THURSDAY, 30 MARCH 1995

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

PRINTING COMMITTEE

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I lay upon the table of the House a report of the Printing Committee titled "Timeliness of annual reports required to be tabled during 1994".

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Cairns-Forsayth Rail Service

From **Mr Gilmore** (731 signatories) praying that the 7A90 service Cairns-Forsayth, marketed as "The Last Great Train Ride", be retained.

Royal Queensland Bush Children's Health Scheme

From **Mr Lester** (218 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will: (a) immediately remove the board and executive staff of the Royal Queensland Bush Children's Health Scheme and appoint an administrator as an interim manager; (b) immediately reopen the Townsville and Yeppoon homes and retain all homes in their coastal communities; and (c) ensure that community input is sought, as a funding requirement, prior to any proposed future changes in administering the scheme.

Petitions received.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Rural Debt Levels

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (10.02 a.m.), by leave: Mr Speaker, last October the State Government, through the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority—QRAA—commissioned chartered accountants, Bentleys, to undertake an independent survey of rural debt levels on a regional and industry basis. Information was collected from all lenders and commercial credit providers servicing the rural sector, and the data was then analysed by the Treasury Department, the Department of Primary Industries and QRAA. I will today table that summary analysis for the benefit of honourable members. Copies of the survey report are available from QRAA upon request.

There were two main catalysts for the survey. First, the State Government and primary producer groups were concerned about the level and nature of rural debt. Second, the State wanted as detailed a picture as possible of rural debt to help us better target drought relief measures. The major findings of the survey will therefore help the State Government, rural organisations, farmers and graziers, lenders and rural communities to better understand and respond to financial problems confronting Queensland's primary producers.

However, I caution against selective interpretation of this data. For example, a farmer with a high level of debt is not necessarily a bad farmer or a farmer in trouble, nor can one particular rural industry be branded as inefficient because it has a higher level of indebted farmers than another industry. These debt levels could be explained by fluctuations in market prices, industry or farm restructuring or—as is more likely the case for many Queensland farmers during the past four years—the impact of the continuing severe drought. On the other hand, farmers with little or no debt are not necessarily free from financial stress.

The Bentleys survey, which is the first detailed look at rural debt in Queensland, shows that, as at December 1994, total rural indebtedness in the State was $3.875 billion. This was shared by 16,530 of the estimated 21,370 farm businesses in Queensland. This means that 4,840, or 23 per cent, of Queensland's primary producers are estimated to be debt free. The Bentleys survey of farm businesses also shows: about 47 per cent are borrowers who are considered viable under most or all circumstances; about 24 per cent are borrowers considered potentially viable long term but with debt servicing difficulties; about 4 per cent are borrowers with debt servicing difficulties and a deteriorating debt situation; and about 2 per cent are borrowers considered non-viable. Further, the 6 per cent of farm businesses with debt categorised as "at risk" and "non-viable" account for 15 per cent of the level of debt. This means that 94 per cent of Queensland primary producers are either debt free, or have the capacity or potential to service their debt in the long term.

The relatively low "at risk" and "non-viable" percentage indicates considerable financial discipline and good management by both primary producers and financial

institutions. However, it is also clear that during the past four years of tough drought, many producers have made, and continue to make, substantial personal sacrifices in order to sustain farm viability.

Unfortunately, the drought has not broken. Very useful rain has fallen in some areas in recent months, but there has been no general breaking of the drought and the situation remains precarious for many producers. The Commonwealth and Queensland Governments therefore remain committed to responding to the difficulties facing rural producers with various targeted and tailored assistance measures. More than $204m has been allocated to drought related programs since 1991-92, with $109m provided by the State and $95m by the Commonwealth.

In the eight months to February alone, $36.7m has been provided through Rural Adjustment Scheme interest subsidies to 2,171 producers. This compares with $34.9m of interest subsidy support for the whole of 1993-94. According to the analysis summary of the Bentleys survey, more than 70 per cent of RAS payments so far in 1994-95 have been made to the financially stressed grain and grazing industries, where it is needed the most.

More information is contained in the Bentleys survey report and I commend it to all honourable members. In conclusion, I wish to thank the rural lending institutions for their cooperation in enabling this analysis to be compiled. I now seek leave to table the analysis of that report by the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority, Queensland Treasury and the Department of Primary Industries.

Leave granted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Rural Regions Advisory Council Report

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Rural Communities) (10.08 a.m.), by leave: Last year, the Government established the Queensland Rural Regions Advisory Council—QRRAC—as a joint industry, community and Government body to look at the range of Government services available to help communities in rural Queensland deal with the changing social and economic climate. The council included representatives from State and local government, rural industry groups and community service organisations. It is the first of its kind in Australia and represents one of the many steps this Government has taken to ensure people in rural and remote areas have their say in services which affect them.

QRRAC met with more than 100 local representatives throughout Queensland and received a range of formal submissions on social, economic and environmental issues which affect people living in outback and remote Queensland communities. It reviewed statistical and research material such as population changes and economic production in order to identify regional profiles as well as examining whether the range of existing State and Commonwealth services were easily accessible to people in rural regions. The council subsequently put together a report which emphasises that the changes taking place in rural Queensland affect everyone in different ways. For example, some regions' populations are declining while others are growing.

The report's recommendations build on activities the State Government already has in place to promote an environment of self-reliance, partnership and regional economic development. QRRAC has highlighted the important link between adequate telecommunications infrastructure and improving the capacity of Government to deliver services in rural regions.

The Government will survey the telecommunications needs in rural communities and report its findings to Cabinet by June 1995. To ensure that regional priorities are reflected in the program development and budget process of all Government agencies, the contracts of chief executive officers of Government departments will require them to demonstrate how their departments service rural communities. By June 1996, the Government will develop a pilot project to encourage departments to reflect the difference in the priorities from one region to another in their budget preparation. The outcomes of that project will ensure that Government resources are most effectively targeted in regional areas.

A widely skilled community is a critical component of successful rural adjustment and development, and the Government will continue to work in partnership with rural regions to identify further opportunities for training at the local level. By December 1995, the Government will develop training strategies to overcome barriers to rural people who wish to develop or upgrade their skills. QRRAC highlighted the importance of using local

networks to identify needs and promote services in rural areas. The difficulties of distance and isolation in rural areas can affect the quality of consultation that occurs. By December 1995, Government agencies will establish and publish clear guidelines for consulting with rural communities. I am pleased to announce that the Government will continue its support for QRRAC and will extend its membership to the Queensland Council of Commerce and Industry, the Queensland Women's Consultative Council and the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

In summary, the QRRAC report has highlighted the complexity of issues which influence successful social and economic development in rural regions. A number of strategies to get the public sector to better tailor its services and infrastructure development to meet the priorities identified in particular communities have been recommended. The Goss Government has demonstrated its commitment to rural Queensland in a range of important areas of public policy. Involving the major interest groups in the process of rural adjustment and development through structures such as QRRAC is vital to ensuring that we continue to achieve workable solutions to the complex problems facing rural communities. I table a copy of QRRAC's report.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Unresolved Whistleblower Cases

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (10.12 a.m.), by leave: I am instructed by Cabinet to advise the House of the following. I have received from Mr Ken O'Shea, the Crown Solicitor, a memorandum in response to certain evidence given at the Senate inquiry on unresolved whistleblower cases. The Crown Solicitor has drawn my attention to evidence given to the inquiry by Mr Callinan, QC, who appeared at the inquiry on behalf of Mr Kevin Lindeberg. Mr Callinan's submission to the inquiry was made on behalf of his client. There was no suggestion that Mr Callinan's comments were made on his own behalf or, indeed, that of the legal profession. However, Mr Callinan's arguments on behalf of his client reflected adversely on advice given to the Government by the Crown Solicitor.

I have previously stated to the House that the attacks made upon Mr O'Shea and other public servants by Mr Lindeberg have not been substantiated in the independent investigations conducted by the CJC. The allegations are without foundation and have grossly maligned Mr O'Shea and other public servants involved. Mr O'Shea's memorandum deals directly with Mr Callinan's evidence. It refutes, by reference to relevant case law, the extraordinary and erroneous claim that the decision to shred the Heiner documents was in any way improper. As Mr O'Shea is unable to defend himself publicly in this matter, Cabinet decided on Monday, 27 March 1995 that it is appropriate that the memorandum be tabled in the House for the information of members. I therefore seek leave to table the document.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Overseas Visit

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (10.13 a.m.), by leave: I wish to report to the House on the recent visit by an all-party parliamentary trade delegation to Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The visit was undertaken over the period 5 March to 18 March 1995. Other members of the delegation were the honourable members for Cleveland, Mundingburra, Albert, Nicklin, Nerang and Mirani.

The aims of that parliamentary trade delegation were to promote Queensland's economic and trade interests and to acquire a better understanding of the growth economies of the Asia-Pacific region through direct contact at senior level in both Government and business. In Papua New Guinea, the delegation met with senior members of the Government, including the Prime Minister, to discuss and identify opportunities in private sector training and education, compatible with the memoranda of understanding between Papua New Guinea and Queensland regarding business cooperation and cooperative educational exchanges.

Malaysia and Indonesia's transformation to key engines of ASEAN growth affords undeniable opportunities for this State's providers of goods and services, particularly in areas such as vocational training and consultancy and engineering services. The delegation was able to consolidate previous groundwork undertaken in vocational training and meet with Queensland firms earning foreign exchange for this State.

A highlight of the visit was the launching of the Asia-Pacific Academy of Further Education in Kuala Lumpur, which is a vocational training joint venture between the Queensland Government and Federal Hotels

International, one of the Low Yat Group of companies. I lay upon the table of the House a detailed report and itinerary of the March 1995 Queensland parliamentary trade delegation, along with copies of local newspaper reports of the delegation's activities in Papua New Guinea and Malaysia.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Police Interviews on Newspaper Articles

Mr BORBIDGE (10.18 a.m.): In directing a question to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, I refer the Minister to the fact that, following a complaint by his Director-General of the Corrective Services Commission, the head of Police Crime Operations, Superintendent Peter Reiken, yesterday sought unsuccessfully to interview a journalist with the *Sunday Mail* and is seeking to interview the member for Crows Nest over a series of articles published in that newspaper which reveal the names and records of serious repeat offenders who have been released from secure gaol custody after serving only a fraction of their full sentences. I ask: how can the Minister justify diverting scarce police resources from the escalating crime crisis into witch-hunts designed to intimidate the media and silence members of Parliament?

Mr BRADDY: I have no information on the alleged interview of the Leader of the Opposition. If any such interviews are taking place, they are authorised by the police themselves. The police certainly sought no direction or approval from me, nor did they even——

Mr Connor interjected.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked his question. The member for Nerang will cease interjecting.

Mr BRADDY: In relation to those matters—the police sought no approval from me, either directly or indirectly. In relation to the documents to which the honourable member referred—under section 10.19 of the Police Service Administration Act, a person who has——

Mr Borbidge: You know all about it now, do you?

Mr BRADDY: When I saw the information that the honourable member published, I took some interest. However, I took no action; I initiated no action; nor would I ever initiate action on those matters. It is entirely a matter for the police. It is purely an operational matter.

Under the Act, a person who has in his or her possession a document of a confidential nature brought into existence for the Police Service and discloses that document commits an offence. If the police believe that an offence has been committed in relation to that Act or any other matter, they are entitled to investigate it. As the honourable member well knows, when he participated in that facade, he did not reveal that all of the people who were released early or who were about to be released or who might be released were subject to particular orders by judges of our courts.

Honourable members are aware of how the system operates in Queensland. Under the community corrections system, when an offender comes before the parole board, generally that person is not eligible for parole until he or she has completed half of his or her sentence. However, if at the time of sentencing the judge recommends an earlier parole——

Mr Cooper: I wouldn't make excuses for them.

Mr BRADDY: I make no excuse, nor do I make an apology.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Crows Nest under Standing Order 123A. I suggest to Mr Cooper that he has to be on the other side of the Chamber before he can answer questions.

Mr BRADDY: I make neither excuse nor apology for a judicial system in which the judges of the Supreme Court or the District Court of this State have the power to recommend a parole earlier or later than is normal. The community corrections boards should give respect to those recommendations. It does not mean that they are bound by them, but I will not——

Mr Connor interjected.

Mr BRADDY: That is right, they do not have to rubber stamp them. In some instances about which the honourable member complains, the paroles have not even been granted. The honourable member is going on as though we should pay no heed to the men and women who are appointed as judges in this State. On occasion, they recommend earlier or differing parole periods. I repeat: it does not mean that parole will be granted at those times. I will not recommend to the Government a change to the system

whereby the recommendations of the judges are ignored. That is our system. It is a fair and just system. People go before the parole board for consideration. Those boards are community boards and the judges are entitled to take their views into account.

I am informed by my office that one of the pieces of information that Mr Borbidge released to the media in that false fury of his contains the home address of one of the women involved. That was a disgraceful episode by Mr Borbidge. He pays no respect to people and he pays no respect to the law. I repeat: if the police and Corrective Services Commission officers believe that the law has been broken, it is their duty and their prerogative to investigate the matter. It does not require a direction from me and they will suffer no interference from me.

Early Release of Violent Offenders; Leaking of Information

Mr BORBIDGE: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to the fact that the Director-General of Corrective Services has sought the diversion of police to investigate the leaking of information to the Opposition which confirms his Government's disgraceful policies in relation to the early release of violent offenders. I refer also to the fact that watch-houses are crammed full and acting as Clayton's prisons and that the prison system is chronically overcrowded while 228 murderers, 1,411 people convicted of assault and 5,304 people convicted of sexual assault are at large on community correction orders.

I now ask: do the Director-General of Corrective Services and the Police Service not have more important things to worry about than who leaked a few snapshots to the Opposition?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I have nothing to add to what has been said by the Minister for Police. I think he has summed it up very well. I would think that the Leader of the Opposition should consider and review what ethics, if any, he has left.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

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

Visit to Queensland by Jeff Kennett

Mr LIVINGSTONE: In directing a question to the Treasurer, I refer to media reports that the Victorian Premier, Jeff Kennett, will deliver an address on economic management to a Liberal Party function on the Sunshine Coast next month. I ask: can the Treasurer inform the House how Queensland's economic management compares with that of Victoria?

Mr De LACY: I am pleased to do so because I have been informed that Mr Kennett is coming up here to give advice to the Queensland Government about financial management. In an article in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* comments were attributed to Mr Slipper, the member for Fisher, in which he is promoting a breakfast on the Sunshine Coast with Mr Kennett who is coming up to Queensland to have Easter on the Sunshine Coast. In that article, Mr Slipper states—

> "And the Member for Fisher said there was no doubt that Queensland Premier Wayne Goss could learn a few lessons from Mr Kennett about governments cutting debt, not wasting spending, and generally living within their means."

I could suggest to members of the Opposition and the business community on the Sunshine Coast that they will not learn very much from Mr Kennett. After I read that, I decided to do a comparison between Queensland and Victoria in respect of those important areas.

Three years ago when Mr Kennett became Premier of Victoria, that State's net debt was $30.9 billion.

Mr Stephan interjected.

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

Mr De LACY: That figure was $30.9 billion.

Mr Connor: Is that whole of Government?

Mr De LACY: Yes. The figure for the whole of the Government sector was $30.9 billion. That figure is now $31.9 billion. So, in three years of cutting net debt, he has added $1 billion. During the same period in 1992, the net debt in Queensland was $3.6 billion. We now have net assets; we have eliminated the whole $3.6 billion. We have taken about $4 billion off our net debt and eliminated it altogether. Mr Kennett has added $1 billion—and he is coming up to give us advice.

In relation to taxes, in 1992-93, per capita State taxes in Queensland were $1,069. At the same time in Victoria they were 37 per cent higher, or $1,460. In 1994-95, in

Queensland they are now $1,166, but in Victoria they are now 48 per cent higher at $1,720. So, in the three years since Mr Kennett has been in power, the gap between Queensland and Victoria has widened, and widened substantially.

Mr Burns: Will he be able to help Mrs Sheldon?

Mr De LACY: The question is: will he be able to help Mrs Sheldon? I put to honourable members that Mrs Sheldon wants all the help in the world when it comes to understanding financial matters. I would suggest that, instead of going to Mr Kennett's address, Mrs Sheldon would do a lot better by going down to see Don Wilson because he knows something about financial management.

This morning Mrs Sheldon raised the very important issue of the need to get more women into State Parliament. Sadly, it is likely that, because of these issues and the visit by Mr Kennett, we will probably lose another woman in State Parliament at the next State election. Mrs Sheldon will be out and Mr Wilson will be in.

Identify It Campaign

Mr BUDD: I ask the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services: can he please advise the House of the success of the Identify It property engraving campaign?

Mr BRADDY: In relation to the Identify It campaign, in conjunction with private enterprise the Queensland Police Service has carried out a campaign to assist people to cooperate through having articles engraved so it is easy to track down that information and the object if it is stolen. I have to inform the House that, so far, it has been very successful. Over 3,000 people have brought in their items to be engraved. People from nursing homes have telephoned to obtain information. Generally, the reaction has been very good.

However, considering the population of Queensland, it is important that people take full advantage of the process. I urge all honourable members to pass on that message to their constituents—that they should cooperate with the Identify It campaign. Members of local Lions clubs and Neighbourhood Watch groups are also contacting residents so that they can have their property engraved. This is really important. It takes a little bit of effort but, provided the engraving is carried out, property can be recovered more easily.

This campaign fits in very well with the Property Crime Squad information that I gave to the House recently. Since the inception of the Property Crime Squad in September last year, $1m in stolen property has been recovered. If we can get the people of Queensland to engrave their property, the ability to discover stolen property and return it to the owners will be greatly enhanced.

Gabba Cricket Ground

Mrs SHELDON: I ask the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing: given the $25m upgrading of the Gabba Cricket Ground, including $7.1m on lighting for the ground for day/night matches, and given the recent decision to tear up the running track at ANZ Stadium in order to provide facilities for cricket matches, what guarantee can the Minister give that next January's one-day international between Australia and the West Indies will be held at the Gabba and not at the ANZ Stadium?

Mr GIBBS: I cannot give the member any guarantees, because she has asked that question of the wrong Minister.

Mrs Sheldon: You've got nothing to do with sport?

Mr GIBBS: I have nothing to do with the Gabba. The question should be directed to the person who is in charge of the Gabba and who looks after the Gabba, and that is the Treasurer.

Arts Graduates

Mr BARTON: I refer the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts to the number of arts graduates completing courses in Queensland tertiary institutions, and I ask: what encouragement is the Government providing to assist these students in their pursuit of excellence?

Mr WELLS: I thank the honourable member for the question, and I also thank him for his support of the pursuit of excellence in all fields, particularly in the field of the arts. I am very pleased to advise the honourable member that we will be establishing a $10,000 gold medal scholarship which is going to be awarded annually to an outstanding performing arts graduate.

This scholarship is part of the tenth anniversary celebrations for the Queensland Performing Arts Complex. Funding for these scholarships will be provided by the Queensland Performing Arts Trust. The scholarship will be provided each year to an outstanding graduate from a different performing arts discipline. The successful

graduate will be provided with introductions to professionals in the international arts industry, including leading producers, choreographers and directors in New York, London and other major centres.

The gold medal scholarship is going to be awarded annually, with a different discipline of the performing arts being the recipient each year. The assistance that will be given to Queensland's leading graduates is both rewarding for the individual and will be of invaluable assistance to these people who are at the commencement of outstanding artistic careers.

I might say that the extraordinary talent that reposes in a large number of graduates in a number of areas of the arts, particularly in respect of the gold medal scholarship, is a source of constant amazement to members of this House who have witnessed it. This kind of encouragement is going to go an enormous distance towards ensuring that Queensland's arts graduates continue to have the flourishing success which they have until now enjoyed.

Tully/Millstream

Mr LINGARD: I refer the Minister for Minerals and Energy to statements published yesterday in the *Pyramid News* by his colleague the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development, in which he states—

> "My position on Tully/Millstream remains as it always has. I support the project under strict environmental guidelines. Any representations I make on this matter can now be done at Cabinet."

I ask the Minister: does he endorse the comments made by his colleague Mr Pitt?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question. The question of future supply will be discussed and debated within Government circles. In this Government, we sit around the table and make collective decisions. When the Premier and I announce that decision, it will be a Government decision and all Government members will abide by it.

Computer-aided Dispatch System

Mr BEATTIE: I ask the Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Consumer Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier on Rural Affairs: given Opposition criticism of the computer-aided ambulance dispatch system and centralisation of the system, is he aware of lifesaving successes under this system? Can he provide me with information in relation to the young baby who was saved yesterday in Windsor, which is in my electorate?

Mr BURNS: I thank the honourable member for the question. Yesterday, a call was received at Ambcom Spring Hill. A two-week-old baby girl was reported to be cyanosed and not breathing. The baby's father terminated the call before giving a call-back number, and two units were dispatched Code 1 to Windsor.

The communications operator, Jill Kemp,retrieved the call using call-line identification. That is the computerised system through which, when people ring the ambulance in central Brisbane, the operator can pick up the address of the caller. Even if a child has rung the ambulance, the operator can pick up the address. In many cases, young kids ring the ambulance and they cannot really tell the operator much.

In this case, the operator was able to retrieve the call. Jill Kemp called back and contacted the father. The father then relayed the instructions to the baby's mother and after about a minute, the baby's condition improved dramatically. The communications operator was advised by the father that the infant had resumed breathing and that her colour was improving. The two units arrived, treated the baby and transported her to the Royal Children's Hospital. The baby is still in hospital and is still in a critical condition, but it is obvious that, without the prompt assistance of the communications officer, Jill Kemp, and the baby's family, the baby would have died.

The point I make is that centralised communication replaced the old system under which many stations operated with only one ambulance officer. The officer's wife answered the phone. After the ambulance officer raced off to answer a call, his wife handled all calls while he was away.

The important thing is that there have been some difficulties in explaining how the centralised communication system works. People say that, under this system, the ambulance officers do not know their way around some areas. However, ambulance officers are now being transferred and stationed at various centres throughout the State. Most ambulance officers want to be transferred from one place to another because they can gain further skills in the larger centres. Ambulance officers like to go to country centres for a period, but also like to return to the larger centres in order to maintain their skills.

The most important message that I can give—and I thank the honourable member for Brisbane Central for the question—is to tell people that, if they ring the ambulance, they should not hang up straight away. If they stay on the phone, skilled operators in the communications centre,who have been trained for that purpose, can then provide them with some help. Normally, a person rings the ambulance, says what has occurred and then goes outside and waits for the ambulance. People should stay and talk to the operator.

Another important point to make is that only 8 per cent of Queenslanders have learned first aid. That is one of the lowest percentages in the country. We need more and more people to learn first aid. For example, if someone's parent collapses with a heart attack or a stroke, that person needs to receive CPR while the ambulance is coming. Keeping oxygen going to the brain can help to keep people alive. It is true to say that the more people out there in the community who take our ambulance courses or other courses that are offered by the lifesavers, the scouts or St John Ambulance, the more valuable people they will be. Learning those skills will help to save lives.

Gold Coast Institute of TAFE

Mr SANTORO: I refer the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations to a report in today's *Gold Coast Bulletin* within which it is claimed that the proposed cuts to several high-demand courses within the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE will lead to a loss of 20,000 student contact hours, or the equivalent of 30 full-time teachers. I ask: can the Minister explain to the House why these cuts are being forced on the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE despite repeated claims by the Minister that TAFE funding under the Goss Labor Government has been increased greatly since 1989?

Mr FOLEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. As luck would have it, I have a copy of the article in question. At the outset, the point that needs to be appreciated is, as the honourable member concedes graciously, that under this Government funding for TAFE colleges and institutions has increased dramatically—in the order of 75 per cent. Funding for the whole TAFE system has increased in the order of 63 per cent. The increase of 17,100 additional full-time and part-time places in 1994 is a simple fact on the record.

What we are seeing now are campaigns by the Queensland Teachers Union and the State Public Services Federation, which are engaged in a drive for membership contest, in particular for TAFE teachers. As a consequence, in different parts of the State claims about alleged funding problems are being made. The simple fact of the matter is that the funding for TAFE colleges has increased dramatically, unlike the bad old days when TAFE was the poor country cousin, neglected and grossly underresourced.

Mr Santoro: What's happening on the Gold Coast?

Mr FOLEY: The honourable member referred to the Gold Coast. That is but one of a number of places where this campaign is occurring, as it will continue to do so long as the Queensland Teachers Union and the State Public Services Federation are engaged in this dispute over the coverage of TAFE teachers. It is very important that we keep well and truly before us the simple facts of the matter. By 1996-97, student contact hours for TAFE Queensland are targeted to reach 57 million. That is an increase of 107 per cent since the election of the Goss Government in 1989—a spectacular increase.

However, I will concede that in the Queensland Teachers Union's campaign manual, which it has distributed to its members, the point is made that there have been large increases under the Labor Government. However, they go on to say—

> ". . . but these increases have been largely nullified by an increase in student contact hours"—

that is, more training—

> "and an increasing range and complexity of services."

The union accuses the Government of using the extra money to provide more training. They have got us this time.

Disposal of Black Plastic

Mrs BIRD: I point out to the Minister for Environment and Heritage that, for a long time, tomato farmers and horticulturalists have disposed of the black plastic used for weed control and water retention by burning that plastic in the open, with consequent problems for the environment, asthmatics and others distressed by the smoke, and I ask: can she outline to the House the steps that the Department of Environment and Heritage is taking to overcome this problem?

Ms ROBSON: This issue is a principal concern in the member's electorate, and it is certainly one that we have been trying to address all over the State. I refer to the practice of burning generally and, in particular, the burning of black plastic. I can confirm for the member that the department has received complaints from many people in her area who have been distressed by smoke. The member has been talking constantly to the department about this problem.

I understand that some farmers have been taking their black plastic to the local refuse tips. That practice has overloaded a lot of the tips, and they have not been able to cope, to the extent that the Bowen Shire Council recently prohibited the practice at its tips. That council made an arrangement with the Collinsville Power Company to dispose of the material in part of the Collinsville mine site—a solution that, apparently for financial reasons, has not been taken up by local farmers. Based on the principle of polluter pays and user pays, the disposal of black plastic is, in our view, a shared responsibility. Farmers have to ensure that they manage the on-farm storage and ultimate disposal of the film to minimise the environmental impacts, as outlined by the member for Whitsunday, and obviously to avoid creating an environmental nuisance through burning plastic in the open.

Industry has been approached, through the film blowers and polymer manufacturers, to ensure that the products that they produce, market and make a profit from are available for recovery, reprocessing and disposal where necessary in an environmentally acceptable way. As a result of a meeting that was organised through my department with that industry, a working group composed of representatives from the growing industry, Governments and the industry in general has been established to identify disposable management options. I look forward to the results of the deliberations of that committee in relation to this very urgent problem.

Mines Inspectors; Moura Mine Disaster

Mr GILMORE: I point out to the Minister for Minerals and Energy that during the first half of 1994 an internal memo was issued within his department requesting mines inspectors to stay in their offices because there was insufficient money in the budget to pay for petrol for their cars, and I ask: what was the date of that memo, and did it coincide with the 11-week period during which the Moura No. 2 mine was not inspected?

Mr McGRADY: I do not have my personal diary on me, but if such a memo exists I can get the date for the honourable member. Last Friday morning in this Parliament, the Premier tabled a graph which indicated that the number of accidents in the mining industry had declined over recent years. The Department of Minerals and Energy has a fine record in trying to improve the safety of the mining industry. As the relevant Minister, I will never be satisfied—nor will this Government—while there are still accidents in the industry. I assure this Parliament, the people of Queensland and the people who work in the mining industry that this Government will attempt at all times to improve the safety record in that industry, which is vital to the economy of Queensland.

Ambulance Service

Dr CLARK: I direct a question to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Emergency Services. As the Minister is aware, this Government has spent record amounts on the Ambulance Service, particularly in the Cairns area. I ask: could the Minister advise of the type and cost of some of these projects?

Mr BURNS: The honourable member has been fairly keen to get a new ambulance centre at Kuranda. Late last year, she organised for the LAC, herself and officers from my department to have a look at the site that had been proposed for that centre. Eventually, we rejected that site and bought a new one for $160,000. We have called tenders, and those tenders are now in. About $300,000 will be spent on a new station on that site. As a result, we expect that Kuranda will have a modern ambulance facility at a location that can service the area. That goes to show that the local member did the right thing by asking us to have a look at the type of land that was available. There is no doubt that the original site was not a good one and that the new site is a lot better.

A substantial amount of money has been spent on the Ambulance Service in the Cairns area. A new ambulance centre will be built at Cairns at a cost of $2m, and some $300,000 will be spent on the Kuranda station. The Government has bought land at Edmonton at a cost of $168,000, and it has spent $20,000 on upgrading the station at Yarrabah. I thank the Yarrabah community for its help in providing the labour for that very necessary project. Their assistance was very helpful. Recently, that community provided a four-wheel-drive ambulance to assist with operations at the new upgraded centre.

Five new ambulance vehicles have been bought for Gordonvale, Cairns and Kuranda stations at a cost of about $280,000. The Government has already organised a new communications centre for Cairns. The new centre will be a completely modern facility. The Mareeba centre will be used as a backup in case the Cairns centre is rendered inoperative by a cyclone. I express my thanks to the Cairns area community, the local ambulance committee and ambulance officers in that area. Those very dedicated officers have worked very hard. They have done a great deal of extra work and study.

Mr Bredhauer: Hear, hear!

Mr BURNS: The member for Cook said, "Hear, hear!" There are isolated ambulance officers in Bamaga, Weipa and so on. Their skills are very valuable to the Government, and I thank them for the support and work they have done. I also thank the communities that support them.

Education

Mr QUINN: In directing a question to the Minister for Education, I refer to last year's Education budget in which the Government allocated $20m to commence the implementation of its response to the Wiltshire report, and I ask: how much of this funding has been allocated to the non-Government sector, how was this amount calculated and what assurances do the non-Government schools, which educate over a quarter of the State's students, have that they will receive equitable funding in the future to allow them to participate fully in the Wiltshire recommendations?

Mr HAMILL: The member has asked a very important question. I will endeavour to give him the information that he seeks. The Wiltshire reforms have been widely acclaimed in Queensland by both the Government and the non-Government school sector. This Government has put its money where its mouth is in terms of the implementation of those recommendations. As we speak, there has been the recruiting of key teachers and the recruiting of specialist advisers who will work in the classrooms to assist teachers in implementing the wide range of reforms to the curriculum, particularly the focus on literacy and numeracy.

Members need to understand that a substantial amount of the resources being put in place to support the Wiltshire reforms are intersystemic. That point is recognised by the non-Government school sector, which is closely involved in a number of the structures being put in place to deliver the curriculum reform, such as the curriculum council, which is the subject of legislation before the House.

As to the actual funding in the areas of non-intersystemic arrangements—the member would be aware that the Government has an established funding mechanism to support the non-Government school sector across education matters in general. There is a genuine expectation from that sector that it will receive funding through that established mechanism. The non-Government school sector has also presented a separate submission to Government seeking funding over and above that which it would expect from the normal nexus arrangements. That submission is currently being considered by the Government.

Special Needs Students

Mr BENNETT: I refer the Minister for Education to a book titled *All Children Are Special*, the launching of which he participated in recently. I ask: can the Minister outline his department's approach to the issue of the integration of special needs students into mainstream classrooms?

Mr HAMILL: Yesterday, I had the pleasure of launching the publication *All Children Are Special*. That is an exciting publication, because it deals with the issue of inclusion and providing for the special needs of individual children within the normal classroom situation. The authors of that book are very proud of their achievement. The book was being launched simultaneously in the United States and Canada, which illustrates that Australia is at the cutting edge in the field of inclusive education.

Considerable debate is occurring in the community regarding how to appropriately address the needs of individual students, particularly those students who have special learning needs. The policy of this Government is very clear. We believe that each child's needs should be addressed on an individual basis. In other words, we look for the most appropriate solution for an individual child's needs. If that can be met in the general classroom, then so be it. If additional resources or additional assistance need to be provided for a child, then so be it. The Government's policy is a child-focused one.

A consideration of the level of resources that this Government allocates to the education of special needs students underlines our concern and commitment.

Around 6.5 per cent of the Education budget is directed to special needs children. So 6.5 per cent of the budget is allocated to 2 per cent of the school population. In other words, about $157m is committed to special needs students. That funding is distributed among 62 special schools, 138 special education units and 280 advisory visiting teachers who work within the school environment dealing with issues such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical impairment and intellectual impairment.

The honourable member's concern in relation to this matter is shared by many in the community. It is an area in which there are demonstrable needs and an area in which we have to be sensitive to the individual needs of individual children, but we should also bear in mind that not every child will be the same and not every child will cope in a normal classroom situation. We must be very careful to ensure that the child's needs are addressed. We must provide appropriate support for the teacher in the classroom situation and also cater for the needs of the other children in that situation.

Tree-clearing Guidelines

Mr HOBBS: I refer the Minister for Lands to the joint Cabinet submission on tree-clearing guidelines, which also provides for the establishment of a tree management working party to examine the extension of tree-clearing controls to privately held freehold land and report back to Cabinet by the end of July this year. I ask: why has the Minister tried to hide this part of his agenda, which contains yet another reduction in status to freehold land? As provisions already exist at State and local government levels regarding vegetation clearing on such lands, why does the Minister intend to inflict more bureaucratic duplication on primary producers?

Mr SMITH: That question has been fairly well dealt with over the past couple of days. As to the advisory committee—the decision of the Cabinet was that the committee would report back by 31 August and that Cabinet would consider those submissions later in the year, and eventually—hopefully before the year was out—consideration would be given to those guidelines by the Governor in Council. That deals with the totality of the Cabinet decision.

Business Plus Scheme

Ms POWER: I ask the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development: can he inform the House of what this Government has provided to Queensland businesses through the Business Plus Scheme?

Mr PITT: I thank the honourable member for Mansfield for asking that question. I acknowledge the keen interest that she has in her business community and the good work that she is doing in informing them of the products available through my department.

The Business Plus Scheme is an excellent scheme. This initiative of the Government commenced in October 1993, so it is now 18 months old. The scheme aims to help small-business operators prepare a business plan. Outside professional assistance is brought in to do that. Such assistance is welcomed by small-business operators. The aim is to expand a business where possible and, if a business does not require expansion, at least to review its business practices to ensure that it is operating in the most efficient of manners. Thus far, 1,200 businesses have embarked upon the program and to date 600 businesses have completed it. The scheme has resulted in $550,000 worth of subsidies being provided to small businesses to assist them in this manner.

The scheme is so successful that the department has seen fit to raise the level of subsidy from $1,000 per business to a maximum of $2,500. In more remote areas, small businesses sometimes find it very difficult to access business advice. We are now allowing consultants to include a travel component in their operational costs in order to get them out into the more remote and smaller country towns in Queensland.

In the member's own electorate of Mansfield, 13 businesses have applied for assistance under the scheme, and to date seven businesses have completed the course. One business in particular is a success story. I refer to a domestic plumbing firm run by a husband-and-wife team. The firm has been in operation for 20 years. Members are probably saying to themselves, "Why would anyone who has been in business for 20 years require that sort of business review?" I inform members that the scheme has been of assistance to that operation. It has enabled those people to focus on what they are doing and revamp their activities. As a result, they have noticed not only that their business is expanding but also that its returns have improved.

The Business Plus Scheme is not just for new businesses and it is not just for businesses facing difficult times. It is for all businesses. It is yet another example of the

commitment that this Government has to small business in Queensland.

Tully/Millstream Project

Mr FITZGERALD: I refer the Minister for Environment and Heritage to statements made by her newest colleague in Cabinet, the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development, in which he claims that he will now be making representations at a Cabinet level regarding the Tully/Millstream project. As the project falls within the Minister's portfolio responsibility, I ask: has a decision been made regarding the Tully/Millstream project?

Ms ROBSON: The question is a little bit indefinite. The member said that the Minister has made representations about what—the fact that we are not going to proceed with the Tully/Millstream project? I think it has been pretty widely stated by this Government that that is the case.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Ms ROBSON: If the member would be quiet, I will attempt to answer his question. My understanding of what my colleague has in fact stated is that he has been discussing the issue. I do not think he has undertaken to try to present the Opposition's viewpoint to Cabinet, which is to categorically go ahead and exploit Tully/Millstream regardless—unless the Federal Government stopped it. The Federal Government has quite clearly said that it will not proceed with that project.

If the member wants to ask the Minister for Business, Industry and REgional Development his view and whether he is taking something to Cabinet, he should ask him. The Government's position on the Tully/Millstream has been articulated on a number of occasions.

Youth Involvement in State Emergency Service

Mrs ROSE: I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister for Emergency Services: is he aware of the efforts made by the State Emergency Service to promote enthusiasm for the SES among the youth of this State?

Mr BURNS: In Queensland, we are very lucky to have the State Emergency Service, which comprises about 45,000 volunteers. The volunteer system works very well. With about 50,000 rural fire brigade officers and about 45,000 State Emergency Service officers, including lifesavers, air sea rescue, coastguard and honorary ambulance officers—approximately 100,000 people are involved and are supporting the Government in these areas.

When we see State Emergency Service officers in those very distinctive orange overalls during an emergency, such as a cyclone or a very bad storm, we realise just how valuable an asset they are to us. Last year, the Government accepted some advice that it should try to do something about a cadet scheme. Next week, I will be visiting a number of areas including Moranbah, Middlemount, Hughenden, Tully, Ingham and Charters Towers to launch the scheme.

There are 10 pilot schemes through which young people will be trained. A pamphlet has been produced on this subject because parents wanted to know what young people between the ages of 13 and 15 would learn. The pamphlet states that they would learn basic abseiling; bushcraft and camping; how to operate a radio set; map reading and navigation; floodboat familiarisation; search and rescue techniques; basic rescue, including knots and lashings; how to handle injured and traumatised people; basic first aid; leadership; and headquarters administration.

The major point is that no training will be dangerous. All training will be supervised strictly by highly qualified instructors, and cadets will not be called out to perform SES operational duties. They may enjoy the chance to assist adult volunteers during a call-out by performing duties at headquarters such as operating the radios. Two hundred thousand dollars has been allocated to the projects, and if they are successful, the Government intends to look at extending the pilot projects to other areas throughout the State.

I thank the honourable member for her support for these youth training initiatives. She is very much involved in lifesaving in her own electorate. Her husband is involved in the Point Danger branch of the lifesaving movement and she has been very helpful in ensuring that Ministers are aware of the training needs of young people.

Queensland Building Services Authority

Mr J. N. GOSS: I refer the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and the Minister for Rural Communities to the Queensland Building Services Authority gold and silver card system for contractors and subcontractors. I ask: why has the QBSA taken no action against card holders who are working outside the classification on their card,

even after substantial proof such as videos, accounts, declarations and reports have been submitted to the authority? I ask further: what protection do consumers have in these cases?

Mr MACKENROTH: As well as the member opposite, I also watched *Today Tonight* the other night. The information that that show conveyed is not correct. The BSA in fact does take action against people. I understand that one of the persons who was on that show has in fact been breached for operating without a licence. The television program was advised of that information but chose not to use it.

Mr J. N. Goss: That's only one person.

Mr MACKENROTH: The member quoted something, and he is wrong. He should own up when he is wrong. The BSA is now doing compliance checks right around the State. Fewer and fewer contractors do not have gold or silver cards. That shows that contractors are in fact picking up the gold card and silver card system and becoming licensed. Action is taken against any unlicensed people. They are taken to the tribunal and they are fined.

SEQEB Response Time

Mr HOLLIS: I direct a question to the Minster for Minerals and Energy. Last week in the House, the member for Moggill continued the Opposition's attack on the Queensland electricity industry, this time criticising SEQEB repair crews for not restoring power quickly enough after Telecom workers severed a power cable. Mr Watson claimed that there was little response from SEQEB, until four hours later, when a generator was provided. I ask: could the Minister provide details of SEQEB's response to this situation?

Mr McGRADY: This sustained attack by members of the Opposition on the Queensland electricity industry is typical of their negative and complaining approach. What is worse is that, in this matter, the Opposition has used the privilege of the House to attack public servants who have been unable to reply. Previously, the member for Tablelands attacked SEQEB workers for not restoring power quickly enough for his liking after some of the most severe storms in the history of this city.

I have been informed of the facts of what happened on 16 March at Chapel Hill. This is what I have been told: Telecom damaged the SEQEB cable at 3.30, but SEQEB was not notified for another 20 minutes. Fifteen minutes after a call was received, a crew from the Taringa depot arrived at Chapel Hill . This crew inspected the damage and, within an hour, had restored supply to most of the homes affected. However, some of the damage affecting another 15 homes required a specialist underground crew. That crew was recalled from home as its members had knocked off work for the day. Upon arrival, the crew assessed that repairs would take some four to six hours and immediately started organising a diesel generator, which arrived at approximately 7.30.

The underground crew worked into the night and was able to restore power to the 15 homes by 10.40 p.m. So after these workers responded to an emergency call within 15 minutes, and after specialist underground workmen were called from their homes to work into the night, Dr Watson decides to rise in this place under parliamentary privilege and criticise them. The workers of SEQEB were not at all impressed by that, and I am not impressed. If Dr Watson had any decency, he would immediately apologise to those SEQEB workers.

I might add that the SEQEB annual report shows that its service has improved in the five years under this Government to the point at which loss of power occurs less than one third of the number of times it did in the last five years of the coalition Government. That does not include Joh's strike in 1985.

Capital Markets Board

Dr WATSON: I am glad that the Minister for Minerals and Energy confirmed what I said in the House. I refer the Treasurer to the Queensland Treasury Corporation's 1993-94 annual report, particularly to the dividends paid on the after-tax surpluses of the Capital Markets Board. The dividends paid were zero in 1992, 40 per cent on after-tax surpluses in 1993, and zero again in 1994. I ask: what is the rationale for these gyrations? Did the Minister agree to these variations as part of the corporation's corporate plan for each of these years, or has he expressed at any time concern about the seemingly unjustified variations?

Mr De LACY: The honourable member's question relates also to the question that he asked yesterday, when he asked why the Treasurer endorses or requests that the QTC repatriate profits to the Consolidated Fund.

Dr Watson: No, I didn't.

Mr De LACY: Yes, he did. So I decided that I would consider the reason why those

profits are repatriated to the Consolidated Fund. All honourable members will be interested in this. The reason is that the legislation says, "Except to the extent"——

Mr Borbidge: This is yesterday's question; tell us about today's.

Mr De LACY: It would not hurt Mr Borbidge and Mrs Sheldon to listen to my answer because their performance on those issues has been brought into ridicule.

Mr FitzGerald: You need it on notice for tomorrow.

Mr De LACY: No. Yesterday, when I answered the question, Opposition members interjected. I stuck with what I said, which was right and their injections were wrong.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I alert you to the fact that the Premier just walked between the Treasurer and the chair as he petulantly stormed out of the Chamber, and you took no action under the Standing Orders.

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

Mr De LACY: The Queensland Treasury Corporation Act states—

> "Except to the extent that is otherwise provided by the Governor in Council, all profits made by the corporation shall accrue to the benefit of the Consolidated Fund and any losses of the corporation shall be the responsibility of the Consolidated Fund."

Does the honourable member know when that legislation was introduced? It was introduced in 1988. Increasingly, in this House, we have the spectre of members challenging what the Government is doing on the basis of legislation that they introduced.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Moggill will cease interjecting. I warn him under Standing Order 123A.

Mr De LACY: The Government is remaining consistent with the legislation.

Dr WATSON: I rise to a point of order which is associated with the new sessional orders. When we debated the sessional orders, the Government specifically rejected the proposal that a question which could not be answered by a Minister be put on notice for the next day. Despite that, Mr Speaker, you are permitting the Treasurer to answer yesterday's question and not answer the relevant question that I asked today. I ask the Treasurer to answer my question.

