed.

The Government cannot blame the Leader of the Opposition and other members on this side of the House who say that this is a political stunt designed to do something before an election. If it is not a political stunt, the Government will accept these reasonable amendments. If it is not a political stunt, it will set up a backbench committee of equal numbers to address the Standing Order issue. But if it is a political stunt, this Government will reject everything that has been put forward—all those concepts—and there will be a division of the House, in which Government members will vote without any consideration of the Opposition's amendments or the reasonableness of those amendments and will end up voting against them. So that is the challenge—it is either a political stunt, or not. The Opposition has offered reasonable amendments. The Government should accept them, if it is game.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (4.42 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I second the amendment moved by the honourable member for Moggill. I have had discussions with the honourable member on some proposed amendments to the motion before the House. I have made some contribution to those amendments, and I totally support the package that has been put to this House by the Opposition as a very reasonable package so that we can get bipartisan support for the recommendations that have been made to the House. I believe that these are only minor amendments to the motion moved by the Leader of the House to put in place a sessional order. As the member for Moggill said, if the Leader of the House is quite genuine in his attempt to trial something that is completely different from what we have been used to, it is well worthy of a trial if the Government accepts the Opposition's amendment.

It is very reasonable that a member should be able to ask for a detailed answer to a question if he or she forgoes asking the question without notice. The Leader of the Opposition has proposed that the sessional orders contain a provision that members of the

House can ask one question each every day, except for the Leader of the Opposition, who has the right to ask two questions. I believe that all members should have the right to forgo that right to ask for a detailed answer on the next day of sitting. It is not unusual for a member to seek details on some matter and not want to wait 30 days for an answer. A Minister may not be expected to be competent to answer a question in detail. The backbencher, the private Government member or the private Opposition member may want the facts, so he or she can forgo the right to ask a question. Of course, the member must get the call. That is not a right that every member has. Members must get the call of the Speaker or the cooperation of the Whip to put them on the list, and then they can forgo their questions without notice, and those questions are placed on notice through the Speaker, as at present. That would be very reasonable.

Likewise, there is a parallel. A Minister might not wish to answer a question without notice straightaway; it might be too detailed, or the Minister may require a more accurate briefing on the matter. I see no harm in a Minister asking that a question be placed on the notice paper. I have no problem with that. It is far better to have an accurate, concise answer delivered the next day of sitting rather than a rambling tirade from a Minister who is trying to defend a position he knows nothing about. I have seen this happen amongst Ministers from all parties. I am not only critical of Ministers of this Government; I am critical of previous National Party and Liberal Party Governments. I have seen Ministers get up and belly-ache and carry on with answers that just fill in time and contribute nothing to debate in the House or the knowledge of the House. It would be more constructive if a Minister said, "I ask that the question be placed on notice." It is a historical fact that some of the best Ministers we have had in this place in years gone by were those who did not try to answer questions without notice; they asked that the question be placed on notice so they could give a more accurate answer the next day. They very rarely got into any trouble with the press or their constituencies. That became a reasonable answer for a Minister to give. He or she was always able to give a more accurate answer. In the past, I think it was always a he, because we did not have many female Ministers. I think Yvonne Chapman was the first in Queensland.

The member for Moggill spoke about whether it should be 30 days or longer or less for answers to be provided to questions on notice. I know that, in good faith, the Leader of the House has asked that it be 30 days. In New South Wales it is 35. In other places there is no time limit. Generally, answers are provided within about four weeks when no time limit is set. There is no time limit in the Federal Parliament. In some States, after two calendar months a member has the right to rise in the House and draw to the attention of the Speaker that he or she has not received an answer to a question.

This is going to be a bit of a suck-it-and-see exercise as to how many questions will be asked. The Minister says that 3,500 questions could be asked in a year, because there are 35 non-Executive members on this side of the House and there are about 35 on the Government side—about 70 members. If they all asked a question every day, obviously the departmental officers would have problems. I understand that, in 1993, this system was tried in New South Wales. I understand that 2,062 questions on notice were asked for that particular year. In 1994, 1,785 questions on notice were asked—a substantial number of questions. Last year in Western Australia, 3,117 questions on notice were asked.

In Victoria, members can ask many more questions than they can in New South Wales or Western Australia. In Victoria, the Leader of the Opposition is allowed to put four questions on notice every day, and every other member of the House can put three questions on notice every day. That does not require the call of the Speaker; they are lodged with the Clerk. Last year, there were 26 questions on notice in Victoria. My advice is that there was no Government action to curtail the number of questions on notice; it was just that members did not take that opportunity. So even though nearly 2,000 questions were asked in New South Wales, in Victoria, which has a more generous system, there were only 26. I do not know why members did not take that opportunity. Government members should talk to their Labor mates, who are in Opposition in Victoria. During the previous year in Victoria, only 128 questions were put on notice—under a more generous system than that offered here.

The Leader of the House does not know what workload he is creating for departmental officers. On behalf of most members of the House, I suggest that whereas we want accurate answers to our questions, I hope we could get them within a week, if possible. The Government could easily explain that there will be a delay because there have been 70 questions a day, especially if one department

is being targeted or a lot of information is being sought from a particular department. We would not expect extra officers to be brought in to cope with that workload, which may not exist for very long. That would be a legitimate explanation. I believe that the test of the good faith of the Government in introducing this sessional order will be if it tries to provide the answers as quickly as reasonably possible. If all the Ministers provide their answers on the twenty-ninth day, it will be seen for what it is—a stalling tactic. I hope the Government does not use stalling tactics. We will wait and see how the Government handles it. I would like to see "14 days" instead of "30 days". After a trial, it will require only one motion and it will be accepted.

Government backbenchers and Opposition backbenchers often complain about the length of time that Ministers speak. The coalition has provided some Ministers who set an excellent example of filling up time. Who can forget Bob Katter filling up five, six or seven minutes at the end of question time?

Mr Cooper: He wasn't a patch on Matt Foley.

Mr FITZGERALD: He was not a patch on the Honourable Minister for Employment, Matt Foley; I know that. Mr De Lacy, the Treasurer, is fairly good at going on with long, rambling answers. It is a different case if information is being hammered out, but honourable members should not forget that I am discussing questions without notice. How on earth can a Minister give a long, detailed answer to a question without notice? If we are going to have a fair dinkum trial, how about trying to hold Ministers' answers down to three minutes? I know the Speaker has every right to ask a Minister who is giving a lengthy answer to sit down. Of course, under Standing Orders the Speaker has a lot of rights.

I would like to compare our system with the system I saw operating in New Zealand. I observed a question time under the Labor Speaker, Kerry Burke. It became the culture of the New Zealand Parliament that the questions to be asked were distributed about 45 minutes before question time. Both the Government's questions and the Opposition's questions were distributed and members knew what the six major questions for the day would be. Members had the opportunity to ask supplementaries across the Chamber. If the Speaker thought the questions were being repeated, or a Minister was starting to repeat himself or herself, he stood and said, "Next question."

Mr Mackenroth: Could you imagine if the Speaker in this Parliament did that? You people would whinge like you wouldn't believe it.

Mr FITZGERALD: Kerry Burke was a very good Speaker and a culture must have developed in previous Parliaments, because—and I could not believe it—when a Minister was sat down, he did not try to get in an extra couple of sentences. The members of the Opposition did not try to continue; they sat in their places and said, "That is fair enough." That is the culture that had developed.

We are not too bad in this House. Sometimes we complain about rough treatment in question time, but one has only to look to the Federal Parliament to see how rough question time can be. I suggest a trial of Ministers' answers being limited to three minutes. The Honourable Leader of the House would have no trouble with a three-minute limit. I do not know whether he has ever spoken for longer than three minutes when answering a question. I compliment him on the way he answers questions. Generally he gives a very concise answer. He gives the facts, then sits down. He is not like some of his colleagues who get up on their hind legs. I am saying that a competent Minister can always give an answer in three minutes. Any lengthy, verbose statement is an admission that that person is incompetent and cannot think up a concise answer. It is true that if a Minister does not know the answer, the answer is even shorter. I believe that that should be given a trial. Let us try it. The Leader of House said that the trial of the changes to the sessional orders will be conducted for only a couple of months—for the rest of this session. At this stage, there are not too many sitting days on the calendar. If the Budget is brought down, we will debate the Estimates and during those hearings the time for questions is limited. So I cannot see any reason why we cannot give this a really decent trial.

I do not understand why under Standing Order No. 70 a question may not be put to the Speaker. I do not remember members of the Opposition asking the Speaker too many questions about his responsibilities. I do not see the sense in that change. I cannot remember Government backbenchers or members of the Opposition asking the Speaker about a matter for which he has responsibility. Is something being covered up? Why is this change being made? I think the option of asking a question of the Speaker should remain in the Standing Orders, just in case someone really wanted to do so. We on

this side of the House have respect for the Speaker. I think we should have the right to ask a question on notice of Mr Speaker, and I do not know the Leader of the House's intention in wanting to insert that sessional order.

I would like to know what form the notice of question paper will take. Under the present system, the list of questions placed on notice is distributed to honourable members when they come into the Chamber so they know who is going to answer the question. Honourable members also read the question that is going to be answered and if the Minister does not table the answer, but chooses to read it, as happened this morning, members know what the question is. I may have missed the point, but I do not think the Leader of the House raised it. How are members going to know what questions are placed on notice? Seventy members can ask questions on notice. Those questions can be on the notice paper for 30 days. It would be ridiculous for me to ask a question about an alternative route up the range if the honourable member for Toowoomba had placed it on notice a week before, and it would be silly for the member for Toowoomba South to ask the same question two days after I had. I need to know who is asking questions and when those questions are due to be answered. I want to see an up-to-date list of questions on notice, with questions being added as they are asked and removed as they are answered. I do not think that those questions will be printed in *Hansard*, because if we have two weeks of sitting per month, questions for eight days of that month may possibly appear in *Hansard*. It is not printed every day and members need to know the questions that have been asked on notice. We need a list of current questions on notice to ensure that there is no doubling up. In my position as Leader of Opposition Business, I have to make sure that the members on this side are alert and do not ask a question that a member on the other side of the House has already asked. It has happened before. When I was the Government Whip, I was given a question which I was ready to ask the Premier, when, lo and behold, the Leader of the Opposition asked the question before me. So members have to have enough wit to say, "Aha, that question has been asked, therefore we will substitute another question or we will put a supplementary question." I believe that is very important.

In the sessional order motion that is before the House, reference is made to protection of persons referred to in the Legislative Assembly. I note the speech by the Minister for Employment and Training. I stand by the right of members in the Parliament to raise issues. Some members will be more liberal with their right as a member to raise issues and, at present, members of the general public and people from companies can ask for a right to have their side heard. I think we have to be very cautious in this regard. I think that the ruling made by Speaker Powell is reasonable in regard to a letter being sent to the Speaker and the Speaker having the right to stand and say, "I received this letter from such and such a citizen" and read that letter to the House without comment if he thought that that needed to be done. He exercised his right as Speaker to do that and it was left at that. It was not debated, but the person's remarks were heard. They were limited as to how extensive they could be. They could not enter into debate, personal abuse or any of those things that we do not want the general public to use in Parliament. Members are elected to this Parliament and they have certain rights and privileges. The Parliament would not be a Parliament if we threw away those rights and privileges. That is very important.

Some members mentioned the former member for Archerfield, the late Kev Hooper. Kev came in here and acted without fear or favour. Generally, he began his speech, "I have it on good authority", which meant that it had turned up in a brown paper bag, and he then went on with the latest expose. He missed the mark many times, but he may have hit it a lot of times. I know that the member for Mount Ommaney is looking on with interest, because Kev Hooper may have hit the mark a number of times.

Mr Cooper: Mr Mackenroth had the same feelings as Kev Hooper.

Mr FITZGERALD: Yes, Mr Mackenroth had the same feelings. Kev Hooper did that. But members are elected to this place and they had the right to disagree with his remarks. They had the right to defend themselves if they wanted to. I know that one late member may soon be joined by another member, but it will be up to the electorate to decide those issues.

I believe that we should be very, very cautious in setting up a method by which the general public can debate a matter any time there has been an allegation made against a company. I can imagine what is going to happen. A couple of times a month the Minister for Consumer Affairs cranks up a press release. That press release might be

about someone who is painting roofs or spraying down the sides of houses fraudulently, or someone who is ripping off little old ladies. It is a regular occurrence and the Minister feels motivated to warn the general public about some terrible, fly-by-night company. If all of those fly-by-night companies demanded the right to come into this place and put forward their side of the story, it would be ridiculous. We are putting the Speaker in the position in which he or she will have to decide whether the Minister for Consumer Affairs is stepping outside the parameters of his ministerial responsibility and using this Parliament to barrel somebody when he should be doing it outside and running the risk of being taken to court.

I believe that this privilege could be abused. I am very, very cautious about the handing over of the rights of a member of Parliament to a member of the public. I believe that the Speaker is going to be given the added responsibility of having to sort the wheat from the chaff. There will be an expectation that all of these companies that are named by the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs will have their day in Parliament.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate) (5.02 p.m.): I look at this debate today from the perspective of a new member of the House. All the previous speakers in this debate have had quite extensive experience as members of this House. As a new member, the Standing Rules and Orders are something that I continue to learn more about every day.