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

Mr De LACY: The honourable member ought to be thankful that he is getting an answer. With the silly questions that he asks, he is not entitled to an answer. However, I am prepared to give him an answer.

The honourable member asks why there have been different dividends in different years. Primarily, it relates to their profit performance. The reason why there was no dividend last year is that, as the honourable member would know, it was a very difficult year in the financial markets, in particular the bond market. They did not make the profit that they made in previous years.

In relation to repatriating the profits back to Treasury—last year, we decided that, because of the volatility in the market, we would be better off leaving whatever profit had accrued in the QTC. We did that because we believed that it would be better off having the reserves so that it could respond in a prudent way when things occurred. Last year, we decided to take no profits. I do not know what the member for Moggill criticises the Government for. Yes, all of the profits of the QTC will eventually come back to the owners or the shareholders of the QTC, which is the Government of Queensland on behalf of the people of Queensland. I do not think that I ought to apologise for that.

PRIVILEGE

Etiquette of the House

Mr LINGARD (Beaudesert—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.13 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege pertaining to the etiquette of this House. Mr Speaker, I advise you that when that question was being answered, the Premier stood and walked between the Treasurer and the Speaker——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. That is not a matter of privilege. The honourable member will resume his seat.

Mr LINGARD: He has abused you, Mr Speaker, and you know that he has abused you.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. I am on my feet. I warn the honourable member under Standing Order 124.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Cardwell Barramundi Farmer

Mr DAVIES: I ask the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development: is he aware of a story in the *Townsville Bulletin* regarding a Cardwell barramundi farmer, in which the member for Barambah criticises the actions of the Minister's department? Will the Minister advise members of the facts of that matter?

Mr PITT: I would be pleased to do that. That was another one of those articles that appear in the country media and come from members of the Opposition. Mr Edwards was seeking $18,000 to run three-phase power to his lower growing ponds to aerate them. In October 1993, Mr Bevin Williamson, the Townsville general manager of DBIRD, visited Mr Edwards and, after assessing the situation, ascertained that there was a cash shortage within that business. As Mr Edwards indicated that he did not have sufficient uncommitted cash to utilise the QSBC Business Plus Scheme, he was vocally critical of the Government.

Subsequently, the regional manager made the decision to provide guidance to create a bankable document, that is, a document that would help that farmer in obtaining finance. In April 1994, a bankable document produced by personnel from DBIRD in Townsville and the DPI in Ingham was presented to Mr Edwards. In May 1994, in a follow-up, the DBIRD officer who worked on that bankable document, Mr Gary Heiner, offered to accompany Mr Edwards to the Commonwealth Bank in Tully to make a presentation for refinancing. However, Mr Edwards declined the offer and indicated that he was happy with what DBIRD was doing for him. Since then, there has been no further contact between the department and Mr Edwards. It is curious that the honourable member for Barambah dredges up this matter some time later, knowing full well that the farmer concerned has no gripe with the Government.

Apprehension of Suspects in Mooloolah Park

Mr LAMING: I refer the Minister for Police to a newspaper article in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* of 21 March in which it was claimed that some business people in Mooloolah Park had apprehended four suspected thieves red-handed and had to hold them for more than an hour before the police arrived.

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

CLASSIFICATION OF COMPUTER GAMES AND IMAGES (INTERIM) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 23 March (see p. 11329).

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook) (11.17 a.m.): The Opposition has no major problems with this legislation. However, Opposition members will raise some relevant points. This legislation has been laying on the table of the House for the minimum time.

As the level of communication increases around the world, it will substantially increase our knowledge of the way in which to deal with situations, and this will benefit individuals and society in general. Unfortunately, there is a downside to that rapid exchange of information, that is, those who are depraved or prepared to do anything for monetary gain will abuse the system. It will become increasingly difficult for Governments to provide the types of legislation and mechanisms that are necessary to allay the concerns held by the majority of people about the younger generation having access to that unworthy material.

Currently in our society, material wealth has become very important and, as a result of a vast array of consumable items, emphasis has been placed on the need to obtain material possessions. Many family units are unable to pay for those items from a single income. As a result, it has become a regular occurrence that both husband and wife, or the partners in whatever relationship exists, must work. Of course, the women's liberation movements do not subscribe to the theory that a woman's place is in the home; they have taken away the enormous credibility that was given to a mother who was devoted to the nurturing and upbringing of her family. Those minority groups do not acknowledge that, in most cases, a woman is far more competent than the husband to attend to the upbringing of a family, although there are many instances in which the male member of the household can successfully carry out that duty. It is important that, in their formative years, children have someone to turn to for assistance or to chastise them in the event that they misbehave. Very often, both a husband and wife go to work, their children are unattended after school, and those children often get up to mischief. If one looks closely at the animal kingdom, it is quite apparent that

close supervision of the young is carried out by one of the parents. This tried and proven system, which has been passed down over millions of years, has ensured the survival of the species.

However, in recent times, the do-gooders, academics and minority pressure groups have obtained the attention of Government, resulting in changes that have doubtful benefits to the youth of our society. Decriminalisation of homosexuality is just one of those changes. In Queensland that change may have given this Government a few badly needed votes, but the recognition of its support for the gay Mardi Gras, and the loose way that money was allocated to the AIDS Council, has been condemned by every person to whom I have spoken about that matter. How can the Government support the family unit while the State's resources are being spent on Bubble Boy swap cards? That is not consistent with our best interests.

The proliferation of the rights-of-the-child agenda is causing a great deal of consternation among families. Anyone who has a teenager would be aware of the rebellious period that many adolescents go through. It is a process that has gone on since time immemorial and is part of a physiological change that occurs when a young person is entering adulthood. The signing of an international treaty to stem the abuse against children in less stable countries around the world is having serious repercussions here in Australia. Many parents are becoming irate with information that is being fed to their offspring about their ability to sue their parents, or that the Government will give them support if they believe they have grounds for leaving home. The matters that I am raising deal with the instability that is now occurring within the family unit and the unsettling effect it is having on youth.

Young people have the ability to absorb information at a faster rate than adults, whereas adults have the benefit of experience—a commodity that cannot be bought or sold. Computer games are part of a new generation of technology that is sweeping the world. Many young people are more computer literate than their parents will ever be. That is a complete change from when the older generation was the font of all knowledge. It is now of greater importance that those who care about the future of their offspring provide a stable lifestyle to enable them to make value judgements in their early, formative years.

The Opposition is supportive of the intentions behind the Classification of Computer Games and Images (Interim) Bill, but makes the point that it will be a very difficult task to stem the flow of undesirable material. Primarily, it will require an education process for parents to ensure they are aware of the various classifications of computer games. However, of even more importance will be the ability of people at an impressionable age to call on the resources of sound principles on which to base their future.

Irrespective of classifications and penalties for those who abuse the system, a super highway of technology is coming down our phone wires with which many of us have not come to terms. It will be impossible to contain the impact of unsuitable material on those who have access to the Telstra system. Currently, those wanting to avail themselves of the 0055 numbers can have access to informative material and erotic material within Australia. Similar circumstances will prevail with computer modems and the world will be the arena for those who have the equipment.

In the short term, it is important to put the brakes on undesirable material that is not suitable for the entertainment of underage people. The classification officer has an enormous responsibility to follow through the various options and degrees of difficulty of particular games. Quite often, in some games, the higher the level of success, the more explicit or more dramatic the achievement. To speed up the process of assessment for the classification officer, one of the mandatory provisions for games brought before the censor could require that software be made available to the censor that is capable of unlocking the results that a player could achieve. Admittedly, this would not be an option for the illicit trade, but the penalty provisions for that trade are addressed in the legislation. The Bill provides for computer games to be reclassified if the classification officer requests a copy of a game.

The Opposition is agreeable for games up to the MA(15+) classification for games being played in a public place by a child who is under the age of 15 years and who is not attended by an adult. The Opposition has some concern with the leniency shown in the case of a reasonable belief that a child is 15 years, who is not accompanied by an adult, playing a game with a higher classification than MA(15+).

The major difference when comparing classifications of computer games against films and publications is that the material viewed in a game is limited to the skill of the player with the game, but this restricting factor

does not occur with films and publications. It will be necessary for an education program to be implemented by the Department of Consumer Affairs for adults and children to be made aware of the classifications and what the classifications stand for.

At a meeting of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers on 18 February 1994, it was agreed that the classification of computer games and images would be subject to a national classification scheme. They are to be classified by the Commonwealth Office of Film and Literature Classification, but the guidelines would be more strictly applied to computer games than they would be to films and publications due to the interactive nature of the games. Education, business, accounting, professional and scientific software will be exempt from categorisation, unless it contains dubious material. Some films have been produced for educational purposes that leave nothing to the imagination. I consider that they are straight-out pornography. Generally, in that regard the Opposition has no problem with the proposal, but some concern exists about what is considered to be educational material.

The ACT Classification of Publications Ordinance 1983 has been amended as an interim measure and this legislation has a sunset clause of two years from its commencement. Each State will introduce its own enforcement legislation to reflect the States' requirement for classification and sale.

It has been reported that the ACT Government has reversed its position on the R and X-rated interactive video games. This is a substantial change in that Territory's attitude to computer games, at least. In the past, R and X-rated material had been sourced from the ACT. It is anticipated that computer games will be classified much more rigorously because there is a possibility that they may have a bad effect on children. Clearly, it is important that parents are made aware of the implications of the games because kids have the ability to absorb the way life is portrayed on the screen, extrapolating that into real-life, anti-social activities.

The legislation also allows for the Police Service to play an active role as an inspector to seize computer games believed to be objectionable and not conforming with the legislation. Extending those powers to the Police Service is a sound initiative as, in many areas throughout the State, many people may require the ability of a person with sufficient authority to take possession of material that does not comply with the legislation. It would appear that the process for allowing this to occur is satisfactory, as there could be times that it will be required to expedite the authorised person to act on a complaint.

It will be vitally important that Governments keep a tight rein on the impact that minority groups have on young people. Although Governments cannot be totally responsible for the shifts in moral values, it is essential that changes that are initiated do not act to the detriment of young people.

In the time provided, the Opposition has had a close look at the legislation and has no major problems with it. It will not be dividing on any clause. In fact, the Opposition thinks that many aspects of the legislation are good and are in the best interests of our young people.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (11.31 a.m.): I rise to support the Classification of Computer Games and Images (Interim) Bill 1995. Computer and video games are not subject to comprehensive classification and supervision in the same way as films, video and publications although, recently, there has been a move towards such classification and supervision at a national level. In fact, it started in 1993. We all know—the Opposition spokesman referred to it in passing in his speech—that, in recent years, the number and range of computer and video games has increased dramatically. As members would know, I have three young children who are at the age where they are finding video games incredibly attractive. There are three Game Boys in our home and at every opportunity the kids end up on the computer.

The breadth of games available is quite extraordinary. This revolutionary change has taken place in a relatively short period. I note that the Deputy Premier said in his second-reading speech that over the past five years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of games available. Of course, he is dead right. There are games that are able to be played on personal computers, there are cartridge video games, there are CD-ROM games, there are bulletin boards and virtual reality. To some extent, bulletin boards and virtual reality are the challenging areas.

Another change that has taken place is that, because of demand—and there is enormous consumer demand for these games—prices have dropped dramatically. That has meant that they are more widely available than perhaps one would have expected a few years ago. The problem is that technology is developing so rapidly that it is hard for parents, and I guess law makers such as us, to keep up with it. I have to say that, as a parent and in common with many other

parents, I am worried about computer games and what my kids get to play. I do not claim to be terribly computer literate, but many parents are computer illiterate. Children are much more literate in using computer games than are their parents. This raises the very difficult problem of supervision. It is all very well talking about putting the responsibility on parents which, of course, is where it should go, but from a parent's point of view such games are extremely difficult to supervise, particularly in regard to bulletin boards. It is very difficult for parents to supervise exactly what their children are playing every day.

I was talking about this problem with the honourable member for Moggill before Parliament started today. I agree with what he said: all one can do as a parent—in addition to this legislation which, of course, I applaud and support—is to try to give one's kids some moral values so that by the time they have access to computer equipment they can make judgments. However, I do not think that we should at any time sell short just how tough it is for parents, particularly those who are computer illiterate, to supervise what their children have access to.

Recently, I attended a seminar with the Deputy Premier, at which he made a very apt remark. He said that, in this area, one really needs a string of inspectors who are 10 years old because they are the ones who are computer literate. They are the ones who know how to handle the games and they are the ones who know how to play them. Obviously, that is not a practical solution, but I think that the Deputy Premier's remark highlights the difficulty in this area.

Of course, the question is: how do we supervise our children and how do we control the access children have to these games? Sure, parental supervision is one aspect, although I have illustrated problems in that area. However, there is also an enormous amount of peer pressure. Children can sit at home after school and play games with a mate at New Farm, Ashgrove or wherever. They can all get involved and, indeed, as more and more games come on to the market, there is peer pressure to get the latest game. In fact, last year I was in Hong Kong with a parliamentary delegation and while I was there I purchased a disk for Game Boy that had 138 games on it. Of course, in Australia one can get only one game per disk or perhaps up to five. I made an inquiry through the Parliamentary Library to the people who import Game Boys into Australia about why their games did not, in fact——

Mr Welford: A pirate disk.

Mr BEATTIE: I will come to that. I asked why their disks did not have more than one or five games on them. Of course, those people indicated to me that I had unknowingly acquired a pirate disk and that, in fact, they do not put that number of games on each disk. Of course, my kids want to have as many games as possible on the one disk, because they want to have that degree of choice.

Dr Watson: And you wanted it as cheap as possible.

Mr BEATTIE: The member should not expose my Scottish ancestry. Of course, that is true as well. I will not hear any more interjections like that: I do not like being exposed in that way. Obviously, the people who have the rights for Game Boy in Australia want to maintain the 30-odd jobs that are involved in the distribution of the product. That is fine; I have no problem with that. However, that indicates the extraordinary level of technology. On one little disk there are 138 games and, no doubt, one could have more than that. Obviously, for commercial reasons the Game Boy people are not going to sell the disks with that number of games on them. But that indicates the level of technology and the potential of the product.

For some time, a Senate select committee on computer standards relevant to the supply of services utilising electronic technologies has been investigating the classification of video and computer games. In fact, in October 1993 it recommended the introduction of some form of classification designed to provide consumer education and, importantly, to protect the community from exploitation and exposure to indecent and obscene material.

Fun parlours or arcade-operated games have been around for longer than have video games or personal computers. The Time Zone people run arcade parlours around Australia. In 1993, those people told that Senate committee that they employ 500 people. They said that, each month, over 1.5m Australians use the Time Zone arcade parlours. That is absolutely extraordinary. So one can understand the enormous popularity of the games in those parlours. That is in addition to the private use of video games and computers. So we have a very serious problem on our hands and need this sort of legislation.

In his second-reading speech the Minister gave clear reasons why we need to have a system of classification and why,

notwithstanding all the difficulties that I have outlined, this legislation is so important and so necessary.

The Deputy Premier stated—

"In 1993, for example, great concern was expressed about a CD video game called Night Trap. This game used live actors and required the player to defend a group of scantily dressed college students from being molested and mutilated by a group of zombies. This game was voluntarily withdrawn by the distributor"—

and so it should have been—

"but there was no guarantee that it would not be distributed at a later time."

Dr Watson: It shouldn't have got there in the first place.

Mr BEATTIE: It should not have got there in the first place; that is right. That is why we have to have a system of classification. The Deputy Premier continued—

"Other games causing concern included Custer's Last Stand, where soldiers raped American Indian women, and a game know as Auschwitz, which had the objective of cramming as many Jewish people as possible into gas chambers."

What sort of sick mind produces those sorts of video games? That is extraordinary, to say the least. The problem with games is that they are far more potentially dangerous because of their interactive nature, something to which the Opposition spokesman referred. Players can actually live out their fantasies and not just stand by passively, as is the case when watching movies or reading literature. The potential of virtual reality is unlimited. The tendency of some is to play the games incessantly—on and on and on. That is a matter of some concern. In fact, I have read that someone played a game on and off for 36 hours. I will refer to that again later.

What are we doing? We fear that children who repeatedly play games with sexually explicit, violent, abhorrent and sexually demeaning themes will begin to act our those fantasies that they are controlling on computers or video game machines. That is what we are trying to do something about. All of us would agree that it is important for us to encourage our children to develop interaction with other children and other adults so that they understand and develop an appreciation of the importance of real relationships and do not just sit around playing a machine.

As I understand it, over the next six months Australian Ministers will be looking at the issue of bulletin boards, which are a real problem. The difficulty is that they are beyond control. Bulletin boards are information boards where individual users can phone in to pick up or drop off information or engage in conversation. That is very difficult to control, particularly in relation to overseas calls. Obviously, although the Minister is doing everything possible in this legislation, it is impossible to deal with that problem.

Under this legislation the State Censor will have the power to classify material if it has not been judged already by the Federal Government. State Cabinet took the view that, while R-rated games should be prohibited, research was needed to investigate the impact on young people to ensure that data was available if any review of the decision is undertaken in the future.

What does the Bill do? As I said, it is designed to complement the provisions of the Queensland classification legislation for films and publications, which has operated since 1992. I want to refer to a number of key provisions. The Bill contains the following: the compulsory classification of all computer games, including games played on public amusement machines. I should say that it is easier to monitor games in arcades or on public amusement machines, because they are a lot easier to inspect. That area is a lot easier to deal with.

After this Bill has been passed, any new game coming onto the market will need to be classified by the Commonwealth Office of Film and Literature Classification. Games currently in circulation will not be recalled, but the State Censor can seize them if his inspectors find that they are in some way offensive or if a complaint is received. These classification guidelines are modelled on those already in place for films and videos, so consumer education will be facilitated and public confusion minimised.

However, the guidelines for the classification of computer games will be tighter than those for films and videos—and so they should be. That is done to reflect the interactive nature of games and to reduce the potential psychological risk that the repetitive playing of violent games could have on children and people with impressionable minds. One of the real difficulties with this issue is that some people would argue that it is difficult to determine what effect these games have on children.

In an article in the *Courier-Mail* on 7 February this year, the Federal Attorney-General, Michael Lavarch, acknowledged that little research had been done on the impact of violent and aggressive computer games, despite concerns about their possible effects. The article stated—

> "He said there would be extensive examination of attitudes towards violent and aggressive games among young people in the wider community."

He went on to say—

> "'Players can be absorbed for lengthy periods in action that rewards aggression and is often violent.' "

Our basic instincts tell us that there is a detrimental effect. I am sure that when that comprehensive research is completed, those basic instinctive reactions that we have will be confirmed. But not everyone is excited about this legislation. Although I am not at all sympathetic to the views of such people, I wish to refer to them. Interestingly, an article in the *Courier-Mail* on 28 September 1994 stated—

> "Australia's former deputy chief censor, David Haines, has lashed out at tough new rules on computer games, saying teenagers only want to have fun.
>
> Mr Haines said anyone playing a computer game was frantically manipulating anything up to five buttons and a joy stick to make a character perform so the game would not end. There was little time to identify with the characters, violent or otherwise, he said.
>
> Mr Haines said the real concern was the carnage repeated nightly on television news and current-affairs programmes.
>
> . . .
>
> He said that in the past there had been outrage and spirited debate about films such as the Texas Chainsaw Massacre, A Clockwork Orange, Caligula, Hail Mary and Pasolini's Salo, but any final decision about censorship had been left to the Film Censorship Board.
>
> 'Of recent time however, we have seen political pressures brought to bear which are decidedly out of kilter with the spirit of democracy and freedom of choice . . .' "

That is a very interesting argument. These games allow a totally new interaction for children, and we are dealing with very young minds. To balance his contribution—and I reckon this explains what he said—I point out that Mr Haines is now a consultant to the communications and entertainment industry on media regulation. Mr Haines was the Deputy Chief Censor of the Office of Film and Literature Classification, formerly known as the Film Censorship Board, for eight years until he resigned last week. I think he is speaking with his new found loyalty. I totally reject his views.

There was an article in the *Courier-Mail* on 5 November 1993 which, in reference to the Federal Government, stated—

> "The Government's plan to clamp down on violent computer games by banning the worst and classifying the rest is riddled with loopholes, according to the games industry.
>
> It claims the plans may cut its $100 million annual turnover and yet fail to protect Australians from the world's most explicit games.
>
> Games software companies claimed yesterday it would be possible to circumvent the Government's planned classification scheme.
>
> They said games players could still order software directly from overseas and play with credit cards, or download games from international bulletin boards, the electronic meeting places PC users can visit over telephone connections."

I referred to that before, and that is true. However, that is not an argument to do nothing. We must start with classification. That in itself will serve to educate. While there are difficulties, that is not a reason to do nothing. That is why I applaud the initiatives of the Minister.

Clause 5 establishes the position of the computer games classification officer in Queensland. Clause 9 states—

> "A person must not demonstrate, or attempt to demonstrate, an unclassified computer game in a public place."

Part 4 deals with the use of advertisements. Clause 11 states—

> "A person must not use, or attempt to use, an advertisement for a computer game if the advertisement has been refused approval under the Ordinance."

Clause 12 states that the advertisement is to bear determined markings. Clause 14 refers to markings on containers. In other words, what we are doing is setting in place how this legislation will endeavour, in a practical sense, to ensure a system of classification for the video game industry, which has worked very well for film and written publications for some time.

Clause 20 prohibits the sale of improperly marked unclassified computer games and sets a maximum penalty of 60 penalty units—and, of course, a penalty unit is worth $60—or imprisonment for six months. Clause 21 refers to the sale of improperly marked classified computer games. Indeed, clauses 23 to 28 contain very strict provisions to protect minors.

Clause 23 states—

> "A person must not demonstrate, or attempt to demonstrate, an objectionable computer game in the presence of a child."

I applaud that provision. Clause 24 states—

> "A person must not sell, or attempt to sell, an objectionable computer game."

The maximum penalty is 60 penalty units, which is $3,600.

Clause 25 states—

> "A person must not, on premises on or from which classified computer games are sold, keep or have possession of an objectionable computer game."

Again, the fine is $3,600 or six months' gaol.

Clause 26(1), relates to possession of objectionable computer games, states—

> "A person must not have possession of an objectionable computer game to sell it."

Again, the penalty is $3,600 or six months' gaol. Subclause (2) states—

> "A person must not have possession of an objectionable computer game to demonstrate it in a public place."

This is where the legislation gets really serious. The penalty for that offence is $15,000 or two years' gaol. Subclause (3) states—

> "A person must not knowingly have possession of a child abuse computer game."

Again, the penalty is $15,000 or two years' gaol.

Clauses 27 and 28 are important. Clause 27, which refers to making an objectionable computer game, states—

> "A person must not, for gain, make . . . an objectionable computer game."

Again, the fine is $15,000 or two years' gaol. It is also prohibited for such a game to be copied. Clause 27(3) states—

> "A person must not make or produce, or attempt to make or produce, a child abuse computer game."

In this case the fine is $60,000 or five years' gaol. Subclause (4) states that a person must not copy such a game.

The Minister has endeavoured to come up with a mechanism that will limit the availability of these computer games. I applaud this legislation.

Time expired.

Dr WATSON (Moggill) (11.51 a.m.): I am happy to make a very brief contribution to the Classification of Computer Games and Images (Interim) Bill. During his speech, the member for Brisbane Central mentioned that he and I had a discussion about this Bill fewer than two hours ago—just before we came into the Chamber. The member and I obviously adopt a similar approach to these matters. I have a great deal of empathy with any Minister who attempts to regulate this type of material. On the day that the Minister introduced the Bill to the House, I took an extra copy home with me to give to my 17-year-old son.

Mr McElligott: You're not old enough to have a 17-year-old son.

Dr WATSON: I accept the generosity of that interjection.

On that evening, the House rose early enough that my son was still awake when I got home. I said, "Here is a copy of a Bill you might be interested in. It is about the classification and regulation of computer games." He took the second-reading speech, the Bill itself and the Explanatory Notes and flicked through them very quickly. I said, "Aren't you going to look at it a bit more closely than that?" He said, "No." I said, "Do you think it is worth doing?" He said, "No." He is a first-year university student. I said to him, "Hang on. You can't go making that kind of statement without justifying it." I went on to argue my case, pointing out that certain classifications are to be applied to these games. My son said that he had noticed that. I asked for his view on this legislation, and he asked me how it would be enforced. I went through the typical things that a parent would say in such a case. I pointed out that regulations are to be introduced——

Mr Beattie: This is very impressive.

Dr WATSON: I know. I pointed out also that people who hold licences to sell this material will have to meet the regulations. My son said, "What will happen if a friend gives it to me and I bring it home? Are you going to have police following me everywhere?" I assured my son that we do not live in that type of society and that certain restrictions would

apply. He said, "What are you going to do about the fact that I am on the Internet?" I understand that each University of Queensland student is allowed 25 hours a week on the Internet. By using that medium, my son can talk to anyone in the world and download a variety of information. My son purchased a modem for our computer. This means that he can play these types of games and be connected with a friend at Ashgrove—or, if he wants to, in the United States—and they can play an interactive game against each other or with each other against the computer. The technology available is tremendous.

Mr Burns: Mind-boggling.

Dr WATSON: It is mind-boggling. When the Minister and I were growing up, it was easier for our parents to keep track of what we read, because material available in libraries was given a particular classification. Parents could flick through proposed reading material—just as my son flicked through this legislation—and quickly form an opinion as to whether it was suitable. Today, that is not possible.

Dr Clark: There's also pornography on the Internet. Have you asked your son about that one?

Dr WATSON: I will get to that in a moment.

In the past, our parents had to drag us to libraries and encourage us to read widely and learn about the world. Today, parents do not have to do that. My family has had a computer ever since my eldest son was born. As computer technology has changed, we have upgraded. We now have a 386 and a Pentium at home. They are fast machines that have a large storage capacity. Parents no longer have to take their children places and encourage them to seek out knowledge; the information is at young people's fingertips. Every day of their lives they are presented with a colossal menu from around the world. It is extremely difficult for any Legislature to control that environment.

Mr Beattie: But you've got to do something, though.

Dr WATSON: I agree with the member for Brisbane Central. I agree also with comments by the Minister and the shadow Minister. We cannot just throw up our hands and say, "There is nothing we can do." We have to show some leadership. By passing this sort of Bill, as a Parliament we are saying that we do not believe that that type of material ought to be readily available. We have to put some moral stamp on the material that is available. Once upon a time, such material could be screened by parents, but that is no longer possible. That does not mean that we can abrogate our responsibilities as parliamentarians and do nothing.

During our conversation, the member for Brisbane Central and I agreed that it is important that, as parents, we train our children at a very young age. We have to imbue them with a sense of right and wrong. As I said, it is no longer a case of encouraging young people to seek out information; the information is at their fingertips. We have to help them separate the appropriate material from the non-appropriate material. In that regard, Mr Beattie and I are in total agreement.

I am expressing a very personal view. I interact with two teenage sons who have access to the technology that is available. My wife and I have always encouraged that access because we believe that our children must be equipped to survive in this high-tech world. At the same time, we are very cognisant of the issues involved in such access. The Opposition offers every support to the Government in its efforts to regulate this material. If the Opposition were in Government, I am sure that the Labor Party would offer similar support. It is with a great deal of pleasure that I say those few words in support of the Bill. I wish the Minister all the best in his attempts to regulate this material.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN (Chermside) (11.59 a.m.): I rise to support this legislation. We are all aware that throughout the Western World one of the major problems facing Governments is the rapid advance in technology, where the technology is ahead of community acceptance and is often ahead of the legislation and ahead of the means by which we can monitor the technology. This applies to fields such as bioethics as well as the information highway, which is the focus of this legislation.

I agree with the 1993 Senate select committee report which recommended some form of classification of computer games. It focuses on two main issues: firstly, the provision of consumer education; secondly, the protection of the community from exploitative and indecently obscene material. As members who have already contributed to this debate have said, the focus of this legislation is the education factor of trying to help parents and youngsters understand what material is contained in computer games so

that a more informed judgment can be made about them.

I agree with the member who preceded me when he said that it is almost impossible to police. The police cannot run around after every youngster who happens to have a floppy disk or computer game to see what is on it. The graphically violent and sexually obscene material that is available on these games has also been spoken about previously by members. The availability especially of violent games in the arcade parlours is well-known. The huge attendance by youth, especially young boys, at arcades is evidence of this.

Previous speakers have spoken about some extremely disturbing games, or so-called games, in which decisions are made by the participant to take another person's life or to take part in an activity which is totally degrading. We recognise that the new developments which use images of live actors, as opposed to the Mario Bros cartoon type portrayal, are actually more realistic and probably more damaging. These live-action sequences are a disturbing trend in new games. They are potentially more dangerous because they are interactive and they give the participant the chance to act out his or her fantasies.

From 20 years' teaching experience, I am aware that the best learning practices occur when people use more than one sense. For example, if a child only hears a piece of information, very little of it is retained; if a child hears and sees and writes the information, much more is learnt. If a child hears, sees, writes and then takes part in some action, there is a great deal of retention and it is a good learning process. Teachers all around the world are keeping students busy, active and getting them involved in their classrooms so that they can have the best learning experiences. It is in this context that I assert that the interactive computer games are a powerful learning experience for children. These interactive games contain not only factual information—some of them contain very little factual information—but also, more importantly, they hold values, a tone, atmosphere and certain actions which are also absorbed and assimilated by the people who play them. The assimilation of these values is particularly important when we consider children, because they do not have the experience of other values against which they can measure those being exhibited in a particular computer game.

Let there be no doubt that these games do influence children and will continue to influence children. Television has already proved to be a big influence on children. Many studies carried out in various countries in the Western World have concluded that constant exposure to television does help form the values of the viewer. One example is that, in the United States, it is estimated that, before starting school, the average child has seen almost 20,000 killings on television. That is reflected in the violence that is rampant in the American society. These studies have recognised the psychological harm to children and indeed adults that can result from exposure to violence on television.

Often, my wife and I will read a film review, speak to other adults whose views and values we respect, then watch that movie with our children. We often talk about aspects of the video or movie with our children if we believe they need information or guidance in gaining a proper appreciation of what was portrayed. Film classification and other allied consumer information is of great help to families when they are deciding what television program or film they will watch. I applaud this legislation which will extend these classifications to video games. As a side comment, one problem is the scarcity of G classification entertainment available to children, especially during the school holiday period.

Because of the technology behind these games, there are many hidden messages and hidden moves that are not readily seen. As has been alluded to by other speakers, previously with books, films or videos, at least parents could preview what was going to be seen or experienced by a child. On the other hand, these interactive computer games contain many moves which do not occur on the screen until the participant has achieved a high level of performance or until he or she is lucky or unlucky enough to hit a certain part of the screen. Therefore, there is no easy way of previewing what the child is actually going to experience. It is this hidden nature of many of the computer and arcade games which means that parents are not even aware of what their children are experiencing.

I take the Deputy Premier's comment that perhaps the best people to preview these games will be youngsters who have the skills to actually get through all of these stages of the computer games. When I played a game as simple as the Mario Bros, I did not get through very many levels. I relied very heavily on my 11 year old to tell me when to jump so

that I could hit the hidden zone to gain extra points. I am sure that this will be a problem faced with these games. I encourage the Minister to take whatever steps are necessary for a proper, thorough evaluation of this material to provide a comprehensive guide as to what the material contains.

These problems with computer games have been likened to the experiences of migrant families in which the parents cannot read or write English, which means that the children can have access to a whole world of material of which their parents are unaware. In this case the new language is that of the computer, of which many parents are not fully informed.

Governments are presented with this dilemma because the industry is growing in ways in which, at this stage, it is impossible to see where it will finish. The industry uses technologies which are beyond the capacities of individual Governments to properly supervise. This was portrayed in detail by the previous speaker in reference to the Internet.

How we find the balance between protecting the community whilst not impairing the computer industry is a difficulty which I believe this legislation addresses in a practical sense. I accept that the basis on which classification decisions will be made will be those currently in place for films, publications and computer games. I take the Minister's point that, if we can build on the consumer education that already exists on films and other classifications, we have a better chance of informing the community about computer games.

One of the key elements of the Bill is that there will be compulsory classification of all computer games. The difficulty of retrospectively classifying games has been raised by a previous speaker, but the public should be aware that there is a means by which a complaint can be made to the State Censor so that a potentially objectionable game can be reviewed. If people have a concern, I encourage them to write a letter to the Minister and complain about a particular game, whether it be in an arcade or shop, so that a classification can be made.

A second key element of the Bill is that, although the guidelines are modelled on those that are already in place for films and videos, they will have a stricter classification. Although this move has received criticism from some sections of the community, I support the Minister's action. I agree that, when we find ourselves in new areas where we are unsure of what is happening, it is better to be more cautious and to give greater protection to the youngsters in our community.

The restrictions placed on persons operating arcade parlours is an important step but a very difficult one to police. I must confess that I have grave reservations about the whole arcade parlour subculture that encourages young people, especially young men, to live out their fantasies in the artificial world of the arcade game.

Mrs Bird: It is a form of escapism.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: As my colleague the member for Whitsunday says, it is a form of escapism. As a person who has had 20 years' experience in looking at teenagers' faces in the classroom, I often get a sense of the thoughts, the feelings and the workings of the minds of young people. Sometimes when one stands outside one of those parlours and sees the dazed and distant look on the faces of young people who are addicted to those machines, one realises that it is a great cause for concern.

I also agree with the provision of the Bill that prohibits even the possession of child abuse computer games. Anything that will help slow down the activities of paedophiles in our society needs our support. The creation of the position of computer games classification officer will be important. The difficulty will be in that person establishing correct procedures and principles by which to make the classifications.

I am pleased that all Australian Governments have agreed that the material which would otherwise have been classified R will be banned and that there will not be any material of an X category sold or distributed. I support those moves. Although civil libertarians may have some reservations, I support the decision of the Senate select committee to conduct research into that field so that we can see what the real effects are. Because we are in such a new and untested field, we must try to find out the effects of those types of games and that type of viewing not only on the young members of our society but also on adult members of our society.

The Minister commented that he might be a bit conservative and that he would err on the side of families in the classification. I fully agree with him because, if there is a danger that our young children will be exposed to that sort of material, we should take whatever steps are needed to try to provide some form of protection. Today in our society, there are enough pressures on families that are a cause of parental concern. I do not think this is true

only for today's society; I believe that it has always been the case. However, the legislation is an attempt to come to grips with something that our children are facing, which we did not face when we were their age.

The scope of the Bill to include images is also a welcome provision. Some of the worst pornography in circulation is on computers in images, whether they are computer screen savers or photographs of some sort. The Bill contains provisions to allow for exemptions when medical, scientific or educational programs are being developed, so it is not an attempt to be mind controllers or to stop legitimate research. Under the legislation, the State Censor has powers of exemption, which will allow legitimate researchers to do their work. Exemptions will also enable libraries and educationalists to provide material of a beneficial nature or of an educative nature. The Bill will not inhibit the legitimate exchange of ideas, but we want to stop things that are non-productive and non-educational.

We must keep the legislation under constant review. Because it is tackling such a new factor in our society, the Bill will need to come back to the House for amendment. I know that in the future when this Minister or another Minister brings the Bill back to the House for review, Opposition members will not be critical. The Bill is the first stage of an ongoing process that will be a difficult challenge for us in the coming years. Major changes and developments in the medical field with in-vitro fertilisation and gene manipulation have forced the medical profession and Governments to face up to certain legislative requirements. So too developments in this field of technology have led to this form of legislation. We are in uncharted territory. The Bill is a first and very important step to try to guide our society, and especially our young children, through that new territory. I support the legislation.

Mrs BIRD (Whitsunday) (12.15 p.m.): There is plenty of evidence to show a correlation between what is shown on film, television and video and the way that a person behaves. It is understandable that people might assume that, because caricatures are being shown, that has a different impact. Indeed, video computer games do have a different impact. However, that impact is not minimised; it is magnified. The impact is magnified in the sense that the players have control of the game. They are participants in the action on the screen. Not only do they have control over the game; they also have the power to do whatever they want to do with what is happening.

We have come a long way from the days when I was a child, when we were forbidden to read comics. We were not allowed to read comics because they gave us an untrue impression of what life was about. That did not stop us. When we debate the legislation, we must bear in mind that point, that is, that the Bill will not stop the rot. I clearly remember my brother putting a sheet around his neck and trying to jump from the roof because he thought he was Superman. We did not have any comics in the house. He must have seen Superman at school.

Mr McElligott: What happened?

Mrs BIRD: He broke his leg. In our day, we were shielded because access to some of that material was controlled by the families. Today, the position is different.

In 1988, the Commonwealth Joint Select Committee on Video Material looked at various studies and inquiries on violence on the screen. Most of those studies were conducted in the USA. Generally, those studies concluded that the viewing of violence contributes to aggressive behaviour, particularly in children. Before then, in 1982, a report titled *Television and Behaviour: 10 Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties* stated—

> "Television violence is as strongly correlated with aggressive behaviour as any other behavioural variable that has been measured."

A study conducted over 22 years in the USA by Leonard Eron and Rowell Huesmann concluded that there is a significant relationship between television viewing—what is on the screen—at age eight and the seriousness of criminal convictions by the time that person is an adult of the age of 30. That study found that a child who was exposed to a high incidence of violence on television was 150 times more likely to commit a criminal offence by the time that person was 30 than was a child who had little exposure to television violence.

Even the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal's research department has made some inquiries into the effects of television violence on young people and concluded that television violence represents a danger to society and that the amount of violence currently shown on television is totally unacceptable. The ABT stated that the amount of violence on video is higher than the amount of violence shown on television. That is a very interesting point. The Joint Select Committee on Video Material also noted that

most of the material that it looked at suggested that young viewers are not repelled by film violence but become desensitised to the extent that violence is seen as an acceptable and legitimate means of attaining social ends.

Peter Horsfield, in his publication *Taming the Television—A Parent's Guide to Children and Television*, remarked—

> ". . . It has been shown that the continual viewing of violence is likely to increase a person's aggressive behaviour, as well as lowering the moral reservations in individuals against uses of violence."

He also suggested that children absorb the action viewed on film, television or video, the action becoming part of the child's behavioural repertoire to be used when the child sees a situation in which he feels it is appropriate or necessary.

Studies have shown that the effect on the child increases when the situation presented is very close to the child's own situation. This can have a profound effect on a child who is a victim of, for example, domestic violence in the home. The effect of these images is not short term but a long-term process that gradually increases their thoughts, behaviour and personalities—that is, the more a child watches television or a video, the more a child is influenced by what he or she sees.

It is not only children who are affected by what happens on the screen. It has been mentioned in this place on other occasions that there are numerous cases of adults, such as Wade Frankum, who have been severely affected by what was available to them through the visual and print media. After the Strathfield massacre, it was revealed that Frankum was a regular buyer or viewer of pornographic films, video and literature. In his flat were catalogues of X-rated videos, both of a heterosexual and homosexual nature. A copy of *American Psycho* was found beside his bed. When the details of the massacre were made public, there were protests to restrict by law the availability of the sorts of weapons used by Wade Frankum but, for reasons I find difficult to understand, no hue and cry was raised for laws to control the availability of literature such as *American Psycho*, or violent and pornographic films and videos. Surely the thoughts going through Frankum's mind at the time of the massacre were more important in explaining the massacre than the type of weapon he used to kill.

What about the impression that those video games have on children's minds? Is there not some sort of correlation? There have always been mentally unbalanced people such as Wade Frankum in this world but, until recent times, events such as the Strathfield massacre did not occur. Depicted violence constitutes one of most important courses of psychopathic behaviour in modern times. Ted Bundy said just before he was executed that the media played a definite role in the formation of his behaviour. An interesting fact is that pornographic material is almost always found in the homes of serial killers. Even a Brisbane Supreme Court judge, Justice James Thomas, has blamed American television programs for the increasing number of domestic sieges in Australia, when sentencing a man who tried to cut his baby's throat. Justice Thomas said that he was sure that shows had an effect on the subconscious and influenced people's contact with reality.

We are constantly bombarded with violence—be it real or contrived. It has become part of our way of life to expect to see this violence. Although we do our best to counter what we can in society, it is really up to the whim of the individual. That is no reason for us to play Pontius Pilate. We must do our best to ensure that we control the exposure, particularly of young people, to scenes that imply sex. Intimate sex acts, both implied and explicit, are regular features of today's video games. The predominate act portrayed in those scenes usually occurs between people who are not married and quite often with prostitutes. Research has shown that people exposed to pornography believe that unusual sexual behaviour is widespread. Viewers of pornography have also been shown to be more callous towards sexual exploitation and more tolerant of rape and violent sexual acts.

But violence and sex scenes are not the only images presented to the children of this generation in video games that assist them in developing a very false view of the real world. The portrayal of women and women's roles are also misrepresented to the greatest extent. In fact, female roles in films often present women as objects of male desire and, if they are not always beautiful, they are always especially brainy, or both. This may present a distorted view to children of the role of women in today's society. The function of women as romantic partners is also distorted on film. The number of women in their twenties represented on film far outweighs the number of women above that age. Unfortunately, this particular misrepresentation of society cannot be dealt with as easily by legislation as the issues of violence and sex on film, as it is too often subtly implied, therefore making categorisation very difficult.

The same can be said of car chases that are depicted on film. I have mentioned this several times. The villains in the car chases are those who are doing the chasing; the heroes are usually the ones being chased. The cars used are invariably big, powerful, prestigious-looking vehicles for the baddies and clapped-out cars for the goodies. The police are usually portrayed to be the baddies and are usually bumbling fools when it comes to car chases. A good example is *The Blues Brothers* in which hundreds of police cars fail to apprehend the "goodies", who have been shown breaking the law on numerous occasions throughout the film. Those types of images surely must impress upon our youth a mistaken belief that car chases are fun, exciting and healthy, which they may be on screen but rarely are in real life.

Insurance company figures show that the people in the highest risk category of having collisions in car chases are those between 17 years of age and 30 years of age. As has been demonstrated by numerous studies and research projects, young people are impressed by what they view on the screen and will often attempt to copy the actions they have seen. No wonder road fatalities in the 18 years of age to 30 years of age bracket are, tragically, the highest of all age groups. The solution is to stop the brainwashing at a very early age. If we are to modify the behaviour of 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds, we must start at the earliest age. The repetitiveness of the games and the participation of young people in them makes some control by legislation essential. The mechanisms that are put in place today are just the beginning.

In responding to my question to him on 3 December 1993, the Minister stated—

> "The proposed guidelines will empower parents by providing user-friendly consumer information and by banning or restricting access to games containing scenes of violence, cruelty or sexual exploitation."

That is the pivotal point. The legislation is all that we can do. The implementation, the initiation and the viewing by children must be monitored by the parents. We have to stop taking the power away from parents and get parents back to parenting.

Mr PYKE (Mount Ommaney) (12.28 p.m.): It pleases me to join the debate on the Classification of Computer Games and Images (Interim) Bill and to speak briefly in support of this vital Bill. It disappoints me to see that only four members of the Opposition are in this Chamber.

Mr Cooper: You are lucky to have four of us.

Mr PYKE: Lucky? I would not say that I am "lucky" at all. I believe that this Bill is a triumph for bipartisan cooperation and commonsense. In terms of the prevention of violence against women and the prevention of child sexual assault, this Bill promises to be a very important and very useful tool.

I will reiterate key points from the Minister's second-reading speech. The Australian Senate Select Committee on Community Standards relevant to the supply of services utilising electronic technology has been investigating video and computer games and classification issues for the last few years. In its October 1993 report, the Senate select committee specifically recommended the introduction of some form of classification legislation designed to provide consumer education and to protect the community from exploitative and indecent, obscene material. The committee said that it was extremely concerned about the proliferation of such types of video and computer games with few, if any, controls on their sale or accessibility. The graphically violent and sexual material available on video games undermines the community's efforts to regulate the flow of such material to minors on film and video, in publications or over telephone lines. The other segment of the games industry concerns arcade games which are played in public places, particularly fun parlours.

I understand that in an endeavour to assist the community and to provide guidance to the computer and video games industry, Australian censorship Ministers agreed to the introduction of classification legislation. The Bill before the House is intended to complement amendments that were made to the Classification of Publications Ordinance by the Commonwealth Attorney-General in 1994.

The provisions of this Bill are also intended to complement, as far as possible, those provisions that are currently contained in the Queensland classification legislation for films and publications and which have operated satisfactorily since 1992. I consider this to be a vital piece of legislation, because it ensures that Queensland is playing its part in a national legislative initiative designed to advance the computer game industry. It will also assist families and the community to maintain standards and provide guidance to our young people.

Some elements of this Bill will be of particular assistance to the industry. This legislation will ensure that there is guidance for the industry as to what it may or may not sell

or distribute; what it may or may not advertise; what it may and may not import; and what it may and may not produce. I also understand that this legislation will be kept under constant review and that elements of the computer and video games industry are yet to be addressed adequately, including the use of bulletin boards, the Internet, virtual reality and even pay TV.

Games devised by adults provide a legacy from our generation that injures and impacts greatly upon younger minds. In terms of prevention of violence against women and child sexual abuse—we require generational change. This Bill promises to provide a safeguard for the minds, attitudes and behaviour of our children and other young people. I thank those residents in my electorate—ordinary residents; educators; and people involved in parents' and citizens associations and parents' and friends committees—who have written to me and expressed their concern about this issue. They have motivated and assisted me to represent them and to put forward their views, my views and those of my office in relation to this issue. I commend the Minister on his expeditious handling of this issue.

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Consumer Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier on Rural Affairs) (12.32 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions. I thank the Opposition spokesman for his support for the legislation and the principles underlying it. As the member for Hinchinbrook pointed out—a superhighway of technology is coming down the telephone line, and it will be a test for all Governments to cooperate in an endeavour to ensure that this information technology revolution is subject to appropriate controls.

An inherent problem with information technology is that it is developing so quickly that, inevitably, there is a lag before legislation can be drafted and effected. Because of the speed of change and the need for State, national and international cooperation, it is critically important to empower parents by the provision of consumer education so that they can properly control what computer or video games their children are playing. I believe that is the real key to this legislation—so that parents can understand what their children are watching. It is no use parents walking in when their children are playing computer games, seeing something on the screen, and then the children pressing a button and the image disappearing. They cannot say, "Bring it back." It is too late; it has gone. Parents ought to be able to see whether that game has a rating. Under this legislation the rating will have to be shown clearly, so that parents can look at it and say, "You should not have that" or "You should have that"—whatever the case may be—or sit down and talk to their children about whether they should be playing that type of game.

Inevitably, censorship legislation raises questions about the changing moral climate of a society. The difficulty that we as parliamentarians face is trying to develop legislation that reflects the aspirations of the vast majority of people in the community and allows sufficient leeway for the development of new technologies and ideas. Censorship is essential to protect people from exploitation and uphold community values. However, it must be weighed carefully against infringing too far on the rights of people to see, read or play with whatever they wish. I am glad that the Opposition spokesman believes that the Government has struck the right balance in this legislation.

The honourable member also made the point that business, accounting, professional, scientific or educational computer programs are exempt. I point out that they are exempt only if those programs fall into the "G" and "M" categories. Any software that would receive a higher classification is not exempt. Accordingly, the exemption given to that type of software is strictly limited and should not be the subject of abuse. I confirm that, last year, the ACT Parliament passed legislation prohibiting specifically computer games that would otherwise be classified "R" or "X". As I pointed out in my second-reading speech, the agreement to ban that type of material was reached by all Australian censorship Ministers.

I also appreciate the Opposition spokesman's support for police officers being appointed as inspectors. This arrangement exists already under the films and publications classification legislation and ensures that censorship laws can be enforced throughout Queensland in a speedy and effective way. An agreement with the Commissioner of Police is in place to ensure that there is consistency in the enforcement of the legislation.

Finally, an issue throughout the Opposition spokesman's speech was that today's youth are far more advanced in computer literacy than are their parents. I do not think that anyone would dispute that. As I have said before, most parents do not have the skills to access all facets of a video game, while their children are very adept at using computers and computer games. For example, my grandchildren are leaps and

bounds ahead of me in using computers. So I agree with the Opposition spokesman that that is the biggest problem we face. As new technology is developed, the young kids of today are learning to use it in kindergartens and schools; they are learning computer skills. The parents of the future will accept this development as the norm, but we do not see it that way; it was not taught to us in schools. We do not have those computer skills, so it is very difficult for older parents to check on what their sons and daughters are doing.

I thank the honourable member for Brisbane Central for his support for the legislation, for pointing out some of the difficulties that parents face in supervising their children, and for highlighting the effects of peer pressure. The honourable member also pointed out the real problems with bulletin boards. As he said, this issue is being considered by all State Governments and the Federal Government. As the honourable member pointed out, the problem we face in attempting to regulate bulletin boards and the use of Internet is not an excuse for doing nothing; that is quite right. It would be easy to say that the problems are too great and that Governments should vacate the field. No-one should hold that view. We simply have to try harder, use novel approaches and cooperate rather than worrying about State and Federal demarcation lines.

I note the honourable member's comments about former Deputy Chief Censor Mr David Haines. I believe that the honourable member effectively demolished David Haines' arguments. However, it is important to point out that, in a field as new as this, it is imperative that the welfare of children remains paramount.

I thank the member for Moggill—my note says "the young honourable member for Moggill". I thank him for sharing with the House his 17-year-old son's analysis of this legislation. This legislation is not intended to be a solution to all the problems with which we have been confronted by the information technology revolution. Currently, bulletin boards and the Internet are not regulated by this legislation. The States do not have the constitutional power to regulate the Internet or specific bulletin board systems. If material is downloaded from bulletin boards, that material can be subject to the Classification of Publications Act. However, I point out to the honourable member that, in 1994, the Federal Attorney-General released a report on the regulation of computer bulletin board systems. It is intended that Australian censorship Ministers will discuss the report with the Federal Communications Minister with a view to formulating a range of policy options that will ensure that bulletin boards are subject to appropriate legislation. To be truthful, I believe that it will probably be a code of conduct.

I assure the honourable member that the thought police will not be taking software from his son or a floppy disk from the honourable member. This legislation will be administered sensibly, with a keen appreciation of the realities of the marketplace and the wishes of Australian families.

In summary, I recognise that accessing information from around the world through networks such as the Internet is a real problem. As I said before, problems such as that and the problem with bulletin boards are being considered on a national basis. Those problems are certainly not something that we can control from Queensland. However, parents must take some responsibility. Finally, it comes down to us. Before parents go to the expense of buying a modem for their computers, they should think carefully, and they certainly should supervise their children. I am told that only about 3 per cent of Australian families have computers with modems and the facility to——

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr BURNS: Of course, the honourable member made the point that his son goes to the university and has access to the Internet for a particular number of hours.

Dr Watson: He does it from home.

Mr BURNS: But it is done through the university system. The other day, one of the TV cameramen told me that his 10-year-old son could give me some lessons on how to access the Internet and bulletin boards. I am interested in that sort of education, which is going to be given to me by the young son of Harry from Channel 10.

I thank the honourable member for Chermside for his comments. Policing this legislation will not be easy. But with a more aware public and with the benefit of this legislation, officers of my department and the police can act on complaints referred to the department. I agree that there is a trend to use live actors in games, which gives them a more realistic appearance. This makes it more imperative that we do something. I also agree that new technology is a very useful learning tool for our young people.

A recent survey from Belgium showed that, although the playing of computer games was on the increase, the time for which children were occupied by that activity was nowhere near the level that children spend

watching TV. Because of the illiteracy of parents, consumer advice will be available to assist parents and guardians. That is best part of this legislation.

I thank the honourable member for Whitsunday, Lorraine Bird, for her comments. I was interested by the honourable member's recounting of the various studies which suggest that the viewing of violence by people may correlate with aggressive behaviour. Of the people who raise censorship issues with me, nine out of ten would rate violence as their biggest concern, as opposed to sexual references. There is growing concern about violence.

Mr Rowell: That's not an indictment, is it?

Mr BURNS: No, I am not sure that it is—or an endorsement, either.

The point I make, though, is that most people are concerned about violent movies, even the ones that censors have approved. There is concern about the increase of violent material. That is a point that censorship Ministers have to take into consideration. There is certainly considerable debate about the links between pornography and the commission of violent acts, especially those against women and young children. While these links have not been proven conclusively, certain Australian censorship Ministers determined that it is important to err on the side of caution, especially when young children are involved and when we are dealing with something as new as interactive computer games.

Finally, the honourable member was right in saying that the only way we can ever make a meaningful impact in the area of computer censorship is by empowering parents through up-front information on the games themselves and by consumer education generally. For this reason, under this legislation symbols will be printed on the wrapping of computer games informing parents up front of what a rating for a game is and whether it contains themes involving violent or sexual references.

I thank the honourable member for Mount Ommaney for pointing out that this is a vital Bill because, apart from anything else, it will ensure that Queensland plays its part in a national legislative initiative. The honourable member was also correct in pointing out—and this point needs to be emphasised—that the industry itself will benefit from the legislation. The legislation will ensure that, prior to games being distributed or sold, the industry will know exactly what is allowed and what is prohibited. I thank honourable members for their contributions.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 71, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

DRUGS MISUSE AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 22 March (see p. 11230).

Mr COOPER (Crows Nest) (12.45 p.m.): This Bill presents the Opposition with something of a conundrum. We certainly do support its claimed intent and purpose, which we believe is laudable. However, we believe also that it is so sloppily drafted that virtually all of the noble intentions and powerful declarations espoused by the Minister in his second-reading speech will actually come to naught.

We have come to expect a fairly vast gulf between what the Government says it will do and what it actually does, so I am really unable to say whether this Bill is simply the result of poor drafting or whether it is the result of a deliberate decision to take the soft option to deal with what the Minister himself declared was a growing problem. Later, I will deal in detail with what I believe are key sections that need significant amendments if the declared purpose and intent is to be achieved.

It could be argued with considerable justification that this Bill is all contrived sound and fury, with very few teeth and very little bite. In this regard, it is notable that the Minister made absolutely no reference to penalties in his second-reading speech. Perhaps he realised that all of this tough talk about what he was pleased to call "an important element of strategies to combat illegal drug use in Queensland" would be exposed as a shoddy confidence trick if he did actually detail the penalties proposed in this Bill. I would remind the Minister—that is, if he needs reminding—that the pathetic fines provided in this Bill should be considered in the context of the vast amounts of money that the illegal drug trade amasses. For example, the recent

Doggett Street amphetamine factory raid netted more than $600,000 in cash. The paltry fines provided in this Bill would not even rate as petty cash in the drug trade.

Another major flaw, which may or may not be the result of poor drafting, is the failure of the Bill to address the very real and growing problem of the manufacture of illegal and highly dangerous drugs in backyard laboratories. It seems that this Bill does not even permit access to private premises where these purveyors of death manufacture these drugs. I can only wonder why. I direct the Minister's attention to proposed new section 43J, which refers only to business premises.

As I am advised, the controlled substances particularised in Schedule 6 are individually a necessary element in the production of amphetamines, save and except for acetic anhydride, boron tribonide and pyridine, all of which are used in the production of heroin, and red phosphorous used in the production of lysergide, or acid, both of which are Schedule 1 drugs.

There are, of course, quantities of specific dangerous drugs that aggravate possession, and such a schedule should be included in the amended Act for the unlawful possession of any of the controlled substances. I am further advised that, as unlawful possession of the controlled substances in the schedule is not an offence, this Bill really does nothing to prevent manufacture. Again, I believe that this is a fundamental flaw and a basic weakness. I ask the Minister to respond to that assertion. If it is simply a case of sloppy drafting, the matter can be resolved here and now, but if it is yet another case of this Government saying one thing and doing something else under the cover of a propaganda blast, we will be saddled with an amended Act that achieves very little, if anything at all. As I have foreshadowed, I intend to raise other matters with the Minister during the Committee stage.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister outlined the history leading up to this Bill. The Australian Police Minister's Council established a national working party on amphetamine control in March 1990, and this working party reported to the council in November 1990 with recommendations in relation to control. Then something that the Minister called an "interdepartmental working group consisting of representatives from the Police Service's Drug Squad and Policy Branch, Queensland Health and the Government Chemical Laboratories" was established. This group really did redefine the words "working party", given that it has taken almost four and a half years to produce this very thin and sloppy Bill.

Many honourable members will recall that the annual report of the Director-General of Health and Medical Services, released in December 1990, warned that clandestine laboratories producing illegal designer drugs were increasing in Queensland and that, for example, the seizure of amphetamines in 1989-90 increased by a staggering 70 per cent over 1988-89. Despite that warning coming virtually simultaneously with the recommendations of the report to the Australian Police Ministers Council in late 1990, years went by without the Government taking even this token action. This inexcusable delay, coupled with the serious weaknesses of this Bill, must give every Queenslander serious cause to reflect upon what priority the Government gives to declaring a real war on the drug trade.

By comparison, the New South Wales Government acted swiftly. In 1991—only a few short months after the recommendations to the Police Ministers Council—it gave approval to recruit front-line Hong Kong Chinese drug officers to infiltrate the Asian Triad syndicates which were reportedly responsible for supplying up to 90 per cent of Australia's heroin. It also introduced urgent legislation under its Poisons Act to crack down on the illegal so-called backyard chemists manufacturing these highly addictive and mind-altering drugs. While this was happening south of the border, the Goss Government had a working party which worked on—or perhaps, given the delay, partied on—and only now do we see the fruits of its labours—or do we? I challenge the Minister to table the reports and recommendations of that working party so that we can all see how close the provisions of this Bill are to what it finally recommended they should be. Of course, it is pointless asking for such information under FOI.

On the general matter of the laws relating to illegal drugs, I invite the Minister to respond to the widely held view that it is this Government's ultimate intention to dismantle the Drugs Misuse Act entirely and include some of its provisions in the Criminal Code and the balance in a Summary Offences Bill. There is a growing belief that this is on the Government's agenda and that the sly and devious purpose for this is yet another weakening of the existing provisions of the Drugs Misuse Act. I challenge the Minister to state firmly and categorically that, while he is Minister at least, the Drugs Misuse Act will remain intact.

The Goss Government has a record of weakening and diluting the provisions of the Act. Prior to the 1989 election, the Labor Party while in Opposition agreed to the demands of those who had been gaoled for life for trafficking in hard drugs under the provisions of the Act introduced by the former Government. No sooner was the Goss regime installed in power than the then Minister, Mr Mackenroth, eagerly agreed to this group's demands and the Drugs Misuse Act Amendment Bill received its first reading in the first sitting of Parliament in 1990 and was passed in May 1990. Life sentences were repealed and those imprisoned were quickly released. In November 1991, 14 of the 19 people gaoled for life under the former Government's law were out and, to quote from the *Sunday Mail* of 10 November 1991—

> "Disgusted police say these included some of the biggest heroin traffickers ever caught in Queensland."

The last person to be released was recently charged yet again with prostitution offences. Referring to the previous Government's legislation, that special report in the *Sunday Mail* stated further—

> "Police claimed the big traffickers were impressed by Queensland's Drugs Misuse Act and were not game to set foot in the State."

At the time, the Goss Government claimed that those gaoled for life for hard-drug peddling had been convicted for offences involving only fairly small amounts of drugs and that this somehow reduced their culpability. The simple fact is that the amounts of drugs involved were reasonably small because the then Government, of which I was a member, did not want to risk vast sums of taxpayers' money in undercover operations to purchase these drugs. There was never any doubt that, if the Government of that time had somehow found millions of dollars for what was called show money for undercover police operations, many, if not all, of the operations involving those convicted and gaoled for life would have produced far larger quantities of drugs.

It is significant that the Police Commissioner, Mr O'Sullivan, said in October 1993 that the illicit drug trade had grown since the Goss Government had eliminated those mandatory life sentences. In his response on behalf of the Police Service to the Criminal Justice Commission's discussion paper on marijuana, released in July of that year, Mr O'Sullivan wrote—

> "With the abolition of mandatory penalties, increased levels of serious and large-scale drug activity were witnessed to be occurring in Queensland."

The Government, which shamelessly manipulates and uses Mr O'Sullivan to try to defend itself on police matters, fell remarkably silent about that well-informed expert view. The Government could hardly abuse and denigrate its own Police Commissioner, although nobody would be betting odds about what the Government's response would have been if I or any other member of the Opposition had said the same thing.

It was also in 1993 that the Chairman of the Criminal Justice Commission, Mr O'Regan—also appointed by this Government—revealed that the Premier, Mr Goss, had written to him saying that he had an open mind on the matter of decriminalisation of marijuana. When the fact of that letter became public, the Government realised that it was a case of the Premier regrettably having an open mouth as well as an open mind, and it went into disaster-control mode. The Attorney-General, Mr Wells, flatly ruled out any change to the existing laws relating to the use and possession of marijuana and, by clear implication, gave the CJC a mighty big serve for wasting taxpayers' money researching the subject.

Warnings about the rapid growth of the hard-drug trade keep coming. In April 1994, a senior police officer confirmed that high-grade heroin was freely available in Brisbane and on the Gold and Sunshine Coasts at $450 for 25 grams—a price which indicated a plentiful supply. In the following month, May 1994, the head of the major crime squad's Asian task force, Sergeant Brian Wilkins, said that known members of interstate Asian drug gangs were visiting south-east Queensland.

I believe that the time has come for the Government to give serious thought to forming a body similar to the New South Wales Drug Enforcement Agency, which was formed in April 1989. Using the multidisciplinary team, within its first two years that agency became the best drug-trade buster in the country, with a team of 270 highly skilled people, including police, lawyers, accountants and intelligence analysts. Of that staff, 160 were front-line enforcement detectives, trained to infiltrate drug syndicates. In its first two years, it knocked out 45 well-established drug trafficking networks and seized cash and property worth more than $5m—not to mention stopping millions of dollars worth of drugs reaching the streets. That is the sort of

serious response that the hard-drug trade needs, and this Government should consider it.

The penalties that are handed out to drug dealers in this State have not merely been weakened by this Government as a deliberate act of policy; they are being even further diluted because of the Government's shameful and inept handling of police watch-houses. In June last year, Supreme Court judge Mr Justice James Thomas described the Brisbane watch-house conditions as medieval and ordered that each day a convicted drug importer had spent there prior to sentencing be treated as a week of sentence. It should be pointed out that the person about to be sentenced was a man who had pleaded guilty to being knowingly involved in the importation of 92 kilograms of cannabis with a street value of $7m. Drug dealers and other criminals must be about the only group of people who actually agree with the Government's flat refusal to do anything about watch-house overcrowding, because a few days of extreme discomfort can often mean weeks of freedom.

It is also acknowledged that Queensland's gaols are literally awash with illegal drugs, including prescription and hard drugs and marijuana. One can only wonder how seriously the Minister regards this problem. On 16 July last year, I wrote to the Minister drawing his attention to a reported statement at a coroner's inquest into the death of a Wacol correctional centre inmate, Thomas Ball, by the gaol's operations manager, Mr Patrick Byrne, that marijuana was "the bane of our existence". It is not surprising that the Minister has not replied.

That death of an inmate after overdosing on a cocktail of illegal drugs in October 1993 was but one illustration of what is happening inside our overcrowded, underfunded and ramshackle gaol system. It was significant that, although Mr Byrne told the Coroner's Court that two popular ways of smuggling drugs into the gaol were via food and drink, the dead inmate's mother said that officers had never examined cakes, tobacco and drinks that she gave her son.

Sitting suspended from 12.59 to 2.30 p.m.

Mr COOPER: If the Chair could have given me one more minute before the luncheon recess, I would have been able to have a longer afternoon off.

Mr Beattie: A longer lunch.

Mr COOPER: I could have gone to the Toowoomba show, the Weetwood, and done all those sorts of things.

My letter posed some serious questions for the Minister about drugs in gaols, and after many months he is yet to respond. It is no secret among prison officers that any drug can be obtained in gaols, and indeed I have heard numerous allegations that drugs are manufactured in gaols by inmates. The frequency of these reports from throughout the State does not permit the matter to be dismissed. There is also a policy inside our gaols of tacit acceptance of the open use of marijuana because authorities believe that a serious crackdown on the use of this drug would cause huge upheavals which they simply could not handle. The trade-off for turning a blind eye to marijuana is a relatively peaceful inmate population.

At the beginning of my speech I indicated that I intended to raise with the Minister some serious questions about some of the clauses in the Bill. I again advise him of that intention. If the Minister is keen to ensure that this Bill does do what he said it was intended to do, I am sure he will welcome my many suggestions.

There is no doubt that the trade in and manufacture of hard drugs does need a comprehensive and meaningful response both in the provision of effective laws and in the provision of the necessary police resources to enforce those laws. I have already raised some of my initial concerns about some weaknesses in the Bill—the lack of any penalty for unlawful possession of the controlled substances in Schedule 6 of the Bill is one—and I would hope that the Minister will respond positively.

Mrs WOODGATE (Kurwongbah) (2.32 p.m.): In common with all other members in this House, I abhor the use of drugs and I spend a bit of time worrying about the growth of their use in this country; that is why I am pleased to speak on this Bill and place a few points on the public record. The Explanatory Notes state that the reason for the Bill is that—

> "The abuse of amphetamine drugs is a growing problem throughout Australia."

We all know that. The Explanatory Notes continue—

> "In addressing this increase in drug abuse, the National Working Party on Amphetamine Control recommended that a uniform approach be adopted by all Australian States and Territories . . ."

This legislation will bring this State into line with the other States and Territories. I think Queensland is the second last State to introduce this type of legislation; South Australia is the only State left. As the Explanatory Notes state, another reason for the Bill is—

> ". . . the implementation of legislation to control chemicals which can be used to produce illicit drugs"—

often referred to as "controlled substances".

In recent years, the popularity of amphetamine abuse has increased to the degree that, in 1990, Australian seizures almost equalled the combined seizures of heroin and cocaine. That is a rather frightening thought. Amphetamines have been described as the drugs of the nineties. In 1993—two years ago—in Australia the use of amphetamines continued to grow and, in the order of popularity, it remains second to cannabis. The most commonly manufactured amphetamine in Australia remains methylamphetamine. I hope I have pronounced that word correctly.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mrs WOODGATE: Just say it, do not spell it. If amphetamine abuse continues to increase in Australia it can be expected that the incidence of the clandestine laboratories will also increase. That is the type of thing that this Bill sets out to prevent. There will be an increased danger to police who investigate the illicit amphetamine manufacturer, because they will inevitably come increasingly into contact with clandestine laboratories and the list of dangers that they present.

Usage of amphetamines continues to grow on an international scale and, as a consequence, Governments throughout the world, police and other law enforcement agencies have realised the importance of the precursor material in the production of amphetamines and the need for satisfactory regulation of the chemical industry. Two years ago, in 1993, we saw the implementation of tighter chemical controls in many countries, including Australia, with Governments ratifying agreements in line with the United States conventions. To combat the production of these amphetamines, this Bill introduces precursor control. Precursors are the chemicals that are required to manufacture amphetamines. They are legal substances that are not manufactured locally but imported from industrialised European countries and the United States. A register of people who buy these substances from the chemical suppliers will be one way of combating this problem. Having that information on the public record will reveal where these chemicals are being used and is one way that we will be able to combat this problem.

I believe that Queensland is winning the fight against drugs. I think that all members would have seen a recent media report that quoted the Assistant Commissioner of the Crimes Operations Branch, Graham Williams, saying that police were winning the battle against drug producers and severely affecting the illicit drug market. I am pleased to see that he has backed up that statement. Rather than just accepting what I read in the papers, I asked to be briefed about just how we were winning the battle. The information I have been given is a reason for hope that we are winning the battle against these barons of the drug world.

The Crimes Operations Branch is currently conducting seven covert and overt drug operations throughout Queensland. From 1 February to 28 February 1995, three covert drug operations were closed by the Crimes Operations Branch, with a total of 75 persons arrested as a result of the investigations. The following charges have been laid: trafficking in dangerous drugs, 15; unlawful supply of dangerous drugs, 17; unlawful possession of dangerous drugs, 65; producing dangerous drugs, 36; Weapons Act offences, 3; possessing a thing used in the commission of a crime defined in the Drugs Misuse Act, 33; proceeds of crime offences, 3; and 24 other criminal offences. That comes to a total of 196 charges. The individual value of the drugs seized was interesting—amphetamines, over $160m; cannabis, $444,000; and cannabis plant, a total of over $466m. That is a lot of drugs off the street as a result of the Crimes Operations Branch successful prosecutions.

A total of 200 kilograms of uncut amphetamine was seized from what is believed to be Australia's largest amphetamine laboratory at Newstead, Brisbane. Although the member for Clayfield is in the Chamber, I will not ask him whose electorate Newstead is in. I think it is in his electorate.

Mr Santoro: Which suburb?

Mrs WOODGATE: Newstead.

Mr Santoro: No. That is in the electorate of the honourable member for Brisbane Central.

Mrs WOODGATE: That is why the drugs were cleaned up.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order!

Mrs WOODGATE: I ask your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker. That is why that has been cleaned up; there has been good representation by the member for Brisbane Central. I will give credit where credit is due.

The seizure was as a result of a joint operation with the National Crime Authority. On 14 February 1995, what is believed to be the largest cannabis crop in Australia was discovered in the Gympie district—that is bad representation. Surveillance of the crop led to the arrest of eight persons on 25 charges—I will give Mr Stephan a copy of this speech—and 162,000 plants with a value in excess of $405,000 were seized.

I am pleased that we are winning the fight. As I said, I did not just accept what was in the paper. I accept what Assistant Commissioner Williams says, but sometimes one has to take with a grain of salt what one reads in the paper, because sometimes it is wrong. The research that I requested after reading these good headlines about winning the battle satisfied me that all of these operations are on the way to solving the problem. I believe that this legislation will make it a bit tougher for those pedlars of death to pursue their evil ways in the drug world. I am very happy to support the legislation.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (2.38 p.m.): There can be little doubt that the abuse of amphetamines and the growth industry in the manufacturing of illegal amphetamines is having a major impact on our youth and family values and is a critical issue which needs to be urgently addressed by the Government in this Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill.

The 1993-94 statistical report by the Queensland Police Service shows a significant increase in the arrest rate and the number of drug related offences recorded in Queensland. Often, drug usage is related directly to personal and property crimes, which have a serious effect on our social and economic standing as a community. The fear of crime is increasing due to the Government's inability to understand, control and develop critical strategies which will influence society's internal war against crime and drugs. In this very brief contribution I simply wish to address the major strategies in society's fight against crime.

The Fitzgerald report spoke openly about the drug industry and corruption and its impact on the community generally. The recently released review of Commonwealth law enforcement arrangements in 1994—the COAG report—suggests that drug offences are costing Australia an estimated $1.2 billion annually. An FBI futures research report into drug trends, which I am sure all honourable members would know came out in 1990, suggests that reliance solely on law enforcement will not abate the problem. There will need to be a major reliance on community support. I think that that is another key concept that the Bill tries to come to grips with, but not as well as one would have hoped.

Indeed, recent media reports in New South Wales regarding the $50m amphetamine dealer and manufacturer who appeared to escape justice in return for information have caused much public debate about the effectiveness of some drug-enforcement strategies. The FBI futures research also suggests that the key to solving the drug problem in our community is the pivotal role the community plays in dealing with drug-related and crime-related issues. The problem with the legislation is that it fails substantially to address how the community is to be involved.

For example, should the property confiscated or resources gained be used to provide drug rehabilitation treatment and/or support through education programs? Certainly, there is also a need for far more progressive research on the links to drug-related crimes. The legislation is based on an assumption that all illegal amphetamine production is the result of legally obtained commercial goods. It fails to recognise that chemicals can be obtained through a variety of sources, for example, third-party sources and the manufacturing of chemical by-products by dilution of compound substances.

Certainly, the sections in the Act regarding third-party sources appear to be ambiguous. The belief in the legislation is that all thieves take their goods to pawnshops to gain cash or that all chemicals associated with the illicit drug industry are obtained directly from the commercial marketplace. The Government has provided little information on the way in which controlled chemicals are transferred into the illicit drug market, thus disclosing the best practices available to the industry, Government and the community on how to deal with that problem.

The legislation is relying on the organisational integrity of business, the registering process and the reporting of the missing substance two days after it is noticed missing. On occasions, chemical substances

may not be noticed missing until a stocktake occurs and, by that time, the trail to the culprits may be cold. The use of registers and technology will cause further difficulties for enforcement agencies in administering the legislation.

If the multimillion-dollar illegal amphetamine industry continues to thrive, it will be because of the Government's ethos that enforcement through legislation can control the behaviour of illegal commercial ventures. That concept of partial self-regulation appears to be a major drawback to reducing the amphetamine trade. It is interesting to note that, in his second-reading speech, the Honourable the Minister, Mr Braddy, failed to provide any anecdotal evidence that commercial industry has even been the source of chemicals for the supply or production of illegal amphetamines. Other illegal means not fully disclosed without adequate research may be the primary source for the manufacturing of those illicit drugs.

Again, the Government is using the police and environmental officials to control that specific commercial industry, with little recognition of the need to provide additional resources to legitimately wage an effective campaign against drug dealers and manufacturers. There must also be some acknowledgment of the way in which organised crime participates in the illegal amphetamine industry. The financial returns involved in that illegal drug industry are extensive, and commercial enterprises could easily be tempted to support that illegal enterprise. To act as a deterrent, penalties must be significant. As the member for Crows Nest, the shadow Minister, said, when we are considering a multimillion-dollar illegal industry, the penalties in the legislation may not act as a major threat to organised crime and those who would have an affinity with it.

It is interesting that it took the Government five years to act on the national information that was provided to the Government by the Australian Police Ministers Council. The Government should avail itself of regular briefings on those and other issues raised by that forum in particular, so that law and order issues can become more transparent and open to public debate. The more public debate that occurs on issues such as those being debated today, the more effective the efforts of the community against that illicit trade will be.

The police powers in the Bill are significant, and I wonder how they will be managed when the Police Powers Bill is finally introduced into Parliament. The power to use telecommunications, surveillance equipment and listening devices is also paramount to the effectiveness of any enforcement agency. The Minister may wish to consider how the powers in the Bill will interface with that intended legislation.

The power of search is somewhat limited to public access provisions and fails to consider private or restricted storage facilities. It appears that the provisions relating to the judicial and investigation certification of controlled substances are extremely wide. People from whom I have sought legal advice on that aspect of the Bill say that it may result in problems being experienced in the courts. The police and other investigatory agencies may find substantial costs being awarded against them because defence lawyers will find certification in the legislation not legally substantive in nature. That investigatory difficulty often results in administrative burdens and the system being labelled ineffective.

However, there is a definite need for the Government to provide law enforcement agencies with the widest powers possible. Not only in this debate but also in other debates, the Opposition has acknowledged that principle. We must always bear in mind the community interests in the fundamental principles of liberty and freedom. As I said, I do not intend to make a lengthy contribution to the debate. I conclude by again stating that, although the Opposition supports the legislation, I am of the view that the Government has failed to provide the Queensland community with a substantial range of strategies and direction to tackle the difficult problem of illegal drug abuse and manufacturing.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes) (2.46 p.m.): I rise to support the Drugs Misuse Amendment Bill 1995. In doing so, I make it very clear to honourable members and to the public of Queensland what a rapacious problem the use of amphetamines is becoming within our society and how unfortunate it is that communities in our electorates have not escaped that problem. The problem extends right through our society and, most alarmingly, through our young people.

As part of a national strategy, the Bill will assist police in bringing about measures to control amphetamines in this State. Principally, the Bill will ensure that precursor chemicals—that is, the chemicals that are required to manufacture amphetamines—are controlled from the point of distribution from the chemical companies. That is a very

important aspect of controlling the drug problem. The peculiarity of that manufactured drug is that it is not predominantly imported. It can easily be manufactured domestically in a backyard, on a farm or anywhere else in this State where people can covertly undertake such operations.

The use of amphetamines is not new. Those drugs have been around for a long time. The first synthetic amphetamine—benzedrine—was produced in Germany in 1887. Methylamphetamines were being synthesised in Japan in 1919. The first medical application for amphetamines was found in 1927, when they became widely used in decongestant inhalers for the treatment of asthma and other bronchial disorders in the 1930s. Amphetamines had a wider use as stimulants during World War II. It is only in recent times that its variants, such as ecstasy, have come into vogue as recreational drugs, particularly among young people.

I am very grateful for the briefings on the Bill that I received from the Minister's staff and officers of the Queensland Police Service, and, more particularly, for recent briefings from senior officers at the Mount Gravatt Police Regional Headquarters, including Bob Reilly and his senior staff. Those people deal with the problem on the ground and they have quite a good awareness of it. The information that I received during briefings from those officers at Mount Gravatt was quite a revelation to me. It seems that the incidence and the use of that drug is a relatively new phenomenon.

It could be said that amphetamines have become the poor man's heroin. Heroin is a very expensive drug that has been used on a limited basis by particular sections of our society and its use has not extended much beyond that. Today, amphetamines and the variations of them tend to be used widely, simply because they are far cheaper than drugs such as heroin. For one reason or another, they are attractive to the very young users. Most alarmingly, those drugs are predominantly administered by injection rather than being taken orally, inhaled or smoked, which are alternative methods of imbibing them.

The problems associated with using amphetamines extend to a number of areas. The first problem comes under the heading of public health. The predominant use of this drug is via intravenous injection. That has its obvious consequences, especially for naive, young users who do not know what they are doing. Those young users may not have had adequate education in the dangers of using syringes and, in an intoxicated state, they may start to share syringes. That has very serious implications for the further spread of diseases such as hepatitis B and C and the HIV infection. In terms of public health risk, blood contamination is a matter of very grave concern.

It sickens me to encounter residents coming into my electorate office carrying a cardboard box or a jam jar containing a used syringe that they found in their frontyard or at the local playground where our kids play, walk and engage in their daily activities. Owing to the wide use of drugs and because the users are often intoxicated, syringes can be found anywhere in neighbourhoods. That is a feature of today's society that good citizens are finding abhorrent.

The public health concern to which I referred extends, to a very significant degree, to the immediate users. Those substances can have immediate and long-term damaging effects upon the health of the young people who take them. Those adverse effects can be anxiety, irritability, panic attacks, irregular or rapid heartbeat and irregular breathing patterns. Some users have been known to become hostile, aggressive, and even psychotic. Continued use can lead to malnutrition, reduced resistance to infection and periods of severe mental or emotional disorders.

I am sure that other members would join with me in acknowledging the value of television advertisements that emanate from the State's Health Department and the national health promotion measures that warn against the use of amphetamines and warn young people that they could have a heart attack while they are supposedly enjoying recreational use of those drugs. Those drugs are dangerous and young people can die from them—either directly from heart attacks or seizures or indirectly through getting into trouble when under the effects of them or, in the longer term, contracting a deadly disease, particularly if the users are sharing needles. This serious public health concern is peculiar to this particular drug because it is being used widely in an injected form by young people. It is a cause for grave concern. Therefore, via legislation such as this, we need to consider every means of controlling its use.

The other broad area of concern that has been raised by police officers and others in the community relates to the relationship between this drug and crime. One does not have to go very far among members of the Queensland

Police Service, or elsewhere in society, to hear anecdotal evidence about the number of young people needing to break into houses and commit other crimes in order to finance their drug habits. Those drugs are very habit forming and the users have to keep up the money supply in order to satisfy that habit.

Police officers have related to me anecdotes about the side effects of those drugs which stimulate the central nervous system and increase alertness. As well as providing a feeling of wellbeing, those drugs can keep people awake for at least two hours to six hours. Car thieves who use amphetamines can jump into a stolen car and drive it for unlimited hours as long as they have a supply of drugs. They can work around the clock—either stealing cars, driving stolen cars or committing other crimes. Police have told me of another side effect of the use of amphetamines. When police go to visit suspected offenders in the early morning, they are more likely to be out instead of in bed waiting for a visit from the local Police Service. There is range of immediate and unanticipated effects that arise from the wide-scale use of these drugs.

The particular feature of amphetamines is that they are so readily available for domestic production. Illicit amphetamine production takes place in clandestine laboratories, which have been found in bathrooms, motel rooms, caravans, small trucks and sheds. In fact, the list is limited only by the offender's imagination. Amphetamine cooks need only possess a recipe, chemicals and equipment to undertake production. They do not need qualifications. The process rarely follows safe work practices and, as a result, those covert laboratories are quite dangerous.

By the very nature of those activities, the clandestine laboratories present a unique series of hazards and risks to police officers and any other person who may stumble across them. Many of the materials are reactive, explosive, flammable, corrosive and/or toxic. The manufacturing processes give off strong odours so, in order to avoid detection, those clandestine laboratories are often poorly ventilated. The lack of proper ventilation and temperature controls gives rise to high concentrations of toxic fumes and explosive chemicals, which can be dangerous. Actions such as knocking over a container, having a lit cigarette or switching on an electrical appliance that makes a spark is enough to cause an explosion.

Contact with the chemicals themselves is extremely hazardous, whether that contact occurs when the chemicals are in their raw form or after they have been cooked and turned into the finished product. Touching those chemicals or just breathing their fumes can cause fainting, sickness, or permanent injury. Some law enforcement officers in the USA have suffered serious illnesses, such as a collapsed lung, pneumonia and chemical bronchitis from exposure to such fumes. Often the victims will not realise that they have been exposed to the fumes because the symptoms will not surface for many days or, indeed, weeks. Some chemicals that are used to make drugs can cause nerve damage, cancer, and even a quick death if inhaled.

The methods of manufacturing these drugs are diversifying and, because of that diversification, they are becoming even more dangerous. The traditional chemical method involves the heating of the precursor chemicals which, when cooled, solidify and form amphetamine crystals. However, other production methods such as electrolysis have also been identified. That involves the use of electric currents to supply electrons to the chemical process. With this method, there exists not only the danger of explosion owing to chemical interaction but also exposure to electrical shock.

One matter of concern that I have mentioned to the Minister, and which is addressed in the legislation, is that drugs may be passed on either by sale or simply by the handing over of the precursor chemicals or the selling of those chemicals by the person or company who acquired them initially from the chemical distributor. It is important to ensure that this legislation covers the prospect of those precursor chemicals being handed on to second, third or fourth parties beyond the initial acquisition from the chemical company. The net should not be left open.

It is very important that legislation similar to this is enacted throughout Australia. All Governments have agreed to harmonise their respective State and Territory precursor control laws while respecting each Government's right to enact legislation in that area. This harmony of laws was recommended originally by the APMC national task force on illicit amphetamines. The legislation that has been enacted to date has been successful, and most agencies have reported a restriction in the flow of chemicals required for amphetamine manufacture. All jurisdictions have seen a decrease in the purity of the street-level amphetamines, which may also be an indicator that precursor legislation is taking effect as supply tries to keep up with demand.

As the legislation reduces the availability of essential chemicals, the need arises to dilute the product to a greater degree to produce the same weight of amphetamine to accommodate the level of demand, which has not decreased.

The enactment of precursor legislation is vital to effective law enforcement in all jurisdictions. Those States that fail to address this problem adequately will undoubtedly become increasingly popular as a production centre for amphetamines and a source of the precursor chemicals for people who live in those States that have the stricter legislation. We have a very important obligation in Queensland to maintain our status in the national scene in terms of preventing the spread and use of these drugs. I commend the Minister and his staff for their efforts in bringing this legislation before the House in such a timely fashion.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (3.05 p.m.): I rise to speak to this very important Bill. In doing so, I notice that it has taken the Minister some five years—since March 1990—to introduce this legislation. In November 1990, the working party reported to the Australian Police Ministers Council in relation to this issue, which was then subject to a Queensland interdepartmental working group consisting of representatives from the Police Service Drug Squad, the Policy Branch, Queensland Health and the Government Chemical Laboratory. I realise that there are always some difficulties in this respect, but it seems that the introduction of this legislation has taken an inordinate amount of time.

Recently, while reading the Queensland Police Service annual report, I noted that the rate of drug offences in this State over the past five years has increased markedly. It has increased from 360 offences per 100,000 head of population to around about 775 offences per 100,000 head of population, which is more than double the number of drug offences. That is a very steep and very alarming increase in the incidence of that crime. Whether or not this legislation is going to make a significant difference or, indeed, any difference at all only time will tell. Certainly, it is another step in the direction of trying to gain greater control over the illegal sale and distribution of drugs.

Previous speakers have already pointed out how easy it is for people—particularly young people—to inject their bodies with amphetamines and how easy it is for them to manufacture the drug. One only has to look at the figures in the Police Service annual report to realise that drugs are a major crime problem throughout this State. Drugs are also a major social problem—a problem that Government needs to give a very high priority.

Unfortunately, an examination of these figures reveals that it is plain that the Government is certainly not getting on top of the problem. One has to question whether the programs that the Government has put in place are working, because there is little doubt that there is a very close relationship between drug offences and the escalating crime rates within the community. For example, according to the Police Service annual report, over the past 12 months the number of people involved in household break-and-enter offences increased by 24 per cent. I am sure that quite a large number of those offences were drug-related. Suncorp's annual report indicates that, over the past 12 months, payouts for burglary insurance have increased by 50 per cent. We also know that there has been a continual increase in car theft and violent crimes within the community. So across-the-board there is certainly a relationship between crime and drugs. That is also true in regard to organised crime, which reaps huge profits from peddling drugs.

That leads one to ask: how is the Government faring in this matter? What new programs does the Government propose to implement to tackle the problem? How well is the Government monitoring the current situation? There can be little doubt at all about the effect that drugs are having, even in our schools. One could not help noticing an article on the front page of today's *Courier-Mail* which related to marijuana in a school in north Queensland. I am not saying that the drug problem is confined to north Queensland. Unfortunately, it is a problem that occurs throughout society. If we cannot control the amount of drugs that are entering schoolgrounds, the Minister must question the size of the problem that he is facing and the efficacy of the programs that are currently in place.

The shadow Minister indicated quite clearly the problems with drugs within the prison system. Prisons are becoming more and more known as holiday camps. It is well known and, I think, accepted that drugs are freely used and exchanged within the prison system, and that is one of the ways in which many inmates are now kept happy within the corrective services system. When people with drug habits are sent to prison, one expects them to be rehabilitated; one does not expect them to be released before they have been

successfully rehabilitated. One expects modern scientific and medical techniques to be available within the prison system. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be the situation. In this day and age, drugs seem to be peddled more than ever. I understand that prison has become a great haven for drug rings, which are pushing inmates who are not on drugs into taking them. Even the inmates who are taking some of the softer drugs are being encouraged to take harder drugs.

One cannot help hearing stories about laboratories being established within the prison system. Honourable members might recall that, not many years ago, a huge number of spot checks were undertaken within our prisons. Occasionally, drugs were found and confiscated. Today, there seems to be a deafening silence about spot checks. Apparently, there is less security now than ever. I understand that the Minister likes to keep these matters very close to his chest because they are a great embarrassment to the Government. Unless this Government can get on top of the drugs problem within our prison system, there is little hope of controlling the problem in the general community. I hope that the Minister can give some guarantees that these matters are being attended to and that we will not continue to see the problems going from bad to worse. That is what has been occurring in more recent times, particularly since this Government came to office.

The rate of drug offences stated in the Police Service's annual report highlights to the community that some people who are offending are being apprehended and put into the prison system. It is more important than ever that those rehabilitation programs are working and that those people who are gaoled for possessing or taking drugs end up much better for their prison terms and are rehabilitated by the time of their release instead of being hooked on drugs.