I was surprised and somewhat disappointed to find out who the Opposition speakers would be for this debate. We have heard from the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the National Party and the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party. The list of Opposition speakers is indicative of what the Opposition does to its back bench. It tries to suffocate its back bench; it does not allow its back bench to speak on many issues at all. The Opposition does not allow its back bench to be involved in question time, and I believe that that is part of the reason why the Opposition is opposing strongly these reforms that the Government wants to implement in this Parliament.

If one looks at the list of speakers for the Matters of Public Interest debate, one would see that, again, the majority of the Opposition front bench spoke. I have the speakers' list for the Adjournment debate, which will be held later tonight. Again, two of the three speakers are from the Opposition front bench. So the back bench of the Opposition has very, very little opportunity to partake in the parliamentary processes.

Mrs Edmond: Maybe they don't want to.

Mr NUTTALL: Maybe they do not want that. Maybe part of the reason the Opposition does not want its back bench to become involved in the parliamentary process is that certain backbench members have significantly more talent than the people on the front bench. Those members will not allow their backbench colleagues to be involved in the process. If those members think I am wrong, they should look at how many of their backbench colleagues are here now. We have numero uno. The member for Burdekin also sunk like a stone when he went onto the back bench.

As for the opportunity for people to ask questions during question time—when I first came to this Parliament, it surprised me that one of the first things that happened was that the Whip came to the new backbenchers and said, "Look, this is the process. You will have opportunities to ask questions in the Parliament. You will have opportunities to ask questions that are relevant to your electorate." That is exactly what we do.

As a result of the reforms that are being put forward today, if we have only one question from each member, that doubles the number of shadow Ministers who will have the opportunity to ask questions without notice. That gives them a greater opportunity and it gives their back bench a greater opportunity to ask questions. As members would recall, the only time the back bench of the Opposition were able to ask questions in this Parliament was when we as a Government allowed the Opposition the entire question time in which to ask questions. On both occasions, the Opposition struggled to ask 60 minutes' worth of questions.

The other reason the Opposition is opposing this motion so strenuously is that some Opposition members, particularly the leadership, are keen to stay in the limelight. They are keen to make sure that they are at the forefront on all occasions, and they are not keen to see other Opposition members perform in this Parliament.

Mr Vaughan: Except the member for Aspley.

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, except the member for Aspley. A lot has been said about Government Ministers allegedly procrastinating

and lengthening their answers. One of the amendments put forward by the member for Moggill is that answers be restricted to three minutes in length. In 1994, the number of answers that were given to questions without notice was 15.9. So if we say that 16 answers are given over the period of an hour, that equates to approximately five minutes an answer. So one really cannot say that Government Ministers procrastinate in their answers. I believe that the Ministers are reasonably to the point. However, part of the reason Ministers take five minutes to answer a question from the Opposition is that Opposition members continue to interject when the answer is being given. They continue to interject and they do not allow the Minister to answer the question. During the last sittings of this House, the Deputy Leader of the Coalition was thrown out for that very reason—for not allowing Ministers to answer questions. So if the Opposition wants to ask more questions, I say that the easy answer is to allow the Minister to give a response.

Another matter that I would like to touch on briefly is the process of presenting petitions. I think that one of the welcome reforms, which so far has not been referred to in this debate, is the insertion of a new Standing Order 238A, which states—

> "A copy of every petition received by the House is to be referred by the Clerk to the appropriate responsible Minister who may forward a response to the Clerk for presentation to the House."

That response must be given within 30 days. The new Standing Order states further—

> "A copy of this response shall be printed in Hansard and be supplied to the Member who presented the petition."

I think that is a very welcome reform. Far too often petitions are presented in this House and, basically, they get lost in the system. This reform will certainly do away with that.

As to the new wording of petitions—on quite a number of occasions I have been disappointed when, after listening to representations from constituents, I have been presented with an inaccurately worded petition that cannot be presented to the Parliament. People put a lot of work into preparing petitions. We are trying to simplify the process for presenting petitions to the Parliament so that it will be easier.

All in all, the reforms are good. They will be in place for a trial period. Certainly, at the end of the trial period, they can be reviewed to see whether they are working, and we can take it from there.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (5.10 p.m.): The new sessional orders proposed by this Labor Government will see a transfer of power from the Parliament to the Executive arm of Government—the Ministers of the State. We have seen this happen on a number of occasions under this Government, and it is exactly what is transpiring with the amendments before the Parliament today.

Therefore, I welcome and support strongly the amendments moved by the member for Moggill and seconded by the member for Lockyer. The amendments go some way to bringing back to this House some of the powers of Ministers. The Government has said that it will reform question time. Obviously, an election is just around the corner. However, these sessional orders have not been referred to the Standing Orders Committee. I understand that the Standing Orders Committee has not met during this term of Parliament. If that is the case, that is pretty shameful and dreadful.

Nevertheless, the amendments to the Standing Orders moved in the form of sessional orders by the Leader of the House are designed to take pressure off Ministers. If we examine the Standing Orders, we see that they go to the nub of the issue—to give Ministers some 30 days in which to reply to questions on notice. We know that it is much easier for Ministers to fob off questions without notice than questions on notice. Questions on notice often concern contentious issues. After 29 days, most of the contentiousness surrounding an issue has passed by and it becomes old hat—yesterday's news. This sneaky, little sessional orders proposal moved by the Leader of the House, Mr Mackenroth, will save the Government from many embarrassments.

The issues addressed by questions on notice will fade away during the 30-day response time. Clearly, this is an example of the sort of scheme that the Government dreams up from time to time and in relation to which tries to pretend that it is assisting Parliament and democratic processes.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr BEANLAND: As the member for Crows Nest said, sometimes in politics 24 hours can be a long time. We are talking about 30 days! The whole issue will be dead and buried and will not be a source of embarrassment to the Government when an answer is given.

I appreciate and support the amendments being proposed today. Under the amendments, when a question is put on notice—when a member decides to do that instead of asking a question without notice—it will be answered on the next day. That will overcome the very glaring error in the sessional order proposals.

Apart from the Leader of the Opposition, members will be able to ask only one question each. A few moments ago, we heard a great deal from the member for Sandgate. However, he did not inform us how many of the questions he has asked in this House were his own questions and how many were dorothy dixers supplied by Ministers. We always hear dorothy dix questions being asked by Government members.

We have not heard how these sessional orders will assist in the process of testing Government Ministers. After all, in the Westminster system that is what question time is all about. It is about putting Government Ministers to the test to ensure that they are accountable to the Parliament of this State. Not once has there been any attempt to indicate how that will be achieved. All we have heard is that the sessional orders will allow more members to ask questions. That may or may not be the case.

In the case of Government members, this will simply mean that more members will ask dorothy dix questions. In the case of members of the Opposition, this may or may not provide—depending on Ministers—an opportunity for one or two additional members to ask questions. And this may or may not include backbenchers; it may include members of the shadow Cabinet. That remains to be seen. But there are no guarantees in this exercise at all. For the Leader of the House to try to pretend otherwise is stretching the truth.

These changes to sessional orders have arisen because the Government has failed to take up any of the other propositions to reform this House put forward over time by EARC and the various standing committees. The Premier refuses to allow Parliament to be televised. The Kremlin is televised, as is every other Parliament around the globe, but not good old Queensland. We cannot televise Parliament because the press and the folks at home may see Government Ministers, in particular the Premier, in not such a good light. The Premier may wind up appearing like his Federal leader, the Prime Minister of this country, who has become a part-time Prime Minister. Who knows, we might end up with a part-time Premier, only fronting up to the occasional question time. Perhaps the next thing we will see is some sort of roster system.

The point is that this will do nothing to improve the functioning of Parliament, to improve the testing of Ministers or to make Ministers and the Executive arm of Government more accountable to this place. At the end of the day, that is what the public of Queensland want to see. Deep down, that is what I believe all members of Parliament want to see—an Executive arm of Government that is more accountable to the Parliament. That will certainly not happen under the proposed sessional orders.

The Leader of the Opposition will have the opportunity to ask a supplementary question. That is what second questions were originally designed for, that is, as a follow-up opportunity that members need to be able to test the Minister further, because the Minister has failed to answer appropriately the first question or has tried to wriggle out of it. That provision will now apply only to the Leader of the Opposition. Other members who have legitimate reasons for asking a second question—and that occurs quite often—will not be able to do so because the opportunity will not be there. Clearly, the whole situation is one designed to provide benefits to the Government and to assist Ministers.

In conclusion, I notice that the sessional orders will delete the prayer from the format for petitions. Once again, we are changing and tearing up symbols. We have heard a lot from the Labor Party on other issues about symbols, yet one of the symbols is the prayer at the end of petitions. No indication has been given as to the reason for its deletion. Currently, the Standing Orders state that Ministers should report to this House in response to petitions. Generally, that has not happened in the past, and only time will tell whether it happens in the future. However, at the end of the day I think we are worse off for the removal of the prayer. Another symbol of this Parliament and of this State will be removed from petitions, something else for which no reason has been given.

Mr D'ARCY (Woodridge) (5.18 p.m.): Today, I take the opportunity in this debate to point out to the House the hypocrisy of the Opposition, the likes of which I have never before seen. The Opposition's resistance to change has not altered.

I will relate to the House a bit of the history of this Parliament. In the past, the Standing Orders governing question time in this place were the worst in Australia. Under

the Nationals, this Parliament had the worst question time in Australia. Under the former Government, when I and most members participated in question time, when asking a question on notice we had to stand up and read it out in full. The next day, the Minister answered it by referring, for example, to question No. 1. It was an absolute disgrace. However, that procedure has changed significantly.

I want to relate a story. In 1980-81, the then National Party Speaker, Mr Muller, was very anxious to ensure that his mark was left on this Parliament. During the debate on this motion, various members have referred to the transfer of power that will occur under these proposals regarding the Standing Orders Committee. In 1980-81, that committee was composed of the Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen; the Deputy Premier, Llew Edwards; the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Casey; the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, myself; the Leader of the House, Claude Wharton; the Liberal Party Chairman of Committees, Mr Miller; and the Speaker, Mr Muller. On that committee, the Government well and truly had the numbers.

After several meetings of that committee which all members attended, it was proposed that there be a change to the Standing Orders regarding question time to allow questions to be tabled in this Parliament—similar to the proposal presented by the Government today. That proposal was accepted by the Standing Orders Committee. It was accepted also by the committee that Ministers could respond to those questions in the Parliament. The only person who opposed that proposal was Claude Wharton, the Leader of the House. Those members who were here at that time—and it was 1981 by the time it was brought forward—may remember that the proposal was presented to the House. However, in the meantime—in company with his ally of that time, Des Booth—Claude Wharton had approached the National Party backbench members and convinced them that their Ministers were not capable of handling themselves in the House under the proposed changes to question time.

When the ballot took place in the Parliament—and the Standing Orders Committee actually brought the Bill to the Parliament—it was a fiasco, because Claude had organised for the National Party back bench and some of the Liberals to oppose those changes. So the changes were not instituted at that time, but the Standing Orders were so bad that the Clerk of the time could not apply them in the Parliament. During this debate, Opposition members have called for a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee. Such a meeting occurred in 1980-81, and the committee of the time was prepared to change the rules in a similar fashion to that proposed today.

I believe that the amendments moved by the Opposition are merely a furphy. These changes are being offered to members opposite as an interim measure. The changes will apply for a trial period to see whether they work. Although the proposed amendments may contain a couple of reasonable provisions, they do not address the whole problem. The proposed changes reflect the measures that the former colleagues of members opposite were prepared to accept as far back as 1980. Anyone who saw Vince Lester on his feet today would realise that he has not understood the Standing Orders since he came into this place.

I have referred to one occasion on which an attempt was made to reform parliamentary procedures. The National and Liberal Parties opposed those changes then, and it is disappointing that today they are opposing measures that are designed to offer them substantial benefits. It is sad to see the continuing resistance to change displayed by members opposite.

Ms SPENCE (Mount Gravatt) (5.22 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the House to adopt sessional orders designed to bring about an improvement in the way this House conducts its business. Too often we hear talk of parliamentary and procedural reforms which just never happen. Even Harry Evans, the Clerk of the Senate, has said that all Parliaments are slow to change, but the changes we are debating today are evidence of a commitment to make this House work better, to give all members greater opportunities to question and to guard against unwarranted and unintentional abuse of the House's privilege, all of which makes the opposition to this motion very remarkable.

We know that question time is a valuable tool for discovering information and for making Governments accountable. The method of asking questions on notice has eaten into that valuable time, and this Government is going to redress that situation. Under the proposed sessional orders, it will no longer be necessary to ask questions on notice in the House. Instead, they will be handed in to the Clerk and questions and answers published in *Hansard*. There are two advantages attached

to this new system. First, it allows more time for those valuable questions without notice. More time means that more questions can be asked and the Government is made more accountable. All members on this side of the Chamber have expressed their disbelief today that this Opposition plans to reject this proposal, which gives them the opportunity to ask more questions and make this Government more accountable.

The second advantage is that all members will be permitted to ask at least one question on notice each day. I suggest that some members opposite try to remember when they last had an opportunity to ask a question. The way will now be open for them. This amendment expands the rules regarding the asking of questions. As a result of the lack of rules regarding the asking of questions, we see members asking long-winded and complicated questions without notice—questions which are designed more to give the questioner an opportunity to gain political points rather than elicit answers.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms SPENCE: The same questioner then complains that the Minister's answers are too long or that the Minister has not answered the question, and I hear the Opposition complaining of that right now. Perhaps they ought to look at the way they ask the questions.

Under these proposals, the new rules direct that questions should be brief, not contain arguments, inferences, imputations or hypothetical matters; nor should they be unduly lengthy, express an opinion or ask for a legal opinion. Rules such as these are long overdue to help ensure that members receive the information they want. All members who have taken part in this debate have expressed the shared sentiment that question time is a very important part of our Westminster-style Parliament. In common with the Leader of the House, who spoke earlier in today's debate, I am proud to be a part of the important reforms put forward today.

I note that chapter 4 of an EARC report published in December 1991 was devoted to the issue of question time. On page 51 of the report, we have an extract from the Liberal Party's submission to EARC to improve question time. I want to read a number of the suggestions that the Liberal Party made to EARC at the time. The Liberal Party suggested that questions on notice should be tabled only, thus removing the need for them to be read into *Hansard*, consequently taking up the time of members wishing to ask questions without notice. That is what we are proposing here today. The Liberal Party suggested that answers to questions on notice should be printed in *Hansard* and in the daily proofs and not be read to Parliament. That is what we are suggesting here today. The Liberal Party suggested that, as questions often seek detailed information, there should be neither a requirement nor expectation that answers be provided on the next sitting day. That is what we are suggesting here today. It is indeed surprising that, considering that the proposals suggested today take up so many of the Liberal Party's suggestions to EARC in 1991, they should then choose to oppose this motion.

It is truly astonishing that the Opposition should be opposing these reforms, because question time is obviously a vital mechanism for it to extract information from the Executive. These reforms will give the Opposition greater opportunity to ask questions—more questions on notice and more questions without notice—and yet members opposite are opposing it. These people opposite, who displayed an unhealthy reluctance to reform the performance of this Legislature and the scrutiny of the Executive during their 32 years in Government, have not shaken off the shackles of their past. The absolute lack of progressive policies of reformist zeal that characterised them then remains with them if they oppose these reforms today.

As part of these reforms, as chairman of a committee, I will continue to be subjected to questions on notice and, through them, will be answerable to the House. There is nothing wrong with that. The member for Beaudesert chose to use much of his speaking time today to yet again criticise the operations of the committees of this Parliament. May I say that I believe that the member for Beaudesert is a hypocrite and he is also factually incorrect when he talks about some of the committees.

The member for Beaudesert represents a party that did nothing to promote the committee system in this Parliament. He continually publicly criticises the work of the Public Works Committee because on three occasions that committee has voted on party lines. I think the member is trying to suggest that for that reason there is some political interference in the workings of the committee. What the member for Beaudesert chooses to ignore is that, in the last five years, the Public Works Committee has presented over 28 reports to this Parliament, all of which have been unanimous. When his party was in Government, the Public Works Committee

brought down only one report, and that was the report on the Wolffdene Dam, and that was not a unanimous report. I understand that there was a dissenting report. So, when his party was in Government, there was only one report from a Parliamentary Public Works Committee. It was split along party lines and there was a dissenting report.

During the Labor Party's term in Government, there have been more than 28 reports, all of which have been unanimous. The fact that on three occasions four members of the committee voted one way and three members of the committee voted another way does not at all suggest political interference, it suggests that, after extensive briefings on a particular issue, four like-minded people felt one way and three like-minded people another way. That does not necessarily suggest political interference. Indeed, I would ask the member for Beaudesert to consider that, if there is political interference in the business of committees, it does not have to come necessarily from the Government side of the committee, that indeed it may well come from the Opposition's participation in the particular committee.

These sessional orders are not just about committees. They go a lot further than that. They are also about giving more rights to backbenchers. At long last, they involve a chance to bring the form of petitions into the present by ridding them of the antiquated and subservient language that used to be required. No longer will petitioners humbly pray, they will now simply and appropriately ask the House to take action.

Petitions will now have to have the name of the principal petitioner on the front page. The advantage of this lies in allowing those who are approached to sign a petition to know exactly who is promoting it. I believe that any petition presented can only be a genuine request, an indication of feeling, if those who have signed it know all the details of the situation being petitioned, and that includes knowing the proponent's name. When petitions are presented, the Clerk will forward a copy to the responsible Minister, who can arrange for a response to be made and printed in *Hansard* if it is required.

Again, we are seeing changes which make the Government more accountable to this Parliament and, through its members, to the people of Queensland. I am very pleased to support the motion.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN (Chermside) (5.33 p.m.): I welcome these reforms and rise to support them. They are reforms that will allow the majority of MLAs to represent their electorates more effectively. These changes will especially help backbenchers to represent their electors by giving them greater ability to ask questions which are relevant to local issues. Currently, there are time constraints on our question time, and there are about 70 members, both non-Government and Government who are not Ministers of the Crown, who are able to ask a Minister a question, but because of the time constraints, the number is limited to a very few from each side.

The proposed changes will give each of us the ability to ask one question on notice each day. It is true that this process could be abused. If Opposition members decided to flood a Minister's office each day with 35 questions, this would create a log jam, and the Minister's offices could find the workload so heavy that this system could fail. If that in fact is what the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition want, they could probably try to achieve that, but that would show a mean-spirited, feeble-minded approach to the workings of this Parliament. These reforms provide a legitimate chance for members to have a say about issues that are relevant to their electorate. I would hope that members of the Opposition especially do not abuse that.

There has been some criticism of the provision that Ministers have 30 calendar days in which to make a reply. I am certain that, if the members of this House are reasonable with their questions, the Ministers will be reasonable with their replies, and 30 days will not be needed to reply to members' written questions. The proposed changes will allow members to highlight local issues, to gather information from the Executive Government, to get the Minister to address an important matter and to have a response on the public record. The fact that a copy of the Minister's reply will come to *Hansard* and to the member ensures that it is publicly available and that the Minister is more accountable. As some of my colleagues have said, it is very hypocritical of National Party members to call these changes a means to reduce the workings of this Parliament or reduce a member's accessibility to Ministers. By these reforms, the Ministers will be much more available to backbenchers.

As the member who spoke before me said, an additional feature of these reforms is that a question can be directed to chairmen of committees. I welcome that. There are limitations and reservations on the new questioning process, and I believe that it is essential that these parameters be set.

Proposed Standing Orders 68, 69 and 70 basically outline the format, or restrictions, on the way questions can be asked. They are legitimate limitations and I would hope that none of the overt critics of the Government in the media or in some of the civil liberty groups will jump on the bandwagon and say, "You do not have limitless ability to ask whatever you want." Of course we cannot do that, otherwise the process would not work. The Minister has proposed workable procedures that can be achieved.

I am also happy to accept the changes to the format of petitions, which will make petitions clearer, more reasonable and make them more in tune with everyday language. Having the principal petitioner's name on the front of the petition is a good idea because it gives a focus for response by the Minister or by the local member.

Mr Budd: You're a very generous and understanding man when it comes to the Opposition.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: I hope we are generous and understanding. I am sure we will be.

I wish to comment on statements made by a couple of members of the Opposition about the removal of the prayer. I can say—and I am sure that my colleague, Mr Purcell, who is joining me in approving this motion will agree—that, as a practising Christian, I have no objections to the removal from the petition of the formal prayer. Mr Purcell and I would prefer to be judged more by our actions rather than by a pro forma prayer written and presented in a way that has no bearing on our actions.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: I hear members opposite complaining and whingeing. Let them jump on their high moral horse, but they will be judged by their actions, not by a standard pro forma which they are now arguing is an essential part of our society.

I also agree with the proposal for the protection of persons referred to in the Legislative Assembly. I have never agreed with the view expressed by some people that Parliament is a coward's castle. The real cowards are those people in the community who hide behind the legal system to protect their illegal or immoral activity. Powerful people use laws of defamation and other civil legal action to scare off victims upon whom they prey. The cost of legal action prevents many aggrieved citizens from speaking out against injustices in our society. The one place where matters can be aired without fear of legal retribution is in Parliament. Sometimes, MLAs will get things wrong. but there are ways in which an irresponsible member of Parliament can be brought to task. They have the opportunity to apologise in the House and they are accountable in a number of ways. The media will act as a watch and a brake on irresponsible actions by parliamentarians and, most importantly, our voters can decide every three years whether our actions within this House are responsible or irresponsible. The proposed reform gives any citizen the opportunity to respond to what he or she considers is an adverse comment in Parliament, and it is a much-needed change.

I was going to say that I was amazed at some of the things that Mrs Sheldon said, but I am not amazed. She has shown herself to be such a newcomer to this House that she really does not know what went on beforehand. I am pleased to have been part of a Government that has made significant changes from some of the disastrous practices of the past. Mrs Sheldon's criticism that these are not reforms but restrictions leaves me dumbfounded. She consistently limits the number of Liberal Party members who can ask questions in this House by asking two questions herself and then limiting the number of members who can ask questions. The Leader of the House has proposed a system whereby every Liberal member can ask a question of a Minister, but Mrs Sheldon opposes this. She is illogical, and she does not really know how this Parliament works. These reforms will make the workings of Parliament even more relevant to each member's constituents. I support the reforms.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (5.41 p.m.), in reply: It surprises me that Opposition members are not supporting this motion.

Mr FitzGerald: You support ours; we'll support yours.

Mr MACKENROTH: Show me yours and I'll show you mine! Opposition members are really not prepared to measure the reforms that we are proposing and to decide whether they are something that will be better for this Parliament, for members of this Parliament and, probably most importantly, for the Opposition in this Parliament, because they are the people who will get the most benefit from them.

Opposition members really should consider that very few questions are placed on notice, and not many questions have been

placed on notice over the past couple of years. The system has not been used in this Parliament over the past couple of years. We have moved more and more towards questions without notice. Opposition members claim that fewer questions without notice will be asked. That will not be the case. In fact, members have the ability to ask an extra question without notice each day, because the occasional question on notice will not be read out. So the actual length of question time is not being altered. What we are saying, though, is that all of that time is being devoted to questions without notice. At the end of the day, the Opposition will be able to ask exactly the same number of questions without notice—if not one more—as it asked last week, the week before and the week before that. We are taking absolutely nothing away from the Opposition.

If there is an issue which, in the opinion of the Opposition, is going to bring down the Government, Opposition members can ask a question about it and then get somebody else to ask another one and somebody else to ask another one. If the issue is sustainable, it will not make any difference, because the questions will be asked and the issue will be out in the public arena. That is what question time should be used for. We are not in any way stopping the Opposition from doing that. We are providing an opportunity to those members who do not usually get the opportunity to ask questions. We are going to double the number of members who ask questions each day. Whereas the number of questions will be the same, we will double the actual number of members asking questions without notice. We are also saying to every member in the Parliament, "If you want to, you can place a question on notice every day." In a full parliamentary year, that has the potential to mean about an extra 3,000 questions being asked in the Parliament.

According to the Opposition's proposed amendment, if a member does not want to ask a question without notice, that member can ask one question on notice by standing in the House; he still has the right to put one question on the table, but the question that the member asks by standing in the House must be answered tomorrow, and the other one would be answered within 14 days. How many systems do we want operating? Surely, if a member has a question to ask, he or she will ask it without notice. Nobody has been taking great advantage of putting questions on notice in this Parliament. I believe that a member should be able to place a question on notice and obtain an answer within the time allotted. We have set a limit of 30 days because we really do not know the workload that will be placed on individual departments. The potential exists for Opposition members to get their act together and plan something. They could place 35 questions on notice to one Minister on one day, 35 to that very Minister the next day——

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: I am saying that there is the potential to place 140 questions on notice to one Minister in one week. How would a department cope with that? That is why we have said that there should be a 30-day limit. It is not to try to stop an issue from getting out.

I had 12 years' experience playing the Opposition game. If an Opposition member has an issue that is so big that it is not going to be an issue in 30 days' time, that member is not going to place that question on notice; he or she will ask it without notice. If the Minister does not answer that question, that member will go straight outside screaming about how he or she has asked that question and received no answer. The reality is that this is more about getting the question asked than about getting the answer, anyway. That is all the Opposition really wants to do.

Mr FitzGerald: Is that how you do it?

Mr MACKENROTH: Perhaps I should not let out too many secrets. That is the reality. Opposition members will still ask their questions, and if it is really a major political issue of the day they will get it into the media. I always believed that if I did not get a run in the media the question was not worth asking, anyway.

I have been a member of Parliament for seventeen and a half years. During all my time as an Opposition member and during my time in the Ministry I have never had one person walk up to me and say, "Listen, Terry, I read *Hansard* the other day. Jeez I was impressed with that question you asked" or, "I was impressed with that question you answered." Even my father reads *Hansard*. Opposition members have made all sorts of claims about our denying the right of people to read what is in *Hansard*. If they are really honest they will all agree that what I am saying is right; that it just does not happen like that.