I turn now to penalties. The Opposition is not sure what some of the penalties will be under this legislation and whether they will work. This Minister has responsibility for the Police and Corrective Services portfolios. Another thing that people cannot help noticing is that prisoners are being released after serving a quarter or a third of their sentences and, in some cases, less than that. No indication has been given as to whether any of those prisoners are being rehabilitated, even though they are being let out so early.

Mr Cooper: They haven't got time. They're not in for long enough.

Mr BEANLAND: That is perfectly true; they are not in for long enough. It is no wonder we hear so much about the revolving-door prison system! What is the purpose of it all if those prisoners gain no benefit from serving their gaol terms? It is all very well to lock them up and keep them away from the community, but that is not enough. We hear a lot from members opposite about rehabilitation and the need to look after those people. I agree with that. There has to be some program to ensure that when prisoners are released they are rehabilitated so that they do not continue to re-offend and end up back in the system the next day. For example, recently, someone previously convicted of, I think, drug offences re-offended immediately after being released from prison. The prison system, with its short sentences and minor penalties, is a joke. The criminals convicted under these offences are released before serving sufficient terms during which they can be rehabilitated. The Minister likes to walk away from this issue and blame the Corrective Services Commission, which then blames the Minister, and around it goes. Mr Hamburger speaks on radio for the Minister when the Minister is on a sticky wicket. That is simply not good enough.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr BEANLAND: The shadow Minister reminded me of what a disgraceful, despicable little act it is to have the Police Service interviewing the shadow Minister for Police about from where he might or might not have obtained particular information. That highlights the current outrageous situation. I challenge the Minister to publish daily the names of people who are being released, and when, so that the community is kept informed. If the Government does not like what is being reported and it is concerned about these reports, it should give people the figures—for example, for 1994 and 1995. Those figures should be published weekly in the *Queensland Government Gazette*. If the Minister has such a strong belief that his system of rehabilitation and penalties is working well, I challenge him to publish those figures weekly in the *Queensland Government Gazette*. As those offenders are being released, there should be notification in the *Queensland Government Gazette*. Let us look at the terms that prisoners are serving, the length of those terms and whether they are re-offending or have been rehabilitated. As the Minister knows full well, it would be extremely embarrassing for him and the Government as a whole to do that. I am sure that the Government would not last too long if it started publishing those

figures on a weekly basis in the *Queensland Government Gazette*.

Another issue about which I am very concerned is needle exchange. I am talking about amphetamines, which are administered largely by injection. Those drugs are made easily. Because of my concern about the crime rate, the rehabilitation process and penalties, I keep a fairly close eye on this issue. Recently, I could not help noticing that 200 syringes were found at the busy Coorparoo Railway Station during the Clean Up Australia Day.

Mr Fenlon: You didn't look at the clarification in the *Courier-Mail* a number of days later when it was stated that it was incorrect; that those syringes were found in Norman Creek, not at the Coorparoo Railway Station.

Mr BEANLAND: I am not that concerned about whether they were found in Norman Creek or at the Coorparoo Railway Station. But I thank the member for Greenslopes for confirming what I am saying. I totally agree with him and thank him for his comments. The fact is that 200 syringes were found. That says very little for the needle exchange program. In the last couple of days in this place, members heard the member for Aspley highlighting concerns about the breakdown of the needle exchange program. I am on record enough times as indicating that the Opposition strongly supports the needle exchange program, but it must be enforced. The problem is that it is simply not being enforced; it has become a joke.

The media exposed this problem when a number of journalists fronted up to get needles and were given boxes of them without having to exchange any needles. The program has become a farce. The departments that are administering the free needle program for registered heroine addicts as a means of controlling the spread of HIV and hepatitis have created a disgraceful situation whereby needles are simply handed out by the box load to whoever needs, wants or requests them. That indiscriminate issuing of needles is adding to the crime problems not only in Brisbane but right through the State. It is fortunate that no-one was badly injured when those needles were found. The Premier of New South Wales—I think he is still the Premier—was pricked by a needle during the Clean Up Australia Day in Sydney. Innocent people can be hurt if they are pricked by an infected needle, yet this Government seems to have completely lost control of the needle exchange program. It seems to have adopted a couldn't-care-less attitude.

The fact that the Government has been extremely negligent in controlling the issue of needles has resulted in a worsening of the drug problem. That fact is highlighted by that section of the annual report of the Police Service dealing with drug offences. The report states that drug offences have more than doubled in the five years that this Government has been in office. What an horrific increase! The report is not reflecting a doubling of the number of drug offences because of population growth. The report states clearly that per head of population—per 100,000 people—the number of drug offences has more than doubled. That is an alarming situation.

Another issue of concern is students acquiring drugs at school. I mentioned earlier the problems discovered at one school, and I am sure that the same applies to more than one school in this State. I am pleased to see the Minister for Education in the Chamber. I am sure that he will follow up this issue urgently. All members of Parliament should be extremely concerned about students being able to acquire drugs at school. If that practice continues, I am afraid that our children are in for a very bleak future.

Earlier, I mentioned the Government's so-called attempts to rehabilitate drug offenders. Other measures adopted to deal with drug offenders include community service orders. Whatever programs are employed, it is imperative that the Minister ensures that they are effective. Slowly but surely, this Government has watered down the penalties applying to drug offenders. It will be interesting to see the penalties provided under the new Criminal Code. In a range of fields—whether it be the watering down of penalties, the breakdown of the needle exchange program or students acquiring drugs at school—the drug problem in this State is becoming worse.

It has taken five years for this legislation to be presented to the House. Fortunately, I was not holding my breath waiting for it! We are led to believe that this legislation is very important and that it will make a significant difference. The question must be asked: why has it taken five years to be presented to this Parliament? Why was it not presented much earlier so that it could be enforced in the community at large? I am extremely disappointed in the position that prevails in this State currently under which the Government is giving what could only be described as a very low priority to controlling illegal drugs.

Mrs McCAULEY (Callide) (3.23 p.m.): Amphetamines are the hidden drug problem in Australia and probably in western civilisation. I welcome this legislation, which aims to come to grips with the illegal manufacture of these drugs in Queensland backyard laboratories. The Minister said that approximately 30 per cent of persons referred to drug and alcohol treatment centres are amphetamine abusers and that in 1993 in Queensland there were twice as many amphetamine-related arrests as there were heroin-related arrests. It is evident that amphetamines are big business and a big problem.

Amphetamines have been tagged the ocker alternative to cocaine because of their relative cheapness and local manufacture. Ephedrine forms the basis of the locally manufactured drug, and speed, as it is called, is probably more socially acceptable than other drugs. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that this Government move to close the legislative loopholes relating to ephedrine and the other chemicals used in this iniquitous trade.

The World Health Organisation lists seven drugs that cause drug dependence, that is, physical or emotional addiction. These are morphine, cocaine, barbiturate/alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines, khat and hallucinogenics. The history of amphetamines is that they were first synthesised in 1927 and hailed as a wonder drug because their stimulant effects were immediate and dramatic. By 1938 the substance was known to be habit-forming, although that claim was not taken seriously. Amphetamines were used extensively in defence circles—for example, the Spanish Civil War—and were included in survival packs. In World War II, both sides used amphetamines to keep their soldiers fighting for prolonged periods. The Japanese also used them after the war to increase industrial productivity and efficiency.

During the sixties and seventies, amphetamines were freely prescribed as diet pills. That is when I first came into contact with them. I find it ironic to look back on the early 1970s, when I was nearly three stone lighter than I am now but still considered overweight, so I trotted along to my doctor and asked for a script for something to suppress my appetite. He gave me a prescription for Duramine, which turned out to be something that kept me awake all night. I did not eat, but I stayed up all night. I very quickly decided that I really did not want to lose weight that badly. In the sixties and seventies, many women were taking diet pills as a matter of course. In fact, the doctor that I went to gave me a prescription for 150 of those tablets. When I went to the chemist to fill the script, he told me that the normal script was for only 30 tablets, yet I had a script for 150! Those types of pills were very readily available, and people did not realise the problems that were associated with them.

There was also a huge black market in the sixties and seventies as the recreational usage increased in trendiness, and bennies, uppers, purple hearts and speed were traded around the trendy set with gay abandon. These days, we are more sophisticated in our usage of amphetamines, and the substance is often injected directly into the veins. That has its downside, as confirmed a few years ago by the fact that two out of three confirmed AIDS cases were intravenous speed users. Hepatitis B is also spread easily in that way.

Pure amphetamine is a colourless liquid chemical from which several stimulant drugs are manufactured into either tablet or capsule form known as benzedrine, dexedrine, methedrine and ephedrine. It is chemically related to the adrenaline which is produced naturally by human beings, so it easily mimics adrenaline effects; that is, it prepares the body for fight or flight and stimulates certain brain areas. In fact—and Government members might be really keen to know this—it seems that even intelligence can improve after amphetamine use by up to eight points on an IQ scale.

The drug also raises blood pressure, increases heart rate, induces loss of appetite and feelings of alertness and wakefulness, and increased doses lead to excitability. Gradually, users develop a tolerance and therefore begin to take higher doses, which in turn leads to sleeplessness, disproportionate tiredness and, in some cases, large-scale mood changes to aggression, violent mental breakdowns, increased accident liability because of impaired judgment, and hallucinations. Too much of the drug can also be indicated by talkativeness, trembling, irregular heartbeat and, of course, death. There are apparently no physical withdrawal problems, but there are serious psychological problems, as it is a drug that tends to be more emotionally addictive than anything else.

Of course, amphetamines have many acceptable medical uses—for example, in the treatment of narcolepsy, which is constantly dropping off to sleep. Maybe we should use some in this Chamber! It also has a role to play in carefully monitored situations for children with specific psychological problems

and hyperactivity, where it acts as a calming agent. However, the use is by prescription only and must be approved by the Health Department. It has previously been used to treat depression, Parkinson's disease, epilepsy, to counteract the effect of barbiturates and alcohol and to treat bed wetting. Of users, 10 per cent to 20 per cent developed a clear-cut drug dependence following usage.

The problem that we as a society have with this drug is that it is not the average long-haired layabouts who use it; it is the yuppie pep pill. Students and long-distance drivers use it; fatties use it; bored housewives use it. It is probably responsible for more serious road accidents than we are aware of, and it would certainly be dangerous if taken by someone on a night shift who was working with heavy machinery or that sort of thing. In fact, amphetamines were a major factor in the Grafton bus crash and the Alice Springs Hotel incident, in which a truck was driven into the bar and three people were killed. In the Grafton bus smash, it was found that the driver had 80 times the acceptable therapeutic level of ephedrine in his system, which resulted in impaired judgment and hallucinations. I understand the police believe that he probably swerved to avoid an imaginary vehicle on his side of the road, and that is what caused the accident.

I am aware of a police comment that in every truck accident attended during the past five years by a particular officer, every driver—that is, every driver—showed evidence of use and possession of amphetamines. It is a huge problem among long distance drivers on our roads. This drug is also on the increase in the 20 to 29 year age group. For example, in 1987 only one autopsy showed signs of amphetamine use, but by 1988—nearly 12 months later—that figure had risen to 29 of the total autopsies performed in this State.

The police have had their successes in combating the manufacturing of these pep pills, and many millions of dollars worth of equipment have been confiscated in recent years. It is heartening to learn that law enforcers in Queensland are fighting back in the war on this insidious and multimillion-dollar trade.

In recent years, the Proceeds of Crime Unit has had some remarkable hauls of confiscated equipment and money. The unit's largest cash forfeiture of $169,000 was in about 1991. It resulted from a raid on a Townsville motel where a large quantity of amphetamines and a customised turbo-charged vehicle were also seized. Drug raids during 1992 covered areas such as Caboolture, Maroochydore, Nambour, Noosa, Landsborough and Redcliffe. They netted 47 people who were charged with 142 drug-related offences. These raids were to break up an organised ring of drug suppliers and receivers. Drugs found included heroin, amphetamines, hashish and cannabis. An enormous amount of property was forfeited also.

Going back through articles in the local papers—the latest article for this year shows that that police unit is still working effectively. In fact, in February of this year, the unit smashed an international drug ring in the Townsville area involving marijuana crops and amphetamines valued at more than $60m. The police arrested two men who they claimed were the kingpins of a drug production and distribution network that stretched right down the east coast of Australia to Melbourne. They also charged 48 people with 129 offences. Police claimed that they had identified six large crops allegedly linked to the same crime group made up of Australian and New Zealand nationals. So it is good to know that the police are still effective. Of course, Hector Hapeta, who recently got out of gaol but looks like going back there again, and Robert Chan were also gaoled for trafficking in heroin and trafficking in amphetamines and LSD from the Valley.

I would simply conclude by saying that I hope that this legislation is not too little too late, because the problem is a serious one. It is obviously a problem that affects everyone. It is a problem that young people obviously talk about and discuss in their normal conversations. I was quite surprised to find that one of my children, who is 24, knew exactly how to make these drugs—well, he thought he knew how to make them—with ordinary cough medicine, etc., that can be bought from the chemist. Young people obviously discuss these things. I have no doubt that my son would not be involved in anything like that. However, drugs are a concern and they are a major problem, and the sooner that problem is stamped out, the better.

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Rockhampton—Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (3.33 p.m.), in reply: I would like to particularly thank the members for Kurwongbah, Greenslopes and Callide, all of whom made a constructive contribution to this debate. They discussed their experiences, their concerns and their understandings of

where we are at this time. However, as to the contributions made by the members for Crows Nest and Indooroopilly, and to a lesser extent the member for Clayfield—they were up to their usual standard, or should I say down to their usual standard. They were quite disgraceful, really. Their contributions amount to either a complete lack of understanding of what is occurring in society—and that would be ignorance on a massive scale—or a completely cynical and political approach to what should be an area of politics where we do our best to work together.

If honourable members look at the drug situation and they see the amount of work being done by the police—the number of arrests that are being made—they will see that, quite clearly, in Queensland in the last couple of years, great work has been done. Drugs are not like some other areas of crime where the Opposition likes to make political points. Sometimes members opposite try to suggest that there is a massive amount of crime in the community, of which only a small proportion is being detected. When it comes to drugs—we do not have knowledge of drug crimes unless the police detect them, unless the police arrest people and unless the police charge them. Those Opposition members, knowing as they do, or knowing as they should know, the amount of great work that has been done by the police in the past couple of years, should have been giving praise to the police of Queensland and the Queensland community for its cooperation.

The Queensland community has played a big part in this war against the drug industry and the crime of illegal drugs through Crime Stoppers and operations in which people phone in with information. I will come back to how successful that has been. It is very disappointing to see either the ignorance or the cynicism of the members for Indooroopilly and Crows Nest particularly. I think they do know better, but they are so rabidly cynical in their exercise to denigrate good work being done that they make fools of themselves in this place.

I refer now to the matters raised particularly by the member for Crows Nest about penalties being inadequate. I think that in this case his comments show that his lack of knowledge is probably ignorance. The basic legislation that is tuned by this Bill is the Drugs Misuse Act. The penalties in this Bill are basically penalties for those commercial people who fail to keep adequate information available and fail to monitor stock properly. Under those circumstances, controlled substances can be used in the production of dangerous drugs. They are the penalties that we are talking about.

Of course, the real penalties are in the Drugs Misuse Act. This Bill will form part of that Act. Producers of dangerous drugs may be liable to a maximum penalty of 15 years' imprisonment. What nonsense we hear when the member for Crows Nest talks about inadequate penalties. He also referred to penalties relating to possession. There are adequate penalties in the main legislation, of which this Bill will form part when it passes through this place and is proclaimed. The honourable member knows that and he cynically ignores it, or he demonstrates a massive ignorance of the law in this regard.

I refer now to the claim by the member for Crows Nest that there is perhaps some secret plot by me and the Government to do away with the Drugs Misuse Act and absorb it into the Criminal Code and summary offences legislation. Would it not be absolutely disgraceful if the legislation in relation to drugs and the criminal penalties relating to drugs was not in legislation A but in legislation B? Even if it was the same legislation, even it was the same penalties, what an horrifically silly thing to do. The criminals would really be cheering. They would have a field day if they were sent to gaol for 10 years under the Criminal Code rather than for 10 years under the Drugs Misuse Act. What was the member getting at? Was that absolute cynical nonsense or ignorance? I leave it to the jury of the Parliament and the Queensland people to make some sense of that.

I can say at this time that there is no plan to abolish the Drugs Misuse Act. If ever there was, the legislation in toto would go into the Criminal Code or other legislation and it would have the same impact and the same effect. Even if it did occur, it would be of no importance at all. It is another red herring probably to be used by the member for Crows Nest, as he does so often, in spreading nonsense in the community, trying to imply to the community that the Queensland Government was about to abolish the Drugs Misuse Act and that it had gone soft on drugs. That is the standard of behaviour that we have become used to from the honourable member. That is the only inference that I can draw from the nonsense that he mentioned in his speech. At this stage, the Government has made no decision to put the drugs misuse legislation into the Criminal Code. If that is done, the legislation will contain the same provisions, the same penalties and the same

punishment and will have the same effect of deterring people from committing crimes.

I turn now to some information that is very relevant to the success of the police in fighting crime. Again, I remind honourable members that these drug statistics relate not to drug offences that are out there in the ether that we know about by some form of osmosis and then occasionally have some success on; these statistics reflect the reality of what is occurring in Queensland under the Government. Between 1 July 1993 and 28 February 1994—a period of nine months—33 traffickers were arrested. A total of 468 arrests were made and nearly $40m worth of drugs was seized.

To demonstrate how active and successful the Queensland police are under this Government, I inform members that between 1 July 1994 and 28 February 1995—the same period in the following year—44 traffickers were arrested. In total, 474 arrests were made and drugs to the value of $662m were seized—$662m! For members of the Opposition to say that the Government does not care and that it is not successful is clearly a nonsense.

I place on record the congratulations of the Government to Inspector Ann Lewis, the head of the Drug Squad in Queensland, and her officers. In the past two years, Queensland police have been most successful in fighting illegal drug activity in this State. Operation after operation has been well publicised in the community through the media. Therefore, the cynicism and the untruths of the members for Crows Nest and Indooroopilly will not penetrate to the community. We cannot have arrests of that number being made and drugs of that value being seized without the community being aware of it. Members of the community are aware of it. They will not be distracted, nor will they be impressed by the complete cynicism, ignorance and ability to twist the truth demonstrated today by the members for Indooroopilly and Crows Nest.

In relation to prisons—again, the position is clear. The Government has policies. In common with prisons world wide, difficulties are experienced in controlling access to drugs by prisoners. However, the Government has policies, which it is continually strengthening and improving. Urine tests are conducted in correctional centres. The Government has a policy that about 15 per cent of the custodial correctional centre population is anonymously tested every year. In an effort to control the use and movement of illicit drugs in prisons, the general manager can impose non-contact visits for a specified period. If intelligence information is received that visitors are involved, the Corrective Services Investigation Unit—that is a police unit—is notified and searches of visitors are conducted under the provisions of the Drugs Misuse Act. Cells are regularly searched and the Dog Squad is often involved.

Having done all of that, we must do more. In an attempt to control the use of illicit drugs in our correctional centres, the Government is preparing an even more comprehensive drug strategy. In that context, it was interesting to hear the absolute piffle being peddled by the member for Indooroopilly about sentences. In the context of the legislation, for drug offenders and all other people, I repeat that the Government's policy on parole is plain. If people commit a crime for which they are sentenced to life imprisonment, they are not eligible for release on parole until they have served 13 years.

Under the previous Government, that did not occur until the last few months of its term in office. Under the previous Government, one-third of people sentenced to life imprisonment were released before they had served 13 years. We release no-one from our community corrections centres until they have done at least 13 years. Now, under our Government, the average sentence served by life-sentence prisoners is 17 years and six months—a significant increase on the time that those people served under the previous Government.

The one aspect of parole that will vary is that our policy for non-life sentence prisoners is that they serve half their time before they become eligible for parole. I repeat, "eligible"; it is not automatic release. Judges have the right to recommend earlier release. Each of those cases that the Opposition peddles relates not to a decision made by a community corrections board of its own accord under Government policy, but to a decision made by a judge of the Supreme Court or the District Court to recommend earlier parole for various reasons.

Opposition members know that, but they refuse to admit it. They try to hide that from the media and the community, but those are the facts. The Government will not resile from that. Our policies are clear. Unless a judge recommends earlier release, prisoners will serve at least half their sentences. Usually the judges do not recommend early release. In some instances, they do. Our community corrections boards must pay respect to that.

That applies to people sentenced for drug offences or for any other offences.

If Opposition members had the guts to tell the truth, they would not be in a position to peddle the piffle on sentences that they do now. Today, 30 per cent more people are in prison than were in prison 18 months ago. Where do Opposition members think that we get them from? Do they think that they are ex-National Party supporters who have volunteered to go to gaol to keep the numbers up? The prisoners are there because the police are arresting more people and because the prisoners serve adequate sentences unless released earlier by a community corrections board at the specific suggestion and request of a Supreme Court judge or a District Court judge.

In the context of corrections, drugs and crime generally—the Opposition has no credibility. For the 32 years in succession that it was in Government, from 1957 to 1989, it never had it. The former Government lost all credibility, as was revealed by the Fitzgerald report. Our Government has credibility. We have consistency, and we will pursue it, despite the lies, the cynicism and the absolute piffle that is peddled by the members for Crows Nest and Indooroopilly, who ought to be ashamed of themselves. The effect of their actions is to denigrate the Queensland Police Service. They say that they do not do that, but they do. They did it today.

If those members say that nothing is happening in relation to drugs, they denigrate Inspector Ann Lewis and her Drug Squad. They denigrate the good work done by that squad. They denigrate the $662m worth of drugs that was recovered in nine months between July 1994 and April 1995 and the 474 arrests that were made. They try to hide those facts from the community for narrow political advantage. It is yet another example of the Opposition selling Queensland short in areas in which Queensland is succeeding. Opposition members will not get away with it. They will not succeed in getting back to Government by that sort of cynical and ignorant behaviour.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. P. J. Braddy (Rockhampton—Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—

Mr COOPER (3.51 p.m.): I reject the vitriolic and hysterical outburst that the Minister made during his reply. It is a pity that we have reached that level. I would like him to address himself to proposed sections 43F to 43I. Proposed section 43F(3) states—

> "If the employee intentionally or recklessly fails to comply with the controlled substance information requirements . . ."

The inclusion of those words "intentionally or recklessly" seems to introduce a mental element that would make the task of proving an offence more difficult. If those words were not included the section would state—

> "If the employee fails to comply with the controlled substance information . . ."

That would be far more effective for those trying to apprehend people who are committing an offence. The Minister might consider why those three words were included. If they were omitted, it would be necessary to prove only a failure to comply. Those words add extra hurdles to overcome.

Mr BRADDY: As to that vitriolic and hysterical address that I supposedly made—I felt that it did me the world of good, particularly as it was one of the few opportunities that I get in this House to put honourable members in their places after their constant denigration of the good work being done by the Queensland Police Service.

Mr COOPER: Would you like to concentrate on these questions?

Mr BRADDY: The honourable member raised this matter. Members have witnessed the constant denigration of hardworking police supposedly under a mantle of saying, "Oh, it is not the police we are having a go at; it is the Government." The Drug Squad now has 78 members. The honourable member says that the Opposition is not having a go at the police; yet earlier he suggested that officers in the Drug Squad are achieving nothing. They have achieved a heck of a lot, and they have done that in spite of the honourable member's obstruction, not because of it.

Honourable members interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Briskey): Order! The Minister will be heard.

Mr BRADDY: This legislation is basically the same as standard legislation throughout the country. All Parliaments of this country have decided that those words are appropriate to be included in all the circumstances, understanding the commercial value and so

on. What has been done in Queensland is exactly the same as has been done elsewhere. It is considered appropriate, proper and relevant. By taking extra time, Queensland has added extra substance to the legislation and generally improved it in sections where we believe it needed improvement. This has not delayed the fight against amphetamines. The member for Kurwongbah referred to the great raid on the amphetamine factory at Newstead. This legislation was not necessary to effect that raid. This legislation relates to controlling the commercial use of those substances. In no way has the fight against drugs in Queensland been held up by this legislation coming before the House in 1995. The proof of that is not my word, but that operation against the amphetamine factory, which netted an enormous quantity of drugs of great value and resulted in the arrest of quite a number of people.

Mr COOPER: In no way, shape or form did the Minister address himself to the inclusion of the words "intentionally or recklessly". Therefore, I reject the explanation—which virtually did not exist.

Proposed section 43F(4) states—

> "In a proceeding, evidence that an employee supplied, or helped in the supply of, a controlled substance . . ."

The words "or helped in the supply of" should be restricted to any acts that are preparatory to the supply—anything that is prior to the supply. If that is not the case, an innocent truck driver who is delivering a controlled substance could suddenly find himself prosecuted because he has recklessly failed to comply with the controlled substance information provision. A person in that position of innocence should be protected.

Mr BRADDY: The application of the law would not apply in that case. Proposed subsection (4) must be read in the context of proposed subsection (2). As usual, the member for Crows Nest is wrong.

Mr COOPER: Quite obviously, we are going to get nowhere as this Minister unfortunately——

Mr Littleproud: The Estimates committee will be good fun.

Mr COOPER: The Estimates committee will be good because, through sheer rhetoric, the Minister pretends to support the law enforcement agency, but in actual deeds, through his failure to address himself to reasonable questions on the clauses, he does not do so. That is probably because he is totally and utterly ignorant and cannot even explain his own legislation. Under the heading "False name or address", proposed section 43G states—

> "A person must not obtain, or attempt to obtain, a controlled substance from someone else under a relevant transaction by giving the other person . . ."

I believe that the Minister should amend that section by deleting the words "from someone else" and "the other person", because those words introduce a further element into the offence that has to be proved before a conviction can result. If those words were deleted that section would state—

> "A person must not obtain, or attempt to obtain, a controlled substance under a relevant transaction by giving—
>
> (a) an order for the supply of a controlled substance stating . . ."

Those words are going to increasingly become hurdles for those trying to resolve this matter and bring to book people for supplying a false name and address.

Mr BRADDY: It does not change anything. I would rather take my legal advice from the Queensland parliamentary draftsman than the member for Crows Nest.

Clause 5, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 9, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

NATIONAL CRIME AUTHORITY (STATE PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 22 March (see p. 11231).

Mr COOPER (Crows Nest) (4.01 p.m.): The Opposition has no objection to this Bill, which could be described as a procedural one to ensure that the National Crime Authority, which is a Commonwealth Government body, can operate more efficiently and effectively. It is the earnest hope of all honourable members that the National Crime Authority, working with other Commonwealth and State law enforcement agencies, can continue to make inroads into serious crime in Australia.

The authority traces its beginning back to the coalition Federal Government's National Crimes Commission Act, which was passed in late 1982 and, after the change of Government in Canberra in 1983, new legislation—the National Crime Authority Bill 1984—was passed after wide consultation. The National Crime Authority, born in July 1984, was given unprecedented powers to pursue the Mr Bigs of Australian crime and now has some 400 employees nationwide and an annual budget of some $40m. In many ways, the National Crime Authority is the Commonwealth equivalent of Queensland's Criminal Justice Commission. The two bodies work together closely on major investigations and also with the Queensland Police Service and the Australian Federal Police.

Over the first decade of the NCO's existence, it had its successes as well as its failures. However, there was increasing friction between the authority and the Australian Federal Police. That friction, caused in part by rivalry and an overlap of functions, was complicated further in the Federal jurisdiction owing to the existence of several other law enforcement and security organisations, including the Australian Securities Commission, the Customs Service, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, the Office of National Assessments and the Defence Signals Directorate. It has been estimated that the cost of all of those agencies is about $1 billion a year.

The Federal Government recognised this increasing friction and rivalry and realised that the rivalry was harming the fight against crime as competing bureaucrats fought for their place in the sun. Commendably, the Federal Government established a review and, as a result of its report, announced last year the creation of a new overriding national law agency referred to as the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Board. This board will, for the first time, oversight the principal national law enforcement agencies and, hopefully, the result will be a better coordinated and more cost-effective war against crime. Importantly for both the NCA and the Australian Federal Police, their statutory framework remains unchanged, but, in the words of the Federal Justice Minister, Mr Kerr, the new oversight body will allow for finetuning.

I believe that what happened in the Commonwealth jurisdiction over the decade to 1994 is happening in Queensland. There is no doubt that there is rivalry—often to the point of resentment—between the Criminal Justice Commission and the Queensland Police Service, and that this rivalry has the potential to hinder the fight against crime. Although much of this rivalry remains below the surface and away from public sight, it is there and it is real. There are those at the Criminal Justice Commission who are frankly contemptuous of members of the Police Service and regard them with the deepest of suspicion, believing that the service lacks the intelligence, the sophistication, the resources and even the will to combat major crime. There are those within the Police Service who are frankly scornful of members of the Criminal Justice Commission, seeing them as arrogant, moralistic, self-serving, overly academic and legalistic in their approaches and attitudes, and virtually accountable to nobody.

In his report, Mr Fitzgerald, QC, identified what he called the police culture that grew up over many years, which resulted in many police officers having a them-and-us mentality—an unshakeable belief that protection of their own against the world was their first loyalty and their first duty. In many ways, that siege mentality was perfectly understandable, however ultimately self-deceiving and certainly deeply wounding it was for the service itself. Although there continues to be and, indeed, should be a deep sense of pride of service and an enduring sense of loyalty to fellow officers within the service, there has been a very welcome change and the Police Service has adapted well to the change that the post-Fitzgerald era required.

I have kept a very close watch on the Criminal Justice Commission since its inception via legislation that was introduced when I was Premier. Indeed, it is not too fanciful to admit that, on occasions, it has returned the favour of scrutiny.

Mr Beattie: Ha, ha! Well said!

Mr COOPER: That tickled the member's fancy. I thank God that someone is listening and on the ball. However, I am concerned that a CJC culture is developing, which is almost frighteningly similar to the police culture exposed by Mr Fitzgerald, QC. One straw in the wind was the recent statement by the chairman, Mr O'Regan, that he would not consider compulsory searches of CJC staff to upgrade security because he trusted them. I suggested at the time Mr O'Regan made that statement that it gave the CJC employees a status not enjoyed by any other State public sector employee. Simply on the word of the CJC chairman, we have to accept that every single CJC employee is strictly honest, strictly

fair, strictly accountable, entirely trustworthy and dedicated to truth, justice and righteousness. It would be no exaggeration to say that if the Police Commissioner made the same claim about every single police officer, members of the CJC would fall about laughing—at least in semi-private.

I believe the time has come for the Government to have a formal inquiry into the relationship between the CJC and the Police Service to ensure that their relationship is based on mutual respect and clearly defined areas of responsibility.

I can certainly understand the view of many senior officers of the Police Service when they complain that the CJC gets all of the applause and congratulations for major crime successes, despite the fact that much of this work is undertaken by senior and very experienced police officers seconded to the CJC. Senior police officers argue—and justifiably so—that had those officers remained with the Police Service and if the Police Service had the powers that the CJC has, then it would be the Police Service receiving the plaudits. I believe that the relationship between the CJC and the Police Service has simply grown like Topsy and has been, at best, ad hoc and, at worst, the result of push and shove as both sides warily assess the situation. That means that too much energy and too much time is being wasted on what essentially are demarcation disputes based on jealousy and a desire to be the organisation in the sun, because that means greater Government support and increased budgets.

Such a formal inquiry should call for and address submissions from all interested bodies and people. It should not only make recommendations on what this relationship should be but also define specific areas of responsibility for each body. There may not need to be a State equivalent of the Commonwealth oversight board if this matter is addressed seriously before this rivalry becomes too deeply entrenched. I believe that responsible people at the CJC and in the Police Service would welcome such an inquiry because they realise that petty point-scoring does nothing to aid the fight against crime.

It is also appropriate during this debate to consider what the relationship is between Queensland law enforcement agencies and Federal agencies. I believe it is true to say that, at the moment, they could hardly be worse. The honourable member for Broadwater, who has made some amazing revelations about certain senior figures in the Labor Party and their extremely dubious relationship, to say the least, with criminals and confidence tricksters, has achieved a distinction which nobody, least of all himself, ever thought he could achieve. He was described by the Federal Defence Minister, Senator Ray, as the "lickspittle of leakers from the CJC". If the honourable member for Broadwater and the CJC agree about anything in this particular matter, they would agree that he would probably be the very last member of this House, or perhaps the last person in Queensland, who would benefit from CJC leaks. However, this matter and other matters have shown that the relationship between Queensland and Commonwealth agencies have virtually hit rock bottom, despite the stiff-upper-lip attempts by various chief executives to pretend otherwise.

Last year, the CJC told the Queensland Court of Appeal that it was in fear of losing its links with the Queensland police and the National Crime Authority over the leak to the *Australian* of its confidential November 1993 report to its parliamentary committee. We were all left wondering about the truth of that claim when the Police Commissioner, Mr O'Sullivan, and a spokesman for the National Crime Authority both said that they were not contemplating any changes to the basis of their relative relationships with the CJC, although the Australian Federal Police declined to comment. It could be reasonably deduced from that exchange that the CJC was, by the most generous of interpretations, grossly and erroneously overstating what the views of Queensland police and the NCA were on the matter.

On the other hand, it could be concluded that the CJC was itself guilty of putting these relationships at risk by making demonstrably false claims about the views of these other two law enforcement bodies. Only recently, the Federal Justice Minister, Mr Kerr, wrote to the State Attorney-General, Mr Wells, asking him to take action over suspected CJC leaks of an investigation involving former senior Labor Minister, Mr Graham Richardson. This is the very matter which the honourable member for Broadwater has so diligently pursued.

Mr Beattie: Diligently?

Mr COOPER: He is relentless; he is a terrier. According to Mr Kerr—

> "It is a regrettable development that a law enforcement agency, or at least some individuals within it, appear prepared to engage in deliberate and malicious leaking of sensitive information in the course of investigations, in breach of statutory secrecy requirements under the Criminal Justice Act 1989."

If anybody believes that this extraordinary attack by the Federal Justice Minister on the CJC was not inspired at least in part by angry officials of both the NCA and the Australian Federal Police, then I can only pity them for their naivety. Of course, I certainly do accept that the primary motivation for the Federal Minister's outburst was the disclosure by the honourable member for Broadwater of the incredible go-slow attitude of these Federal agencies into the matters surrounding the behaviour of certain senior Labor figures.

This matter has resulted in a dismaying public battle between the CJC and Federal agencies being fought across front pages and on news bulletins as charges and countercharges fly. The Australian Federal Police Commissioner, Mr Mick Palmer, has said it was wrong to assert that the AFP had in any way hindered the inquiry by preventing the CJC from providing information to United States authorities or been unwilling to meet a request from US authorities for a briefing. The CJC Chairman, Mr O'Regan, had said previously that his organisation had been upset by the apparent unwillingness of the AFP to take up an American FBI request for a full briefing on the case.

The CJC and the National Crime Authority have been engaged in a bitter public brawl over this matter, with a report that three CJC investigators and a Queensland police superintendent were told to leave the Sydney headquarters of the NCA. The Chairman of the NCA, Mr Tom Sherman, whom we in this State all know, described this order to the four Queenslanders as "a helpful suggestion to seek the assistance of New South Wales authorities". I have heard some very remarkable public jargon in my time. No doubt other members in this Chamber have, too. But that comment does have a unique appeal. I would commend it to the Speaker, if only he were here. The next time he wants to get rid of any Opposition member, he should make a helpful suggestion. In that way, presumably we could all go on pretending that we really do adore each other after all.

Mr Beattie: We do.

Mrs Bird: We don't.

Mr COOPER: Some members say we do, other say we don't.

Remarkably, Mr Sherman did go on to say—presumably with a straight face—that the NCA enjoyed with the CJC and the Queensland police what he called "excellent working relationships". I can only wonder what it would take to put these relationships under such a strain that the NCA chairman might admit to some vague feeling of tension. But given that this Bill today seeks to further consolidate and help the relationship between the NCA and State agencies, the Minister should be as concerned as I am that these relationships are dangerously close to a complete rupture. All of the laws in the world which have as their noble purpose the abiding spirit of cooperation in the fight against crime mean nothing when there is a clash of personalities.

There is one other matter concerning the joint Commonwealth/State fight against crime that I wish to touch upon briefly. The Federal agencies have a crime-fighting weapon at their disposal which Queensland agencies do not, that is, the right to seek a Federal Court judge's approval to tap telephones. To its credit, the Commonwealth Government has also announced proposals to give Federal police the power to take, by force if necessary, non-intimate body samples, including fingerprints. It is my firm belief that the Queensland police should also have these powers, and I again ask the Government what its view is on that matter.

On 22 March, I wrote to the Attorney-General, Mr Wells, about the Commonwealth Government's proposed forensic procedure legislation, given that the Queensland Government's response to it has been at best lukewarm because of its concerns about civil liberties. I quote the last two paragraphs of my letter, which stated—

> "You would be aware that any refusal by the Queensland Government to give Queensland police similar powers would impede their investigations of crimes significantly and lead to considerable confusion in the matter of the collection of evidence in joint Federal-State investigations. In so far as that latter matter is concerned, I invite your advice on what would happen if, in the event of Federal police having this power and State police not having it, a joint inquiry discovered—via Federal police using these powers—that there had been a breach of a State law. Simply, could State police charge the suspect on this evidence and would this evidence be admissible in a State court?"

I believe that Queensland police should have the same range of powers as those available to Federal police and that their ability to respond effectively will be severely hampered by the refusal of the Government to grant them these powers. I invite the Minister to

respond to this matter and to give a commitment that State police will not have to try to investigate suspected crimes without the full battery of powers that their Federal colleagues do and will continue to enjoy.

As I said at the outset, the Opposition supports the Bill. Its introduction, at a time when the relationships between Queensland's two crime-fighting bodies—the CJC and the Police Service—and the relationships between Queensland and Federal agencies are under serious strain, gives the Government the ideal opportunity to explain how and when it will act to ensure that all of these relationships are re-established firmly and sensibly.

I invite the Minister to try to take this piece of legislation a darned sight more seriously than he took the previous one. It is an opportunity to show that he has some statesmanlike qualities, instead of appearing as someone who has been stung and reduced to vitriol and personal criticism. Perhaps he could address himself to the issues that I have raised in my speech. As the Minister said in the first place, let us see whether we can get some form of unanimity when it comes to fighting crime, especially major crime, and re-establish our crime-fighting bodies on a proper footing. Let us see how the Minister goes this time.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (4.10 p.m.): I rise to support the National Crime Authority (State Provisions) Amendment Bill of 1995. As members know, I have a particular interest in the fight against organised crime. This Bill will improve the efficiency of the National Crime Authority as a national law enforcement body. The provisions are designed to prevent people whose activities are under investigation by the National Crime Authority from becoming aware of the National Crime Authority's investigation.

Unfortunately, in the past, when the National Crime Authority has been involved in investigations into individuals, particularly in the organised crime area, the people being investigated have been notified of that fact. For example, financial institutions that have received summonses or notices relating to the various financial affairs of their clients have felt legally obliged to inform their clients. That has enabled the clients to take certain action, in particular the concealment of evidence and the rearrangement of affairs and papers, which has on a number of occasions scuttled major organised crime investigations by the National Crime Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as you would appreciate, these are obviously important powers that are being given to the National Crime Authority. They are powers that need to be supervised very carefully. Members of the House may or may not be aware that there is a Federal parliamentary committee that supervises the National Crime Authority. Its powers are not as strong or as far reaching as those of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee established by this Parliament to supervise the CJC.

The first Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee sent the then Deputy Chairman and me, as the first Chairman of the PCJC, to appear before a hearing of the parliamentary National Crime Authority committee in Canberra when it was investigating the various powers associated with the National Crime Authority and examining whether there needed to be changes to its legislation. Both Bill Gunn, and I recommended to that parliamentary committee that there should be changes to the Act to include a section similar to the section 6.7 which exists under the current CJC Act here, which is a secrecy provision preventing the members of the Committee from releasing information or discussing secret Criminal Justice Commission matters publicly.

It is no surprise to learn that members of the Parliamentary National Crime Authority Committee have from time to time not only released information publicly but also been involved in public slanging matches between themselves, with other members of Parliament and with the National Crime Authority itself. My concern about that is that it has been destabilising to the work of the National Crime Authority.

I know that things have improved significantly under Tom Sherman. He has been a good chairman. But until Tom Sherman took over, the National Crime Authority had a mixed history. It is common knowledge that the previous chairman, Peter Faris, resigned. There were difficulties involving the leadership of another past chairman, Mr Stewart. I am not saying that he was right or wrong, but difficulties were encountered at that time to the extent that the home of a National Crime Authority officer in Adelaide was bombed. There was a public perception of some degree of disunity within the National Crime Authority. I am not taking sides in relation to those difficulties; I merely state that they existed, and that they interfered with the important work of the National Crime Authority itself.

Mr Cooper: Personality problems.

Mr BEATTIE: That is exactly right; there were personality problems.

When one considers—and I have said this on a previous occasion—that organised crime is becoming more global, with the Yakuza, the Triads, the Colombians, La Cosa Nostra and the Mafia, we need in this country an organisation such as the National Crime Authority which gets on and does its work effectively without interference from personality problems. That is why Tom Sherman has been a breath of fresh air. He has done a good job.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: A very capable person.

Mr BEATTIE: He is a very capable person indeed.

As I said earlier, it must be understood that organised crime is becoming more global. Organised criminals have enormous resources at their disposal. We must understand, as the FBI educated the parliamentarians of the Senate and the House of Representatives in America, that the kill rate when fighting organised crime may be low in numerical terms but the real Mr Bigs are actually being apprehended. Organised crime figures need to be targeted in a pro-active rather than reactive way. Although that approach means that a small number of people are apprehended, at least the major Mr Bigs are gaoled. That is a difficult concept to sell, but it is an important concept if we are serious and realistic about dealing with organised crime. There must be that degree of targeting.

The level of cooperation between the CJC and the National Crime Authority is important, as is the relationship between the Police Service and the CJC. As we all know, the Criminal Justice Act requires that there be a cooperative arrangement between the CJC and the Police Service in tackling organised crime. Although there were a few hiccups in the early days, and notwithstanding what the honourable member for Crows Nest said, that relationship is maturing and improving. All members of this Parliament hope that that relationship continues to develop as those bodies become an integral part of the fight against organised crime not only in Queensland but also at a national level.

As we know, organised crime does not simply stop at the border. Organised crime is not organised according to State boundaries. It is an Australiawide activity and a worldwide activity. The CJC cannot operate effectively without cooperation from the National Crime Authority, the Federal Police and a range of other interstate agencies. I support this important legislation, and I hope that it is supported by all members.

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Rockhampton—Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (4.24 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their support for the legislation. I have some information that I would like to impart in response to the matters raised by the member for Crows Nest. During his contribution, he suggested openly that there was some sort of breach in the relationships between the Queensland Police Service, the CJC and the NCA. That statement is absolutely and totally wrong. The Queensland Police Service has an excellent working relationship with the Criminal Justice Commission. From time to time, I talk as rationally as I can with the chairman of the CJC and the head of the Official Misconduct Division. That working relationship is superb. Several large operations involving the NCA, the CJC and the Queensland Police Service have been undertaken, all of which have been extremely successful. The recent amphetamine raid was an example of that. The CJC has no complaints about the operations of the Queensland Police Service, particularly in the field of organised crime. The relationship between those two bodies could not be stronger or better. Similarly, the relationship between the Police Service and the National Crime Authority is also very good.

To cite an example of that—recently I met with Mr Sir Max Bingham, the former chairman of the CJC, and Mr John Avery, the former Commissioner of the New South Wales Police Service. Those gentlemen were requested by the Australian Police Ministers Council and the NCA to undertake a review of the NCA, the State bodies and the Australian Federal Police. When those gentlemen met with me, they made it clear that no agency in Australia has a better working relationship and a better record for cooperating with the NCA, the Federal authorities and the CJC than does the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Government. Those gentlemen stated that, if other States had cooperated to the same extent, no problems would exist.