In my introductory remarks today, I said that we were going to table answers that are longer than one page. That was done because we have a very frugal Speaker, who has estimated that if answers are longer than a page it could cost us somewhere between

$20,000 and $40,000 extra each year in preparing *Hansard*, and he wanted us to limit that. But because the Opposition has made such a point of it, I have said that we will not do that. Therefore, for the remainder of this term, while we are trialing this system, we will put all the information into *Hansard*.

Mr FitzGerald: Tell the Ministers to keep it short but, won't you?

Mr MACKENROTH: I have always worked on the basis of telling the member as little as possible. So he can be assured that mine will be very short.

Dr Watson: Good, open and accountable Government.

Mr MACKENROTH: My real problem is that no-one asks me any questions. I sit here every day shivering and waiting for the attack to come. If Opposition members want three-minute answers, they should ask me some questions, and they will get answers of less than three minutes. With the system that is working today, whereas some answers are longer than three minutes, many are less than three minutes. We are probably looking at an average of three minutes. On some occasions, I have said to my colleagues, "Give them a fair go today. Let's keep the answers as short as possible." The real problem is that the Opposition had no questions to ask us. On a couple of occasions we have really had to keep the answers going in order to keep question time going for the full time.

We ask the Opposition to give the proposal that we have put forward a chance to operate in this Parliament. At the end of this term we can assess how it has operated as we have proposed it. We ask them to give it a fair go for themselves, because I believe it is going to be to their benefit. At this stage we will not accept the amendments that have been moved by the Opposition. We will accept considering them after what we have proposed has had a fair trial.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 47—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bennett, Bird, Braddy, Bredhauer, Campbell, Clark, Comben, D'Arcy, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Mackenroth, McElligott, McGrady, Milliner, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Power, Purcell, Pyke, Robertson, Robson, Rose, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Sullivan T. B., Szczerbanik, Vaughan, Warner, Welford, Wells, Woodgate *Tellers:* Livingstone, Budd

NOES, 30—Beanland, Cooper, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Stephan, Stoneman, Turner, Veivers, Watson *Tellers:* Springborg, Davidson

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I advise honourable members that the bells will ring for two minutes.

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

AYES, 47—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bennett, Bird, Braddy, Bredhauer, Campbell, Clark, Comben, D'Arcy, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Mackenroth, McElligott, McGrady, Milliner, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Power, Purcell, Pyke, Robertson, Robson, Rose, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Sullivan T. B., Szczerbanik, Vaughan, Warner, Welford, Wells *Tellers:* Livingstone, Budd

NOES, 30—Beanland, Cooper, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Stephan, Stoneman, Turner, Veivers, Watson *Tellers:* Springborg, Davidson

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Sitting suspended from 6.01 to 7.30 p.m.

TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (7.30 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend Acts administered by the Treasurer, 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) (7.31 p.m.): I move—

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

The activities previously undertaken by Treasury with regard to the direct administration of legislation affecting various types of non-bank financial institutions and cooperatives have been progressively transferred to more appropriate supervisors over the past three years. The Bill provides for amendments to the remaining legislation

administered by Treasury in this area, consistent with the above objective.

The Queensland Office of Financial Supervision—QOFS—is being given responsibility for the administration of legislation affecting cooperative housing societies and terminating building societies, in advance of, and in preparation for, new legislation which is currently being developed to regulate cooperative housing societies in particular.

This is achieved by making necessary amendments to the Co-operative Housing Societies Act 1958 and the Building Societies Act 1985. These new areas of responsibility are seen as being consistent with the existing activities already being undertaken by QOFS in relation to permanent building societies, credit unions and friendly societies under their respective legislation.

The responsibility for administration of legislation affecting general cooperatives and other similar activities is being given to the Department of Emergency Services, that is, the Office of Consumer Affairs, with appropriate amendments being made to the Co-operative and Other Societies Act 1967 and the Loan Fund Companies Act 1982.

The completion of the transfers of responsibility provided for in this Bill and the repeal of the Administration of Commercial Laws Act 1962 will conclude Treasury's direct involvement in this area. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Education) (7.33 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend certain legislation about education."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Education) (7.34 p.m.): I move—

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

I take great pleasure this evening as the newly appointed Education Minister in presenting to the House my first piece of legislation in that role. The Bill provides for amendments to the Education (General Provisions Act) 1989 and the Education (Senior Secondary School Studies) Act 1988.

Members will recognise it as a most important piece of legislation, as it will provide one of the major building blocks to Shaping our Future. The Bill will give the Government the legislative base to introduce major reforms recommended by the Wiltshire review into curriculum. The review was the most comprehensive study of its kind in the history of Queensland education.

Members should be well aware by now of the review committee which was established following a 1992 election commitment. Headed by Professor Ken Wiltshire, the three-person committee conducted a rigorous review leaving no stone unturned in its search for excellence. Following the Report of the Review of the Queensland School Curriculum (Shaping the Future) in March 1994, a period of public consultation occurred, culminating in Cabinet's decisions in November last year to support a major reform of the curriculum.

The Goss Government has quickly begun implementing the major recommendations of that review. Much to the displeasure of those opposite, the reforms have been widely welcomed by the community and educators generally. It stands in stark contrast to the education policies of conservative Governments in other States which are bringing about change by slash and burn and closing down schools.

Improving efficiency and quality of education to meet increasing demand can be met through altering work practices and school operations rather than adopting draconian policies.

The major areas which I will see implemented are—

> the need to put the three Rs—reading, writing and arithmetic—back on the agenda;
>
> the "back to basics" approach—the cornerstone of that package;
>
> the tackling of issues—in the form of literacy and numeracy—as a priority; and
>
> the appointment of 425 new teachers this year to smoothly implement the reforms.

It is the most comprehensive education reform package ever—

totalling more than $300m over six years;

it will place Queensland at the leading edge; and

a State of innovation, not desecration—as witnessed in Victoria where 155 schools are planned for closure.

Parents and teachers will have more information about their charges' progress as there will be running records of students' achievements, diagnostic testing and more accountability overall.

All these reforms expose the failures and lack of imagination of former conservative Governments that allowed our education system to wallow in neglect. I can assure the House that under this Government's policies there will be no chance of neglect. All our education programs will have regular reviews and input of new and innovative people and ideas so that we can keep pace with the rapidly changing world in which we live. Today's legislation will provide the overall framework for a much-improved system of consultation with the education industry and community.

I believe that the Wiltshire review proved beyond doubt that we need a better and more broadly based discussion at the local and State level about how we can better shape our education future. This Bill will allow that to occur. The main objectives of the Bill relate to the establishment and operation of a new curriculum management structure—the Queensland Curriculum Council—and for changes to the role and functions of the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies. In addition, the Bill includes minor alterations to both Acts relating to matters of an administrative nature.

The establishment of the Queensland Curriculum Council provides for the representation of all major stakeholders in the management of curriculum development in Queensland and is an integral component of the curriculum management structures model supported by Cabinet. The model provides for the establishment of two new curriculum management structures—the Queensland Curriculum Council and the Queensland School Curriculum Office and also provides for changes to the responsibilities of the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies.

Cabinet endorsed this model as part of the Shaping the Future initiatives following its consideration of the Report of the Review of the Queensland School Curriculum to which I referred earlier. The council will be an intersystemic and representative preschool to Year 12 ministerial advisory council comprising representatives from major stakeholders including the non-Government sector, parent bodies, business and industrial organisations. The major role of the council will be to advise me on preschool to Year 12 curriculum development.

One important role of the council will be to develop, endorse and then recommend to me a strategic plan for preschool to Year 12 curriculum development. The council will also hold two forums annually. One forum will be a State industry/schooling forum for the purpose of considering major schooling/industry curriculum issues. The second forum will be a distance education/open learning forum to ensure that open learning and distance education issues are included within mainstream curriculum development, so debunking a constant ill-informed criticism from members opposite that distance education is not on the agenda.

The membership of the council reflects the Government's commitment to provide a forum to enable the views of major stakeholders to be taken into account in educational planning and decision making in relation to curriculum development issues. The Bill provides for the council to comprise 15 members appointed by the Governor in Council and six official members who will be members by virtue of the offices they hold and authorises me to appoint any additional members that may be necessary.

The council will not be a statutory body, and to remove any doubt the Bill provides for this to be declared in the Act.

The Bill also heralds some important changes to the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, and as a consequence proposes changes to the Education (Senior Secondary School Studies) Act 1988 by expanding the board's role in post-compulsory schooling to include the authority to undertake accreditation, recognition and registration functions for vocational education programs for senior secondary education (Years 11 and 12) that are delegated to the board under the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 1991. These changes provide for the board to play a more significant role in the convergence of vocational and academic education in Queensland schools as a recognition of the changing needs of both our student population and the needs of society.

Currently the board's principal functions are to approve and develop syllabuses, to accredit work programs, to administer an appropriate system of student assessment, to certify and disseminate the results of assessment and to administer the Core Skills Test. In view of the board's new responsibilities for vocational education programs for senior secondary education, the Bill provides for the membership composition of the board to be amended to provide for a member of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission to be a member of the board to replace the nominee of the Board of Teacher Registration.

In accordance with the curriculum management structures model supported by Cabinet, the board will cease to have a role in junior secondary school curriculum (Years 8-10) as this responsibility will be assumed by the proposed Queensland School Curriculum Office. As a consequence, the board will no longer issue a Junior Certificate as of 1 January 1996.

In light of the significant changes to the board's responsibilities, the Bill provides for the existing members of the board, including the chairperson, to go out of office to allow for the reconstitution of the board. The Bill clarifies the relationship between the board and the Queensland Curriculum Council by providing that the board must submit its program for curriculum development in Years 11 and 12 to the council for endorsement and inclusion in the council's strategic plan for preschool to Year 12 curriculum development.

The Bill also provides for some other minor amendments to the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 which are necessary to reflect important changes to the context in which Queensland education is now operating. Currently, the Act does not permit me to delegate certain of my powers relating to granting dispensation from compulsory enrolment and attendance provisions with respect to home schooling and enrolment in schools of distance education. The Bill provides for these restrictions to be removed.

The Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 provides that instruction in accordance with regulations shall be given in State primary and special schools during school hours in selected Bible lessons. The Bill provides for "shall" to be replaced with "may" to better reflect current practices in schools, and has been supported by all major religions through the Ministerial Religious Education Advisory Committee. This includes all major Christian religious groups as well as representatives of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Jewish and Muslim faiths.

The Act provides that every parent of a child of the age of compulsory attendance who does not attend a State or non-State school because of prescribed reasons must cause that child to be enrolled with the School of Distance Education or any other State educational institution offering distance education. The Bill provides for the term "to be enrolled" to be defined as the requirement to return completed papers to the School of Distance Education to close a loophole in the Act whereby some students enrolled by simply registering their names with the School of Distance Education.

The Bill also provides for other minor amendments to the Education (Senior Secondary School Studies) Act 1988. The Act currently provides that members of the board, other than the chairperson, shall hold office for three years. The Bill provides for the members to hold office for no longer than three years, which will ensure that in future the terms of office of the members of the board will have a uniform expiry date. The Act provides that a person is not eligible to be a member of the board in the same capacity for more than two consecutive terms of appointment. The Bill provides for me to have discretion in this matter.

In summary, the main purpose of the Bill is to amend existing legislation to provide the basis for reforms in Queensland curriculum development. The changes will provide a marked increase in the participation of significant stakeholders in educational decision making and strategic planning in relation to curriculum development, and enhance the convergence of vocational and general education in Queensland schools.

The changes will provide for the significant reforms this Government is making to education in general, and curriculum in particular, in this State. It will place Queensland in the vanguard of the curriculum reform in this nation and prepare Queensland students to confidently face the challenges of the coming decade. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Fitzgerald, adjourned.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (7.45 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Workers' Compensation Act 1990."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (7.46 p.m.): I move—

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

The amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act 1990 contained in this Bill will require Government agencies to hold policies of accident insurance for workers' compensation in the same manner as private sector employers. The purpose of this change is to improve significantly the financial incentives for Government agencies to manage actively their workers' compensation claims, to implement effective rehabilitation programs for Government workers and to minimise the risk and cost of work-related injury and disease. This initiative complements initiatives by the Government to effect continuous improvement in the workers' compensation system generally to optimise performance of employers in the area of prevention, claims management and rehabilitation.

Most Government agencies have never been required to hold workers' compensation policies. Government statutory claims have been administered and paid by the Workers Compensation Board, which has then recovered claims costs plus an administration fee from the relevant agency. It has always been the responsibility of Government agencies to manage their own common law claims. This contrasts with the private sector, where employers are required to hold a policy of accident insurance with the Workers Compensation Board and pay annual premiums for insurance cover in respect of both their statutory and common law claims liabilities.

The changes proposed as part of this Bill follow a detailed review by Queensland Treasury and the Workers Compensation Board of the current system for public sector compensation claims. The review highlighted the relatively poor average claims cost history for Government claims compared with the private sector. For instance, Government workers who claimed compensation in 1993-94 took an average of 21.9 days on compensation at a cost of $2,953, compared with the private sector average of 18.7 days at a cost of $2,120.