Once again, the member for Crows Nest has attempted to sow the seeds of dissension. Despite several successful joint operations between the CJC and the Queensland Police Service and occasionally the NCA, the member attempted to sow the seeds of distrust and to tell untruths about the working relationship between those bodies. I cannot speak for the relationship between the CJC

and the NCA; that is a matter for them. I am not the responsible Minister, and I am unaware of the reality of that relationship. However, there is an excellent working relationship between the Queensland Police Service, the CJC and the NCA, which is tackling organised crime and seeing organised criminals charged and convicted. The facts and the records speak for themselves. I will not tolerate the lies being peddled by the member for Crows Nest.

Mr COOPER: I rise to——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet. I now warn the honourable member for Crows Nest under Standing Order 123A. The Chair considers the term "lies" to be unparliamentary and asks the Minister to withdraw it.

Mr BRADDY: I withdraw "lies" and substitute "untruths". Those untruths are being peddled in an attempt to drive a wedge, in the minds of the public, between the CJC, the Queensland Police Service and the NCA. The member for Crows Nest has no chance of driving a wedge between the CJC——

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Crows Nest has been warned under Standing Order 123A. I warn him not to push it any further.

Mr BRADDY: I was attempting to say that the member for Crows Nest has no chance of driving a wedge between the CJC, the NCA and the Queensland Police Service. The relationship between those bodies is honourable, hardworking and very successful. Despite that, the member for Crows Nest attempts to destroy that image in the minds of the few people in this State who take any notice of what he says.

As to police powers—the honourable member is well aware that the Government has to await the final outcome of the CJC reports and the parliamentary committee reports. Every time I suggest that I am in favour of something, I am accused by someone in the community of being arrogant because I did not wait for the final report from the PCJC. On occasions, I have indicated my personal, strong support for certain increased powers. The way in which they will finally be amended, extended or increased is a matter for the Government. We have to wait for all of those reports to come in. It is some four years since the CJC started on that particular exercise. The parliamentary committee therefore has had to wait until the CJC completes its course. I understand that the PCJC will be in a position fairly soon to give the Government its final report, and then the Government will go through the exercise of deciding which powers will be amended, extended and improved. I look forward to that exercise in the realistic hope that Queensland police will get further resources and opportunities to increase their fight against crime.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clause 1 to 23, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 21 March (see p. 11184).

Mr QUINN (Merrimac) (4.33 p.m.): I rise tonight to participate in the debate on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill. In doing so, I recognise that this is an important Bill in terms of education in Queensland. At the outset, I indicate that the Opposition will be supporting the legislation because it believes that it is moving in the right direction for Queensland school children. It has taken quite some time for this legislation to come before the House. This initiative was announced during the 1992 State election campaign, so it has taken quite some time to get here. As I said, the Opposition will support the passage of the Bill through the House.

Before I go through the Bill and indicate some of the Opposition members' concerns—we do have some concerns, even though we are going to support the Bill—I want to set the record straight on a number of matters that the Minister raised in his second-reading speech. Firstly, the Minister sought to contrast what is happening in Queensland with what is happening in Victoria by specifically mentioning the closure of some 155 schools in Victoria. I should not have to remind this House, nor indeed this Minister, that schools

are being closed in this State, too. The point the Minister made in his second-reading speech is fairly vacuous. For example, one need only refer to Cairns Central State School, which was in operation, which the Government sold in order to fund the James Cook University campus in Cairns. I refer also to Bardon Professional Centre, which was sold for a tidy sum of money. What about Newmarket State High School, which had the death sentence passed over it? It will be taking no more enrolments; it is expected to close within the next three or four years. I could point to many other inner city schools which, because of demographic changes, will come under the microscope within the next couple of years.

I recognise that a number of these schools, and particularly some of the smaller schools throughout country Queensland, will need to be closed, and the Opposition has not objected to that when it has seen valid reasons for them to be closed. However, for the Minister to try to make a point about what is happening in Victoria, without saying a word about what is happening in Queensland—giving the impression that this Government is not closing schools in this State—is totally false. I would hope that from now on, whenever the Minister comes into the House and puts the record of the Government to date before this Parliament, we will not have to be subjected to that sort of dishonesty and hypocrisy. It is a fact that schools in this State are being closed. It is an undeniable fact, and trying to give an impression opposite to that in the second-reading speech was a small schoolboy prank.

The second issue I wish to raise about the second-reading speech is that the Minister sought to portray that, somehow, the Opposition was displeased to see this legislation and that we took objection to the general reception of the educational community to the Wiltshire report and the Government's response. That is also false. If members look at the public record, they will see that when the Wiltshire recommendations came out, as the Opposition spokesman, I indicated clearly that we supported the broad thrust of the recommendations. In fact, it would have been hypocritical of me not to, because in the 1992 election campaign—the scene from which all this came—the Liberal Party went to the election with a policy of numeracy and literacy testing in primary schools and the setting up of an independent statutory authority to oversee curriculum development in Queensland. It was not tenable for anyone on my side of politics to oppose what was recommended in the Wiltshire report because we had agreed with the bones of it in the lead up to the 1992 election campaign.

There have been a number of other reports about curriculum structures in Queensland. I mention the Hughes report, which was commissioned by the Government in 1990, which made certain recommendations to the Government. I refer to Cramp, which came out of Viviani, which also mentioned the need for a statutory authority to oversee curriculum development in Queensland. I make the point that, in this legislation, the Government has moved away from the recommendations that were made in two previous reports and it has chosen a different model. The moving away from those recommendations is one point about which the Opposition expresses concern.

In general, the Opposition has supported the Wiltshire recommendations and we have publicly supported the broad thrust of the Government's proposals that result from the Wiltshire report. I can remember at that time saying that we gave our guarded support, because we recognised that it was a genuine attempt by the Government to put more resources into schools, to put the curriculum structures on a firm and established footing and, at the same time, try to address some of the problems appearing in the school system within Queensland. As I said, in total we gave our guarded support.

In its overall reaction to the Wiltshire report, the Opposition has some problems with what the Government is proposing. We think the time frame is not being driven by the right agency. This whole exercise is being driven by the Office of the Cabinet, when it ought to be driven by the Department of Education. Further down the line, I think we will start to see some changes to the whole process in order to try to keep to the schedule which the Office of the Cabinet has imposed on the Department of Education. In the long-term, that might lead to some very good recommendations being half-finished and not being followed through to their ultimate ending. It may be that an unrealistic time frame was imposed on the process.

The legislation and the Minister's second-reading speech do not give an explanation as to why the Government is so diametrically opposed to a statutory authority controlling curriculum development in Queensland, as recommended to it in the Hughes report, the Cramp report and the Wiltshire report. The legislation does not

provide for a statutory authority. It moves away from that. Although Opposition members recognise that the legislation is a step in the right direction and is travelling down the right path, we would like it to go one step further and create a statutory authority. I would appreciate it if the Minister would explain to members why he has not yet embraced the recommendations in those three reports for a statutory authority.

The other problem that I have with the response of the Government to date—which I indicated in the question that I asked in the House today—is: what sort of funding assistance will the Government supply to the non-Government sector?

Mr Hamill: I gave you a very good answer on that.

Mr QUINN: To be quite polite, the Minister gave a very vague answer. The Wiltshire report places heavy emphasis on the need for an intersystemic approach. My information to date is that the Government has not yet made a solid financial commitment to allow the non-Government sector to participate as fully as it thinks it should in all of the proposals. Although the sum of $20m was allocated in the Budget until June this year, in question time the Minister was unable to tell me how much in dollar terms he had forwarded on to the non-Government sector.

Mr Hamill: I told you how the mechanism works.

Mr QUINN: The Minister did not give an answer. Wiltshire's vision was for full intersystemic or cross-sectoral participation. People on the non-Government side have some misgivings that that will not occur. I mentioned that, in the long run, the time frame might be unrealistic. At the same time, it must be recognised that the Wiltshire recommendations contain many good ideas. The idea of a comprehensive curriculum review to put in place a more up-to-date curriculum in Queensland State and non-State schools is well worth while. The emphasis on numeracy and literacy was a long time coming. Everyone in Queensland finally recognises that those two aspects are the building blocks of a good education.

I recognise also that Wiltshire put the focus more on primary schools than on secondary schools and focused on the need for additional resources to achieve better outcomes in primary schools. I mentioned the testing in Years 2 and 6. Another good idea was the flexible arrangements within Years 1 to 3 and within the upper end of secondary schooling. The Wiltshire report contains many good details. At the same time, many ideas are fairly vague and will need to be fleshed out over a long period. Opposition members will be interested to see how those ideas work in the final analysis. Because some of the ideas were fairly vague, lacking in detail and will require a considerable amount of work, I gave guarded support on the basis that Opposition members were not aware of the full implications of the Wiltshire recommendations.

As I said, Opposition members recognise that the Bill is a move in the right direction. I indicated also that we would like a statutory authority to be established, as recommended by the previous three reports. The reason why we support the proposal for a statutory authority is that such an authority would prevent the educational agenda in the State schools and, to some extent, the non-Government schools being captured by a minority interest when there is an overt political influence within the curriculum. To make sure that that does not happen would take a very vigilant Minister. That was one of the great strengths of the model of the statutory authority.

The other aspect that is not mentioned in the Bill and was very vaguely mentioned in the Government's response is the need to separate the testing authority or the testing regime from those people who provide the service. I cite the example of random sampling, which became known as aspects of numeracy and literacy. In the past, the Department of Education provided the services in the school; the Department of Education conducted the random sampling; and the Department of Education took the results and released them in a particular form.

The last result was represented in a series of graphs. Prior to that, the whole testing regime had been changed. It had been rescaled. Non-Government schools had been excluded and the number of schools in the sample had fallen. All of a sudden, in the last report on aspects of numeracy and literacy, bar graphs were almost leaping off the end of the page to show how great the increase in literacy and numeracy standards in Queensland schools had been.

At that time, I made the point that having that incestuous relationship between the deliverer of the service and the testing authority of the service is similar to trusting used-car salesmen to take people's prospective purchases for a spin around the block and to come back and tell purchasers that they have a great car. We need an arm's

length distance between the provider of the service and the tester of the service so that people have confidence that those who do the testing are not unduly influenced by those who provide the service, in other words, so that there can be no loose arrangements to make sure that the results are more amenable to public consumption. The legislation does not do that. I am concerned that it does not set up that arm's length distance between the provider and the tester.

Other aspects of the Bill that Opposition members agree with and have no problems with are the minor changes to both the Board of Senior Secondary Schools Act and the other consequential or attendant changes to the Education (General Provisions) Act. The provision that makes the reading of bible lessons optional is a sensible way to go. That is being done in most schools in Queensland. One would have to walk a long way to find a classroom in which that is done religiously—excuse the pun—every week. We agree with that provision and note that it does not change the right of ministers of religion to come in for up to an hour a week, as occurred in the past.

We also agree with the very small change to the provision relating to the School of Distance Education, which makes the return of completed papers mandatory. I have raised the point as to what the quality of some of those papers might be. However, that is a matter for the marking officers. We agree with the abolition of the Junior Certificate—provided that an exit statement is produced. I understand that that is the case, but it is not mentioned in the legislation. Will the statement be produced by the department or by the schools concerned?

Mr Hamill: I will correspond with the member on that.

Mr QUINN: I would like it to be done by some credentialling authority, such as the Curriculum Council, rather than the school. That would give the students a more prestigious certificate. If it is possible, some moderation procedures should be adopted to ensure that the exit statements taken by students at one school are viewed by employers as comparable to exit statements taken by students from neighbouring schools. That is a very important point. Lack of moderation procedures would result in a loss of confidence in the standards of the exit statements. We do not want that for students who leave at the end of Year 10.

Those are the main concerns held by Opposition members. We recognise that the legislation is an improvement on the existing provisions. It is not what we would like to see. The Government could go a step further with the Bill. It could have established the statutory authority, as recommended by many other reports and as carried out in many other States. The Minister could also have taken steps towards ensuring that there was an arm's length between the service provider, the Department of Education, and those who are providing the testing results. By and large, we support the legislation. It will be interesting to see whether the remainder of the recommendations of Professor Wiltshire are implemented by the Government in the future.

Ms SPENCE (Mount Gravatt) (4.50 p.m.): Today, members are speaking to a Bill that contains many features. Primarily, though, it restructures the role of the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, establishes a new Queensland Curriculum Council and clarifies the relationship between the two. I understand from the speech of the member for Merrimac that the Opposition is going to support most aspects of this Bill. I must say that I am very pleased that, on this occasion, the Opposition has taken a sensible approach to this legislation and is not trying to politicise the whole issue of education. That is valued by all educators in this State.

The major changes contained in this legislation came out of the Report of the Review of the Queensland School Curriculum 1994, known as Shaping the Future, which was a very extensive examination of the most important aspect of education in this State, that is, classroom teaching and learning. Indeed, the nature of the school curriculum and its delivery are the key ingredients to good education.

A primary platform of the Goss Labor Government in 1989 was education reform, a subject that did not receive much attention by the previous National Party Government. The Shaping the Future report—a compendious document that has been widely debated by the education community—has much to commend it and, of course, it offers much for the education community by way of critical reflection. As this is the first piece of legislation to come from that review, this is the first opportunity to be provided to this Parliament to respond and participate in the public debate that has been greatly encouraged by the Government in the aftermath of this report. I welcome this opportunity to make some observations on the subject of curriculum that may be of some value to the new Queensland Curriculum Council, which we are establishing today.

Firstly, although I acknowledge that some very valuable preparation for the future might be expected to develop from deliberate attention to teaching thinking skills through existing areas of learning, the conservative side of me urges strongly that a future perspective for the curriculum, while important, should not diminish the importance of young people learning about the past and the present. Secondly, I suggest that there is much still to explore before we accept too readily the call for a convergence of general and vocational education in schools. I personally find it very difficult to envisage how the pursuit of vocational courses will better equip young people to deal with a future in which, it is confidently predicted, men and women will change their work more often than in the past and where work itself will change far more rapidly than has ever occurred before. I remain to be convinced that schools will turn out those flexible, life-long learners as they expect.

Thirdly, one can only hope that the political and popular slogan "back to basics" will not be taken too literally. From what has already appeared in the media, there are more than a few reactionary fundamentalists among popular opinion makers who believe that if we teach "'reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic" the way it was taught when they were at school, then all will be well—and perhaps we should bring back the cane for good measure. Unemployment, delinquency and the issue of the nation's international competitiveness will not be solved at a stroke or even a few strokes. I believe that we have to be very wary about adopting a fundamentalist, unprogressive approach to children's education based on the premise that things were wonderful in the good old days.

Goprint is selling the *Queensland School Readers*, which most members would have read when they were at school. Those books cover Grades 1 to 7. I bought a set for my children, and I was shocked to read what we actually read at school. It is very sad. At the front of the school readers the compilers' aims are stated. The readers provide—

> ". . . a compendium of useful knowledge as well as a treasury of beautiful thoughts."

In those days, that was sufficient for a well-rounded education. But, of course, they are currently out of touch with the technological, multicultural world that we live in today. I challenge all honourable members to take up those readers and look at what they did study. They were sexist, racist and boring.

Mr Hamill: They had very nice colour plates, though.

Ms SPENCE: They did have some nice colour plates. Notwithstanding those comments that I made about "back to basics" and the three Rs, I am pleased that the Government has picked up the emphasis on literacy and numeracy and run very hard with it. Some of the initiatives to which the Government has committed itself include the allocation of an additional $20.7m over four years to fund literacy and numeracy programs. That funding has provided new resources in schools and enhanced professional development for teachers. The Shaping our Future initiatives add to this already strong commitment. The new initiatives are the Year 2 diagnostic net and the Year 6 test. In relation to those tests—the objectives of the department state that the diagnostic net will be implemented across Queensland schools to monitor, identify, diagnose and plan to improve student outcomes in literacy and numeracy. The diagnostic net will involve mapping students' progress, using developmental continuums for both literacy and numeracy, validating teachers' observation with specifically designed validation tasks undertaken midway through Year 2 and identifying those children who require specific intervention. The purpose of the Year 6 test is to provide a further safety net to identify students who require additional assistance in literacy and numeracy.

When the concept of those tests was first raised from the Shaping the Future report, I felt fairly negative about them. If they were tests designed to identify the students in a class who had literacy problems, I would have to say that the teachers were already doing that quite well. However, those tests will be of benefit generally to schools and to specific classroom teachers, because they will identify to teachers and schools those areas of literacy and numeracy that they are not handling very well. I believe that all schools probably need that annual check to identify those areas on which they could improve. I believe that those tests will help schools and teachers identify the areas of their own teaching that may be lacking in some ways or strong in other ways.

Mr Quinn: You are now a convert.

Ms SPENCE: I am a convert, because I can see that they will do some good; although I still believe that teachers are already proficiently diagnosing literacy and numeracy problems in their classes in Year 2 and Year 6. I am sure that those tests will help teachers in other areas.

Mr Quinn: You don't sound convincing.

Ms SPENCE: When my Year 6 boy does his test this year, I will come back and talk to the honourable member about it.

The Government is committed to providing substantial resources to support the improvement in literacy and numeracy in schools. An extra $17m will be provided each year for this initiative. This includes additional human resources, such as 110 education advisers in literacy and education advisers in numeracy, and approximately 600 key teachers who are full-time teachers but part-time advisers to work with both teachers and students to raise the standards of literacy and numeracy in our schools. I believe that this is a very important initiative.

I was a high school English teacher for 11 years in this State. Despite three years of extensive training and an Arts degree to become an English teacher, in all of those years of training no-one ever taught me how to teach children to read or write. I learnt about literature, how to teach literature and how to write critically myself, but as for teaching children how to read and write and how to help children with their own reading and writing problems, that was never part of the teacher training curriculum. So there would be many teachers in our schools who have never had that training, and I think that these key teachers who are going around schools teaching teachers will be a very important part of improving literacy and numeracy skills in this State.

I have also talked to primary school teachers, who have told me the same thing—that they have never actually had that training. Everyone assumes that they just know how to do it.

Ms Power: It was the early childhood teachers.

Ms SPENCE: Perhaps it is the early childhood teachers. Of course, many students came to high school who could barely read and write, and it was very difficult for teachers to teach them when they themselves did not have the training.

The Government has also indicated an even greater commitment to improving the literacy and numeracy skills of Queensland students. The department plans to target students and schools that have the greatest need so that the best use is made of those additional resources. I think that is a sensible approach. Any teacher in this State knows that greater problems exist in some schools than they do in others. This Government is certainly about bringing equity to all students in our schools. If it is going to do that, it has to target certain schools a lot more than it has in the past. I believe that the Government is not resting on its laurels. It will keep these initiatives under review so that the children of Queensland have every opportunity to become as literate and numerate as is required for them to contribute effectively to our society.

Finally, on the issue of curriculum, I was pleased to see that key principle 4 in Shaping the Future stated the centrality of knowledge acquisition and indicated the report writer's preferred format for documenting syllabus content. Written statements of content derived from knowledge domains contained in a syllabus are one form of guaranteeing that what is being taught and learnt in our schools is based on scholarship and goes beyond commonsense. It is logical to expect that the knowledge spelt out in the syllabus will become more differentiated as the students progress through the school, as they go from their early childhood experiences to the more subject-based studies of the senior school. Obviously, stating in a syllabus knowledge to be learned neither makes it suitable for use in a classroom nor does it guarantee its passage from page to pupil but, no doubt, it will be beneficial to teachers and parents to know that there is a Statewide commonality in the content of the curriculum.

I hope that the new curriculum council will ensure that, indeed, this does occur because in the past too many of the syllabuses have been lacking in content. I am pleased to see that the structure of the new Queensland Curriculum Council is spelt out very clearly in this legislation in proposed new sections 67C, 67D and 67E. It is a large council with many appointed members. It should guarantee that all areas and vested interests in education in this State are represented. Certainly, the representation by the independent schools on this council is significant and correct. Independent schools educate something like 30 per cent of the children in this State and they should certainly have a fair representation on the Queensland Curriculum Council, and I am pleased that that has been adopted.

The functions of the council have been spelt out in proposed new section 67B, and they signify clearly that the role of this council is to advise the Minister; to develop, endorse and recommend to the Minister a curriculum development; and to undertake an annual forum to consider curriculum issues. I think those initiatives are long overdue. I cannot

agree with the member for Merrimac, who said that he would like the council to have a statutory basis. However, I will let the Minister respond to that matter in his reply.

The consultation that has gone into this legislation has been very extensive. Many groups and many other departments have been consulted. This legislation has taken many months to get to this Chamber today, and I support it.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (5.05 p.m.): If we listened only to the Minister for Education and to Government members such as the member who has just spoken and we considered only their opinions about the state of education in Queensland today, we would believe that total bliss reigns supreme within Queensland State schools. Fortunately for the teachers of Queensland, the Opposition as a whole and individual members of Parliament such as I talk to the teachers in our electorates. When we do so, we receive their feedback rather than the feedback that the Government makes up in its endless stream of media releases and speeches in this place, which it would like us to believe.

There is no doubt that, since the election of the Goss Labor Government, the budgetary allocations to the Department of Education have increased considerably, and I am pleased to go on record as acknowledging that fact. For the record, I say that the total education budget in 1989 was $1.7 billion and for the year 1994-95, the total was $2.7 billion—a very substantial increase indeed. However, the question that needs to be asked is: are students and teachers in the State school system in Queensland better off today as a result of those extra allocations than they were in 1989?

If an objective observer went about the process of answering this question, he or she could become very depressed indeed. The answer that I am getting from the teachers to whom I speak is a resounding "No". This is the case for many reasons, including the fact that class sizes in Queensland schools have not decreased, as the Labor Party promised would be the case when it made its promises prior to 1989. In Opposition, the Labor Party promised that it would implement the Ahern report recommendations if it achieved Government.

For the benefit of Government members, whose memories, undoubtedly, are fading, I point out that one needs only to refer to a document of the Labor Party titled the *Schools Policy*, which was released prior to the 1989 election. In that document, reference was made to the underfunding of the schools within Queensland. I will not quote extensively from it, only enough to make my point. It states—

> "The effects of this deliberate underfunding have been serious and widespread. They have hurt the quality of Queensland education and damaged the overall quality of life in the State.
>
> The most obvious educational impact has been on class sizes. Enrolments in the Queensland school system have grown rapidly while teacher numbers have lagged. In primary schools more composite classes of two or more year levels have had to be formed. In secondary schools the number of courses offered has, in many cases, been cut.
>
> Nevertheless, class sizes have continued to blow out."

The policy went on to state—

> "The latest survey of the Queensland Teachers' Union shows that in 1988 more than one junior primary class in five was over the maximum size (a standard recommended by a committee chaired by Mr Ahern). At the other end of the scale fully 26% of classes for years 11 and 12 were over the limit."

Honourable members would appreciate that when teachers compare the promises made in that policy, from which I have quoted only very briefly, with what is actually happening in the classrooms of the schools today, they will find that not many schools in Queensland are able to make that boast that class sizes have decreased, let alone been reduced to the sizes recommended by the Ahern report.

However, there is one broken promise that has been noticed not only by teachers within our schools but also, and equally importantly, by the parents of Queensland students and the students themselves. Perhaps the major reason why the provision of State school education is not what it should be in this State relates to the enormous pressures and demands that are placed on the principals and the teachers within our schools. Those pressures and demands are the result of the great speed with which change has taken place within the education system under the Goss Labor Government since it came to power.

Most teachers in Queensland—and certainly those to whom I speak—are not against change, particularly when it is for the better and facilitates the teaching function

within our schools. Unfortunately, not many teachers believe that that has been happening. Teachers tell me that many of the changes introduced by the Labor Party in Government have greatly impaired and compromised their capacity to teach.

Although I could speak at length about each item in a long list of Government policies that have made life very difficult for Queensland teachers, I will limit my comments to the concerns expressed by some teachers. Most honourable members would appreciate the validity of teachers' concerns and would recognise the problems caused by the changes made by the Government. I wish to stress that this list is not an exhaustive one; it was arrived at purely through discussions with teacher friends of mine who told me about their problems.

I notice that the Deputy Director-General of the Education Department is here today. Before moving on to the substance of my contribution, I acknowledge the courtesy extended to me by the professional officers at the directorate and regional office levels whenever I draw their attention to the concerns of constituents, whether they be users or practitioners within the education system. I greatly appreciate the courtesy that is always extended to me, even when officers are not able to help me.

I have a list of the concerns of teachers and principals. A great deal of that concern relates to the variety of legislation introduced by the Labor Party. Although teachers and I admit that a lot of the legislation is good, it certainly impacts on the way in which teachers go about their job. The most frequently cited legislation—and I think that other members in this place will appreciate some of these examples—includes the Workplace Health and Safety Act, the Judicial Review Act, the Anti-Discrimination Act and the sexual harassment legislation.

I think it is fair to say that these days a lot of teachers are scared to go about teaching in the way they used to because of the very onerous requirements of Acts of Parliament, four of which I have just mentioned. For example, these days if a young student scratches his face on a small piece of loose wire on a school fence, principals fear that they will be held responsible for such an incident. Teachers tell me, "Santo, these days we cannot even put our arms around a child as a source of comfort, because we could end up in court for all sorts of reasons which the Act prescribes." For example, if a principal tries to get a good day's work out of a good staff member, that principal could have a grievance lodged against him or her.

Mrs Woodgate: What has this got to do with the Bill?

Mr SANTORO: If a child is omitted from a sports team, a class, a learning activity or a group project, that child can charge the principal with discrimination and so on. I will pause to respond to the honourable member who is interjecting. It is not often that an amendment comes before the House which opens up the Education Act for debate in the way in which this one does. It is not often that we have the opportunity to speak as broadly as we are able to today. Importantly, in the brief contribution that I intend to make—and it would be briefer if honourable members opposite gave me a go——

Ms Spence: Do you think you should be able to speak about any aspect of education?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. The debate has gone far enough. The Chair is going to make a ruling. The honourable member for Clayfield will return to the contents of the Bill now.

Mr SANTORO: The Bill concerns itself with curriculum——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Is the member for Clayfield disputing my ruling? If the honourable member wants to continue with his speech, he should discuss the contents of the Bill, otherwise he can resume his seat.

Mr SANTORO: Obviously, I am talking about aspects that have a very real impact on the ability of teachers to fulfil the curriculum requirements. I make the point that a great number of the aspects about which I am speaking have a real, detrimental effect on the ability of teachers to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum. The implementation of the curriculum requirements is all about management, duty of care and looking after the students. Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek your indulgence to put forward the concerns of the teachers in my electorate and elsewhere.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will make that ruling. The honourable member will continue.

Mr SANTORO: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I appreciate your consideration.

As to the whole issue of behaviour management—when the cane was removed, teachers say they were promised that it would be replaced by new support mechanisms.

Obviously, a lot of students within the system rebel against the requirements of the curriculum. However, none of that support has been forthcoming. This lack of support is causing more stress than any other factor. In addition, making classes smaller and giving teachers more counsellors and support staff would certainly be of benefit.

As to the policy of inclusion—teachers say that it is a nice thought to place physically disabled and learning disabled children into regular classes and that this is undoubtedly good for them. However, it is horrendous for teachers when these disabled children are placed in a class with 30 other children.

Mr Hamill: I refer you to my comments in question time this morning.

Mr SANTORO: I will give the Minister some of the feedback that I have received from teachers. They say that smaller classes would help, as would more support teachers and teacher aides. As a result of many other programs administered by the Government under the auspices of other departments, a lot of disadvantaged children are referred to a particular school in my area. However, I do not notice any commensurate increase in resources being afforded to that school.

Student performance standards is an issue of great concern to teachers. A lot of teachers basically see it as a political move with virtually no educational foundation. Keeping mammoth records and checklists and giving ratings for children that parents simply do not understand creates a heavy workload for teachers. Again, this is a huge cause of stress in teachers.

I refer to committees, which is particularly relevant to the curriculum issue. Teachers within Queensland schools are constantly being asked to comment on the curriculum and curriculum developments. Basically, they are telling me that they want to be left alone. They want to teach students, not spend hour after hour every week on policies, work programs, annual operational plans, skill development plans and all sorts of reviews.

I wish to go on record as saying that since Mr Peach was appointed, teachers have taken considerable heart in his expressed determination to return to the basics. The validity of what I am saying is amply demonstrated by Mr Peach's realisation that he had to give a clear signal of direction from the top of the department. Clearly, this means that the fears I have expressed on behalf of teachers have been well founded and of epidemic proportions. I suggest to the honourable member for Mansfield that it is important that she listens to the teachers in her own electorate. If she did so, I am sure that they would tell her precisely what they have told me.

The other point that teachers raise with me is that they think that society, undoubtedly through the prompting of Government, is seeking to unload a lot of parental and household responsibilities onto the schools. Only last week, an instance was brought to my attention. I refer to a new aspect of teaching—pet care. The teachers from the schools in my electorate tell me that there are not enough hours in a school week to teach the basics and more serious subjects, and they cannot believe that they have been asked to teach kids how to look after their pets. Such activities are taking away from the objective enunciated so well by the new Director-General of Education—a return to the basics in the education curriculum. I suggest that when teachers are asked to teach subjects such as pet care that objective will not be achieved.

I have referred to a marked degree of change that is manifesting itself in a very dramatic way in teacher stress and burnout. Members opposite would recall that in a recent contribution I spoke about the increasing numbers of workers compensation claims being submitted by teachers. I certainly will not repeat myself by outlining those statistics. However, I beg the indulgence of the House to outline the results of another survey conducted last year by the Queensland Association of State School Principals.

The results of that survey are most instructive and once again point to an education system very much under stress. The survey obtained a response rate of 59 per cent from primary school principals and 71 per cent from secondary school principals. That constituted a weighted response rate of 60 per cent. Honourable members may be interested to know that only 11 of the 778 respondents did not respond to the question of whether or not they are generally stressed at work. Of the 767 respondents, on which all analyses of that survey are based——

Mr Hamill: Who did this survey?

Mr SANTORO: The survey was conducted by the Queensland Association of State School Principals.

Mr Hamill: When was it done?

Mr SANTORO: It was done towards the end of last year.

Mr Hamill: Was it circulated to all of the schools?

Mr SANTORO: I am happy to provide the Minister with the relevant extract of the journal from which I am quoting.

Mr Hamill: What is the publication?

Mr SANTORO: The publication date is January 1995.

Mr Hamill: No, no, the journal.

Mr SANTORO: It is titled *QASSP—Quality Leadership, Educational Excellence*. I am referring in particular to page 11. It is recent data and recent——

Mr Hamill: I was just curious, that is all.

Mr SANTORO: As soon as I have finished quoting from this publication for the purposes of my contribution, I am happy to make it available to the Minister. Of the 767 respondents on which all analyses——

Mr Hamill: It sounded like a fairly large percentage you were quoting—700 and something.

Mr SANTORO: For the benefit of the Minister, I will repeat it. A response rate of 59 per cent—648—was achieved for primary school principals and 71 per cent—130—from secondary school principals.

Mr Hamill: No, the figure you quoted a moment ago. It may have been a slip of the tongue.

Mr SANTORO: I was quoting——

Mr Hamill: No, just before you were stating a figure of something like 700 and something per cent.

Mr SANTORO: I was talking about the total number of respondents, which was 767. In that survey, 78.1 per cent—599—of the respondents reported being generally stressed at work. As well, 18 per cent of all respondents reported being stressed for reasons unrelated to work, because they were also surveyed on topics unrelated to work.

The Minister and other honourable members may be interested to know that factors identified as sources of general work-related stress—and this ties in with the comments that I have been making—were: overcommitment of time; discipline matters with students; information flow and amount of correspondence; lack of associate administrators; greater responsibility for decision making; degree of comfort in role of counsellor and ability to debrief; level of support from parents, teachers, other community members, P & C, QASSP and equivalent associations; and responsiveness and flexibility of department to requests for information and resources.

Mr Hamill: Is there any difference between primary and secondary?

Mr SANTORO: Unfortunately, I am just about out of time. If I had more time, I would go through the detailed break-up of the responses given by primary and secondary principals. As I said, I am happy to make this information available to the Minister.

I conclude my contribution by thanking the House for its indulgence in allowing me to express these concerns. I realise that members thought that I may have not been specifically addressing the provisions of the Bill, but I appreciate the opportunity to place the concerns of the principals in my electorate and throughout Queensland on the parliamentary record.

Time expired.

Mrs McCAULEY (Callide) (5.25 p.m.): I welcome the opportunity to talk to the new Minister for Education about distance education. That issue concerns many parents in my electorate. This Act provides that every child of the age of compulsory attendance who does not attend a State or non-State school should be enrolled in the School of Distance Education.

In the past few years, the Capricornia School of Distance Education has faced many problems. I believe that those problems have now been solved. However, I want to take this opportunity to raise another issue of concern by reading a very lengthy letter. I tried to reduce the length of the letter, but when I read it again and again, I realised it made many very valid points. I came to the conclusion that I could not shorten it to any great degree. I promised the women who are involved with the Capricornia School of Distance Education, who are the mothers/teachers of these children, that I would present their case in Parliament whenever I had the opportunity. That opportunity arises now, and I am pleased that the Minister is in the Chamber so that I can read this letter to him.

Mr Hamill: Did you say the points have been addressed?

Mrs McCAULEY: No, the issues that were of concern last year involved the transmitters. I believe that they have now been resolved. These are different issues. They relate to curriculum matters, which is the topic covered by this Bill. The points made in the letter are extremely sensible. The letter commenced by stating—

> "It was with relief, that parents educating their children in isolation greeted the findings of the Wiltshire report

and the governments decision to revert to the teaching of the basic concepts of reading, writing and calculation in the primary schools."

I hope that those ladies will not be disappointed after the passage of this Bill. The letter continues—

"Parents teaching their children in isolation have been aware of the difficulty of giving the children a sound basic grounding. The materials, that have been written to present Queensland Education Department guide-lines, tend towards a holistic approach to teaching which has been found to be unsuitable for children learning in the home environment. Children in the younger grades have found it very difficult to learn to read and write. As a result of this, many home tutors have found that they have had to spend a lot of time and money making up the shortfalls.

Parents have been aware that the papers have not been meeting the needs of their unique situation and have been communicating their concerns to Open Access . . . Open Access have recognized the concerns and made some changes, but staffing, budget and the fact that the writers are not really aware of the unique teaching environment and lifestyles of the children, mean that the papers are not really working.

The home tutors and parents are concerned that while it appears certain that the children in state schools are going to be provided with a good sound basic education, children on distance education may have to wait for years before their materials come into line."

The secretary of the P & C Association of the Capricornia School of Distance Education asked me to follow through on this matter, and that is exactly what I am doing now.

The letter from the Capricornia School of Distance Education to the Open Access Support Centre sets out a number of concerns. I want to go through them very thoroughly. The letter states—

"In this time of drought, when rural families are in crisis, we are concerned by the difficulties experienced in the educating of isolated children. The materials sent to the families as a basis of the child's education, assume that the home tutor has unlimited time to give to the process. Unfortunately this is not so. Home tutors, predominantly mothers, who receive no financial reward for their long hours, are struggling to give their children an education.

Home tutors have always had to donate their time to ensure that the isolated children received an education, but the time required and the problems experienced have increased substantially since the introduction of the new materials.

Mothers on the land are shouldering ever increasing burdens as a result of the present rural climate and we would like you to keep this in mind as you produce the materials to be used in the home.

Materials in the past have been user friendly and easily able to be managed by busy women on the land.

We realize that the new materials have been written to the new Queensland curriculum, but, we would like to point out that the curriculum was not written with children in these exceptional learning circumstances in mind."

She goes on to mention some of the problems. The letter continues—

"Home tutors are concerned with some aspects of the distance education learning packages. While grateful for the move by Open Access to in service the teachers early in 1995, home tutors are worried that the practical aspect of the paper implementation might be missed. Writers and teachers might be able to see techniques that they believe might work, but, because none of them have had any practical experience in a home learning environment, they would find the practicalities of their theories very hard to envisage. Keeping this in mind, the home tutors would like you to consider the possibility of, at least, some home tutor representation at this inservicing.

Since the new papers were introduced, home tutors have found that they, and the children, have had to increase dramatically the time spent implementing the papers in the schoolroom. Home tutors have also found that they are having to spend a lot of time preparing materials for the next days work. In the present crisis on the land this is time that the home tutor cannot afford.

Visiting V.I.S.E. teachers and teachers not involved in distance education have commented on the difficulty of implementation of the papers, and the excessive time needed to do

them. Experienced Distance Education teachers can also see that the materials are almost impossible to implement in some circumstances. When asked for help they have to admit that they do not know how to help, and they state that they do not know how the home tutors cope. These comments tended to be targeted more towards the papers for lower grades than the upper.

Home tutors are suffering under the pressure of trying to implement these papers, as well as do all of the other jobs expected of them and as a result the children are not learning as well as they should.

As a result of on air forums, numerous discussions and telephone calls the following list of concerns have been compiled. We trust that you might take into consideration the problems being experienced and modify the material so they might be more suitable for the people trying to use them."

She goes on to make general comments. The letter continues—

"There appears to be too much time filler activities integrated into the units. To the home tutor, it appears as if the writers are purposely spinning out the learning process so it fills in a full school day. Unfortunately, many families are finding that it takes much more than a full school day to complete the work. Much of this filler work overlaps into significant exercises, making it very difficult to delete.

Families do not need their school day to be filled. They do however need their children to receive a good, sound, basic education. If this basic education can be achieved with shorter school days, this then frees the home tutor and family to help on the farm and continue the education in the best natural classroom in the world—The natural environment.

Themes in the lower grades do not coincide. All lower grades do themes such as pirates, but not at the same time.

If these themes were done at the same time, many of the activities could be integrated. They could share ideas for their creative writing, children could read and discuss their books with each other, all learn the same songs join together to act out the stories and do their art activities together. This would ease some of the pressure from the home tutor and eliminate the problem many home tutors are having of siblings listening in on the others lessons when their lessons are not so interesting.

To help with the multi grade situation would it be possible to provide just one instruction paper for the three grades for session two.

Could all grades be given the same type of art activity and writing genre in the same unit so basic concepts can be studied together and only one type of art equipment be needed at the same time. These lessons could then be done simultaneously.

An across the grades time table coordinating activities that can be done across the grades, i.e. art, p.e., drama, creative writing, would be useful.

Some families are concerned as to the apparent indoctrination of some issues within the materials. This is particularly evident with the Greening Issue."

I am afraid that this is something not peculiar to distance education; this is something that concerns me and has done for some time with schooling as a whole. I do not really know how to solve that problem. It is a difficult issue. The letter continues—

"Children are taught that to knock down trees is bad for the environment. This is confusing for them when they are witness to the positive results of land reclamation, erosion control and increased productivity, as a result of controlled land clearance, first hand. They are also taught about paper conservation, only to have to 'burn another tree' as they put the excess of paper used in the materials, in the bin at the end of the unit."

I think that that is a jolly good point. The letter continues—

"L.A.C. lower grades

Letter sounds, names and how they are written are not covered thoroughly enough when they are introduced. They are then not systematically revised and reinforced in subsequent units.

Would it be possible to introduce the internationally recognised long and short vowel notation, as a learning aid for the children in the lower grades. If the child was familiar with this notation it could be used in the upper grades for pronunciation purposes.

There is not enough independent work for the children in the lower grades. The constant one to one interaction necessary between the home tutor and pupil means that other children in a multi grade schoolroom tend to be left to their own devices.

Could not both the above problems be lessened if a lot of independent revision work be included for the child to do while the home tutor is busy with the other children. Could the words read, write, colour and draw be introduced at an early stage so the child could read directions independently.

Children are becoming frustrated as they want to feel that they are learning. The format of the materials, though guiding the children in a logical sequence, mean it is not always apparent to the child that they are learning. They often leave the schoolroom at the end of the day with no sense of achievement or challenge.

The Reading Materials are not in a logical progressive order. Words taught for one book might not be used again for several papers. This means that children do not gain confidence in reading by being able to successfully read many of the words in the next book. Children become frustrated as when they move onto the next book they cannot successfully read the majority of the book, using words they learned in the last unit.

Although you believe that the schools are responsible for the reading schemes, this is not always a practical expectation and doesn't always happen.

Could reading exercises be incorporated into the learning materials? Characters that stay with the child throughout the year and build the child's reading skills. The first readings could introduce basic words, then each subsequent reading could use those known words and a few new ones. This would not only develop the children's reading skill, but would foster a confidence and love of reading."

That sounds very logical to me. The letter continues—

"Children should be taught sounds and letters together as some children have trouble relating them to each other at a later date. Sound charts with words using that sound, that could be displayed or made into a sounds book, would also be useful.

Many children have trouble with reading and spelling because they do not hear or speak the sounds in a word correctly. Would it be possible to introduce exercises so children were made aware of where the different parts of the mouth lips and tongue are when the letters are said. The children could also practise the sounds through tongue twisters. Many of these types of exercises could be resurrected from the old papers.

After using the new materials, more families seem to be needing the services of special needs and speech therapist teachers than they did in the past."

I can certainly vouch for that. Many people whose children are taught in isolation need the services of speech therapists; and it is very difficult to find speech therapists in the bush. The letter continues—

"Memory training, visual and auditory discrimination could also be introduced in the lower grades and many of these activities could be of the independent type.

In a classroom situation, children must work independently, the materials do not allow the children in the younger grades to be able to develop this skill of independent thinking and working.

The papers are presented in such a way that children are overawed by the bulk of them.

Would it be possible to keep instructions brief and concise. Children's work printed in a different font to that of the home tutor instruction might make the child a little happier as they could see just which work they are responsible for doing in the book."

I think that that is a great idea. The letter continues—

"Children could be introduced to the words used in simple instructions like read, write, colour, draw, then instructions could be put in so the child could independently do the work. This would also help in a multi grade situation as the child would be able to look ahead and see work that they might be able to do by themselves.

Words to songs and poems, printed on one side of pieces of cardboard add to the bulk and waste a lot of paper. Couldn't these words be printed on ordinary paper, back to back and maybe presented as a singing book which could be recycled?

Time spent in preparation, in the lower grades is not in proportion to the time the children spend using these aids. Often the home tutor spends a considerable amount of time preparing books for innovations, games and puppets and the children get very little use out of them. Why couldn't the children be asked to use their toys for re enactments of stories, instead of puppets? Families with the time can always make puppets.

Much of the home tutor instruction is too wordy.

Could a summary of what the home tutor is to do with the child be put at the beginning of the lesson. This is all most home tutors need and more details could be added afterward to clarify the concept. This would also help busy, multi grade home tutors get across all the essential concepts.

Home tutors find that the papers have unreasonable expectations of the children in some activities. I.E. the bear story, grade two, musical instrument reports grade one and numerous writing drafts in all grades.

It would be appreciated if writers kept in mind that these children are not getting the feedback from peers that they would get if they were in a school. They are in a one to one situation. There tends to be too much writing, which is putting children off school very early.

If tapes are to be used for independent work, the home tutor must have access to a written account of what is on the tape so they can ask relevant questions. Some children find the tapes too fast so if the child does not catch everything the home tutor can make sure nothing is missed. This would also be useful for when the tape recorder breaks down or if the family has no access to a tape recorder or power.

L.A.C. upper grades

Creative writing tends to be too structured, taking the spontaneity and ownership of the material away from the child.

We realise that the child must be taught how to go through the developmental stages of a piece of work, but does it always have to be so rigid? Children tend to follow the guide without thought. Would it be possible for some of the creative writing pieces to be totally directed by the child, in the processed writing mode."