Various steps have been taken to control statutory and common law claims numbers and costs in the private sector, including—

the promotion of the benefits of early return to work;

the implementation of workplace rehabilitation programs;

the implementation of new financial penalties and revised incentives; and

the continuing review of the management of common law damages claims with a view to reducing legal and other costs.

The review of Government claims costs pointed to the potential for significant improvements if the public sector could be exposed to a similar system of incentives and penalties as the private sector. Furthermore, this is in line with the general policy of the Government in expecting a level of performance from Government agencies equivalent to the private sector.

Therefore, the result is this Bill, which will allow for Government agencies to be incorporated into a premium-based workers' compensation scheme from 1 July 1995. A premium rating system has been developed which will maximise the incentives for Government agencies to reduce the incidence of illness and injury among employees through appropriate risk management strategies, and to otherwise better manage their claims costs through, for instance, the implementation of workplace rehabilitation.

A separate fund as well as separate premium rates and pools have been designed which will ensure that the risks and liabilities associated with Government claims continue to be isolated from the private sector. In order to allow the introduction of the premium-based system for Government agencies, amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act are required to provide authority to—

incorporate Government agencies into a premium-based workers' compensation scheme; and

enable the transfer of funds between the Workers' Compensation Trust Fund and the separate provision account within the Consolidated Fund for the purpose of transferring Government premium collections and paying Government claims.

This Government is committed to a sustained reduction in the incidence of injury and disease amongst its 165,000 employees. Therefore, I do not see these initiatives as the end of the Government's drive to improve its performance in this area. Rather, I see these initiatives as a part of continual improvement and change in the public sector.

This move to a premium-based system for the Government sector is further evidence of this Government's commitment to preserving an efficient and effective workers' compensation scheme in this State. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Fitzgerald, adjourned.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (7.51 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Industrial Relations Act 1990 and the Public Service Management and Employment Act 1988."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (7.52 p.m.): I move—

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

The industrial relations reforms introduced by this Government over the past five years support the international competitiveness of Queensland business and industry and concomitant jobs growth while providing a fair and socially responsible framework for the regulation of employment.

This Parliament's legislation reflects and encourages a move towards enterprise-level bargaining, with protections in the form of an independent umpire in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, guaranteed minimum standards and a strong award safety net. Enterprise-level bargaining, where those involved in daily operations are central to the shaping of their working conditions and arrangements, is being embraced in the private and public sector in Queensland as a proven means to bring productivity boosts in exchange for wage rises.

Within the Queensland public sector, 148,000 employees enjoy wage increases as a result of enterprise bargaining. This not only provides benefits for the Government in terms of increased productivity but also benefits the community of Queensland through a more client-focused, responsive public sector. The Bill currently before the House is a further step along the path to enterprise-based decision making and improved productivity. It provides for amendments to enable public sector units to assume greater day-to-day responsibility for the management of their own industrial relations, including representation before industrial tribunals.

Currently, the Act provides that exclusive right of representation in industrial tribunals rests with the chief executive or a nominated officer of my own Department of Employment, Vocational Education, Training and Industrial Relations. If other Ministers seek to have officers or agents of their departments appear, they are obliged under current legislation to go through the cumbersome procedure of making written requests to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. The proposed amendment allows for departments or agencies to send their own officers or agents to tribunals. By devolving to agencies the responsibility for their own internal industrial relations, my department will be able to concentrate, as the central industrial relations agency, on strategic policy development focusing on effective sector-wide workplace reform strategies. In this role, my department will continue to handle sector-wide industrial matters.

The Bill also makes a related amendment to the Public Service Management and Employment Act. This amendment seeks to facilitate workplace reform in the public sector by providing Government departments with the capacity to vary specific entitlements and conditions of employment of officers of the public service, currently provided for in determinations made by the Governor in Council, through their enterprise bargaining agreements. For example, payments of motor vehicle allowance, which are currently made on fortnightly claims, could be annualised, reducing administrative costs. This will increase the flexibility of departments to apply the conditions of employment contained in the determinations to suit their organisational

requirements, thus resulting in enhanced productivity.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

COURTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (7.56 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend various Acts to provide for court annexed mediation and case appraisal, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (7.57 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill introduces alternative dispute resolution processes into the court system. The Bill provides for court annexed mediation and case appraisal. The Queensland justice system will be improved by the inclusion of alternative dispute resolution processes in the court system. This Bill recognises that there are many ways to resolve a dispute. Some disputes can be resolved by agreement, others can be resolved by an independent appraisal of each party's case and others can be resolved only by a court determination.

This Bill will provide the court with the tools of mediation and case appraisal. The aim of using these processes is to give parties an opportunity to participate in ADR processes to try to achieve negotiated settlements and satisfactory resolutions of disputes. A settlement achieved through an ADR process is likely to be cheaper and faster than proceeding to trial. The Bill will introduce uniform ADR provisions in the legislation governing the Supreme Courts, Districts Courts and Magistrates Courts. Uniformity of procedure tends towards a more accessible justice system. The opportunity has been taken in this Bill to modernise the rule-making powers of each court and to confer power to make rules of court in relation to ADR processes.

The Bill contains amendments to the following legislation: Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991; District Courts Act 1967; Magistrates Courts Act 1921; and Judicial Review Act 1991. The amendments to the Supreme Court of Queensland Act, the District Courts Act and Magistrates Courts Act provide the framework for ADR processes. As the amendments relating to ADR processes are uniform, I will discuss them together. The separate amendments to the rule-making powers are discussed below.

Framework for ADR processes

The amendments clearly define the various terms integral to the ADR scheme. The amendments specify the objects of the introduction of ADR processes. It is made clear that the primary object is to provide an opportunity for litigants to participate in ADR processes to achieve negotiated settlements and satisfactory resolutions of their disputes. To achieve that objective, further objects are to provide the necessary framework and protections for the ADR processes in the court system.

The concepts of ADR process, mediation and case appraisal are defined in detail by the amendments. The amendments clarify that two kinds of ADR processes will be used and that the purpose of their use is to help the parties to achieve an early, inexpensive settlement or resolution of their dispute. Mediation is then defined as a process under which the parties use a mediator to help them resolve their dispute by negotiated agreement without adjudication. Case appraisal is a process in which a case appraiser provisionally decides a dispute. Case appraisal is known by other names, such as early neutral evaluation.

The amendments then establish the process for administering the ADR process. The amendments to the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991 provide that the Senior Judge Administrator, in consultation with the Chief Justice, may approve or refuse to approve a person as a mediator or case appraiser. The amendments to the District Courts Act 1967 provide that the Chief Judge shall undertake these functions. The amendments to the Magistrates Courts Act 1921 provide that the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate shall perform these functions.

The amendments provide that the judicial officer with power to approve a mediator or case appraiser also has power to revoke that

approval. Where approval is revoked, a statement of reasons must be provided. The amendments provide for a review process against refusal to approve or to revoke the approval of a person as a case appraiser or mediator. The amendments provide an appeal to the Court of Appeal, by leave of that court, against the decision of the Senior Judge Administrator or the Chief Judge and an appeal to the District Court from the decision of the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate. Because of this specific review process, the amendments make clear that these decisions may not be the subject of judicial review.

The amendments require the maintenance of a register of information about ADR processes. The register must at least contain the name and address of each mediator and case appraiser. In the Supreme Court and District Court, the register must be maintained by the Supreme Court Registrar. The amendments confer a power on the Senior Judge Administrator to decide if further information is to be entered on the register. In the amendments to the Magistrates Court Act 1921, it is made clear that the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate may nominate a registrar of a Magistrates Court in Brisbane to keep the register of information about ADR processes. The amendments confer power on the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate to decide if other information should be entered on the register.

The amendments ensure that the parties can agree to refer their dispute to an ADR process. They confer a power on the court to order a dispute to mediation or case appraisal. The amendments allow the court to require the parties to attend before the court to enable the court to decide whether the parties' dispute should be referred to an ADR process. Under the amendments, the court can order a dispute to an ADR process, regardless of the parties' consent. Some of the matters which a court may take into account when considering whether to refer a matter to case appraisal are specified by the amendments.

The amendments indicate precisely the obligations of the parties once a dispute is referred to an ADR process. The obligations are to attend before the appointed ADR convenor and that a party must not impede the ADR convenor in conducting and finishing the ADR process within the time allowed in the referring order. The concept of impeding is intended to include only the formal aspects of participation. It is not intended to include the degree or extent of participation.

The amendments spell out some of the sanctions available when a party impedes an ADR process. The sanctions include ordering that the claim for relief by the defaulting party is stayed until further order.

The amendments provide more detail as to the procedure at a case appraisal. The amendments make clear that the case appraiser has discretion as to the procedure to be used. They spell out the limitations on the powers of the case appraiser to determine the procedures to be used at a case appraisal. The limitations are of three kinds. Firstly, that case appraiser may receive evidence, examine witnesses and administer oaths only in special circumstances. Secondly, the court may give directions at any time about the procedures to be used at a case appraisal. Thirdly, a person may only be subpoenaed to appear at a case appraisal by order of the court. The amendments specify that the decision of a case appraiser may not be judicially reviewed. The amendments make clear that a person may not be subpoenaed to appear at a mediation.

The amendments clarify that the court may cancel a reference to an ADR process where the court is of the opinion that a party is unable, because of their financial circumstances, to pay the party's percentage of the ADR costs. The amendments provide for the action to be taken at the completion of an ADR process.

The amendments make clear that any agreements reached at mediation must be written down and signed by the parties and the mediator, and that a party may apply to court for an order giving effect to any agreement reached at mediation, as long as the agreement is filed. In any event, the amendments provide that the mediator must file a certificate about the mediation. The amendments provide for the filing of a certificate about the case appraisal and the case appraiser's decision.

The amendments provide that a party may apply to court for an order giving effect to a case appraiser's decision. The application can only be made if the time prescribed for filing of an election to go to trial has passed. The amendments allow the application to be brought before that time if all parties agree.

The amendments provide for the protections and safeguards to be afforded to ADR processes. Three kinds of protection are afforded. Firstly, the amendments impose an obligation on the ADR convenor to maintain secrecy about information coming to the convenor's knowledge during an ADR process.

Certain circumstances which constitute a reasonable excuse to disclose information are set out. Secondly, the ADR convenor, parties and witnesses are afforded by the amendments certain protections and immunities. For example, a witness attending in an ADR process has the same protection and immunity as a witness appearing before the relevant court. Thirdly, the amendments ensure that evidence of anything said or done, or admission made at an ADR process, is admissible at the trial of a dispute or in another civil proceeding, only if all parties agree.

Rule-making powers

The Supreme Court Act of 1991, the District Courts Act of 1967 and the Magistrates Courts Act 1921 are to be amended to confer specifically a power to make rules of court in relation to ADR processes.

The opportunity has been taken to consolidate the rule-making power of the Supreme Court. The power to make Supreme Court rules exists in several pieces of legislation and different methods for making rules of court are specified. This amendment provides a streamlined procedure for making Supreme Court rules under any of these Acts.

The amendments to the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991 define the role of the Litigation Reform Commission in reporting on rules of court made under that Act or any other Act. The amendments make clear that a report and recommendation must be obtained from the commission or a division of the commission when rules of court are made under that Act or another Act or a regulation is made under that Act. The only exception is when rules of court for the Court of Appeal are made under section 32 of the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991. In that case, a report and recommendation from the Litigation Reform Commission is not required.

The opportunity has also been taken to streamline the procedure for making District Court rules. The amendment will ensure that District Court rules need only be approved by six District Court judges, of whom the Chief Judge must be one.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY-GENERAL (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (8.08 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend or repeal Acts administered by the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (8.09 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill contains minor amendments to the following legislation: Acts Interpretation Act 1954; Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950; Electoral Act 1992; Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957; Justices Act 1886; Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations Act 1991; the oaths legislation, that is, the Oaths Act 1867 and the Oaths Act Amending Acts of 1876, 1884 and 1891; and Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General is responsible for the administration of some 157 statutes and, as a result, there is a necessity for a number of minor amendments to be regularly made to various legislative provisions to ensure that the statutes continue to operate in the manner intended.

To facilitate this, an annual departmental miscellaneous provisions Bill is prepared so that the minor amendments needed can be effected by means of one statute. This ensures that much needed statutory reform is not delayed and that the time of the Parliament is not unnecessarily expended on dealing with a number of disparate pieces of legislation, each of which could be more appropriately combined in the form of legislation we are now considering.

The amendment to the Acts Interpretation Act 1954 firstly omits and inserts a new section 29A which has been redrafted to have regard to the Parliamentary Papers Act 1992. The new section makes it clear that out of session tabling can occur at the most appropriate time and not just at the time a report is received. It may not be appropriate to immediately table a report at the time it is received because, for example, a report may recommend prosecutions, and such

prosecutions may be prejudiced if a report is immediately tabled. The amendment will enable the report to be tabled as soon as appropriate, for example, when prosecutions have been finalised, without having to await the resumption of the Parliament.

The new section allows the Clerk rather than the Speaker—as is the current provision—to authorise the printing of the report. This is consistent with the Clerk being a permanent officer of the Parliament and a person who is authorised to publish documents under the Parliamentary Papers Act 1992.

The amendments to the Acts Interpretation Act 1954 also amend section 33A(3) of the Acts Interpretation Act to make it clear that that subsection does not apply to the Acts Interpretation Act 1954. In addition, the amendments amend section 36 of the Acts Interpretation Act 1954 to include a definition of "Speaker" and to relocate sections 48 and 52, which deal with the mode of pleading affirmation instead of oath and the form of oath of allegiance respectively to the Oaths Act 1867. There are further amendments to the oaths legislation to which I will refer later.

The amendments to the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950 relate to section 32 of that Act and have regard to the revision of section 29A of the Acts Interpretation Act already referred to. The amendments to the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950 also repeal the existing regulation-making power, section 26, and insert a new regulation-making power in accordance with modern drafting practices.

The amendments to the Electoral Act 1992 omit and insert a new section 172(1) to create an additional offence where a person fails to promptly post or send by facsimile a request under section 111 by an electoral visitor to vote as an electoral visitor voter. This is in addition to the existing offence of failing to promptly post or send by facsimile a request by an ordinary postal voter for a ballot paper and declaration envelope. It will create consistency between the obligation to promptly post or send by facsimile a request by an ordinary postal voter for a ballot paper and declaration envelope and the obligation to promptly post or send by facsimile a request by an electoral visitor voter to vote as an electoral visitor voter. The amendments also omit and insert a new section 172(2)—offence to not promptly post a declaration envelope—redrafted in accordance with modern drafting practice. The amendments also make a statute law revision amendment to section 111(1) of the Electoral Act 1992.

The amendment to the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957 omits and inserts a new section 15(5) to provide that judges who have accrued a long leave entitlement of not less than six months and who wish to take this leave in parts can take the long leave with the approval of the Governor in Council in two or more separate periods.

The amendments to the Justices Act do a number of things, including:

inserting a new section 268A to remove any doubt as to the validity of the approval of certain forms approved on 18 June 1993;

inserting a new section 271 whose purpose is to remove any doubt and declare that, despite the enactment of the Justice Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992:

the boundaries of each Magistrates Court district or division before the commencement of the relevant provisions of the Justices Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992 continue to be the boundaries for the district or division;

a division of the Brisbane district continued to be a district; and

every place appointed in each division of the Brisbane district continued to be a place appointed for holding a Magistrates Court.

The amendments to section 5 of the Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations Act 1991 deal with the membership of the Justices of the Peace Council. The amendments to the Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations Act 1991 also amend section 12 to enable the appointment of deputy registrars who will have the same powers and functions as the registrar. Finally, the amendments to the Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations Act 1991 amend section 16 to enable a retired magistrate to apply to be appointed as a Justice of the Peace (Magistrates Courts) without having to undergo the compulsory training course, provided the application for appointment is made within five years of the date of retirement.

A considerable number of provisions of the Bill are taken up with the amendments to the oaths legislation, namely the Oaths Act 1867 and the Oaths Act Amendment Acts of 1867, 1884 and 1891. Firstly, the

amendments amend section 13 of the 1867 Act to provide that the provision applies to declarations taken for Queensland law wherever those declarations are taken. They also amend section 3 of the 1891 Act to enable the same people who can take declarations to take affidavits. They also will enable interstate barristers and solicitors to take Queensland affidavits, something which has been prohibited since the ruling of the Supreme Court in the decision of re Ocean Industries. The other amendments to the oaths legislation contained in the Bill deal with the consolidation of the Oaths Act Amendment Acts of 1876, 1884 and 1891 into the Oaths Act 1867 and minor statute law revision amendments as a result of that consolidation.

Finally, the Bill seeks to amend the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991 to make amendments to Schedule 2 of that Act. Honourable members will recall that Schedule 2 of the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991 repealed a number of provisions of the Supreme Court Act 1921 no longer relevant because of the creation of the Court of Appeal. This amendment makes it absolutely clear which part of section 7 of the Supreme Court Act 1921 is being repealed by the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (8.16 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Freedom of Information Act 1992."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (8.17 p.m.): I move—

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

I am pleased to introduce the Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 1995. The Bill has two aims: to remove any remaining ambiguity regarding the Cabinet and Executive Council exemption; and to make the amendments retrospective. Sections 36 and 37 of the Freedom of Information Act were amended in 1993. The amendments followed the decision of the Information Commissioner in Fencray v. Department of Premier, Trade and Economic Development. In 1993, I advised the House that amendments to the FOI Act were necessary to prevent the undermining of the convention of collective ministerial responsibility. The decision in Fencray potentially allowed the release of Cabinet material which may have revealed the particular position adopted by a Minister or Ministers during Cabinet deliberations. It was the Government's intention, as stated in the Explanatory Note to the 1993 amendment, that the purposive test would be removed from the Cabinet exemption, and that all documents that actually come before Cabinet will automatically fall within the exemption.

The present amendments have the same aim as the 1993 amendments and are intended to remove any doubt regarding the operation of the Cabinet and Executive Council exemptions so that all matter that is submitted to Cabinet and Executive Council is exempt. They are intended to prevent inquiry into what takes place in the Cabinet room. They will safeguard absolutely the confidentiality of the Cabinet and Executive Council process.

The objects of the Freedom of Information Act, as stated in section 5, recognise the detrimental effect that the disclosure of particular information would have on essential public interests as well as the public interest in promoting open discussion of public affairs. The FOI Act recognises the need to strike a balance between the two competing public interests.

For Cabinet to work as efficiently and effectively as possible it must have the ability to consider issues without the threat of access to Cabinet documents under the Act. As I advised the House in 1993, the High Court in the case of Commonwealth v. Northern Land Council recognised the public interest in maintaining the confidentiality of the Cabinet process. The effect of the amendments is that all matter, including statistical, scientific or technical matter that is submitted to Cabinet, is exempt from disclosure under the Act.

"Submit" has been defined in the new section 36. The definition makes it clear that it

is necessary only to bring matter to Cabinet in a physical sense for it to be exempt under the Act. It is then a matter for Cabinet as to whether and to what extent it considers the material before it. The amendments make it clear that it is not permissible to attempt to second-guess the reason that documents were submitted to Cabinet. Such inquiries strike at the heart of Cabinet confidentiality.

The Bill extends the exemption to matter prepared for briefing chief executives in relation to a matter submitted or proposed to be submitted to Cabinet. This reflects the fact that in Queensland chief executives may receive detailed briefing on material that is submitted to Cabinet.

I would also draw your attention to the new section 36(1)(e). This subsection, when read in conjunction with the definition of "consideration", prevents the disclosure of matter which would reveal a decision or deliberation of Cabinet. However, it is intended to go further than this and will protect any matter which would prejudice the operations or considerations of Cabinet. It will, for instance, prevent disclosure of matter which would indicate that an issue had been discussed by or submitted to Cabinet. The Executive Council exemption has been amended in the same terms as the Cabinet exemption. In the Government's view, it is equally important to safeguard the integrity and confidentiality of the Executive Council process.

The Bill applies retrospectively. I make no apology for that. The FOI Act was never intended to provide a vehicle to inquire inside the Cabinet room. The Queensland Government does not accept that this would be a legitimate purpose of freedom of information legislation. The Bill is retrospective because it gives effect to the intent that this Parliament always had, that is, to protect the confidentiality of Cabinet and Executive Council deliberations and decisions and all documents physically submitted to, or prepared in relation to, Cabinet and Executive Council.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ABORIGINAL LANDS) AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Rural Communities) (8.21 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act 1978."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Rural Communities) (8.22 p.m.): I move—

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

The Bill amends the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act in two ways. Firstly, it addresses the particular concerns of the Aurukun community in relation to the availability of alcohol in the shire. Secondly, a number of miscellaneous amendments are proposed to reflect Government policy in relation to the establishment of liquor facilities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the issue of personal prohibition orders on individuals consuming alcohol. The Bill has been developed directly in response to a request from the Aurukun community for a legal framework to assist in the control of alcohol.

As part of the process of designing an appropriate system, extensive consultations have occurred with the community. The proposed system is the first of its kind as it attempts as far as possible to take into account one Aboriginal community's unique social culture and geographic setting. Because the approach taken is in the nature of an experiment, the legislation will only be in force for an initial period of two years. Its success will be evaluated before the end of that period to decide whether it should continue in operation.

The primary objectives of the legislation include the establishment of a system to declare places in the shire area where alcohol can be taken and consumed, a deterrent to the illegal sale of alcohol and the minimisation of alcohol-related disturbances in the community. There is broad community support in Aurukun for a system which will allow individuals or groups of people to have alcohol prohibited or controlled in their homes or on their homelands.

It is considered the current liquor laws have not been sufficient to deter the illegal sale of alcohol in Aurukun. Policing of the illegal sale of alcohol, commonly referred to as "sly-grogging", is difficult because the burden of proof required by the courts is set at a level which cannot easily be obtained in a community such as Aurukun. The clear intention of the Bill is that the proposed system to control alcohol in certain places should not result in a total prohibition across the shire.

The Bill establishes a decision making body called the Aurukun Alcohol Law Council, which I will refer to as "the Law Council". The main function of the Law Council is to decide which places will be declared dry, that is, where the presence of alcohol will be prohibited, and which places will be declared controlled, that is, where the possession or consumption of alcohol is restricted through directions which set limits on the quantity or type of alcohol brought into the place.

The Law Council may also make a direction which allows the possession or consumption of alcohol in a controlled place if it is in accordance with a permit. For example, the Law Council may decide to make a direction about a public place such as a park which allows a group to apply for a permit to have more than the allowed quantity and/or type of alcohol when a special event is to be held.

The Bill places a number of obligations on the Law Council to ensure the community is informed about its proposals and its decisions. The Law Council will also have a role in advising the State Government and the Aurukun Shire Council on the operation and effectiveness of the system and generally on the administration and enforcement of the legislation.

Members of the Law Council will be the elders of recognised traditional groups whose names will be published in the Gazette by the Minister. These groups are recognised under Aboriginal tradition and collectively make up the people particularly concerned with the land in the shire. Each traditional group can nominate at least one elder as a representative on the Law Council. The Minister must publish the names in the Gazette as well as a description of each recognised traditional group which forms the basis for the composition of the Law Council. Although more than one elder may be nominated to represent a traditional group, only one elder from each group may attend a meeting of the Law Council.

The way in which the Law Council conducts its business and makes its decisions is up to it. Where the Law Council considers it appropriate, it may take into account Aboriginal tradition in making decisions. However, the Bill specifies the majority of the members of the Law Council present at a meeting must be in agreement to decide a question.

In effect, the Bill establishes a specific purpose alternative governing structure to control the possession or consumption of alcohol in the shire area. This step has been taken as it became clear during detailed community consultations that representation on the shire council and other community organisations was not seen as a particularly appropriate basis for the composition of a body to make decisions about alcohol. These consultations occurred as part of a pilot community planning project being undertaken in Aurukun under the Government's Alternative Governing Structures Program.

The issue of alcohol and a legislative framework to deal with its availability has been the focus of the first stage in the planning project. The approach taken in the Bill is consistent with the Government's policy to explore alternative management structures in Aboriginal communities in close consultation with those communities. The Law Council is accountable to the Aurukun community and must report on its activities at least once every six months and notify the community that copies of the report are available. A number of provisions in the Bill are also specifically designed to ensure the community is given an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

There are two categories of places which the Law Council can declare dry or controlled, public places and private places. Public places are the roads; places under the control of the shire council such as parks, the airstrip and the barge landing area; and places under the control of the Government such as the hospital and the school grounds. Applications to declare a public place dry or controlled may be initiated by the Law Council or it may receive an application from the shire council or from a Government department in respect of places under their control.

Private places are places such as a house in Aurukun which is occupied by a person, a group of persons or an entity other than the shire council or the Government; places such as a homeland area to which a person or a group has the authority to control access under Aboriginal tradition; any other

place that is not a public place. Applications to declare private places dry or controlled may only be made to the Law Council by an occupier or by a group of people who have a particular connection with a private place under Aboriginal tradition.

Once an application is received by the Law Council or it decides to initiate an application about a public place, the details of the proposal must be put in a notice and displayed in a prominent place in the town and if possible at the place where the declaration is proposed. The same public notification process is applicable where it is proposed to amend or revoke a declaration.

The Law Council may also initiate consultation within the community. For instance, it may discuss with the occupier of a private place the need for a declaration over that place and then invite the occupier to make an application. The Law Council's ability to invite applications gives flexibility in circumstances where the occupier or traditional owners may be reluctant to make an application but where there is wider community support for a declaration.

Any adult resident of the shire may express an opinion objecting to or supporting a proposed declaration about a public place. The objection or supporting statement may be expressed in writing or be given verbally after requesting a personal interview with the Law Council. For a proposed declaration over a private place, submissions about the proposal are limited to the occupiers or people using the place or neighbouring place or people with a particular connection with a private place under Aboriginal tradition.