Obviously, I will not have time to read all of the letter, so I will pick out the points that are most important. The letter continues—

"Although Grammar is touched on throughout the units, it is not reinforced until grade 7. In grade 7 it appears that the materials then try to catch the children up on all the grammar they should know before entering high school. Some children are finding this very difficult. Would it be possible to spread the grammar out over the years so that by the time the children are in high school, they would know all they need to know without the concentrated onslaught in grade 7?

In grades 6 and 7 when L.O.T.E. is compulsory no time is allocated within the teaching program to compensate for this. Could LOTE be incorporated into or allowed time for, within the packages.

Maths lower grades

There is too much reading and not enough examples for the children to do.

. . .

Too many irrelevant practical exercises that take up too much time and do not really teach the children anything.

Not enough independent or repetitive work.

The puzzles and riddles, when used all the time take the meaning away from the work. Instead of formalizing a concept in their mind, the children tend to come away from the lesson with nothing but the riddle in their mind. Riddles are fun occasionally, but too often, defeat their purpose.

Time is wasted with the children having to do too much writing in the maths papers. Surely it would be more beneficial to give the children calculator tricks and games to familiarise them with the calculator, than have them write out what it can do, as happened in grade 1."

That seems very sensible to me. She then refers to maths in the upper grade and states—

"Perhaps a little less complicated practical exercise could be thought up so not so much time has to be spent on them."

That message is coming through all the time. It is a plea for help from those very busy home tutor parents. She states further—

"We realise that the papers are meant to be modified by the child's teacher but this does not seem to be practical in the field. Would it not be better to consider writing the important basic concepts that the children are supposed to cover through out the year simply in a way that the child who gets no help"—

and there are some—

"can follow and leave the extension activities to the teacher. This would ensure that all children have the opportunity of a basic education even if they have to struggle alone. The teacher could then extend the children in a manner suitable for the individual.

. . .

People who have left the system and gone on to alternate correspondence papers have commented on how they feel as though a great weight has been lifted from them. They are again enjoying teaching their children and can see their children learning. This enjoyment of teaching is something that was common in the days of the old papers. Families were able to easily teach multi grades as well as helping in the business. Children went away to boarding school able to cope academically, and many of them excelled there. We realise that curriculums change, but perhaps something could be learned through studying the format of the old papers and working out what it was about them that made them so workable.

Too many families are feeling that their only option is to send their children away earlier than they had planned to do so, even though they cannot afford to.

Multi grade families in other schools are also having problems as was evident from the motions at the I.C.P.A. Conference. Teachers at the Brisbane S.D.E., who are the most experienced distance education teachers in the state, are working overtime to make the papers manageable for their multi grade families. These teachers claim that they foresaw these problems when they trialed the papers, but, no one was willing to listen to them.

If these materials had been written with isolated children as the clientele, why do they have to be adapted? Surely when writing for children in particular circumstances, materials should be produced that is workable in those circumstances.

We trust that you will consider our concerns as we see you as being in a position to be able to help and eliminate many of our concerns."

I see the Minister as being in a position to be able to help and to eliminate many of the concerns of those people far more capably than I can. They have put their concerns in a very sensible, logical way. The issues that they raised are very down to earth and sensible. I hope that the Minister can help them in some way.

Mrs ROSE (Currumbin) (5.45 p.m.): I am pleased to speak to and support the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 1995. As it is the first piece of legislation that the Honourable David Hamill has introduced in his role as Education Minister, I welcome him to his new portfolio responsibilities and look forward to working with him as part of his education ministerial committee.

The Bill provides for the establishment of new curriculum management structures, which include the formation of the Queensland Curriculum Council and changes to the responsibilities and functions of the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies. That will require amendments to two Acts—the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 and the Education (Senior Secondary School Studies) Act 1988.

We have seen dramatic changes in the social and economic needs of our community. New technology, for example, is having a major impact on society. Those changes are also having a significant impact on education. In today's changing environment, many of the solutions to educational issues of the past are no longer appropriate to meet future demands. The Government recognised that and responded by commissioning the most comprehensive study of the curriculum ever carried out in the history of Queensland education.

The curriculum review, coordinated by Professor Ken Wiltshire, has made recommendations on a wide range of matters affecting the future of curriculum organisation and delivery in Queensland. Those major reforms include a focus on the basics and putting the three Rs firmly back on the education agenda. The development of literacy and numeracy skills will receive a new priority as we strive to ensure that all children have the skills that they need both now and in the future. I am also pleased that, under the

reform package, the parents will become more involved in a range of strategies to improve the quality of education for their children and that they also will receive more information about their children's education progress.

The Education Legislation Amendment Bill 1995 will provide the legislative basis to introduce the major reforms recommended in the Wiltshire report. The issues of education and employment for our young people are of paramount importance to us all. We have a responsibility to provide new educative, employment and training opportunities to prepare them for their future.

There has been a long-term and irreversible trend away from less skilled occupations, which have historically been filled by less-experienced and less-educated younger workers. The disappearance of those jobs means that we must ensure that our young people have the necessary education and skills required to meet the changing employment environment, to prepare them and to ensure that they are job ready.

One of the terms of reference of the review of the Queensland school curriculum was the relationship between schooling and basic employment and social skills. The Bill signals some important changes in post-compulsory education in Queensland by extending the responsibility of the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies—the BSSSS—to include curriculum for all students in post-compulsory education in Queensland schools. The Bill does that by including in the responsibilities of the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies areas of accreditation, recognition and registration for vocational education programs that are delegated to the board under the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 1991.

Those changes to the role and functions of the BSSSS will necessitate the development and maintenance of a cooperative and collaborative relationship between VETEC, the BSSSS and the Department of Education. Those 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. The board will become a one-stop shop for senior secondary students in our schools, providing the full range of subject choices, including academic and vocational, and facilitating accreditation and certification.

Another of the board's goals, as outlined in its strategic plan for 1993 to 1997, is to develop certification credentials and cross-credentialling procedures to meet the needs of students in post-compulsory secondary education. In addition to this legislation, the strategies being used to do this are: revealing and identifying key issues jointly with VETEC; conducting joint research with VETEC into comparability, accreditation assessment and aspects of curriculum; developing standards and policies for certification of students exiting prior to completion of Year 12; and developing and communicating policies to Government on key issues.

The membership of the board will also change to reflect the changing nature of the senior schooling curriculum by, firstly, providing for membership of one person from the Vocational Education Training and Employment Commission who will be nominated by the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. Secondly, in light of the changes to the board's responsibility for vocational education, this Bill provides for the members of the current board, including the Chair, to go out of office to allow for the reconstitution of the board.

The Queensland Curriculum Council will provide a strategic plan for the development of curriculum for preschool to Year 12 within which the board will operate. The board's work in senior schooling curriculum will also be placed within a total framework of coordinated curriculum development in Queensland. The Curriculum Council established in this Bill will take a lead role in the development of a strategic plan for curriculum development in the years preschool to Year 12. The board's program for Years 11 and 12 curriculum development must be based within the council's strategic plan for curriculum for preschool to Year 12 development that is approved by the Minister.

The statutory functions of the BSSSS will continue to include advising the Minister on senior secondary education, issuing senior and junior certificates, improving and developing syllabuses for designated board subjects on the senior certificate, approving work programs for designated board and board-registered subjects on the junior and senior certificates, providing information to the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority, preparing and administering the Queensland core skills test and determining procedures and undertaking arrangements for the assessment of students for board subjects and the recording of results in board subjects,

board-registered subjects and recorded subjects on the senior certificate. The BSSSS has served the students of Queensland schools very well over the past 20 years. That is reflected in the degree of public confidence in our students completing board and board-registered subjects. Those new changes will enhance the board's role in vocational education and the provision of appropriate curriculum offerings for all Queensland post-compulsory students.

Recently, I was very pleased to be able to be part of a project at the Palm Beach-Currumbin State High School where, for some time, the Department of Education and the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations have been working together to provide an education program, which is accredited by the TAFE system and which has relevance to the workplace. Sixteen Palm Beach-Currumbin State High School students have begun that six-month construction skills course, which will see them build their own classrooms and a house for sale. The Queensland Government provided $80,000 for that project. There is no doubt that the challenge we face is to develop the means by which young people can gain the skills and experience that they need. Certainly, flexibility and innovation at what is needed. The partnership involving the Education Department, the Palm Beach-Currumbin State High School and Group Training Australia has been an excellent example and a very good model of how we can provide students with a chance to gain hands-on vocational experience in an industry in which they want to build a career. The students will be learning from skilled professionals from a quality provider. That combination of learning by doing and learning by studying will be complementary and will have obvious benefits for the students involved.

With the changes in technology, particularly in information technology, I am pleased that technology is one of main subjects in the key learning areas. All members can envisage students spending more and more time in front of computer monitors. Only a few days ago, my 12-year-old boy, who is very computer literate, informed me that it is essential that he have a laptop computer as an educational aid. He is now in Year 8, and he is not bad at two-finger typing. Perhaps the council could consider introducing the teaching of basic keyboard skills, which I understand is available at high schools, into primary schools, because students are starting to operate computers and keyboards from as early as six or seven years of age. I am very pleased to be able to support the Bill.

Sitting suspended from 5.57 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (7.30 p.m.): In rising to speak to these very important amendments to the Education Act, I could not help noticing that, during the Minister's second-reading speech he made great play of the fact that there have been some school closures in other States, and he mentioned particularly Victoria.

Mr Hamill Not some; many—most of them in Victoria.

Mr BEANLAND: That might be so. However, the Minister knows full well the mess in which that State was left by the Labor Party only two short years ago. Given the Minister's remarks I trust that there will be no school closures in Queensland. I look forward to a guarantee from the Minister that there will be no school closures in my electorate. Certainly, he cannot give such a guarantee for all Queensland schools, because I recollect very clearly that the Bardon Professional Centre was closed, a number of small country schools were closed, I think the Cairns Central School was closed and the other day someone spoke to me about a guillotine hanging over the Newmarket State High School. So although some schools have closed in this State as well, perhaps the Minister might give me a written guarantee that there will be no more closures. I have plenty of paper on which the Minister can write such a guarantee, but I hope that it will not be like the guarantee that the people of the Sunshine Coast received in relation to the toll road or the guarantee that the people of Winton received in relation to their rail service. However, because the Minister made those comments in his second-reading speech, it seems to me that he will be forthcoming with a guarantee that there will be no more school closures. I look forward to his providing that guarantee.

This legislation makes very important amendments to the Education Act. It incorporates aspects of the Wiltshire report. I have raised a number of times the fact that the Government is yet to face the real issue of what is wrong with our State school system and why so many parents send their children to non-Government schools when they do not really have to do so. Quite often, both parents work simply to earn sufficient money to send their children to a non-Government school. I do not know whether that has anything to do with the curriculum or some other aspects of State education. However, I suggest that,having recently been appointed to this

portfolio, the Minister ought to be applying himself to answering this question, because it certainly seems to have eluded other Education Ministers. Figures I have received from the Parliamentary Library indicate that 26.5 per cent of parents in this State send their children to non-Government schools. That is quite a high percentage. It has increased over recent years, and I am sure that it will continue to increase.

A couple of matters I want to cover relate to stability in the education system. Recently, when talking to members of the community, parents, and teachers wherever I come across them, I have found that there is growing concern—I am sure that the Minister is aware of this—about what appears to be continuous change simply for change's sake. People simply ask for stability in the system. I am sure that they are looking forward to this new Minister bringing some stability to the education system because, on at least several occasions over the past three or four years, it seems to have been turned upside down. People are looking forward to some stability in the education system for at least 12 months or two years so that they can catch up with what is happening with the curriculum and other aspects of the education system. I notice that, these days, there is a continual flow of people within the education system going on stress leave. They are mainly teachers and principals, which should be a matter of grave concern.

This legislation is about various changes to the curriculum, which I hope will not add to the woes of the teaching profession. On behalf of the teaching profession, I appeal to the Minister to bring some stability to the system and not to continually make changes.

The legislation also makes a number of other changes to the education system. One of those changes concerns the School of Distance Education and the children who will be enrolled at that school. I could not help noticing that, in relation to that provision, the Minister in his second-reading speech stated quite clearly—

> "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 . . ."

There might be a requirement to return completed papers, but I ask the Minister: how is he going to force students to return those papers? The Minister can put it in the legislation as a requirement, but I am not just sure how those papers are going to be returned. I am sure that the Minister will answer that query in his reply.

Mr Hamill: The onus is on them to perform in that regard.

Mr BEANLAND: I missed that interjection but, no doubt, I will pick it up later.

Mr Hamill: I'm happy to oblige.

Mr BEANLAND: This is a particularly important issue because, according to the press reports I have read and having spoken to the shadow Minister, Mr Quinn, I understand that a growing number of students are being expelled from schools for bad behaviour—it is now some several hundred. Many of those children end up at one of the Schools of Distance Education, so it is very important that under this legislation that requirement can be enforced, although I am not sure just how the Minister proposes to do it.

I have also had inquiries made of me about the change to the conduct of bible classes, which I notice has been supported by religious organisations. It seems that all the Minister is doing is changing "shall" to "may" and that there will not be a major change to the current practice.

Having made those general remarks about the School of Distance Education, I now refer to a matter that has been raised with me by a number of parents about the Brisbane School of Distance Education. Constituents of mine have children with medical conditions who are enrolled in this school. They are concerned about those children receiving adequate backup support. I understand that additional funds are being made available by the Brisbane School of Distance Education to people connected with the Showmen's Guild and people who live in drought-affected areas. However, people have approached me and have sent correspondence to the Minister expressing their concern that their children will not receive sufficient backup support. They have indicated to me that recently the senior guidance officer at the School of Distance Education, who was of great benefit to them, has been shifted. Those people are concerned that their children are being disadvantaged because of that change. I understand that the guidance officer who was doing this work was attached to the Fortitude Valley School Support Centre, but was stationed at the Brisbane Distance Education Centre because there were suitable office facilities available at that centre. Those facilities have now been withdrawn and, therefore, the children are now at a

disadvantage. I am talking about children who have medical problems such as terminal illnesses, chronic physical conditions, psychological conditions and psychiatric illnesses and disorders.

Although much effort is being put into mainstreaming children with disabilities into the normal school system, there is a major concern in my electorate that there be adequate backup support given to the School of Distance Education. I ask that the Minister pay some attention to that matter and see if some additional assistance can be provided to these particular people.

I know that people are concerned about the lack of backup support in the normal school situation for mainstreaming children with disabilities into the classrooms. Situations arise in which teachers do not have adequate teacher aide time and without backup are faced with children with disabilities coming into their classrooms. The support is not provided, which can affect the other children in the class. It is unfair to them; it is unfair to the student who comes into the class and it is unfair to the teacher.

I am not arguing about the amount of funds made available to education. However, I ask that a proportion of the massive amount of funds for education go into mainstreaming. The Government is intent on going down this line. I understand that we will see more of this mainstreaming and that more homes and institutions will close. Therefore, it is important that additional funds be directed into this area. We have to ensure that all students and teachers are given a fair go.

I wish to refer to the Wiltshire report, because this legislation will implement aspects of it. A prominent educationalist, Virginia Rowan, recently wrote to me and made some very worthwhile comments. She said—

> "The report of the review of the Queensland School Curriculum contains proposals to re-emphasise basic literacy and numeracy, which many people will welcome.
>
> However, it also raises serious questions. How did the education system deviate so far from the basics? How will the acknowledged problems be solved?
>
> There is nothing new about testing the basics in the primary grades. What is the guarantee that more testing will improve the quality of teaching?
>
> Why is the increasing of resources for remedial and specialist teaching for students 'who can't make the grade' seen as part of the answer?
>
> The real problem is that we continue to assume, incorrectly, that reading skills are automatically developed; that comprehension increases as students progress from grade to grade; and that thinking skills emerge automatically.
>
> The solution is to develop better teaching methods, not to try to correct the results of their failure.
>
> After explaining the new methods for reporting students' attainments, Minister for Education . . . reportedly said: 'There are some students who in the past have really managed to bluff their way through.'
>
> What sort of system would allow students who fail to make the grade to 'bluff their way through'?
>
> Many parents, teachers, employers and students are frustrated by official documentation that does not reflect students' capabilities.
>
> Such students will now 'face closer scrutiny', but this will not help them to become more competent. The Minister's promise of better 'policing' wrongly lays blame on the students.
>
> Before this report, the shortcomings which it identifies were always denied.
>
> Past failure to teach the basics is now to result in spending an additional $300 million over six years. How will spending make any difference?
>
> In the report, the question of 'how' receives little attention. It concludes that 'quality curriculum delivery is located within the individual teacher'. What if it isn't there? Queenslanders need to be told how it is to be done.
>
> The report proposes formal testing of the basics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. If reading skills are not to be formally tested above Year 6, then higher levels of overall literacy are, by inference, not seen as objectives of the school system.
>
> The functional literacy achieved by Year 6 (10-11 years of age) is not a satisfactory minimum achievement for a developed country. An education system with such low expectations can never prepare Australian youth for global competition.
>
> It is possible to do much better through four closely related steps, all of which would save costs and could be applied not only in schools but in all education and training:

- Change the educational philosophy.
- Introduce a practical 'learning how to learn' methodology.
- Cease the provision of vast resources for remedication in anticipation that the education system will fail.
- Disseminate knowledge widely about a theory of learning and how it can be achieved by almost every student.

The foundation of this plan is its philosophy. The existing philosophy is that every child should be able to 'maximise his or her potential'.

Potential is never actual. Education is a lifelong process, and it is nonsensical to imply that a child can reach a predetermined end point. Intelligence (or capacity to learn) is affected by what we already know, which is the framework on which to build new knowledge. The main limitation on potential is that individuals have not been shown how to learn.

'Expanding potential' would immediately raise the performance expected of education.

The other steps in this plan flow naturally from the first. One approach is to teach reading comprehension skills as part of the core curriculum for students of all ages. Students now are told to read, but not shown how. Combined with this would be constant reference to basic aids, such as dictionary, thesaurus, atlas and encyclopaedia.

When students do this they quickly build up a storehouse of vocabulary and factual knowledge which gives them the knowledge and the framework to accelerate their own learning.

There is no need to wait or to spend vast amounts to achieve major progress. Given both the method and understanding of how and why it works to provide motivation, actions taken would allow students to experience success immediately. Regrettably, such steps are not part of the Wiltshire report.

In the absence of real leadership in the education process, it seems that Queensland children will continue to experience the intellectual 'recession they had to have' and the community will be deprived of the ideas and solutions which would have contributed to real progress and prosperity for what we would all like to see as 'the clever country'."

Virginia Rowan is a prominent educationalist in this State.

A Government member interjected.

Mr BEANLAND: For the benefit of the honourable member who interjected, I point out that what she is suggesting is a different way of looking at some of the points raised by Professor Wiltshire—and some aspects that the Government should take into account. In relation to Professor Wiltshire's report, she suggested that it does not resolve all of the problems. She makes some very good points. I listened to the contribution of the member for Mount Gravatt, who raised some of the points that Virginia Rowan raised—for example, the need for learning methodology and so on. A lot of those points were raised in the Chamber before the dinner adjournment. It occurred to me that it was most apposite that the very things that she raised were raised by a number of members in this House. I commend her for that. I suggest that the Minister might have a look at some of them. I put them forward as constructive suggestions. I do not doubt for a moment that educationalists have looked at some of those points. In looking at the curriculum and reassessing the needs of students, the how to learn methodology, which I understand she is referring to, is a very important aspect.

In conclusion, I refer to the issue of time constraints within the school system, which was raised with me recently. Parents are raising this issue with me more and more often. The Government is introducing a number of new programs. For example, additional time is required for LOTE and so on. Although that is all well and good, we still have only a certain number of hours in the education day. There is a whole range of matters to be handled within school hours. Parents are increasingly asking me just how much more the Government will try to stuff into the system and whether there needs to be a reassessment. The Minister is talking about getting back to basics and so on. Because of the time, I will not get involved in that argument at the moment. However, I do raise that issue on behalf of the parents who have raised it with me. Because there is a problem, I raise it for the Minister to cast his eyes over constructively. I think the parents who have raised this issue are right.

Time and time again, people say, "Teachers should teach this or that at school." That is fine, but there are only so many hours in the education day and week. Children do not attend school on Saturday mornings or stay later in the day, for example, till 5 o'clock.

Without additional time, I for one cannot see how the Government will fit in all of these changes, nor do the parents who have raised the issue with me. They are correct. Perhaps there needs to be some reassessment in relation to some of the matters that are taught to ensure that courses are taught perhaps a little more fully so that the children do gain a better understanding, as Virginia Rowan said in her letter to me. Perhaps we need to have a closer look at some of those things. I hope that this new Queensland Curriculum Council assesses these matters at the outset so that we can ensure that our students receive the best education possible.

Mr ARDILL (Archerfield) (7.50 p.m.): I want to talk about a provision of this Bill that will play a major role in the society of the future. In the technological age that now faces us, there is no room for the cast-offs of society who, in years gone by, fell through the net of our education system. There is no room for people who do not take advantage of the educational opportunities offered to them. It is often said that many people lack basic numeracy and literacy skills. That has always been the case but, in the past, such people could always find a position in society. That tradition no longer applies.

I want to refer particularly to the Queensland Curriculum Council, which will be established under this Bill. The council will have six ex officio members, including the chief executive and one other departmental officer. There will also be a curriculum officer. Some members of that council will represent the non-State school sector, and 15 members will be appointed by the Governor in Council. The Teachers Union will be represented on the council, which will also include representatives from the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Associations and the Parents and Friends Council of Queensland. There will also be a representative of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission, one from the tertiary sector and, very importantly, one from the early childhood education sector.

As well as advising the department on curriculum development, the Queensland Curriculum Council will conduct two annual forums. That is a wonderful innovation, because it will provide an opportunity for public input and annual public reporting on what is going on in the education system. The council will also be responsible for ensuring quality assurance in the education system. That is a common term these days, but it is very important to the education system. What does quality assurance mean as applied to the Education Department? It means that, for the first time, monitoring will take place to establish the standards that are being met throughout the system, throughout the school year and throughout the State. The implementation of this measure, which will tighten quality assurance processes at the point of service delivery, will include greater responsibility and accountability for principals and monitoring of curriculum and assessment standards in State schools by regional quality assurance staff. The school support system will also be involved in that process. Quality assurance will ensure that curriculum materials and source books lead to effective teaching programs. These processes are needed to monitor the range of curriculum offerings in schools and to ensure that schools provide an appropriate time allocation to the various subjects. These days, much of that is left to teachers, particularly in primary schools.

A phased approach will be taken for curriculum delivery, guaranteeing high levels of support to school staff as new syllabuses are introduced. Quality assurance measures will help ensure that vocational education provided in the senior schools meets minimum industry standards and is directed towards vocational education programs offered beyond Year 12 and the portability of qualifications. Vocational education is becoming part of the secondary school system. Some of our students now undertake vocational education at the same time as participating in regular secondary school programs. That positive innovation provides such students with a head start.

Quality assurance processes will include the establishment of expert reference groups for new curriculum projects. There will be early and regular consultation with practising teachers and a trialling of curriculum material in State and non-State schools. An evaluation will be undertaken 12 months after implementation, and a comprehensive five-year review of syllabuses and source books will take place. The council will be responsible for the maintenance of existing quality assurance processes, particularly those relating to Years 11 and 12. It will also be responsible for the approval of curriculum projects for Years 11 and 12, which will be a tremendous improvement on the old system.

Quality assurance processes to ensure appropriate and balanced curriculum provisions across Years 9 and 10 include a mandated core curriculum for State schools right through from Year 1 to Year 10 and

relative time allocations for all key learning areas. For example, 30 per cent of teaching time across Years 4 to 7 will be devoted to English, which is a very important part of the curriculum. The council will be responsible for implementing core curriculum monitoring in State schools. The core curriculum will set time allocations for English, maths, science, studies of society and environment, arts, health and physical education, technology and LOTE. Those are the core subjects in which everyone in this day and age will need to be proficient in order to obtain a position in the work force and enjoy a high standard of living. That will apply even more so in the future.

Quality assurance programs will include requiring State schools to develop school work programs across Years 1 to 10 and supporting classroom teachers in developing work programs in the new curriculum via curriculum advisers based at school support centres. Quality assurance will place great pressure on principals to develop, implement and monitor programs to evaluate the performance of teachers. Because of that new role, teaching principals will all but disappear, except in very small schools. If they are to perform their additional functions effectively, they will have to be relieved of regular classroom teaching duties.

Quality assurance processes for assessment and reporting will include the administration of a Year 2 diagnostic net. For the first time, we will have the opportunity to check whether students understand what is being taught to them in the early years. That is where our system has fallen down in the past, because such deficiencies were never picked up, and students went right through the system without having any real understanding of English, maths and a number of other aspects of the curriculum. They then entered high school with absolutely no chance of performing; and therein lies the main reason for behavioural problems in high schools.

Quality assurance processes will also include a Year 6 Statewide test—another means by which we can monitor whether students are benefiting from the subjects being offered. There will be maintenance of the Assessment of Performance Program, utilisation of student performance standards, development of a standardised student reporting framework, moderation of student outcomes across Years 1 to 10 as new syllabuses are put in place, replacement of the Junior Certificate with exit statements and maintenance of existing quality assurance processes for assessment and reporting used by the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies.

The new emphasis on the range of core studies, which every student must now encounter, will see students in a much better position to fit into our technological society. Society will have ever increasing demands, and without a considerably improved education system than has been previously delivered, many students will not be able to cope. Much greater emphasis will be placed on a quota of time dedicated to each of the eight core subjects. If students do not perform, it will not be because the teacher has failed to put sufficient emphasis on that subject because it was not a subject that particularly interested her or him. There will be considerable emphasis on English, proven by the fact that there will be a set minimum time to be spent on English. Standards will have to be met in all core subjects. A test of the success of teaching programs will be possible with those testing periods in Year 2 and Year 6.

As part of its quality assurance and assessment role, the Queensland Curriculum Council will be responsible for establishing quality assured processes associated with curriculum development, coordinating the development of assessment and reporting mechanisms and monitoring system-wide student outcomes. So this will be a very important part of the education process, and it is a very important provision in this Bill.

I would like to spend some time referring to the two high schools in my electorate. The enrolments at both schools have gone down in number to an alarming degree. Due to the move in population—the demography of the area—there are no longer sufficient student numbers to fully justify those schools. However, even more alarming is the fact that some of the parents in the catchment area are not sending students to those schools, which provide a very excellent standard of education. Acacia Ridge High has unique practices to equip students for a future life in business and industry. It has contacts with the local business community, and as part of an ongoing procedure, it is able to send its students out on part-time work—not just the once a year, token time of some other State schools. That work experience almost certainly guarantees a job for any student who performs well, yet many students in that catchment area do not go to that particular school. In point of fact, some years ago, the Brisbane City Council made the mistake of providing too many buses—totally uneconomically—to transport

students from that area to a new high school which opened in an adjacent area. That other school that students are being sent to is an excellent school, too, but it will not provide students with the normal range of activities that the students from that particular area will need to have behind them when they go looking for employment.

That is an unfortunate situation which the school is trying to address. Presently, meetings involving the local community are being held, and the school has even produced a video to show exactly what it has available. I hope the school will be able to keep up the student numbers so that it can remain viable. It is very important to the local community that that school stays. The school has actually received an Australiawide award for the work that it is doing. It is recognised in other States for the work it is doing—it is unique—and students who attend that school receive tremendous benefits.

The other school in my electorate, Salisbury, has a joint program with a school in the adjoining electorate of Mount Gravatt—Judy Spence's electorate. The two schools work together. To provide the widest range of curricula, students catch buses between the two schools. That has been very successful; it is widening the horizons of students to an extent that otherwise would not be possible with low student numbers.

It is a strange phenomena that we establish very large schools, both primary and high schools, and they are in great demand for a long time, and then the population moves on and the schools are too big. Eventually, a second population wave will occur, although perhaps not to the same extent owing to our declining birthrate per capita.

Salisbury has concentrated on the arts and academic achievements, and sporting achievements as well. That school's art gallery is better than any provincial art gallery in Queensland. It is a magnificent art gallery. There are a number of other wonderful features of the school and it would be a terrible tragedy to see that school disappear. It is presently the focal point of that suburb and surrounding suburbs. I hope to be able to assure the parents of the district in the catchment of those two schools that their children will lose nothing by attending those schools. In fact, I tell parents that because of the particular attention that students receive from the staff of those schools, their children will have distinct advantages over children who attend many of the larger schools that suffer from crowded conditions and where the only students who come to the attention of the staff—the only ones who are known by name—are the ones who misbehave. I hope that we can convince parents to continue to support their own local schools.

This new council is a great new endeavour by the Department of Education and by the new Education Minister.

Mr Comben: And the old one.

Mr ARDILL: The previous Minister did a magnificent job. I am sorry that he had to prompt me to say that, but it is true. The time that Mr Comben spent as Education Minister will be of definite benefit to this State and its people. Up until a month ago, Queensland has seen a considerable improvement in Ministers. It started with Mr Littleproud, who was a good Minister, then continued with Mr Braddy, who was an excellent Minister, followed by Mr Comben, who achieved even more than Mr Braddy was able to, and, hopefully, now we have his equal in Mr Hamill. If I go back beyond the time when Mr Littleproud was Education Minister, I will be back in the Dark Ages, because until Mr Littleproud became the Minister for Education, the education system was a total disgrace. As I say, we have seen continual improvement since that time.

Mrs EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha) (8.09 p.m.): This Bill provides for the establishment and operation of the new curriculum management structure, the Queensland Curriculum Council, whose main role is the preparation of a rolling three-year strategic plan for curriculum development from preschool to Year 12. As such, it plays a most important role in the fulfilling of strategies flowing from the Wiltshire curriculum review and, indeed, its foremost duty will be to develop a vision for schooling in Queensland—a broader picture of where we are going with education, what we expect of education for our children, and what the future needs of education will be in keeping with the national goals for schooling in Australia endorsed by the Education Ministers of all States in 1989. From this, the department will generate a charter of values. I know that this led to some queries when it was first mooted, for example, whose values; which religion's values; how will they be introduced; and will it be doctrinal?

One of the advantages that I have had has been to live in a range of countries with different mores and religious bases, and one of the things that I have learned is that all of the major religions have a very similar basic

set of values and that there is no threat to any religious belief to recognise those shared values and that it will in no way undermine inherited existing religious beliefs but will probably strengthen them. Indeed, loud proclamations of piety and public displays of the same do not guarantee the honesty, integrity or worthiness of the individual, nor do compulsory prayer sessions within schools.

Within the Queensland State school system, schools will be encouraged to develop individual statements about curriculum values, goals and objectives, but it is important that our curriculum be anchored in a set of shared values—beliefs about what is good both for individuals and for society.

The rolling three-year strategic plan will detail priorities and time lines for new curriculum development projects from preschool to Year 12. At present, State schools are implementing student performance standards with recently developed syllabuses for maths in 1995-96 and English in 1996. The development of new syllabuses will then take place over the remainder of the decade, with a form of student performance standards associated with each. I must admit that I must be old-fashioned and I still try to say "syllabi".

Mr Gilmore: You are struggling to become politically correct; I know that.

Mrs EDMOND: I gather that the accepted recent form is "syllabuses".

Mr Comben: Syllabi.

Mrs EDMOND: "Syllabi" is now old hat, I am told. State schools will progressively implement a core curriculum from Years 1 to 10, with syllabuses being developed for the eight key learning areas—English, mathematics, science, studies of society and environment, the arts, health and physical education, technology and languages other than English. Those key learning areas will form the mandatory core curriculum and will move towards consistency between the States, allowing families to move around Australia without severely disrupting their children's education, as they have in the past.

In my electorate, and even more so in the pre-1992 Mount Coot-tha, there are many Army families who have voiced their concerns to me about the damaging effects that their forced career moves have had on their children's education. I believe that this is an important and sensible step towards solving that problem of an increasingly mobile society.

The Government has indicated its commitment to providing substantial resources to assist with the implementation of core curriculum in the new syllabuses. This includes educational advisers operating from each school support centre, and I know that schools in my electorate are already benefiting from those advisers. It also includes three days of training for all teachers in the year of implementation and resource materials to support implementation. That level of support is the most realistic ever accorded curriculum change in Queensland schools.

Those changes should enhance the quality of learning and teaching so that all curriculum areas will be enhanced and that our children will be better equipped to work and live in the twenty-first century. Certainly, they have been greeted enthusiastically by parents and teachers in my electorate of Mount Coot-tha, and I have been quite impressed, at recent P & C meetings that I have attended, with the new cooperative approaches being used by the teaching body and the P & C to handle issues within the school. Budgets are presented as a global development, with all concerned parties discussing and having input into the setting of priorities and directions for spending in the school.

Another initiative has been the cooperative approach to discipline within the schools—an area in which it is vital for teachers, parents and children to have agreement. At Ithaca Creek State School, I have been impressed with the way peer group pressure, mediation and discussion is being used as a way of resolving conflicts in the classroom and playground, as it also teaches young people ways of handling conflict by debate and discussion and not by violent conflict and force. That knowledge will continue to serve these young people well as they develop and mature. Certainly, many domestic violence offenders could have benefited from such early lessons in conflict management and how to handle disagreements.

Considerable debate has occurred in both the media and the community regarding how best to manage the needs of individual students, especially those with special learning needs and physical disabilities. This debate is no more urgent than in my electorate where one school which has catered admirably for special needs children for many years is Baroona Special School, which is now suffering a severe lack of enrolments. Changing expectations and attitudes of parents has led to increased inclusion of special needs children at State schools and special education units, leading to a situation

in which serious thought must be given to the future role of that school.

I believe that consideration should be given to maintaining the school as a senior college for special needs students who are moving on from primary schools but finding that State high schools cannot meet their needs. I hope to have discussions with the Minister and the department regarding the suggestion in the future.

Whilst the Government has supported the appropriate placement of children with disabilities into regular schools, a range of settings will continue to be needed to meet the range of disabilities and needs of individual students in a caring environment best suited to them. It is important to note that the Government's concern and commitment to special needs teaching is reflected in the level of resources allocated to the area. About 6.5 per cent of the Education budget is directed to special needs children. That represents about $157m being spent on about 2 per cent of the school population.

That funding is distributed to 62 special schools, 138 special education units and 280 advisory visiting teachers, who work in the schools dealing with issues such as hearing, visual, physical and intellectual impairment. There are demonstrable needs and we must be sensitive to the individual needs of these children. We should, however, bear in mind that not every child will be the same and not every child will cope in a normal classroom situation.

Another area of interest to me is the increasing recognition that not all high school students are heading to university, nor are they leaving school at Year 10, as they did in the recent past. With around 90 per cent of students staying through to Year 12, it is important to provide courses that are appropriate and attractive to them. I have been encouraged by the increasing coordination between high schools and TAFE colleges to provide meaningful alternatives for those students.

Toowong State High School has been a frontrunner in that move but has also spent a lot of energy and knowledge in preparing curricula that meet the demands of both board studies and vocational requirements of VETEC. It is interesting to meet with students at Toowong High who are looking forward to achieving university entrance requirements but are also receiving accreditation in TAFE courses in the engineering or hospitality areas, giving them the widest possible career and future education options.

Changes to the role of the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies will formalise that coordination, as it will include accreditation, recognition and registration responsibilities for vocational education programs conducted in schools under delegation from Queensland VETEC from 1996. A vocational education unit will be established within the board to manage those responsibilities.

I believe that the results of the curriculum review have been well received by the community and provide a clear pathway to the future education of our young people. Over the past 16 years, I have been intimately involved with the education system, as my own children have moved through preschool, primary school, secondary school and now on to university, and with a husband who is a lecturer.

I welcome the increasingly meaningful participation of the whole school community in the management and decision making and the inclusion of parent organisation representation on the Queensland Curriculum Council. That increased parental and community involvement has been a hallmark of the Government's commitment to improving education in Queensland.

Education is facing enormous challenges as society comes to grips with an avalanche of changes and new demands. Our schools must educate students for a future in which they will hold jobs that we have not thought of yet. There is a need to teach and encourage flexibility to meet the curriculum and assessment changes, the increased expectations of parents, information technology, the social and emotional education of children and vocational education. To handle those demands, teachers will need to take advantage of the practical support offered and to constantly upgrade their skills and knowledge, just as professionals in most other areas are finding that they have to, in order to cope with the challenges of rapid social and technological change.

The changes mooted in the Bill are well researched and their need demonstrated and I believe welcomed by the vast majority of the community. I congratulate the departmental staff on their work in the curriculum review and its implementation and the new Minister on his first education Bill. I support the Bill.

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa) (8.20 p.m.): I have a very special interest in this debate tonight. I am sorry that it was brought on at

such short notice. I have not had a lot of time to prepare my contribution.

Mr Hamill: The Bill has been on the table for a week.

Mr DAVIDSON: Absolutely, but I was not expecting the debate to come on today. The shadow Minister advised me that he was not aware of this debate until 3.30 this afternoon.

For some time I have had an interest in the students in my electorate, especially in relation to special needs. I have had many meetings with parents, teachers and students to discuss their requirements and identify some of their needs. One concern that is highlighted by many parents, teachers and students is the lack of guidance officers at schools in my electorate. In the past 12 months, guidance officers' hours have been cut back. I have placed a question on notice asking the Minister to supply me with the hours per week that guidance officers are assigned to the schools in my electorate that I listed.

It is known that developmental primary guidance officers are called upon to provide support for children, parents, teachers and administration. Each of those groups is faced with an increasing number of problems and, in turn, guidance officers are required to assist in the management of those problems. The problems faced by students include learning difficulties, bullying, frequent moves from school to school, poverty, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, being removed from a family, foster placements, blended families, marriage breakdowns, sibling rivalry, vision, hearing and intellectual impairments, friendship problems, lack of motivation, depression, peer pressure, substance abuse, and concentration problems. Problems faced by parents include partnership difficulties; parenting problems—as a result of children being given extra rights, parents are fearful to discipline their children; responsibility for making decisions about education of children without the information or ability to do that effectively; fear of closure of special schools; how to apply for disability allowance; changing curricula; and the inability to assist children at home.

From the perspective of the teachers—more and more teachers are stressed out. They complain about the workloads they have to carry and the lack of assistance that is being extended to them in classrooms. More teachers than ever are stressed because they are being asked to be members of many committees as the department looks to schools to make plans based on local priorities. Teachers also have to deal with problem children like never before. They also face increasing expectations, attempts to mainstream children—especially intellectually impaired children—with very little or no additional support, and constantly changing curricula. The most common complaint that I receive from teachers relates to the lack of support staff. Student numbers are growing, and teachers are complaining constantly that there is a lack of support. Because of school-based management, school administrators are called upon to make more and more decisions.

Mr Comben: And if anyone spends any money on small stuff, you people belt the heck out of them.

Mr DAVIDSON: I receive many complaints about the Minister making statements on television——

Mr Comben: Minister? I'm not a Minister.

Mr DAVIDSON: When the honourable member was a Minister I received complaints about his making statements on television about policies; and the poor old principal of the school, who knew nothing about it, would receive a truckload of information the next day, with absolutely no resources or new school-based management systems to implement those policies. School administrators are faced with upwardly spiralling workloads while trying to cope with the backwash of all the sorts of problems I mentioned earlier.

Guidance officers are allocated according to school numbers, not on a needs basis, which is unbelievable. The department does not seem to have come to grips with how to have a needs-basis allocation. Perhaps ascertainment is an attempt, but many schools are reluctant to throw themselves fully into the ascertainment process because that opens them up to parental wrath. Those schools gather data and meet with parents to decide on a level of need. The schools then have to say that that need cannot be met because they do not have sufficient resources. To ascertain in the first place diverts resources to the ascertainment procedure. That is the great problem facing schools that have students with speech language problems. All the time is spent on ascertaining need, and the speech therapists have absolutely no time for one-on-one assistance. As well, all the money goes towards ascertainment. About one-third of the students in most of the schools in my electorate have quite significant

learning difficulties. It would take all year for a learning support teacher working two and a half days per week to ascertain 100 children out of 300, and no support would be given. All the time is being spent on ascertaining which students have needs, and absolutely no assistance is given to those who have needs.

In other words, not only would schools meet to acknowledge a child's needs and then be forced to say that no help will be given, existing programs—peer tutoring, group tuition, remedial help, etc.—would have to be stopped for the ascertainment process to occur. Therefore, many schools do not ascertain, because they cannot afford to reduce existing services and cannot promise any more services. The dilemma arises when the department asks a school how many children it has in the ascertainment levels 4, 5 and 6 and the school says, "None." That does not mean that there are none, but that the school does not have the resources to ascertain how many children are affected. The department may say that, since the school has no children ascertained at those particular levels, that school will lose services. Schools are in a tremendous bind. The whole process is wrong.

The Government talks about literacy and numeracy, but it must understand that we need to address the most basic problems of students. I refer to the problems in relation to speech language pathology. Six per cent of primary school students——

Mr Comben: What do you know about speech language pathology? Someone wrote this for you.

Mr DAVIDSON: I remember that the former Minister provided another 20 hours of speech pathology to my electorate this year, but he took away 14 hours or 15 hours two years before. Teachers, students and parents in my electorate are grateful that they received another 20 hours of speech language therapy this year. The speech pathologists are delighted, because now they can offer some assistance to those students with needs and not spend all their time ascertaining those needs. The number of hours spent on speech pathology is still very short of the requirements.

Members should appreciate that in 1989, under the previous coalition Government, 36.5 hours of speech language pathology were available in my electorate. In 1992, that was cut back to 22 hours. This Government must be brought to account by me in this House to provide the extra therapy required by those students in my electorate. Some primary school students suffer fairly severe communication disorders, and speech therapy on a one-to-one basis is highly desirable for them. That is particularly important when teaching parents to assist in their children's therapy at home between consultations. At present, due to the limited hours available, only group therapy is available. For those students early intervention is deferred, resulting in more severe problems later in school life. Various studies, including one by Louis Rosetti, a specialist in early intervention, concludes that for every dollar spent to treat a child in the preschool year, it costs $6 to treat that child in primary school.

The Goss Government's Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 states quite clearly that there is legal redress for any person or groups of persons who experience discrimination on any grounds made unlawful by that Act. Impairment, which is one such ground, includes physical, intellectual and sensory impairments. The Goss Government's Disability Services Act, which was passed in 1992, relates to the provision of services to people with disabilities. Clause 5 of that Act states—

> "This Act applies to a person with a disability that is attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive or neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of impairments that results in a substantial reduction of a person's capacity for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility."

The Act states that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights to services that support the quality of lifestyle as do other people. That provision applies regardless of the age of the person with the disability, or the origin, nature, type or degree of the disability.

In the transition from primary school to secondary school there is no ongoing support for children with communication disorders and little opportunity for further therapy. There are three secondary schools in my electorate, but speech therapy is not given a high priority in secondary schools. Therefore, any therapy provided has to be taken outside the hours allocated for primary schools.

Principals, teachers and other students are placed under pressure through lack of secondary school speech therapy. When we consider the large numbers of primary school children, the lack of adequate therapy hours—as I said, there are only 36 hours per week in my electorate after the increase from last year of 15 hours—and the Sunshine

Coast region is similarly disadvantaged. Those students requiring speech therapy create a professionally demoralising situation for speech and language pathologists. Because of this there is a high turnover of speech therapists and many choose to work in other agencies, both Government and private. Many times in the past, the Minister for Education has claimed that speech therapists are hard to find. The fact of the matter is that speech therapists will not take employment with the Education Department simply because of the enormous workload expected of them. Many of these overworked part-time therapists would be happy to take full-time positions if they could be guaranteed a reasonable workload.

Mr Hamill: That's outrageous. You're suggesting they're work shy, are you?

Mr DAVIDSON: No. I do not know whether or not the Minister understands, but these speech therapists are public servants. They are not employed by the Education Department. The Minister might like to take that on board. The poor old "speechies" are currently working in their time off in an attempt to cope with the demand for their services. There is no speech therapy provided at private day care centres or kindergartens.