In addition to receiving submissions, the Law Council may decide to use other consultation mechanisms such as calling a public meeting about any proposal to declare a place. A public meeting would serve two purposes. It could be used to ensure the community has another opportunity to fully understand the proposal as well as to obtain the views of the community or people with a particular interest in the proposal. It is intended that other consultation mechanisms would provide greater flexibility to the Law Council to ensure community understanding and a higher degree of ownership of its decisions.

The secretary to the Law Council is the officer in charge of police at Aurukun or his nominee. The secretary may advise the Law Council on any matters and is responsible for arranging the keeping of minutes of meetings. The Aurukun Shire Council is responsible for undertaking the administrative support function to the Law Council. The administrative costs of operating the Law Council will be divided equally between the council and Aurukun Community Incorporated. The company is an Aboriginal corporation which operates the general store in Aurukun township and undertakes other commercial activities. The directors are members of the Aurukun community.

Penalties are included in the Bill as a deterrent to possessing or consuming any alcohol in dry places or where it is not in accordance with directions or a permit made for a controlled place. The maximum level of penalty is set at 250 units or $15,000 to target offenders who trade illegally in alcohol. For the purposes of enforcing declarations, an authorised officer is a police officer or a member of the local Aboriginal police specially authorised by a police officer for that purpose.

A range of other offences is included in the Bill to assist authorised officers in the exercise of their powers. Many of these are based on the powers of entry provisions which were incorporated into the Local Government Act 1993 late last year by the Local Government Legislation Amendment Act 1994.

The Bill also enables a court to order alcohol or vehicles used to transport alcohol to be forfeited to the shire council where a breach of the Law Council's decision has occurred. Disposal of such goods is dealt with by the council under the Local Government Act. Any proceeds from the sale of forfeited property must be used to offset the cost of providing administrative support to the Law Council.

Provision is made for a person to apply to the Law Council for a review of its decision where that person's interests are affected by the decision. The person is entitled to a statement of reasons for the decision. An appeal against the decision on review may be made to a magistrate within 28 days after the decision is given to the person.

To facilitate the implementation of the legislation a strategy is being finalised and will be put in place prior to the date of commencement. The major tasks to be undertaken include—

facilitating nominations for membership of the Law Council;

establishing administrative systems; and

undertaking a community education program.

Once the new system is operating, a monitoring and evaluation strategy will be put in place aimed at assisting the Government and the community to assess the extent to which the legislation's objectives have been achieved.

The decision-making framework established under the Bill is designed to empower the whole of the community to participate in decisions through recognition of Aboriginal tradition. The extent to which the legislation can bring about a reduction in the incidence of sly grogging and alcohol-related crime will also depend on a broad commitment within the community to bringing about change.

In my opening remarks I indicated there are other miscellaneous matters dealt with in the Bill. The Bill amends the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act to provide for Aboriginal police officers to be indemnified from legal liability during the exercise of their duties. Aboriginal police officers are appointed by the shire council to assist in the enforcement of local laws and can also be authorised officers under the new provisions dealing with the enforcement of declarations of the Law Council. Similar provisions were inserted in the community services Acts in 1994 to provide for indemnification of community police in the other Aboriginal and Islander communities in Queensland.

The Bill also repeals several provisions which are no longer consistent with other Government policy. The Liquor Act 1992 introduced a process for the establishment of liquor facilities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community areas and the local government areas of Aurukun and Mornington. The Mornington Shire Council currently operates a liquor facility under existing provisions of the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act dealing with beer canteens. The Bill repeals these provisions and authorises the facility operated by the Mornington Shire Council to be a general licence under the Liquor Act.

The Bill also repeals sections of the Act which enable the Aurukun and Mornington Shire Councils to issue prohibition orders on individuals consuming alcohol. The provisions of the Bill have been fully discussed with the shire councils and extensive community consultation has occurred in Aurukun on more effective controls on alcohol.

I believe all members will agree that this Bill contains a number of innovative provisions which are designed to assist the Aurukun community to determine more effective solutions to the control of alcohol. The success of these provisions is very much dependent upon the commitment of the Aurukun community to ensuring the Law Council and its membership of elders is recognised as the appropriate authority to determine where alcohol can be taken and consumed in Aurukun. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mrs McCauley, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (8.36 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Electricity

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (8.37 p.m.): Tonight, I rise in this Adjournment debate to bring to the attention of this Parliament and the people of Queensland the dreadful failure of the Goss Labor Government in planning for the future of electricity supplies in this State. Over the past five years, this Government has failed absolutely in respect of the future of industrial and domestic power supplies in Queensland.

Let me remind members that, five years ago when the Goss Labor Government came to power, the electricity industry in Queensland was the best in this country. It was recognised nationally and internationally as the best. We had the cheapest power in mainland Australia—we could not compete with the hydropower in Tasmania. So I ask this Parliament: what has happened in the last five and a half years that has gone so badly, badly wrong? In Queensland, we had the Queensland Electricity Commission, which was highly regarded as probably the finest and most competent planning and construction authority in this country. That Queensland Electricity Commission was charged with a number of things to do. First of all, it had to establish; secondly, to maintain; and, thirdly, plan for the future electricity generation, transmission and distribution in this State.

When the Labor Government came to power in this State, it closed down the QEC planning authority. From 1989 when this Goss Government came to power, there was no planning done—none whatsoever—until about 12 months ago when the penny dropped and the Minister realised finally that Queensland would be in deep trouble in 1998. Let me assure members that everybody else in

Queensland knew that we would be in trouble in 1998 in that the QEC, in no less than four consecutive annual reports, said that, if a definitive decision was not made by July 1991 in respect of the construction of the next power station in this State, we would have power shortages in 1998. The first of those reports was the 1988-89 annual report. It was quite a clear statement and documentary evidence was presented in that report for the incoming Government. There were no secrets about that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you can bet your life that the first discussion that this incoming Government had with the QEC was along the lines of, "Hey, we need a new power station on line in 1998. We need 350 megawatts of power from that date on. If we do not get that, then there are going to be brownouts; there are going to be blackouts; there are going to be problems."

The first decision that this Government made was that it would not construct the Tully/Millstream hydroelectric scheme, which was an essential part of the planning process. It was peak demand power—600 megawatts; and that is the shortage that we will be facing in 1998—for the proper management of the grid in Queensland.

So where are we going? Let me go back a little in history to when the former Labor Government in this State was thrown out of office 37 years ago. It left the electricity industry in this State in a shambles. It was nineteenth century stuff, with the Brisbane City Council generating power for the south east of Queensland. Our Government tidied it up, put it on a central grid under a single authority and started to turn the industry around. It started to construct the Gladstone, Tarong and Stanwell Power Stations.

At the moment, the Stanwell Power Station is coming on line. The third generator will be commissioned within a month or so. That is in the process of being done. The fourth generator will be commissioned in mid 1996 and will provide 350 megawatts of power. I remind honourable members that that power station was brought on line by a National Party Government. On its opening day, the Premier claimed responsibility for it and everything that went with it. He claimed the responsibility and did not have the decency to say that we were the ones who brought it on line.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have to ask you: what will happen after next year? There is not another generator planned for this State—not a single sausage. What will happen? The Government will have to scramble to find a solution. The Government has not been able to put together a package to make it work. The Opposition has put together such a package. We have shown the lead in this matter. We can demonstrate how we can keep the lights on after 1998. I have the document in front of me. Where is the Government's Minister tonight? Why has he not stood up in the House and said what he is going to do to keep the power and the lights on in Queensland? A month ago we saw 60,000 houses in Brisbane without power—a blackout in Brisbane for the first time.

Time expired.

Coalition Energy Policy

Dr CLARK (Barron River) (8.43 p.m.): The National Party conspiracy of trying to delude the people of Queensland into thinking that they have a reasonable environmental record has come to an abrupt end with the release of the coalition's energy policy. There have been no conversions on the road to Damascus after all. The old National Party that we know so well is back in form. It never did give up its dream of putting a dam in the Wet Tropics World Heritage area, and it is determined to succeed where the Tasmanian Liberal Government failed.

The National Party has never supported the Wet Tropics World Heritage listing or even the concept of World Heritage. In fact, when the National Party was in Government it sent its Environment Minister, Mr Muntz, to Paris to oppose the World Heritage nomination.

A Government member: And Rio.

Dr CLARK: And Rio as well; that is right.

The National Party opposed it in 1987 after it pushed the road through the Daintree, and it opposes it now. Nothing has changed. The National Party has not changed. I have long experience of the National Party. It was an environmental vandal when Martin Tenni was the Minister for the Environment, and it is an environmental vandal now for its support of the Tully/Millstream dam.

No doubt the National Party's mate Bob Katter will run around the Federal Parliament trying to get the Federal coalition to support its scheme. Interestingly, I suspect that at the same time its Green Party mate Drew Hutton will be running around trying to convince people that there is no need to worry about the coalition's energy policy, because the Federal Government will not let the National Party dam the Wet Tropics World Heritage

area, if by some miracle it becomes the Government in Queensland.

I can assure Drew Hutton and the National Party that conservationists do worry about the coalition's energy policy, with good reason. As for Drew Hutton's statement quoted in today's *Australian* that a dam in the Wet Tropics World Heritage area is no worse than Oyster Point, who could possibly believe that? What a pathetic excuse for the Opposition's environmental vandalism! Statements like that simply damage the credibility and standing of the Green parties still further. No amount of apologies will hide the bankrupt environmental policy of the National Party or its appalling environmental record.

While the Government pursues the policy of demand side management and energy efficiency, the National Party wants to destroy World Heritage rainforests. The National Party had a chance to redeem itself after the Paris debacle in the 1980s but, no, it opposed the World Heritage listing of Fraser Island in the 1990s. A new decade but the same old attitudes!

In 1992, Mr Borbidge said in the *Maryborough Chronicle* that he regarded World Heritage listing of Fraser Island as unnecessary. This should hardly come as a surprise when three years before he said—

> "As to logging the record of forest management on Fraser Island speaks for itself. In fact, while providing a valuable resource, sustained selective logging actually enhances some parts of the island."

That is amazing stuff. Even the then Environment spokesman, Tony Elliott, opposed the World Heritage listing of Fraser Island. He said—

> "The Government has accepted recommendations that pandered to one section of the community, and had accepted a 'massive overkill' of what was needed to adequately protect Fraser Island. The Opposition therefore opposed World Heritage listing."

In Cardwell, while supporting the Oyster Point project, the National Party denounced World Heritage listing for the Hinchinbrook Channel, saying it was born and bred overseas and controlled in Paris. The National Party has not changed. I hope that the Green movement is waking up to it and remembers what it is really like. I know that John Metcalfe from the far-north Greens has described its proposal to dam the World Heritage area as a backward step, which must be a gross understatement.

Mr Welford: A backward leap.

Dr CLARK: Absolutely!

I am now calling on Chris Neilson, the recently endorsed Green candidate for Barron River, to say what he thinks of the proposal to flood the tropical rainforests of the World Heritage area and whether he thinks Green supporters of far-north Queensland should give their second preferences to a party that supports the Tully/Millstream dam. Their president, John Metcalfe, said today in the *Cairns Post*—

> "What the National Party is asking us to do is to destroy our precious far-north Queensland rainforest to supply peak hour power to the rest of Queensland."

This is the party to which the Green Party intends to give its preferences. Shame on them!

Queensland Electricity Industry

Dr WATSON (Moggill) (8.47 p.m.): Obviously, the member for Barron River is particularly concerned. Having left the Greens for the Labor Party, she has found that she is now in a position where the Labor Party has simply failed to deliver on any of the promises that it made with respect to the environment. People are starting to realise that, at least with the coalition, what we say we are going to do we actually do. We actually deliver. The Government promises the world and delivers very little.

I also wish to speak about the Government's failure to provide an appropriate electricity supply industry. The member for Tablelands has identified a particular problem that Queensland is starting to face. There is a failure, it seems to me, in at least three areas. Firstly, the Government has failed to plan adequately for an increasing demand for electricity in this State. The member for Tablelands clearly demonstrated that in his speech.

Secondly, this Government has failed in its attempt to keep prices for electricity in Queensland competitive. And we will discuss that in a moment. Thirdly, every now and again there is a failure to provide adequate services in return for the significant charges imposed on consumers.

Last week in my electorate, an issue arose that was dissimilar to the brownouts that everybody in Brisbane, including those in my

electorate, faced a few weeks ago. Nevertheless, it is an issue worth raising. Most members would probably understand that Telecom and Telstra, the company which is putting in cables for pay TV——

Mr Welford: Do you know who they are?

Dr WATSON: Yes, Telecom and the Government's mate, Rupert.

It is of concern that a Federal Government corporation is failing to prepare adequately for some of the calamities that will eventually occur. Last week in Chapel Hill, Telecom managed to sever a power cable and cut electricity to a large section of that suburb. I am not concerned about the fact that such incidents will occur, but I am concerned about the fact that no adequate planning has been undertaken to cater for such occurrences—neither by Telecom nor by SEQEB.