It has been brought to my attention by parents in my electorate that the day care centres—and four or five of them now operate in the Noosa electorate—have absolutely no therapist services at all and there are no guidance officers for children with behavioural problems. In many cases, these kids are being dropped at the child care centres at 8 o'clock in the morning. They are being picked up at 6 o'clock in the afternoon, taken home, given a bath and a quick tea, then put to bed. Some of these poor children have very little interaction with their parents or parent, which is a major concern. Many people are witnessing the need for speech therapy at child care centres.

The child care workers are screaming for help. I think that they have made some representations and requests to the Department of Family Services but, as I said, they are screaming for help with those kids who show behavioural problems and speech problems. There seems to be no intention by the Minister or the Government to assist or to identify the need to help these children at an early age. Most people to whom I have spoken would say that the earlier one can intervene in a child's speech problem or behavioural problem, the easier it is to address. It is something about which I will be writing to both the Minister for Education and the Minister for Family Services in relation to child care centres asking them to take these concerns on board. As I said, some very professional people are of the opinion that if we are able to identify the need in day care centres and kindergartens, or in the early years of primary school, to address such problems, then they can be addressed quicker and better, especially if that is done on a one-to-one basis. I hope that the Minister will give my comments some consideration. As I said, I will be following the matter up with a letter to him.

Ms POWER (Mansfield) (8.33 p.m.): I rise to support the Education Legislation Amendment Bill. I do not think that I should have bothered to prepare a speech because the Opposition members have given me enough to respond to, and to respond in a more knowledgeable way.

Over the past 10 years, massive change has occurred in the world, and Queensland has not missed out. Those changes have impacted on education, especially in the area of curricula. It is unfortunate that there are people out there—and I suspect in here—who do not realise that. The member for Callide's correspondence shows us an appalling lack of understanding of where curriculum needs to go. The Government has spent millions of dollars on upgrading the School of Distance Education's curriculum. In fact, I am led believe that it is probably one of the best curriculums in the world. Certainly, I had a Canadian exchange teacher here last year and I took him on a visit throughout Queensland to look at our distance education and our open learning centres. He said that they surpassed anything that he had seen in Canada and the USA, so I am a bit hesitant about the correspondence that the member has read into *Hansard* because if that is suggesting that a return to Dick and Dora is the way to go, no fear——

Mr Bennett: What's wrong with Dick and Dora?

Mr Hamill: What about Nip and Fluff?

Ms POWER: They are a package. I cannot go past the contributions that have been made by some members of the Opposition. First of all, I thought that the Opposition spokesperson, who is actually a teacher, would have given us a little bit more of an analysis of the curriculum. I expected nothing better from the member for Clayfield, but if he wants me to believe that he has been talking to teachers who told him that they resented filling out check lists, writing report cards and other similar responses to reports to

parents, I do not believe him. That is a fundamental part of the teaching process. Teachers teach it, they evaluate it and they respond to it. Any teacher worth his or her salt knows that and if those teachers are telling the member something else, then they should not be in a classroom. I would like the member to name those teachers so we can get rid of them. I do not believe that they exist. I think they are a figment of the member's imagination. He has certainly shown that many times in this House. I also have to tell the member for Clayfield that if thinks that I do not talk to teachers, I want him to know that I live with teachers; my family is full of schoolteachers; most of my friends are teachers; and I do not go a day without talking to teachers.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms POWER: So are we not the defenders of teachers now? Come forward. It is false? Is that the problem—that I have spoken to teachers and I do not know what I am talking about? I thank the members of the Opposition. I am pleased to know that we have it fair.

I thought Mr Lester was the only person who did it, but it seems that that is the way we formulate our speeches. We go through the correspondence list in our office, we bring in the letters, we read them into *Hansard* and that is our contribution to the debate on legislation in this House. Mr Speaker, when I reach that point, would you please sit me down?

I failed to return on time after dinner to hear the contribution by the member for Indooroopilly. However, I am pleased that I did not miss the speech by the member for Noosa. I could not believe the diatribe to which we were treated. It was not his own speech. Obviously, the speech was written for him because the words he used were too big. I have to tell him that he has it all wrong.

The devolution, the process that we are going through to put the decision making into regions, into schools and into support centres, came from teachers. The members of the Queensland Teachers Union, of which I was a member for a long time, asked the department to break down the process. The teachers asked the department to give them the responsibility for the daily decision making in schools because they knew best what was going on in those schools. For a group of teachers to now tell the member for Noosa, "We do not want it and it was not our idea, it was some figment of the Labor Government's imagination", is false. It is just not true.

The notion that the Minister speaks today and the policy is introduced tomorrow—heaven forbid if that ever occurred in the Department of Education! Teachers wait with bated breath for those copious pieces of paper to arrive. That never occurs overnight. In fact, there have been many times when we wished it did, but it does not happen that way. The bureaucracy of the Education Department is well and truly healthy, and things always take time. If principals in Noosa are telling the member that tomorrow they have to implement policy that the Minister spoke about on TV today, once again they have led him up the garden path. Of course, that is not hard to do.

I am not going to make apologies for the shortfalls that still occur in our schools. I am well aware of them because I talk to teachers on a daily basis and, I can tell members, that is not always by my own choice. However, I believe that this Government has gone a long way towards setting the record straight and placing the emphasis where it happens to be needed. The member for Noosa cannot hide away and pretend that his party had no part to play in education. The Liberals usually held the Treasury portfolio; the National Party usually held the Education Ministry. Between them, to coin a phrase, they screwed education in this State for a long period. Their priorities were always based on political decisions and never on good, sound educational policies.

The Opposition's biggest bluff was the senior colleges. The notion of senior colleges was one to be applauded. There was not a teacher in the State of Queensland who did not say, "Great, we have finally found the right idea—break schools up into junior, intermediate and senior colleges." But of course the coalition muffed it by deciding to locate the colleges in its sinking ships at Hervey Bay, Roma and Redlands. Those colleges were not located in those places for any sound reasons. The then Government did not do its homework and explain the concept to people. It is taking a long time for the curriculum requirements to be met. Those were political decisions and were not in the interests of achieving a good education system.

We need to recognise that the curriculums being developed now have to meet the needs of a society that is experiencing ongoing change. As the member for Noosa said—and this was about the only thing of any value that he contributed this evening—there is a variety of children in our

schools today. That variety probably existed before; we probably did not recognise them as much. We also have another group of children, that is, the people whom I call the "miracles of medical science". We have such a broad base of children in our schools that, for a Government to meet all their needs, it would take another miracle and a bucket of money. That is not forthcoming at present. However, we have certainly gone a long towards starting to address those needs.

Again, I make no apology for our not having all of the answers, but we do not have a magic wand, either. We are starting to address those issues. Tonight, members have mentioned special-needs children. I have raised this issue with the Minister over time. In particular, I have addressed what happens to special-needs children over 18 years of age. When they become the "miraculous adult", their educational options are suddenly closed.

The other big challenge that we have to face when putting into place curriculums for the twenty-first century is that we live in a world where technology has taken over. TV and communications satellites make learning a whole different ball game. We cannot simply put forward reading, writing and arithmetic as a cure for all ills. As I mentioned earlier, if we have to go back to old Dick and Dora, we will lose the plot and we certainly will not be able to take our place in the twenty-first century, something that we did recently in Germany when our technology was displayed.

Another area that we have to consider in debating the curriculum is people's mobility. Later, I will talk about national agendas. I point out that there is a problem in that some parents seem to have suddenly decided that schools should take over their responsibilities for looking after their children and for chastising their children for their bad behaviour. That is neither the role of schools nor education, and it should not be the demanding factor in the development of curriculums. But, unfortunately, it often becomes a major issue, as mentioned by a couple of honourable members earlier. Again, in the process of devolution, schools also have responsibility for the development of their curriculum. If behavioural problems occur in a school, the school needs to address them. No two schools in the State will have necessarily the same problems. They need to address those problems and the school community needs to understand them.

When my good friend Dr Bishop, one of the executive officers at Brisbane south, was appointed as the principal of Alexandra Hills State High School, she called a meeting of parents and clearly enunciated what her school policy would be on discipline, school uniforms, attendance and so on. She received a standing ovation from the parents at that school because she told them what the rules would be and how the game would be played. Her success in the department and elsewhere comes from the fact that she has always played the ball game in that way. Principals who do that, who take on the responsibility of being a leader in their school and who develop policies and direction, find that they receive that response from parents. Again, it is up to the schools to develop those areas while the curriculum is being reviewed, because there are many factors impacting on schools, and not only in a social way.

The member for Clayfield was on the right track when he talked about the changes, plans, policies, strategies, legislation and so on that have been introduced. Those things impact quite severely on a curriculum. Although it takes up time, that is no excuse for not delivering on curriculum development. But some of those factors he mentioned impact on the development of curriculum. For example, sexual harassment programs and so on can be built into life skills curriculum areas. The social justice strategy of this Government has to be reviewed and has to be considered in the development of curriculum in those areas. The equal employment opportunity legislation has ramifications both in curriculum and in school development plans.

Although I will not take up all of my time this evening, I point out that in 1993, when a group of teachers to whom I spoke on a regular basis raised with me their concerns about the areas that impinged upon their ability to work on their curriculum and so on, we drew up some 40 areas of policy that impacted on the curriculum. It certainly was a lengthy list. Although I do not believe that it was exhaustive, it certainly was comprehensive.

I mentioned earlier that, in the development of the curriculum, another area that has to be considered is the national agenda. A lot of time is spent on trying to put together guidelines for a national curriculum. The legislation we see here tonight also has to fit in with those guidelines. I have been a member of the Australian Curriculum Association for longer than I want to put on the record.

Mr Beattie: Do it anyway.

Ms POWER: No. I have spent a number of years developing curriculums,

particularly in the area of early childhood. I want to highlight the contribution from the member for Mount Gravatt, who is also a trained teacher, but a high school teacher. It is certainly a belief that I have held for a long time that the only people who were ever trained to teach reading and writing were the teachers of early childhood. Everyone believes that once children reach Year 3 they can read and write. However, we have a literacy and numeracy problem. Everyone can read at the level of an eight-year-old, but not everyone can necessarily read at the 15-year-old or 18-year-old level, and not everyone has the reading and writing skills that they need.

When I was out west, I had the good fortune to spend time in the TAFE system teaching adults to read. It is a totally different ball game teaching 7-year-olds who wanted to read more than anything and teaching 27-year-olds who had never mastered the skills. It is probably an important part of the curriculum review that appropriate teacher training is a big component of its success. Unless we take more than the early childhood teachers to be teachers of literacy and numeracy, we will continue to have this problem. No amount of testing in Years 2 or 6 will change that notion. The big factor will always be that teachers have those skills.

Earlier, I mentioned the senior schools. An important issue to address is the notion of where education breaks up and where the curriculum changes. Earlier, there were attempts to create junior, intermediate and senior schools. In my opinion, that system once had a lot of merit. Unfortunately, it has now lost its way a little. We have developed a P-10 curriculum. It is pleasing that the new legislation broadens that to a P-12 curriculum.

It is pleasing to note the changes to the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, particularly in regard to the inclusion of industry and the TAFE sector in curriculum consideration. I am not of the view that education should be geared only towards helping people obtain jobs, but I do believe that those bodies can make a relevant contribution to secondary education. Having left the department, and looking back on my experience, one of my criticisms is that teachers usually go to school, then to teachers' college and then get a job. As a result, they have a very selective experience base from which they make judgments about curriculum matters. I believe that input from industry and the TAFE sector will be useful for broadening the base on which curriculum issues are discussed. But that is not to say that our education system should be geared only towards training people for the work force.

As I have about 30 State and non-State schools in my electorate—which is a pretty good number for a metropolitan area—I want to focus on those schools. Schools in my electorate offer instruction in many religious denominations. I am pleased that those schools will be included in the processes to be implemented under this legislation. A wide range of religious educational options are available in my electorate, including Seventh Day Adventist, Christian Outreach and the instruction offered by the Jewish Sinai College. Those schools offer an interesting curriculum range. Obviously, they are very keen to instruct students in their particular religions.

The education initiatives implemented by this Government are exciting. I refer in particular to the Languages Other Than English program and that which aims to provide more computers in schools. Every time I enter a school, I find a group of children clicking away on computers. I am reminded of the old adage that if you learn it early, you do it much better. Those students are much slicker on the computer than I am. I get a bit jealous when I see the opportunities open to students. They have the sorts of opportunities that this country kid from Augathella never dreamed of. It is ridiculous that some people want to revert to the primitive education system of the past.

I congratulate the Minister on his appointment to the Education portfolio. It is fitting that a Rhodes scholar be appointed as Minister for Education. I support the Bill.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN (Chermside) (8.53 p.m.): I rise to support this legislation, which I believe will result in the improved delivery of education to Queensland students. Parents and students are anxiously awaiting the implementation of the Wiltshire recommendations. Expectations are high, and I am certain that this legislation will assist the Minister and the department in fulfilling those expectations. As a parent with five school-age children, I look forward to the outcome of the deliberations of the Queensland Curriculum Council, which will help shape the education of my children and all children in Queensland schools.

The Australian Labor Party is the one political force in Australia that recognises that universal education is one of the greatest opportunities we can present to any generation. The Labor Party acknowledges that, no matter what a person's background or social standing, education is the key to

opening up new opportunities so that a person can achieve to her or his full potential. Over the past five years, the Goss Labor Government has given the highest priority to education. Our children, and the State of Queensland generally, are the big winners from this commitment.

I shall comment on the cooperative working relationship between the Government and non-Government sector. I have been fortunate to have had 20 years' teaching in the non-Government sector, 13 years' close involvement with QATIS, the independent teachers' union, and six years on the Board of Teacher Education as the nominee of the independent teachers. The close working relationship between the Government and non-Government sectors is the result of hard work and commitment by a number of people over many years. I acknowledge the contributions of people such as Alan Druery from the Catholic Education Commission, the late Brad Smith from the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, Doug Watson from the office of non-State schools and officers from QATIS, such as former organiser Tim Quinn, all of whom have helped to establish that relationship.

I am pleased to see the willingness of the non-Government sector to participate in the Wiltshire process even though non-Government schools were not compelled to adopt the Wiltshire reforms. That they are working alongside State schools is a good sign for Queensland generally. The non-Government sector has been the beneficiary of increased funding from the Goss Labor Government because of the nexus of the basket-of-services funding. Because we have increased funding to the Government sector, funding to the non-Government sector has also been increased. I am certain that there will be a continuing good relationship between the new Minister and the non-Government sector.

A change to section 30(2) of the existing Act has created concern in some schools, but most of the concern is based on a false understanding of the changes. It is unfortunate that the day after the Minister's announcement of those changes, some people who phoned in to talkback radio claimed that there would be no more religious instruction in schools, that there would be no more catechists in State schools and that programs that had been developed over a number of years would cease. Those incorrect comments probably reflect the objections of an extreme Christian minority that opposed any change to the compulsory Bible lessons. Changing the wording of this legislation from "shall" to "may" does not remove anything from State schools. Schools that elect to offer Bible lessons, in consultation with parents, may continue to do so using the Bibles and teachers' guidelines supplied by the Department of Education. The legislated right of entry to State schools by approved representatives of religious societies and denominations to teach religious education has not been changed and is not under review.

The Department of Education is currently developing resources for the study of religion and ethics, which schools may offer to students whose parents wish them to attend. Most of the major Christian denominations supported a continuation of right of entry by religious groups and the changing of this legislation to allow for a wider range of educational provisions in State schools in relation to religion and ethics. Opposition has come only from the vocal minority that has pursued this issue over several years and which recently received a letter from the Crown Solicitor indicating the seriousness of their accusations against the Minister and the Department of Education on this issue. They are probably the last remaining rump of the old Joh Bjelke-Petersen/Rona Joyner pressure movement.

Mr Hamill: She was there the other day, apparently.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: Where?

Mr Hamill: When they last tried to arrest me.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: I am sure that the Minister has someone more powerful than Rona Joyner looking over his shoulder protecting him.

The Queensland Teachers Union will probably maintain its policy that this provision should have been removed entirely from the legislation, but the Government did not accept the QTU stand. Instead it has made a decision that is acceptable to the vast majority of Queensland parents.

In the mid to late eighties, as a teacher I saw the profession bleeding. It was losing experienced teachers because of the low morale, poor pay conditions and the generally poor conditions in schools. Teachers were leaving the profession and going to private enterprise and a whole range of other jobs because they saw no career future; so many things were demoralising them. That flood of teachers from the profession has ceased.

Some people are still under stress; I acknowledge that, but we are certainly not in the same situation as we were in six or eight years ago.

Under the Goss Government, pay increases to national standards were made almost immediately. The School Refurbishment Program has meant that many State schools that were languishing in poor condition have been upgraded significantly, and services have been provided in many areas that previously did not have them.

Some members opposite have said that the services in schools in their electorates have been very good over a number of years. I agree with that. I remember when, through its union representatives, the Queensland Teachers Union conducted a survey to assess the standard of materials being provided to schools. The survey showed that if the schools were in the electorate of a National Party Minister, they had everything that they could ask for; if they were in an electorate of a Government member, they were well supplied; but if they were in a strong Labor area, they had very poor resources.

Mr Ardill: The same applied to the Liberals, too.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: Yes, schools in Liberal Party electorates also found that. It is a shame that decisions were made about children's lives based on the political philosophy of a Government rather than on a philosophy which treats people equally.

Mr Hamill: It doesn't happen these days.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: It does not. In fact, there are times when I have pressed the Minister's predecessor or the department very hard and said, "I really want this in my electorate", only to be told, "We have a priority listing; we have assessed the need across-the-board." New schools are going into areas which are often National Party or Liberal Party seats because the need is there, and I cannot argue with that. I am pleased to see that now there is a needs basis to funding, and I am pleased to see that the Treasurer is providing the money so that the Minister for Education can in fact make these changes. This is in stark contrast to the Joh Bjelke-Petersen days, when education was given such a low priority and when teachers were held in very low standing.

Mr Ardill: The Premier told a teacher he received his education under a tree and the teacher said it showed.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: It showed that he received his education under a tree.

The member for Noosa commented on the devolution of decision making to the local level. He must have spoken to the one or two schools in Queensland that do not appreciate this positive move. The member for Mansfield, who preceded me in the debate, indicated that in her time as a teacher and during her involvement with the Queensland Teachers Union it was the schools and the teachers who were saying, "Give us some say in what we do at our local level."

With just a simple thing like school stores, one of my own school principals said that when he started out, schools received a list of stores. Schools received so many sticks of a this colour chalk and that colour chalk; certain chemicals for the cleaning of the sinks and toilets; and certain books. It did not matter that the stores did not suit the local need, the school got them because they were on the list. Now, an individual principal at a local level—whether it be a primary or secondary school—in consultation with teachers, can say, "This is what we need in our particular school." The increased school grant then helps pay for that.

I am under no illusion that the schools have to pay for more things out of the increased school grant—that is acknowledged—but principals and P & C associations are generally saying to me, "At least we now have a say. We can apply the priorities that we believe are most suited to our children's needs and we can spend that increased school grant and the P & C funding in the most appropriate way at the local level."

I must say that I do think that there is one problem, though, that the department will need to look at, that is, to review the formula by which the school telephone accounts are estimated. Because of the greater devolution of decision making at the local level, perhaps the old formula is not appropriate now that teachers and principals need to make more calls from their schools. I ask that perhaps that be reviewed in the near future.

There are other needs that must be addressed, but the Goss Government has the political will and the financial management to enable it to bring about changes and improvements to the education system. As I have said, education has been of the highest priority to the Goss Government. This is evident in improvements that have already occurred in the schools. I believe this legislation is another significant step in making

the education of Queensland children even better. I support the legislation.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Education) (9.05 p.m.), in reply: In concluding the second reading debate on this Bill, I want to thank a range of members from both sides of the House for their support of this measure. The significance of the changes which are contained in these amendments to the Act are far reaching because they go to the very heart of the substantial reform that is taking place in education in Queensland today.

As a number of speakers have observed, the Goss Government has a very proud record when it comes to educational reform.

Mr Comben: Hear, hear!

Mr HAMILL: I take the interjection from my colleague the member for Kedron. I think it is only fair to recognise his substantial contribution because it was during his period as Minister for Education that the Wiltshire committee did its work. What we are dealing with this evening is really the result of that good work. Pat Comben can certainly look back with great pride at his time as Education Minister and at the very great contribution he has made to education reform in this State.

This Bill deals with the product of that reform. During the time of both predecessors, Ministers Braddy and Comben, we have seen substantial additional resources made available to the education system in this State. We have seen some 1,700 additional teachers employed in Queensland. That is also significant against a backdrop of reductions in provisions for education in other parts of Australia. When we came to office in 1989, the point was made unequivocally that Education was a top priority for this Government, and it remained so. Not only have we focused on the issue of resourcing in our schools and across the system, not only have we looked at the restructuring and refocussing of the Department of Education, but these measures that are contained within this legislation show the fundamental reform—reform that I am delighted to see in this legislation has bipartisan support. This is a reform to refocus school curriculums, to shed some of the perhaps marginal aspects that have been accreted to the curriculum over time and get education back to what the community desires as the core—the basics. That is very important.

The reforms to curriculum are far reaching. They are far reaching in that what we are seeing is not only a recognition of what should be core areas of learning, but also a recognition that, with the increase in retention rates, the fact that these days somewhere between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of young Queenslanders continue on to Years 11 and 12——

Mr Comben: It rose to 89 per cent.

Mr HAMILL: I take the interjection, it rose as high as 89 per cent. I said that it was between 80 per cent and 90 per cent; it will fluctuate. That will obviously reflect to some degree the state of the labour market, particularly for those young adults and adolescents. The facts are that the retention rates have shown an upwards trend. What that demands of our educational institutions is a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of that larger slice of our young humanity. Consequently, the recommendations in the Wiltshire report, particularly those pertaining to the need for a greater recognition in that senior secondary curriculum of vocational education and training, are consistent with community aspirations and very consistent with the needs of a significant part of that age group who now are remaining at school in Years 11 and 12 and for whom Years 11 and 12 can be a bridge into more vocational training, whether it be through the TAFE sector or on the job. That presents very significant challenges for our school authorities and, of course, for our credentialling authorities with respect to Year 12 and, of course, into tertiary entrance. The amendments that are contained within this legislation refer to that very point.

A number of points were made by speakers from both the Government and the Opposition, and I do not seek to address all of those points. Several are very significant and deserve some mention. With respect to the exit statement—I said in my second-reading speech that the Junior Certificate, as known by a couple of generations of Queenslanders, will be a thing of the past. The member for Merrimac asked what would replace the Junior Certificate; for example, would it be a document that received moderation? Would it have some status, or would it be a piece of paper that could be issued by individual schools without any real recognition of where it sat compared with the value of a similar exit statement from another school? The honourable member is probably aware that, at present, the Junior Certificate is the responsibility of the board, but the certificates issued by individual schools are not subject to the moderation process. That will change. We anticipate that, in 1996, the statement that will

be issued for those who leave at Year 10 will be subject to moderation. It will give status to that particular statement; likewise to the exit statements, which will be issued for those who leave school prior to the completion of Year 12. Those, too, will be subject to moderation. That is important, because it gives standing to those documents and recognition of the effort and the achievements of individual students.

Members made some other points about the Government's performance with respect to the manifesto on which it fought the election in 1989. Particular reference was made to class sizes. I want to say very, very clearly that the allocation of staff that is made available to regions through the allocation of funds recognises the school populations in those areas. What we do not hear is a tallying of all those classes that are significantly below those optimised class sizes, which were outlined in the Ahern report. Obviously, it becomes an exercise in averaging. Significant discretion is given to individual schools as to how they allocate their resources. It is quite competent for schools to provide some variation around the mean to recognise the individual needs of students or the most appropriate allocation of resources to best fit the needs of groups of students in a school. We have made significant advances in the resourcing of our schools. That is reflected by the fact that the allocation of resources to schools on a regional basis more than meets the targets that the Ahern committee embraced approximately a decade ago and which subsequently have been embraced as suitable benchmarks for class sizes. A number of other points were made regarding student performance standards, Schools of Distance Education and so on. I take those remarks on board, and the issues will be pursued.

I turn now to what the Opposition and the Government would consider to be a commonsense provision that is contained in the amendments to the Act. I refer to the changing of the words in relation to selected Bible readings from "shall be undertaken" to "may be undertaken". As the member for Merrimac correctly pointed out, the practice in schools is very much in line with the amendment that is being made by the Bill. The Religious Education Advisory Committee recommended that change. That committee is very broad based, representing major denominations, a number of smaller Christian churches and a range of other faiths. Those recommendations were very sound. That is why it was with some disappointment that I learned from my colleague the member for Chermside that some people in the community were going out of their way to quite shamefully misrepresent a very sensible and minor amendment to the Act.

Some people in the community have sought to portray the Government's amendment in that regard as striking at the provision of religious education in schools. Nothing could be further from the truth. It was with profound disappointment that I read in newspapers in my electorate that that fraudulent exercise was being peddled by some persons—for whatever motive, I do not know. One person who was most distressed about the line that had been peddled by the *Queensland Times*—one of my local newspapers—and the *Ipswich Advertiser* was none other than Reverend Steve Cooper of the Ipswich Baptist Church, who also chairs the group known as the Ministers Fraternal, which is an ecumenical gathering in my community. Reverend Cooper was approached by a journalist from the *Queensland Times* asking him to comment on David Hamill's intention "to remove compulsory religious education in State schools" and then eliciting some response in that regard. He felt quite used by the journalist, who had gone out of his or her way—I do not know who it was—to misrepresent the Government's position on that matter.

In the *Ipswich Advertiser*, a similarly scurrilous effort was made to misrepresent not only my personal position but that of the Government and, I presume from the remarks made by members of the Opposition, that of the Opposition. Let there be no doubt that the amendments that are being embraced by members on both sides of the House reflect the recommendations of the Religious Education Advisory Committee and maintain the right of entry of members of religious societies and denominations to provide religious education in our schools. The amendments to the Act do not interfere with that right of access in any way, shape or form. The very groups who access our schools for the purpose of providing religious education embrace the amendments before the House.

Mr Livingstone: Ron French gave a very accurate report in the *Valley Times*.

Mr HAMILL: That gentleman is a coordinator for the Uniting Church for religious education in schools. He also was concerned initially at the quite scurrilous claims that were being made in order to cause some concern among the devout—the members of religious communities—about the Government's intentions. However, he saw through those claims. He knew that the Government was not

interfering with the right of access to schools. I thank him for his forthrightness in coming forward and stating quite clearly that the measures in the Bill in no way interfere with the right of religious education.

In conclusion, I make one final point. The changes to curriculum that will flow through the Wiltshire reforms, which are at the core of the legislation tonight—that is, the establishment of the Curriculum Council—have been further reinforced today by a decision of the Executive Council to establish the Office of School Curriculum.

The member for Merrimac wanted to know why that body is not a statutory authority. He held a belief that perhaps as a statutory authority it could be insulated from the pressures of individual interest groups and so on. The reasoning behind the Government's decision not to establish another statutory authority was based on accountability and the Government's clear intention, by appointing to those bodies the range of people from the range of organisations as set down in the Act and by ensuring that the Minister remained directly accountable for it, to ensure that the reform program was put in place with dispatch. That is the Government's intention.

We have moved quickly, not just to deal with the Wiltshire report and to frame the Government's response to it but in framing that response and adopting those key recommendations we have also moved quickly not only to establish the Curriculum Council and to place the Office of School Curriculum but also to employ the people who will go into the school support centres and the classrooms and deliver in that very practical and hands-on way the key objectives of this major reform. Those objectives are to focus clearly on the needs of young Queenslanders, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, to identify at an early stage in that child's educational career the particular needs of the child and to focus the resources upon those needs and those children. We are putting our money where our mouth is. We are committed to it. We have acted resolutely. I am very pleased that all members of the House are behind the Government in this major endeavour. This major reform is underlining the importance of education in our community now and into the future.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. D. J. Hamill (Ipswich—Minister for Education) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—

Mr QUINN (9:22 p.m.): Proposed new section 67C(2) states—

> "The Minister may appoint additional members."

That provision was not foreshadowed in the Government's initial response to the Wiltshire recommendations when it went through Cabinet. I am wondering why the Minister has given himself that additional power. As presently constituted under the legislation, the council has 21 members. If the Minister is going to give himself additional powers to appoint members to that committee, what is the maximum size of that committee? Why does he need to appoint additional members?

My second point relates to proposed new section 67D. In the Government's initial response, it was envisaged that the official members would number five. Now, in the Bill, the official members number six. One additional departmental officer is an official member. Why has that change occurred? In the Government's initial response, it was envisaged that the chairmanship of this council would rotate between the non-Government schools and the Government schools. The Bill does not mention how the chairmanship is determined.

Mr HAMILL: In terms of the membership of the council, I am one of those people who generally believes that committees are best kept to smaller numbers rather than large numbers because I tend to find that a small committee can work more effectively than larger committees. Nevertheless, in relation to the Curriculum Council, which members should understand is an advisory body that advises me as Minister, the Government has endeavoured to ensure that it is broadly representative. The various constituent parts specified in the legislation are being called upon to provide their representatives.

The provision that allows the Minister to appoint additional members to an advisory body is there as a safeguard measure should any other part of the education community emerge as needing or being seen as desirable as having a voice on that council. I can assure the honourable member that I will not be going out to appoint additional members to that council. I see that as a measure that should be used only in somewhat extreme or special circumstances. As the honourable member would be aware, the appointments are for a term of 18 months. That appointment

is to an advisory group. It is not a statutory body. It has no power of its own to make binding decisions. As it is advisory, I think that that adequately circumscribes the group.

With respect to its official members in the other part of the clause, again the honourable member will see that the various sectors are appropriately represented. Not only do we have the Government school sector with two representatives, but we have also a representative from each of the two groups representing the non-Government school sector. That balance gives greater weight to the third of the school community who are attending non-Government schools, as opposed to the two-thirds who are attending Government schools. There is balance to ensure that the two groups from within the non-Government school sector can both have a role. Of course, the other parties among those official members are drawn from the Office of School Curriculum, which is separate and distinct from the department and from the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies which—like the Office of School Curriculum—falls within the portfolio but has quite a separate and distinct role in the development of curriculum within our education system.

It was always the intention that the chairmanship would rotate. That is not a provision that needs to be contained within the Bill, but one with which the body itself can deal.

Mr Quinn: But it's your intention that it will rotate?

Mr HAMILL: It is my intention that it would rotate. Allow me to make it very clear. The council exists as an intersystemic body to have within its membership the broad education community neither owned by nor the servant of any one sector or another, but there to give advice and direction with respect to curriculum across our education system.

Clause 5, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

MINERAL RESOURCES AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 23 February (see p. 11061).

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (9.30 p.m.): It is an honour to speak to the Mineral Resources Amendment Bill. The Department of Minerals and Energy is one of the most important departments in the whole of the Government, and any legislation that comes before the Parliament which emanates from that department and which is relevant to it is important and must be well considered.

This legislation affects one of our largest and most economically important industries. Interestingly enough, as mentioned in the Explanatory Notes accompanying the Bill, some time ago a review of the Mineral Resources Act was promised and, as a result, I am pleased indeed to see this legislation before the House.

The review was promised to the people of Queensland in 1990 at the time of the proclamation of the original legislation. While I was thinking about what I was going to say about this legislation, I reflected on the period in 1988-89 when this legislation was first developed. I thought that it would be instructive to talk a little about the process of the legislation, the way it progressed and the difficulties that the National Party Government had with it. I know that when the Labor Party Government came to power, there were also some difficulties with the legislation, but those difficulties were negotiated through.

I would like to have it recorded once again in *Hansard* that the Honourable Martin Tenni was the Minister for Mines and Energy at that time, and he was responsible for the decision to redraft the Mines Act, which at that time was old legislation, had been amended many times and needed to be consolidated. It certainly required amendment because it was no longer valid or reliable for such an important industry in this State. So the Minister at that time undertook a very worthwhile exercise.

It is my understanding—although I did not play a great role, but I was on the Minister's committee—that there was quite considerable discussion in the community about this legislation, which was going to put a whole new face on the mining industry in Queensland. At the time, some of those legislative changes were considered to be fairly radical. I must record that some of the land-holders in this State—the miners, the freeholders and the fossickers—gave the Honourable the Minister and his committee a very difficult time. Those members who were here at that time will remember that vividly, because it was a very vigorous debate. There was great fury around the State and more

dust was created over the legislation than there was in all the mines in Queensland.

At that time, there was also some turmoil in the Government ranks. There was a change of Premier, a change in the Cabinet and a change of Minister. The Honourable Bob Katter took over the job of Minister and it was, in fact, Minister Katter who introduced the Bill and put it through all stages. That was a memorable experience and I am sure that all of us who were present remember it well. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you remember it as well. I think enough has been said about that. It was a fairly vigorous time.

Mr McGrady: Certain public servants chuckled.

Mr GILMORE: I am sure they did, but I suspect mostly with a grimace rather than with humour. Nonetheless, the Bill passed through all stages with, as I recall, some amendments made on the floor of the Parliament that had not been discussed with anybody. That was a matter of some concern to everybody. Nonetheless, the Bill was passed. There was then a change of Government and the Honourable Ken Vaughan became the Minister for Minerals and Energy.

After some considerable renegotiation of the legislation over a period—which I might add resulted in very little change—in September 1990 the legislation was finally proclaimed with a promise that after a 12-month period it would be reviewed. To me the interesting thing was that, after the change of Government, there was very little noise about this piece of legislation. Those folks who had made a sport out of rushing up and down the State and making an awful lot of noise over the original legislation became very quiet and headed off back into the woods to do what they were doing previously.

After the legislation was proclaimed, it did the job. I believed that it was sound legislation and I believe that it still is sound legislation. I believe that it has served the State and the industry reasonably well.

However, I must say that the legislation has not been kind to small miners. Although I do not have it in writing, I might say also that I suspect that the legislation was aimed deliberately at the elimination of the small mining industry in this State. That is unfortunate. It appears to be a fact of history, and it is one about which I am not particularly proud. I hope that some of the amendments that we are addressing tonight in this legislation go some way towards bringing small miners back into this State. I note that a couple of small miners' concerns have been addressed in this legislation, and I am very pleased about that.

In this State, we used to have literally hundreds of small miners involved in mining alluvial deposits of various types, such as tin and gold. Of course, a number of them were involved in small hard-rock shows, particularly in my area. There were also literally thousands of prospectors, or people who were interested in prospecting. Professionals and amateurs had a document called a miner's right and they used to go out on weekends. Those people were, in fact, the first line of entry of the mining industry into a province or a piece of country that had not been looked at before. They were the people who had the little picks. They were the ones who took the samples. They were the ones who looked for the anomalies on the surface of the land. They were the eyes and the ears of the future of the mining industry in this State.

I think that it was a matter of very grave concern that the National Party Government—and at a later time when the legislation was looked at further by the incoming Government, it did not resolve the issue—moved quite deliberately to take those people off the landscape. It seems that, at that time, it was so much easier for the department to deal with a very small number of very large miners than to worry about the inconsequential few little miners who went out there and did all the hard work. I do not think that that has served the mining industry—and it certainly has not served Queensland— well because it has taken many of those eyes out of the bush landscape. Many of those people were doing the hard work out in the hard country out where the Minister comes from. By God, there is some pretty rough landscape out there. Those people spent a lot of time out there. They gave their lives to it. They are the ones for whom we can be thankful for the discovery of much of the important mineral resources of this State. In fact, they discovered the vast majority of the mineral wealth of this State, and we should not have overlooked them.

The small miners filled another niche and that was they recovered much of the resource that was too small to be dealt with by the large miners. They fitted into the spaces. They were the ones who got up the little gullies. They scraped little bits and pieces out of here and there. Nonetheless, they created wealth and they were a very important part of the mining scene in this State. I would like to see us return very soon to that day when the mining

industry once again can support a viable small mining industry with large numbers of prospectors getting out there and looking under rocks and discovering more wealth for this State. It is a pity that the department was able to convince the Minister at that time that we should get rid of those miners, and I believe that we need to go back.

I would just like to for a few moments address some of the issues that have been important for small miners. They have expressed concerns to me, and I know that they have expressed concerns to the department over a period of years. I suspect that some of their input has gone into the review of this legislation. Many of their concerns have related to environmental issues and the way in which they have been dealt with by the department, for example, in terms of fulfilling their obligations as small miners. I must preface what I was going to say about that by saying that I understand that many small miners in those early days—or even 10 years ago—were recognised for their irresponsibility towards the environment. They did not do the right thing. They left scars on the landscape that are still there today. It was probably for that reason, if for no other, that there was a determination to get rid of them. Nevertheless, we must recognise the role that they play and ensure that in the future we have legislation that ensures that small miners can operate but which will also produce a good outcome in terms of restructuring the landscape after they have finished.

They have expressed some serious concerns about contamination and the definition of it. A great deal of the mineralised areas of Queensland are naturally contaminated with arsenic and other contaminants. Those contaminants exist in an area prior to it being mined, and they are most certainly present after an area has been mined. The small miners feel that somehow or other they might be discriminated against. For example, what would happen if, after mining an area, the land was discovered to be contaminated? They would be left in an extremely difficult situation. How could the issue of natural contamination be resolved? In particular, they raised the issue of existing contamination. For instance, I cite the mercury contamination of the Palmer and its catchment area. Huge volumes of mercury were used in the days of the Chinese and others. The mercury remains in that catchment. However, if it were declared as a contaminant, the people working that catchment could find themselves in a very difficult position in relation to that environmental degradation and the costs associated with fixing it up.

They also mentioned—and this was a matter of grave concern; I am very pleased to see that it has been addressed in this legislation—the need for surveys in remote areas, particularly when there are no competing interests. That was one of the things established in the original legislation. That has now been resolved, something about which I am very pleased. I thank the Minister for that. It is a very sensible change and it makes good sense. It was not reasonable to tell people to go out there and do these things when the only reason that we might ever need a survey is if there are competing interests with the prospect of overlapping interests. It needs to be said that the original legislation was overly bureaucratic and made life more difficult and far more expensive for the people out there.

One matter that has not been addressed is the business of having to peg claims on every bend. The Minister would understand that, particularly in alluvial diggings where the claims go up winding gullies, because charges on the environmental deposits and so on are made on the area of the lease, the miners tend to make the leases long and thin and going up every bend, so that there are pegs on every corner. Some of the areas that these people work in are incredibly rugged and very difficult indeed—for example, shaly slopes. It is almost impossible for miners to carry a number of four-by-four pegs, climb up onto ridges and drive them in so that there are markers indicating where the lease is.

I am led to believe that the warden already has the power to say, "You don't have to do that." However, wardens tend to insist on pegging. I know that the Minister knows about this, because I have raised a particular case with him in which it was almost impossible for the person to peg. However, the warden insisted that the miner do that. It would have been wise to include an amendment in the legislation to make clear that the Minister's view is that it is not always necessary to do these things. As long as we identify where the lease is with pegs at both ends, where there are no competing interests it is perfectly sensible to proceed on that basis. It saves an awful lot of effort for those people, who are really interested only in getting on with the job rather than worrying about the technicalities, particularly when they are far too bureaucratic.

Other small miners' concerns include access to plant sites and road access to alluvial workings across patches of land

between leases. Native title, the access to native title and the settlement of those native title claims have made that very difficult. I would like to touch on that point for a few minutes. In relation to mining in reserve areas, people have told me, "I've got a number of leases, but they are not connected. By their nature the leases are long, tenuous and very thin, and there is no space for a plant site." But because miners, like everybody else, need a reserve in the bank, they have a number of leases along a number of streams. They have to shift their plant from time to time because of the distances that are involved.

Because miners have to pay bonds on the size of the areas, they have in practice in the past not pegged areas for plant sites; they have just simply pegged the reserves. Now, when they want to peg a plant site or to establish a plant, they cannot do so, even in mining reserve areas, simply because they have to go through the tenure history business of native title and so on. These leases, which were put there as a hedge against the future, are now no longer viable or useful to the individual. That is holding back small mining in far-north Queensland in a big way.

Another issue is the proliferation of difficult, technical and expensive regulations, once again particularly in respect of environmental protection. The departmental officers, particularly in regional areas, have played an enormous role in trying to make the system easier for small miners who, in some cases, are not particularly literate. The departmental officers in those regional offices have been very important and have done an excellent job in trying to keep the ball rolling in the mining industry.

Time delays in dealing with statutory responsibilities were also a difficulty. Unfortunately, I notice that in this legislation there are more time delays. I understand why this is so. At the departmental briefing, it was explained to me that they need these time delays to go through all of these processes, deal with the other departments and so on. I wish there was a way that we could get over that. We ought to exercise our minds just a little to see whether there is some way to reduce the time delays. When a person determines that he has to put in an EIS, he goes to the Minister, who then has to peg it on a post for 28 days so that individuals can consider the terms of reference of the EIS. Then there is another 28-day lag later on. That puts everything three months further down the track. In private enterprise, time is money. As I said, I understand why this is so; but there must be better ways of doing that. The problem needs to be looked at.

Unfortunately, there are a couple of things that I must say tonight that are not particularly pleasing to me. However, these are things that I must say. We are discussing the Department of Minerals and Energy and the legislation that covers it, and I believe that this is the time to express my concerns. Little has been achieved by this Minister or his predecessor in the industry, and I will give members an example. There is shattered morale in the department. Confidence is at an all-time low, and that is a terrible shame. Once morale sinks to a low level, outputs begin to decrease. Eventually, the whole system begins to fail because there is no longer any spirit in the organisation. That is what has been occurring in recent times, and it has come about because of reorganisation upon reorganisation.

Let us not be churlish about this. The first of those reorganisations occurred during the time of the previous Government. There have been two or three reorganisations since then. The end result has been that nobody really knows where they are going. Many long-serving, competent officers were lost from the department because they had to reapply for their own positions. Some of the serving officers did not even get an interview. Such events destroy confidence and morale. That is an awful shame, because this is an important department and an important industry. There is a breakdown of communication within the department, particularly between inspectorate areas and between engineering sections. For example, the people in the metalliferous section are not encouraged to talk to the people in the coal section. That is a very sad state of affairs.

One of the most important issues is the perceived loss of priority for safety practices in the mining industry. In recent times, the Premier and the Minister have responded to that perception by outlining the number of inspections that have occurred, the number of accidents that have occurred and the amount of time lost through injuries. They pointed to the improved record in that regard. The comments made by those two gentlemen were absolutely true, but that has come about because of a change in the culture of the mining industry. When I visit mines and talk to those in the industry, I find that almost all of them are very proud of their mine safety record. They go to a lot of trouble to show me what they are doing and how they are going about it.

That change in culture was initiated by the mining industry itself rather than the department. In fact, there has been a real reduction in the number of safety officers in the inspectorate as against the number of mines and miners and the production levels of the industry. There appears to have been some sort of a rundown in that area. A serious allegation has been made to me that the money being saved in that field has been redirected to the Policy Division, which represents a politicisation of the department. It is being used as a political tool rather than delivering a service to the industry. That is a shame.

The downgrading in the first four years of this Government of the level of geographic surveying being undertaken set back years the gathering of geoscientific data in this State. Unfortunately, enough money has never been allocated to geographic surveying, and the budget cuts over the first or two or three years of the Labor Government were unfortunate. In the last budget, funding was taken back to its previous level. Nonetheless, it is still probably $100m a year below what it ought to be. We are not drilling enough holes. We are not defining the edges of the mineralised areas. The department is not carrying out the service that it ought to be providing.

We do not know as much about the mineral provinces of this State as the people of the Solomon Islands know about their mineral provinces. We should be undertaking much more drilling. This Government closed down the Drilling Branch. I do not cavil with that decision. However, I am concerned that the money was not redirected to private enterprise to allow drilling to continue. The Government did not encourage private enterprise to drill any holes or undertake genuine geographic surveying in order to better define the mineral provinces of this State. In reality, we know little about them. Perusal of a map drawn around the known information gathered from geographic surveying reveals many empty spaces.