I would have thought that both of those bodies would have planned for back-up measures in the event of such an occurrence. Most of my constituents were of the view that the response by SEQEB was less than pleasing. The incident occurred at 3.30 in the afternoon. There was little response until numerous complaints were directed not only to SEQEB but also to my office. It was not until about 7.30 in the evening that any attempt was made by SEQEB to provide a generator to service the people of that suburb. Most people are of the view that, given the way in which Telecom is going about trying to install the cables, such an event was inevitable and proper planning should have been undertaken. Most people were disappointed also that the problem was not addressed until quite a number of complaints were made.

That is a local issue. Of more concern to people should be the fact that the Queensland electricity industry is becoming less competitive. In August last year, in an address to a benchmarking conference held in Melbourne, the principal economist of the Bureau of Industry Economics, John Whiteman, indicated that in the industrial electricity arena Queensland was falling behind Victoria and, more recently, New South Wales. In fact, he stated—

> "The cheapest Australian State for industrial electricity . . . (is) Victoria . . . "

Victoria still lags a fair way behind the rest of the world, but the fact remains that that State has now taken over from Queensland as the cheapest State for industrial electricity.

Time expired.

Gladstone Region

Mr BENNETT (Gladstone) (8.52 p.m.): Recent studies undertaken during the consultation phase of the Aldoga industrial land use study showed that an overwhelming number of residents in the Gladstone region are in favour of further industrial development. I believe that that response is indicative of the industrious nature of people in the Gladstone region. People are prepared to do the hard yards in ensuring that industrial development is encouraged and facilitated. If I may indulge in a well-used cliche, the Gladstone region's civic leaders, business people and unionists have a can-do attitude.

In common with many people before me, I went to Gladstone as a young, unemployed tradesman following the industry that went to Gladstone. That industry provided me and my family and many other families with a good quality of life, with our children now having the opportunity to obtain a tertiary education in our region at our own university campus—an education relevant to the needs of Gladstone industry and environs. It is clear that, although residents favour further industrial development, they do not want development at any cost. I believe it is important that this Parliament should be made aware of the Goss Government's environmental credentials in the Gladstone region.

The first area on which I wish to concentrate is the gazettal of national environmental parks. As promised by the Goss Government, the area of national parks across the State has doubled. In the Gladstone electorate, parks have been declared at Rundle Range, 2,170 hectares; Curtis Island, 1,550 hectares; and a 44-hectare Boyne Island environmental park. The Goss Government also fulfilled election promises and declared a 580-hectare Wild Cattle Island National Park and saved it from sandmining. That fragile island could not have supported sandmining and in fact it would have devastated its flora and fauna. Other less fragile resources were used not far away. That decision had the widespread support of the Boyne/Tannum community.

The Goss Government has established an air-monitoring program for the Yarwun industrial estate and for Gladstone City and publicly releases the findings of that program—something that the National Party Government continually opposed. Through the Department of Environment and Heritage, the Government coordinated the Gladstone Dust Committee—a voluntary group of potentially polluting industries set a task to reduce dust

and pollution, even though air monitoring has not recorded readings even close to international limits.

Last year, the port authority commissioned a multimillion-dollar coal dust suppression system at its R G Tanna terminal to ensure that coal dust does not blow over the city in high winds. The Goss Government recognised as far back as 1990 that something had to be done about the emissions from the Gladstone Power Station and put in train a program to eliminate dust emissions. As part of the sale contract of the Gladstone Power Station to NRG Comalco, the company has been required to refurbish dust-emission equipment at the station by December 1997—a popular decision well received in the community. Already, part of that work has been completed on one unit, and I will be visiting the station to inspect its operation.

Enhanced water quality monitoring of the Boyne and Calliope Rivers commenced in 1993 as part of the implementation of the $1.5m Clean Waters Plan. A Port Curtis water monitoring group was established in early 1994 comprising representatives of the Department of Environment and Heritage and all companies and authorities currently discharging waste into Port Curtis. Local governments have received $81,000 for recycling, and $15,000 was granted to the B and M Kerr recycling plant for a paper shredder for newspapers. As well, $7,500 has been allocated to local councils for the purchase of pollution-monitoring equipment. The Capricorn Conservation Council has been granted $32,000 between 1991 and 1994, and $37,000 has been allocated for dune management programs in the Gladstone region, proving that the Goss Government is doing its bit in the Gladstone area.

As chairman of the Gladstone Marine Resources Advisory Committee, I was pleased that we were used as a vehicle for the launch of the Calliope River study by the Department of Primary Industries. That study is now an important resource document, and the next step for the department is to set up a fish habitat reserve in that area. The Gladstone Port Authority has also set in train a policy of no net loss of mangroves in the Gladstone Harbour, so that any mangroves that are removed in the expansion of the port will be replaced with mangrove planting. Gladstone has a very keen recreational fishing community which would expect no less from the port authority, because mangroves are recognised for their importance to the marine environment.

I firmly believe that one of the most important resource documents which was recently released by the Minister for Environment and Heritage, Molly Robson, is the Curtis Coast study. The Curtis Coast study was established as a joint initiative by the Department of Environment and Heritage and the Gladstone Port Authority in mid-1992 and meets their respective individual commitments to the environmental policy for Queensland ports and the coastal protection strategy. It has investigated and documented the resources of the Curtis Coast between the Fitzroy River and the town of 1770 with an aim of developing a strategy plan which will seek to establish the management of the coastline on an environmentally sound and socially responsible basis. The Curtis Coast has high conservation values, and I compliment the Goss Government on its work in that regard.

Time expired.

Electricity Industry

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (8.57 p.m.): In joining in the Adjournment debate tonight, I wish to respond to some of the remarks made by the member for Barron River, who earlier expressed to this House her views on the Tully/Millstream project. The question is: who speaks for the Government—the member for Barron River or the Premier? Earlier this year when speaking on a 4CA program in Cairns—a program that is hosted by John Mackenzie—the Premier stated that he personally was in favour of the Tully/Millstream project.

I note that the Honourable the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development is supporting my contention. I know that the Minister personally supports the project. I realise that he is now confined to commenting on matters related to his portfolio, but as a backbencher the Minister made it well known in this House that he personally supports the Tully/Millstream project and believes that it has a lot going for it. Of course, in that respect the Minister is in agreement with 78 per cent of north Queenslanders. I understand that the *Cairns Post* undertook a survey which indicated that 78 per cent of the people of north Queensland are in favour of the Tully/Millstream project.

The question that the electors of Barron River have to ask themselves is: who speaks for the Government? Is it the Premier, is it the newly appointed Minister, or is it the sitting member? The electors have to make their up their minds on that issue. I will leave my

comments there, but I just wanted to draw those points to the attention of the House.

Mr Bredhauer: I would have thought you should ask the Minister for Minerals and Energy.

Mr FITZGERALD: The honourable member for Cook, who is not sitting in his usual place, referred to the Minister for Minerals and Energy. The coalition policy on electricity has now been released. The Government keeps asking the coalition to outline its policies.

Mr Bredhauer: We've already done most of that.

Mr FITZGERALD: I inform the honourable member that the Government has not done most of what is contained in that policy. In the five years that it has been in power, this Government's only decision has been to cancel the Tully/Millstream project. The Government then decided to construct Eastlink in order to obtain one-tenth of Queensland's power from New South Wales under the guise that it will trade in power. The honourable member must understand that no decision has yet been made on that issue. The decision has been made to set aside a corridor but not to build the line. The Government has made a decision to trade in power; however, for the next 10 years it will suck power out of New South Wales.

This Government will export 1,200 jobs to the New South Wales electricity industry. I remind the honourable member that that decision has not yet been made, but it will be made in the near future. Despite denials from the Government that the decision has yet to be made, landowners in the electorate of Warwick and the electorate of Lockyer are well aware that towers will eventually be running across their properties. That is the decision that the Government has made. It has no policy on that. The next Queensland Government, which will be a National Party Government, has released its policies on the sites of new power stations and what options will be available. The first thing that a National Party Government will do is stop Eastlink. We will not give our jobs to the people of New South Wales.

When the National Party lost Government, Queensland had the most efficient electricity industry in Australia and the cheapest power on mainland Australia. So, under a National Party Government those jobs would not be lost. I notice that the member for Warwick is here to support me in this debate tonight. A National Party Government will generate the most efficient electricity industry in Australia and keep jobs in Queensland.

Government members say that they are going to trade in electricity. They say that, with one 330 kilovolt line, they are going to trade in electricity. According to them, it will flow one way for the next 10 years. The Government is going to trade because it cannot sell. It has nothing on which to convey the electricity, yet Government members criticise members of the Opposition when we say, "To trade, you will have to build another line." Of course, no decision has been made to build another line, but the Minister adds the proviso "at this stage". However, even though we will be importers of electricity, the Government is going to trade in power. So not only is the Minister for Minerals and Energy, who has just entered the Chamber, at fault, but so also is his predecessor.

The Government's electricity industry policy is an absolute sham. Public servants employed in the electricity industry are terrified that they will lose their jobs because, if this Government gets back into power, it will blame those employees for the lack of planning. The Minister will say, "Yes, the industry has failed to plan." The Government is screwing everything out of Swanbank Power Station. Government members told us that they were going to get 100 per cent production out of that power station. That cannot be achieved because it has not been designed to give 100 per cent. The Government will try to drag every ounce of power out of every electricity station it has, and it will fail; then it will blame the engineers.

Time expired.

Premeditated Bankruptcy

Mr D'ARCY (Woodridge) (9.02 p.m.): I rise tonight to speak about the bankruptcies that have been plaguing our nation. There is a deep and genuine concern in the Queensland and Australian electorate that we, as their political representatives, have failed to address the problem of premeditated bankruptcy. I refer specifically to people who plan to defraud by bankruptcy.

The publicity associated with the Bond and Skase companies has heightened public awareness of bankruptcy. The public have a genuine expectation that we will come up with some of the answers. Since State Governments over the last decade or so handed over much of the administration of company law to the Federal Government, we can rightly say that it is largely its problem, but

we do have a role to play through the ministerial councils, the pressure that we can put on Federal colleagues and some of the laws that we still oversee.

On many occasions in the Parliament I have raised the problem of premeditated bankruptcy in the building industry. My friend, the late Hans Althoff, and his wife, Erica, of E A & S Plaster, have campaigned strongly for a change in laws. Suppliers and contractors are at risk from unscrupulous entrepreneurs and builders. For example, once material is delivered on site, it is the property of the developer or the builder, whether or not he has paid for it. There are numerous cases where material has been rushed to sites by builders who then declare themselves bankrupt.

To a large extent we have overcome many of the problems associated with subcontractors, and the law in that area is working fairly well. Although we have registration of builders and companies, credit checks still leave a lot to be desired. I understand, for example, that in my area a builder by the name of Les Wilson has traded at various times as Mustang Homes, Our Homes and Wilson & Wilson and on three occasions during the past eight years has been declared bankrupt, leaving behind huge debts. Credit checks should be tightened and the Builders Registration Board given greater power to get the unscrupulous builders out of the industry. Building materials that have not been used should revert to the supplier provided that they have not already been used in the construction.

The bankruptcy laws actually go back to a 1542 Act. They were an attempt to deal justly with a genuine bankrupt. None of the following suggestions regarding bankruptcy are intended to deal with those cases, but they would make it much harder for the premeditated bankrupt to operate. On each occasion of premeditated bankruptcy, it is the public that suffers. Public moneys are used to pursue the bankrupts; financial institutions that face massive losses increase their rates and charges to the general public to cover these losses; and thousands of honest Australian families have been forced into debt because of the actions of these people.

Probably the worse thing that occurs is that, because of existing laws, a bankrupt is able to thumb his nose at the Australian public. There are several areas of the law that can be tightened. The financial institutions must bear some of the burden. The average Australian citizen who wants to borrow money has to deal with the local bank manager, then the local credit agent for the bank. He has to have all of his documentation in place. These high rollers and high-fliers are dealing with the people at the top. They are able to walk away because they do not have to meet the criteria that the average person is forced to meet. Often in cases of bankruptcy, it is these very banks and institutions that foreclose too readily on people who could trade out of their problems. At the same time, many of these people are planning bankruptcies while they are wining and dining people on boats and yachts. It is those types of circumstances that show premeditated bankruptcy. The Australian public want some of those banks that have lent that money to bear some of the responsibility and culpability.

As to company laws—family trusts were set up to cover some of these premeditated bankrupts. There are probably some members of this House who have family trusts, but they are a method of defrauding; they are a method of keeping taxation at the lowest possible rate. However, they are not much use to the average person. That was the vehicle used by Skase, and particularly Bond, to make use of the five-year law. If a person can premeditate a bankruptcy over five years, which obviously occurred in those cases, he or she can transfer assets within family trusts and, at the same time, be immune from prosecution. So that time limit should be changed. We should look seriously at family trusts.

The receiver situation is a joke and it needs addressing. We know that in relation to Skase a trustee was appointed by a group of creditors, mostly florists and restaurateurs, who were owed a total of $80,000. He got his passport, etc., even though he owed the banks a great deal of money. The fact was that the banks moved too slowly. They were his mates. They were owed $190m, yet they did not get to appoint a receiver. We have seen many examples of this problem, and it is getting out of hand.

Today, on behalf of the electorate, I have outlined a genuine concern that premeditated bankruptcy is hurting our nation.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.07 p.m.