It is widely believed that Queensland has an enormous mineral potential. However, in a general sense we do not know the extent of our riches. In the last budget, the Minister set aside a sum of money for a geomagnetic survey west of Rockhampton. That was a very pleasing step, but much remains to be done. We must extend such initiatives so that companies considering investing in this State have a geographic database to which they can refer in the first instance to gain some idea of the most prospective areas. That will facilitate the development of new mines. We are all delighted with the north west minerals province. Anybody with any brains knows that the future wealth of this nation and this State in particular lies in the ground. The Government must do more to ensure that the necessary information is available to enable private enterprise to develop new mining projects.

I reiterate my opening comments. This is an important piece of legislation. I believe that it goes a long way towards tidying up some of the loose ends in the original legislation. I will seek a couple of points of clarification during the Committee stage. I look forward to the future development and redevelopment of the mining industry in this State. I trust that this legislation will continue to serve us well for a long time to come.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy) (9.57 p.m.): A number of the points raised by the member for Tablelands should be challenged, but I noticed that the Minister was taking notes and I am sure that he will pick up on those in his reply. I intended to concentrate on a couple of matters, in particular the amendments relative to the rehabilitation of land and the achievements of the Government and the mining industry. In order to be brief, I will concentrate mainly on the land rehabilitation provisions of this amendment Bill.

Clause 48 refers to the rehabilitation of land covered by exploration permits. It states that within 28 days after termination of an exploration permit the holder must give the Minister a final rehabilitation report stating how the holder has rehabilitated land affected directly or indirectly by the holder's activities. Under that provision, the Minister can give notice to the holder to provide further stated and reasonable information about rehabilitation. If the Minister is not satisfied that the permit holder has satisfactorily rehabilitated the land, the Minister can give reasonable directions about rehabilitating the land. That is an important provision. In the past, that sort of attitude was never adopted. The fact that it is now set down in legislation means that mining companies will have to meet their responsibilities in that regard. The rehabilitation of land covered by a mineral development licence attracts the same provisions under section 62.30A of the Bill.

These amendments are significant, in that they require holders of exploration permits and mineral development licences to clean up after their activities. In November 1991, after 12 months of intense negotiations between the State Government and the Queensland

Mining Council, we saw the joint launch of the new environmental management overview strategy for the mining sector, known as EMOS. The then Minister for Resource Industries, Ken Vaughan, and the council's chief executive, Michael Pinnock, formally announced the adoption of the environmental strategy, which saw the introduction of a new management program covering four areas: environmental management overview strategy; plans of operation; environmental auditing; and the preparation of environmental management planning documents. The objectives of the program were to enable the industry to fully meet its responsibilities under the new Mineral Resources Act.

Before a mine can be built, a company has to prepare an environmental impact statement and satisfy a number of criteria set by the department. It must supply an environmental management overview strategy, which describes the miner's environmental plans for the whole life of the mine from development, through a mine's operating life, decommissioning and through to final rehabilitation. The conditions agreed to then form part of the mining lease. Companies are also required to lodge a security deposit which can be used by the Government rather than refunded to complete rehabilitation. I think that is a positive step because too often in the past mining companies have walked away from their responsibilities and left it up to the taxpayers to fix their mistakes.

Rehabilitation objectives have to be set as part of a mining plan. Firstly, the health and safety of people living near the mine site have to be protected. The plan will then vary according to the needs. Restoration, to replicate pre-mining conditions; reclamation, to re-establish pre-mining uses; and remodelling for a different land use after mining are all issues that need to be considered. The Bill before the House gives legislative backing to the process which will be further developed as an environmental protection policy in the next two years. The Minister referred to that in his second-reading speech.

I would like to comment on the amendments before the House and how they will impact on the coal mining industry. Fortunately, environmentally, coal mining has two important factors in its favour: it makes only temporary use of the land and produces no toxic chemical waste. By carefully pre-planning projects, implementing pollution control measures, and monitoring the effects of mining and rehabilitating mined areas, the coal industry minimises the impact of its activities on the neighbouring community, the immediate environment and on long-term land capability.

As a former coal worker, I am well aware of how non-committed coal producers were to taking advantage of the minimum impact approach to mining operations. There was a real attitude problem, which was reinforced by National Party Governments of the past. When I worked in the industry, it was common knowledge that Joh Bjelke-Petersen had warned producers not to question rail freights when they were spending thousands of dollars rehabilitating land that was worth $30 an acre. The Goss Government has been successful in changing that attitude of mining companies toward environmental impacts as a result of mining activities.

Coal mining companies in particular have come a long way in the last four to five years, and I am able to make fair judgment on that because, having worked there, and now visiting the mines, I can see the change in attitude and the work that is now being done. There has been a real change in attitude and a real commitment to ensuring that the State's coal reserves can be mined with little impact on local environments. I am sure, in fact I know, that the Government will continue to work with coal producers to ensure that conditions on mining leases are responsible and achievable, that mining operations comply with lease conditions and other environmental protection legislation, and that everything possible is done to improve existing environmental performances of coal producers in areas of concern to Government and community.

The Queensland coal industry is a world leader in environmental awareness and in production through a skilled and committed work force, new technology and accessible coal reserves. The willingness of Government and the mining companies to work together means that Queensland is well placed to maintain its share of supplying world coal demands.

Mining in Queensland will continue to be the big money earner, paying the bills for Queensland. This amendment Bill brings legislative backing to State Government and Queensland Mining Council approved and tested environmental policies which are now in place to help miners produce the environmental results that the public and the Government want. Importantly, the policies do not inhibit continued development of the State's mineral resources. Good environmental results are important for the

health of the industry. If all the miners can show that they are achieving results in protecting the environment and successfully rehabilitating mine sites, then both the environment and the economy will benefit.

A good track record in environmental management will help more mining projects to get started, creating more jobs and more export revenue for Queensland. Community acceptance of the way in which miners can successfully rehabilitate mine sites will lead to increased support for the mining industry—something which has been lacking in the past due to poor performances. But under the Goss Government, the leadership of the Minister and the willingness of the mining companies to cooperate, we now have a different attitude, a different approach and greater acceptance by the community for what the coal industry and the Government are doing. There is no doubt that this type of attitude will bring more economic benefits to Queensland.

In closing, I congratulate the Minister for Minerals and Energy, Tony McGrady, and his departmental officers for the work that they have done in preparing this legislation. I support the Bill

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (10.05 p.m.): In joining the debate this evening, I will cover some of the areas that have already been covered in the debate, but I will mention some other points that have not yet been raised. The member for Fitzroy, who has just contributed, spoke about the environmental requirements placed on mines nowadays and gives credit to this Government for enforcing those new requirements on miners. I believe that there have been changing community attitudes to mines and miners. I think it is a natural progression in Australia that the requirement now is that miners shall rehabilitate the land and return it generally to a more useful purpose than that for which it was already being used.

In previous debates in this House, I have mentioned the work that was done in the bauxite mining areas on Cape York Peninsula, where I thought the amount of money that was being spent per hectare on rehabilitating land, or I should say improving the land, was absolutely ridiculous. That land was extremely poor land to start with. It had great open spaces, but it carried no cattle—it was very poor land.

Mr Welford: Is that the only purpose of land?

Mr FITZGERALD: No.

Mr Welford: How do you describe it as poor?

Mr FITZGERALD: I said that the land carried no cattle, but I said that it was a great open space. The member can place as many connotations onto those few words as he wishes. The land was a great open space, and some land is being used as great open space. In some cases I do not say that that is not the most appropriate use for it. In some cases it is the most appropriate use. Open spaces can be of environmental benefit to the land. However, they tried to grow mahogany trees and conifers up Cape York Peninsula. Eventually, they were burnt out and destroyed. The land was going to return to the condition from whence it came—in some cases, unwept and unsung.

Mr Welford: They didn't know what they were doing.

Mr FITZGERALD: They did not know what they were doing. They were trying, but they were wasting an awful lot of money in trying to turn that land into productive forest land when it obviously was not.

However, Australian miners now have to face up to higher environmental standards, and that will occasionally mean that miners will not be able to mine where they want to. That is a fact that they will have to accept. It is also a fact that we, the general public, will be financially worse off for it. The decision that has to be made is whether we want to obtain the money, cash, income, or revenue, the export dollar—whatever one likes to call it—that flows to the general community from the mining activity, or whether we say, "No, will not mine", for aesthetic reasons or because of our environmental concerns. That could be a great financial cost to the people, but it is a decision that the people will have to make themselves.

We know that there are environmentally sensitive areas that are not mined. I know that the department is certainly trying to evaluate the mineralisation potential of areas that have been converted to national park. This Government has a record of converting land to national parks. I have been critical of land not being thoroughly investigated for mineralisation before being declared national park. The general public has a right to know what is in the ground. I would like to see a category of land designated as provisional national park, or a category like that, where we can say, "That land will be preserved as national park. However, we are going to explore it first." That way, we can have all of the benefits of locking the land up, but we can

go ahead and drill. If we do find mineralisation in that land, it can be excised before any area is proclaimed as national park. That process may be time consuming and the Government may need to delay proclaiming that land as national park, but the general public would understand that the Government would thoroughly check it out first. As we have heard, large areas of land in this State have not been thoroughly explored for mineralisation.

The legislation is the culmination of many years of hard work by many people. In a speech made on 6 June 1990, the Honourable Minister outlined the history of the legislation. He said that the genesis was in 1986 with the then Minister, Mr Ivan Gibbs. A Green Paper was released, and then a White Paper was released. Minister Tenni introduced a Bill into the House, which was withdrawn and replaced by another Bill, which was passed and received assent but was never proclaimed.

The change of Government on 2 December 1989 saw the Labor Government come into power. Before that legislation was proclaimed, the Labor Government made some minor amendments to it, including a commitment to review the Act within about 12 months. It has been a fairly long 12 months from 6 June 1990 until the end of March 1995. However, Opposition members will not be critical of the Government for that. It introduced the Fossicking Bill, which became the Act. Therefore, some legislation has been before the House on that topic.

I am amused by the provision of the Bill that removes the consultative committee, which was created by the then Minister Vaughan to consider the major problems of the Act with regard to the property holders, the stakeholders in land. The Explanatory Notes state that that committee met only twice and had nothing of substance to discuss. That is in line with what I thought would happen.

The Explanatory Notes state that Minister Vaughan gave an undertaking to review the operation of the Act at the end of 12 months. It was not to be a general review of the Act and the principles on which it is based, but a review of the practical application. To assist in that regard, a committee comprising representatives of rural land-holders, mining industry organisations, the Local Government Association and the Department of Resource Industries—now the Department of Minerals and Energy—was established. That committee met only twice—in December 1990 and December 1992—and no major issues were raised in the context of the practical application of the provisions of the legislation.

I was convinced that we had struck the right balance in the Act. I could not see what that consultative committee could do. I realise that it was a political problem. At the time of the 1989 election, the National Party was belted all over the State with it. Mr John White, who came from a property at Hanging Rock near Charters Towers, and a couple of other land-holders were most critical of the way that the National Party had handled the legislation.

At the time, I was serving on the Minister's committee and we were convinced that we had the balance about right, that is, not only to protect the rights of landowners and property owners but also to allow mining to take place. We thought that the Warden's Court was set up properly. We believed that we had the balance about right. Politically, it is very dangerous to start dealing once the deals are all done. If the Government makes an assessment, it should press on and bolt it down. Our stand was vindicated. In his legislation in 1990, Minister Vaughan did not make any major changes to the Act. That committee obviously could find no major problems with it.

Sometimes, as the Minister knows, storms rise and we hear great outcries from groups of people who are able to muster a lot of support on some issues. Yet, when we look at the legislation years later, we realise that we must have struck the balance about right.

I again pay tribute to the mining industry for what it has done for the development of our nation. That development will continue. If all the miners were to go overseas and leave our present mines in existence, we would be doomed to a different existence than that which we have with an active mining industry. All members of this House recognise that. However, I do not know whether all members of the general public recognise that.

One of the best stories that I have heard was about a former Minister, Martin Tenni, who was a fairly robust type of character. He walked into a place in north Queensland. A little four-wheel drive had pulled up. On the back was a big sign saying, "Ban mining. No mines". Being a provocative type of character, Tenni walked up to the driver and said, "You would be a stupid fool, wouldn't you?" He might have added a few Australian adjectives to that. He said, "You would be a hypocrite, wouldn't you?"

That fellow spun around. He had been accosted by a Minister of the Crown, but he

did not know that. Tenni was very good at disguising the fact that he was a Minister, particularly when he dressed in casual clothes. The fellow asked him what he meant. Tenni said, "You really mean that, don't you—ban mining; no mines?" The fellow said, "Yes, yes." Tenni said, "You would be the biggest hypocrite. You drive around in a vehicle that is made of steel. Where did that come from? You drive on the roads. Where did they come from? You put fuel in your car. Where did that come from? You are nothing but a hypocrite." He said that, a week or two later, he saw the same vehicle and the sign had been scratched off. In other words, he had made his point. That person had realised that we require mining. Even to allow us to put a fork into our food, we must have a mine. I will not say any more on that theme. Most members understand what I mean.

The mining industry has had a history of crisis. Now in the Minister's electorate, we are going through a crisis. I know how sensitive that he would be to it. The strike has Mount Isa Mines in strife. I hope that that matter can be resolved. In the past, that company had problems. My understanding—and I would be interested to know the Minister's version—is that a power struggle is going on between the unions to represent the workers. Some unions are resisting that power struggle. Some of the unions are trying to stand up to the mining company to gain better benefits or to make sure that workers do not lose any of their existing conditions. The unions are trying to flex their muscles and show their strength. The stronger union is therefore looking for support from the miners.

While that struggle is going on, we are getting into a very difficult position. I will not go into the details of the factional fight and its ramifications for the Labor Party. We can see that demonstrated any time that the Labor Party wants to select a Senate candidate. However, the problem goes back to Mount Isa Mines. I am not incorrect in saying that those things happen.

In 1964, there was a dreadful strike in Mount Isa Mines. A couple of years ago, I was reading a book in the library. It was only a small book. I forget its title. It was about the Mount Isa Mines strike. I thought that I saw the Minister's photo in the book, but it was obviously a photo of his brother. The photograph was of Pat Mackie and Vince McGrady. The Minister looks exactly the same as the person in the photo. I looked up the Minister's name to make sure that it was not Vincent Anthony McGrady. The photograph in the book was of the Minister's brother.

The Minister knows the impact of that strike not only on the company but also on the lives of all the people involved. The unions became locked into a battle which went on to the bitter end. There are examples of that happening all over the world. I cite the example of Ravenswood, which was a very prosperous goldmine. In the First World War, a long strike went on and the price of gold dropped. The mine just died. That site is being revisited now by miners. They are going back over the same ground.

We cannot afford to allow the unions and the companies to continue failing to resolve their problems. They will not just damage themselves. They are like two old pugs that are slugging it out, with blood going all over the place. We, the beneficiaries of the mining industry, are all suffering as well. We are going to continue to suffer. I do not mean only the shareholders. The State's income is going to drop because of a reduction in revenue from rail freight. We are all victims of the industrial relations system. Until we can arrive at a solution to those problems, we are going to continue to revisit them.

When a mine is opened, the problem arises of whether to open up new towns. That is always going to be a controversial issue. The Government may make some decisions, but I believe that the mining companies should work out the most profitable way to do it. At present, there is a debate in Western Australia about whether a particular mining company is better off bringing its workers in from Perth and the southern towns of Western Australia and flying them to the Argyle diamond mine. The miners lover flying in and flying out. They say that that system gives them more time with their families than when they are living on site. They work a different shift program. They see more of their families and their families are nearer to educational facilities and health facilities.

The cost of establishing a mining town that may, in some instances, have a life of only 25 years or 30 years is very high. Sometimes that is not the best way to go. I can understand a Government always wanting to develop remote areas. The Government says, "Right. We will open a mine, but we want some benefits for the people who live in that area." The people benefit from a mining town being established; however, it is not always economically feasible. I believe that, to a large degree, the mining industry is dependent on economics.

It is fine to say that we are going to dictate to the mining companies how they will run their operations, but we cannot always do that because the mining companies in Australia are not entirely Australian companies; they are worldwide companies. If the Government stops a company from mining, making a profit and returning a profit to its shareholders, it will do its mining elsewhere. If honourable members look up the financial records of the mining companies, they will see that CRA, Mount Isa Mines and many Australian companies have operations throughout the world. They will go to any place where they are able to mine their product. Australians will be the poorer because we get virtually no return from overseas mines, unless we happen to have shares in the mining companies concerned. It would be beneficial if all Australians took out shares in mining companies, because they would take more interest in the mining industry.

I wish the legislation every success. I support the Bill.

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers) (10.23 p.m.): I join with the other coalition members in supporting the Mineral Resources Amendment Bill 1995. This Bill covers a wide range of issues, including regional prospecting permits, the right to lodge objections by individuals and also interested groups to the Warden's Court and, most importantly, the environmental and rehabilitation planning which the member for Fitzroy mentioned.

I realise that most members in the House, especially the Minister, are aware of the huge mining activities currently operating in the Charters Towers electorate. Mining and mineral processing is the largest single contributor to Australia's and also Queensland's wealth. It is the financial position of mining companies that largely determines how much they can spend on research and on managing the environment and it certainly takes a lot of wealth and technology to achieve that. Very stringent levels are now required of the industry, and I can inform the House that all mining projects in the Charters Towers electorate are performing above and beyond the standard required when it comes to their responsibilities towards the environment.

The open-cut coal mines of Blair Athol, Goonyella/Riverside and Peak Downs all have very comprehensive programs in place to rehabilitate the land already mined. In open-cut mining all the topsoil is removed and stockpiled. The rock is blasted and the overburden is removed by dragline and dumped in a mined area and reshaped to merge with the surrounding landscape. The soil is spread over the area, fertilised, and then sown with pasture, trees or shrubs. I have witnessed the work being carried out and also noted that, in many cases, the re-established land has a better coverage of grass than the surrounds that have not even been mined. I know the member for Lockyer touched on that in his contribution to this debate. Those projects cost a lot of money, and I do congratulate those mines on their very comprehensive environmental management programs.

Even the drought that we have experienced over the past four years—and even longer in some cases—has had a significant effect on the mines, which had to implement stringent water conservation management programs and pay for water supplies to be piped from various sources to uphold their production and to maintain their rehabilitation programs.

It is pleasing to see that the Bill covers the main concerns experienced by the landowners, which are the rehabilitation of land after exploration or termination of development and mining leases and the removal or selling off of plant left on site. Charters Towers is a prime example, with remnants of the old mining days still scattered across the area, and old workings still causing problems in many areas. Charters Towers also wears the problem of the old mining days with many of the old tailings, known as mullock heaps, scattered throughout and around the city having been tested and found to contain hazardous substances. I know the Minister has recently been on inspection of these tailings and is trying to set up a program to restore these areas to a safe level. At present, Rishton mine is moving the tailings to its plant so that it can process any gold that is found.

Over the years, many of those heaps have spread. During the dry seasons, the mullock dries out, and the rains and winds have spread it over some distance around the original heaps. Now that Rishton mine is removing those heaps, there is a great opportunity to clear the contaminated areas around the heaps and back load the trucks with top dressing to rehabilitate the sites. I suggest to the Minister that that could be a cost-effective method of carrying out that work. The Minister has proposed to fund the rehabilitation, along with the council and the mining companies. While those trucks are working, they could take away those heaps. That would be better than starting up a new project.

I commend the work done on the old Chariah tailings dump in Charters Towers. I do not know whether the Minister had a chance to look at that dump the last time he was in that area. I have flown over it on a couple of occasions. It is a pretty high tailings dam. It is a beautiful site. It is a bit like the ANZ stadium without the grandstand. It is a credit to the people who did the work.

Thalanga Mine, which is 50 kilometres west of Charters Towers, is now trialling the most effective means of controlling acid rock draining. The trials being carried out under the instructions of tailings dam cover specialists, Environmental Geochemistry International, are of a new system introduced by that company. Five specially designed dams will be filled with mine wastes, tailings and mine workings before being capped with clay material, top-soiled and revegetated. Each dam—and all the dams vary—will be monitored over a period and the one that gives the best results will be selected for the control of ARD, which is the drilling at the site. Waste rock produced from the mining of ore is used underground as fill or placed on waste rock dumps and eventually reprofiled, provided with drainage channels, top-soiled and revegetated.

All the goldmines around Charters Towers have very comprehensive environmental programs in place. Mount Leyshon goldmine sets a very high standard in land care, along with the award-winning policy adopted by Pajingo mine, 75 kilometres south of Charters Towers. Both mines have carried out considerable research for waste rock management and waste water treatments. I congratulate the management of both of the mines for their efforts.

One of the most recently developed mines in the McKinlay Shire, the Cannington base metal mine, was also the recipient of last year's awards for excellence in planning design and implementation of environmental management programs. For a place way out there with a restricted water supply, the people have done a tremendous job. The most exciting exploration in the area at the moment is with the Charters Towers goldmine gaining entry to the old workings under the city of Charters Towers. The company has tunnelled just over a kilometre to reach the first of the old workings. While doing this, the waste granite rock and the gravel carted from the shaft has been used as contour banks to surround the shaft entrance and the enclosure to act as a barrier to prevent noise pollution, which is also a very good point.

The people at the mine are constantly in touch with the residents who live in close proximity to the mine to monitor any effects that are caused by this exploration. I do not know whether the Minister actually had time to inspect it when he was up there—yes, he did; I remember seeing his photograph in the paper—but it is a very exciting project. I do not know whether the Minister, with all of that safety equipment on him, actually walked to the end. It is a fair way down. I walked down, but I had to get a lift back. I had had it.

Mr McGrady: I worked with a bloke by the name of White. I don't know what he's doing up there.

Mr MITCHELL: I do not know what he is doing. I have not heard much of him. I am certainly looking forward to my next visit to the mine. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to outline some of the environmental management programs that are being carried out by some of the largest mines in my electorate, and in Queensland, and to inform the House of the awareness of these mining companies of the need to protect our environment and to rehabilitate o the land yet to be mined and that which has been mined already.

Once again, after reading most of the Bill, I am pleased to see that it covers all the rights of all parties involved—the landowners, the prospectors, interested groups, mining companies and the mining registrars. Along with the other coalition members, I support the Bill.

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—Minister for Minerals and Energy) (10.32 p.m.), in reply: I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the speakers in this debate—every one of them—for the support that they have given to this amendment legislation. I want to stress to the House that each and every one of us should take every opportunity that we have, whether we live Burketown or down here in Brisbane, to stress the importance of the mining industry to the economy of this State. As many members mentioned tonight, it is the job provider, it is the wealth creator, and it is the industry that basically pays the bills of Queensland.

Over the past few years, there has been a change in the culture of this industry and certainly a change of attitude with regard to the environment. I recall not too long ago that I travelled to Blackwater with the member for Fitzroy. We came across a young man who had worked for the Department of Environment and Heritage. He told us that up until recently, he was quite disgusted with the

attitude of some of the mining companies. Yet he decided that he wanted to work for one of the mining companies in the Fitzroy electorate because he was so impressed with the way in which it had changed its attitude towards the environment.

Mr Gilmore mentioned the fact that the Department of Minerals and Energy is the most important department in the Queensland Government. I would have to agree with him, and I want that noted and underlined. Mining fraternities and mining communities are a special breed of people. No matter where one goes around the Commonwealth or, indeed, around the world, one meets people from the mining industry who have worked,in mines in Queensland.

As has been mentioned before, the Mineral Resources Act came into being after a great deal of controversy and after a great deal of heart searching by people of different persuasions. It was eventually passed through the Parliament by Ken Vaughan. At the time, Ken said that after 12 months we would look at some amendments. As has been explained before and as is mentioned in the Explanatory Notes, a number of meetings were called and at the time it was felt generally that there was no need for amendments.

Mr Gilmore also mentioned small miners. I think they do play and have played over many, many years a very important role in the industry. The small miners are part of this nation's folklore. It was the small miners who, in many cases, discovered the larger mines, and if it had not been for those men and women who were out there working among the dust and the flies, we would not be enjoying the wealth from the mining industry which we enjoy today.

There are many reasons why some of those small miners have disappeared off the face of Queensland. Of course, one reason is the collapse of the tin industry in the area to which Mr Gilmore referred. There was just a general collapse and, of course, with that collapse went many of those small miners. In the north west of the State, there are other reasons why the small miners have decreased in numbers, and one is that some of the larger mines that used to accept and buy ore from them no longer do that. In my own electorate, I have seen large numbers of people who were once the backbone of the small mining industry simply disappear. That is sad. I certainly hope that that situation can be and will be reversed in the years ahead because, as I said before, they are all identities. We have one in Mount Isa. Whenever officers of my department hear his name, they shudder. Whenever the people in my electorate office hear his name, they shudder. His name is Foschi, and I am sure he would be delighted to know that his name has been mentioned in the records of this Parliament because, my God, sometimes he gives me a terrible time. They tell me that he always comes good on election day.

Mr Gilmore mentioned a number of issues, and he praised the officers of the department. I concur with that because, strange as it may seem, people come into my electorate office with complaints about many other areas of Government activity, both State and Federal, yet I never, ever get people coming into my office with complaints or queries about the Department of Minerals and Energy. I believe that when people go into the office, they get good service. I want to place that on record. Everywhere I go around the State, I hear the same comments about the people who work for the department.

Mr Gilmore also raised matters about the numbers of pegs that have to be placed in many difficult positions. As the member is aware, the mining registrar can dispense with this requirement, but it is very difficult in many of the places to which the member referred. Again, if the member has some suggestions—and I am being serious—or some of the small miners have some suggestions, he should let me have them. I will give the member my assurance tonight that my department will look at that again.

The member also referred to time delays. I think that we have to be honest: in recent years, time delays have been reduced. However, as the member pointed out, there has to be consultation with other departments, particularly with the Department of Environment and Heritage, and there has to be consultation with landowners and other people. It does take time but, again, my department is doing its best to keep that to a minimum.

The member referred to the morale of the staff of the Department of Minerals and Energy having been shattered, of it being at an all-time low. I beg to differ. I can say that, some years ago, that was the case because there were great changes taking place. Whenever we have changes, we have uncertainty and when we have uncertainty, we have people who are concerned. That was the case then but, honestly, I have to say that there are major changes in the department. In fact, we recently had a group working on the RA55. That was a tremendous success. I

brought the whole team into the office for morning tea and they were saying to me that although morale was bad that it had picked up. There are many new projects taking place throughout the State. People are involved in them and there is a new feeling in the department. I accept the fact that morale was low, but I believe that we have certainly turned the corner and that has changed. I am sincere when I say that.

Tonight, members would expect me to defend the department and to defend the Government. However, let me say that no matter who I talk to, whether they are people who are visiting Queensland, or if I go interstate and talk to people there, I always ask them one question: "How are you getting on with the department?" In every single instance, people say to me that the Department of Minerals and Energy in Queensland is by far the best of any they have ever dealt with. At times we can try to score points, but in all fairness the department is running well. It has a good reputation right around this State and right around this nation.

The honourable member also mentioned that insufficient money is being spent on looking for more reserves. Last year, we allocated $2m to the air data program, and there will be a further $2m in the coming year. We are aware of that situation and we are addressing it.

The member for Fitzroy is one of the few members in this Parliament who really understand the mining industry and can speak about it with authority. Not only has he worked in the coalmines of Queensland, he has also worked in the coalmines of New South Wales. He spoke about rehabilitation, and what he said made a tremendous amount of sense. He spoke also about rail freights. As the member for Lockyer mentioned, at times there are big issues, and then all of a sudden they disappear and something else comes over the horizon. For many years, rail freights were a big issue; people in the industry and outside it really believed that rail freights were simply a de facto royalty used by Treasury to bleed some additional dollars out of the mining industry. And I believe that was true. However, those days have gone. We never hear mining companies talking about rail freights, because today we have a policy and a program in place of transparent rail freights; people pay to have their coal, copper or lead transferred from one place to the other. That is no longer an issue in the industry.

The member for Fitzroy also mentioned the revenue which Governments, both State and Federal, receive from the mining industry. As I said at the beginning of my comments, we tend to forget these things. However, the mining industry is the industry which pays the bills in this State. When we see the amount of revenue that the Treasury gets from our industry, we can walk tall. I say to people, "Whenever you travel around Queensland, have a look at the roads you travel on, go into the police station,s hospitals and schools, and talk to the treasurer." A great deal of that money which the Government is using to provide services for Queenslanders comes from the mining industry. Too many people forget that fact.

The point that the honourable member made earlier about Martin Tenni was so true. I had a sticker on my car for many years which simply read, "Ban mining, and let these so-and-so's freeze in the dark." It is so true. Each and every one of us depends on mining to live from day to day. If we ask people, particularly school children, "Where does this or that come from", the chances are that they will know that it comes from the mining industry. The sad thing is that not too many adults understand the significance and the importance of the mining industry.

The member for Lockyer talked about rehabilitation, which is a very serious matter in the industry. As has been said by almost all of the speakers, there has been a change in community attitudes. The community will no longer accept some of the conditions that were prevalent some years back. It is demanding that we pick up our game. I believe that the mining industry has risen to the occasion across-the-board; that it understands that there has to be a change of its attitude, too. There will always be people in the mining industry and every other industry who do the wrong thing. However, on the whole the mining industry is rising to the challenge.

The policies that we have introduced—and which these amendments today enshrine in legislation—will mean that we will never again see, for example, disgraces such as Horn Island. People plundered and destroyed that island, and it was left to the taxpayers, through the Government, to foot the bill to repair the damage. There are many other similar examples around the State—and I do not want to start naming them tonight—for which my department has to find the money for the rehabilitation work. Hopefully, the policies that we have introduced, which will now be enshrined in legislation, will no longer mean

that taxpayers have to repair the damage that environmental vandals were allowed to get away with in years gone by.

The member for Lockyer also mentioned the consultative committee. As has been said, meetings were called and we did not receive much feedback at all. I was in Charters Towers a few weeks ago. We went there, we saw the problem and we solved it. Those heaps to which the honourable member referred have been there for 90 and 100 years. They are part of the tradition of Charters Towers. People have been running around the countryside saying, "They are full of arsenic and cyanide." They become emotional, and I can understand that. I went out there. We sat down with the mining company and the council, which I must say was very cooperative. As honourable members probably know, we have come to an arrangement whereby there will be a three-way split. I believe that that will resolve the problem in Charters Towers.

We are a kind, compassionate and caring Government. Whenever members or even a candidate come to us with a proposition or a proposal, we are more than happy to sit down and discuss it with them. The point I make is that, when a community asks us to consider things, we go there and, if we can help, we will.

Mr FitzGerald: I think the Ministers were going around for other reasons. Mr Mackenroth has been going around for political reasons and now you are telling me you are out promoting your candidate.

Mr McGRADY: No, I did not say that at all. What I said was that we went to Charters Towers, we saw the problem there and I think we resolved it.

Mr FitzGerald: Did you invite the local member along when you went to Charters Towers?

Mr McGRADY: I do not think he was in town; I think he was informed that we were coming. I am a well-mannered man.

It was good to hear the member for Charter Towers praising the rehabilitation work in some of the coalmines in his electorate. I want to take the opportunity tonight to pay tribute to the local radio station. Each year, it runs a mining week and it tries to promote the industry, which is good. The new manager there, Ed Knowles, is a good supporter of the mining industry and a personal friend of mine.

In conclusion, the member for Charters Towers did mention the Premier's environmental excellence awards. This is the second year that we have had these awards. In its first year, I do not think too many people took it seriously; but certainly in the second year they did. As the honourable member said, Cannington won one of the awards. There is a feeling now that the mining industry and the individual mining enterprises are being recognised for the good work that they are doing. And so they should. At the risk of repeating myself, it is the industry which pays the bills and provides the jobs.

I thank all members who participated in this debate. It is a rare occurrence in this Chamber to have unanimous support for something that the Government is trying to do, with very few people trying to score political points. I thank honourable members for their support.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. T. McGrady (Mount Isa—Minister for Minerals and Energy) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—

Mr GILMORE (10.49 p.m.): Firstly, I ask about the definition of "building". I raised this issue the other day with departmental officers. I was told that that definition—and it is on page 11—was in the existing legislation. It states—

> " 'building' means a fixed, roofed structure that is completely or partly enclosed by walls."

Although it might seem a trivial matter that people can mine up to and around buildings, yards and so on, it concerns me a little that this legislation appears not to reflect the fact that out in rural Queensland there are very large, fixed-roof structures that do not have walls and might not be considered under this legislation. I suppose one could nail a sheet of iron on the side of such a structure and it would then be considered to be partly enclosed by walls. However, it seems to me that it is an oversight by either the negotiators or the draftsmen that that has not been included. It could cause grief to a land-holder, and that is a matter of concern.

Mr McGRADY: I am informed that the amendment will have the same effect as the old Act, and the officers of the department tell me that there have been no problems to date. If the member has evidence of any problems, I ask him to let us know.

I move the following amendments—

"At page 11, line 14, 'party'—

omit, insert—

'partly'.

At page 13, line 11, ', exploration permit, mineral development licence'—

omit.

At page 16, line 13, 'a stockyard'—

omit, insert—

'a principal stockyard'."

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 6 and 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—

Mr GILMORE (10.51 p.m.): Apparently, this clause simply ensures that the Government is the only body that has a right to issue a mining lease. However, the legislation appears to be taking a stand in respect of deeds of grant issued prior to 1900. Some of those provide private ownership of minerals, particularly in the case of coal on the Darling Downs. I ask the Minister to explain why he took that step at this particular time, when it has not been taken in the past 100 years.

Mr McGRADY: I am informed that this provision does not take away the ownership; it merely allows the Government to grant the title.

Mr GILMORE: Would that be in concert with the owner? It is a question of ownership. A person has ownership of a mining lease; he also owns the freehold title to the land. Will this provision impose the same rights over private land and private minerals in terms of prospecting permits and mineral development leases?

Mr McGrady: Yes.

Mr GILMORE: So that the owner of the land no longer has that right?

Mr McGrady: Yes.

Mr GILMORE: Why did the Minister take that step?

Mr McGrady: There is no change.

Mr GILMORE: Would the Minister mind explaining that further? If there is no change, why is it included in the legislation?

Mr McGRADY: I am informed that the words have been changed from "Crown land" to "State land", but the intention is exactly the same.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 14, as read, agreed to.

Clause 15—

Mr GILMORE (10.54 p.m.): One aspect of this clause that appeals to me is the changing of the tribunal that hears appeals from the mining registrar from the Minister to the Warden's Court. That is a positive move. People ought to have the right to appeal to a court of law rather than to a Minister.

As to appeals on decisions relating to prospecting permits—it appears that a land-holder does not have any right of appeal. The proposed new section outlines the decisions covered by the legislation, but an appeal by a land-holder is not included in that list.

Mr McGRADY: This is one of the major changes in the Bill. Anybody now has the right to appeal. Under the previous Act, only the landowner could go to the registrar, but now anybody can.

Clause 15, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 16 to 41, as read, agreed to.

Clause 42—

Mr GILMORE (10.55 p.m.): During my contribution to the second-reading debate, I referred to small miners and the time that it takes them to comply with their statutory responsibilities. I believe that the Minister misunderstood me. If the Minister reads carefully through clause 42, he will note that the proposed new section refers to three 28-day periods. Having had that matter explained to me by the departmental officers, I now understand it. However, I place on record that this issue must be addressed carefully to ensure that people are not standing around doing very little for, in effect, three months. I wanted to reiterate that point.

Clause 42, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 43 to 47, as read, agreed to.

Clause 48—

Mr McGRADY (10.57 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 55, line 7, '56holder'—

omit, insert—

'holder'."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 48, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 49 to 107, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 1—

Mr McGRADY (10.58 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

"At page 110, after line 18—

insert—

'5A. Sections 5.30(5)(a) and 6.24(5)(a)—

omit, insert—

'(a) an interest that is a registrable charge under the Corporations Law; or'.'.

At page 111, after line 6—

insert—

'9A. Section 9.3(2)(c)—

omit, insert—

'(c) if the return, document or statement has been lodged by or for a corporation—may rely on work performed by auditors who have examined the corporation's accounts.'.

9B. Section 9.3(4)—

omit.'."

Amendments agreed to.

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

PETROLEUM AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 23 March (see p. 11331).

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (11 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the Petroleum Amendment Bill. This urgent statute will provide legislative certainty to two pipelines that are currently being considered for construction in this State, namely, the Tenneco pipeline from south-west Queensland to Brisbane, and the AGL pipeline—those companies having been established as preferred contractors for those pipeline infrastructure developments. Opposition members understand the need for the urgency of this legislation and certainly the need for the legislation. However, we are going to express some concerns about the haste with which this Bill has been brought into the Parliament and the way that the negotiating process was handled. This is somewhat in advance of the COAG agreement on national competition policy, and it may well have been unduly rushed, because we simply do not have to hand the details of the Commonwealth legislation or the agreement that will ultimately be made at COAG. Clearly, this rush will result in this legislation being brought back into the Parliament in the near future to iron out some technical problems.

The gas industry is growing exponentially in this State, and I am very pleased about that. On a number of occasions, I have expressed grave concerns about the prospect of wasting that quite extraordinary resource by turning it into, for instance, electricity, because gas is one of those reliable, complex energy resources. It can be used for many things: for space in domestic heating; for industrial heating; and for chemical processing. Of course, it can also be utilised for its own chemical properties, including the development of polymer production, fertiliser production, etc. For that reason, I have mentioned on a number of occasions that I am very concerned about not wasting that resource.

It seems that gas reserves in this State are being discovered at a faster rate than we had ever anticipated. More people are putting in more effort—boring more holes—in an attempt to establish the likely indicated probable and proven reserves of gas in this State. I am particularly delighted about that because, in the past, there has been no great emphasis on the urgency to bore more holes in the exploration for gas. I understand that, because they are an expensive infrastructure development. While there was no particular market for gas, there was no sense in public companies boring expensive holes in the ground.

On many occasions we have been told—and we all thought it to be true—that the Denison Trough would be essentially empty of gas within four or five years. I guess it is now down to four years or less since we were first told that. For a considerable number of years, the Denison Trough has been providing industrial gas to Gladstone, Rockhampton and Brisbane. During a recent visit to the magnesite operations in Rockhampton, I saw gas at its very best. That trough has provided the industrial impetus for Gladstone and Rockhampton. Those industries in this State that are already dependent upon the trough and those industries that are going to depend on it in the near future cannot afford to run out of that energy resource. It will be an important resource as long as it is competitive with other sources of energy.

We are now developing an understanding of resources that we did not know before, particularly in the Denison Trough region and north of the section around Jackson—the south-western corner of the State—where we anticipated the majority of our gas province to be. We are now finding gas in other areas, and I am pleased that we are possibly in a position to utilise some of that wonderful natural resource for power generation, particularly if it provides a cashflow for the Tenneco pipeline as it comes into Brisbane. It is absolutely imperative that if Queensland is going to encourage investors to come here and make major investments in infrastructure development, they have to have a cashflow and they have to be able to justify it to themselves and their shareholders.

As well as the gas reserves that we now know we have—and which we are exporting to the other States from the south-west corner—we have in this State a quite extraordinary resource of coal-bed methane. As I understand it, there are still some problems with the development of methane drainage technology, and a number of companies are actively involved in developing that technology in some of the different kinds of strata found in Queensland coal—different indeed from the home of that technology, the United States. It has not been easy, and it will not be easy. Nonetheless, we are led to believe that the resource in coal-bed methane has the potential to provide more energy in this State than all the natural gas that is being recovered from the north-west shelf of Western Australia. If that is anywhere near correct, it means that Queensland will be the energy capital of this country and probably the driving force of South East Asia for many years to come, provided, of course, that we can successfully drain that methane in a viable way. It is my view that, in the foreseeable future, from that methane resource we will have a whole grid of gas pipelines to many corners of Queensland. The first thing that should provide is an energy source that represents an alternative to, and is competitive with, electric energy, which is currently spread by a grid right across the State. There is no reason why we could not have a competitive gas grid once we establish the capability of methane drainage.

The Tenneco pipeline, which will come into Brisbane from the south-west corner, will be an enormous boost to the industrial development of south-east Queensland and, of course, Gladstone and central Queensland. It will be a boost, because it will provide an incentive for existing industries, new industries and other industries relocating from interstate and overseas. I refer to industries such as fertiliser and power and others that have the potential to provide great wealth to this State and vast employment for those people who are coming here for good reasons.

The AGL pipeline to Mount Isa is a very exciting prospect indeed. I know that it has been on the books for a thousand years, and I know why it has not gone ahead in the past. The problem has been a difficulty with markets. I suppose that members have spoken to the same people, so we understand the rules. Nobody is going to set up a major infrastructure development such as this without having some access to long-term viable markets. The problem has been that the major consumer at the other end was saying, "Hey, you are competing with another form of energy, in the form of coal, and until we can genuinely see that you are competing fairly and evenly, then I am sorry but we are not going to buy your product." I understand that we are overcoming that problem. I look forward to the pipeline to Mount Isa for a couple of reasons.

Firstly, there is an end user for that pipeline. Secondly, there are probably two major factors that are very exciting, not the least of which is power generation in Mount Isa involving the extension of a grid to all developing mines in that north-west province. The pipeline will also provide an opportunity for a superphosphate operation which will create some 300,000 tonnes of extra freight on Queensland Rail a year. It will also provide extra jobs and extra industrial development in the Mount Isa region. These are the kinds of spin-offs that occur from these infrastructure developments, which would not be possible without pipelines. So it is very important that we all support that pipeline and ensure that it is constructed as fast as possible in that region because it will be good for the Mount Isa region and the economic development of this State. That is a very important aspect of this legislation.

The pipeline will also provide for downstream processing, which is currently unavailable to us in Mount Isa, and that could, of course, involve refining, smelting, and even casting industries. There is no reason why we ought not go into that and the downstream processing of some of these refined metals. The gas pipeline into the Mount Isa region limits that area to development only by our imagination and by the ability of industry in that area to compete with other companies around the world that are doing the same things and doing them very well.

The basic principle behind the legislation is to deal with a natural monopoly. It is encompassed in the principles espoused by Hilmer in the national competition policy. To achieve competition in the industry, particularly in a natural monopoly, we must have access to pipelines. Gas pipelines are a perfect example of a natural monopoly.

It is my view and it is the intent of the legislation that the Government will not flog pipeline owners around the head. The Government has introduced the Bill to ensure equity, fairness, open access and transparency in the transportation of gas and other petroleum products around the State. We are here to ensure the reasonable treatment of all parties involved. That includes not only the owners—the investors—but also the users, that is, the people who pay for the carriage of their goods and the people who pay for the use of the goods at the far end of the line. If the whole lot does not come together in one competitive package, no industrial development will result from the pipeline development and we are wasting our time.

The pipeline infrastructure must be very carefully structured so that the whole of Queensland benefits. I understand all that and concur with the intent of the legislation. However, I would like the Minister to reassure investors—who are the people who will spend the money—that infrastructure which does not represent a monopoly situation is not inappropriately accessed to the detriment of the investors. That is a very important principle, which we ought to think through carefully. We do not want to get our feet on sticky paper tonight and end up with people who might otherwise invest in some of those operations being unable to do so for fear of others having inappropriate access to their infrastructure.

The Bill allows for negotiation on a number of issues. As I understand it, end users are allowed to purchase gas at the wellhead and then negotiate transportation of that gas through the pipeline. The Bill allows them also to purchase gas, that gas having been transported through the pipeline. It gives small producers in western Queensland access to a major pipeline so that they can deliver their products and therefore take part in the great industrial development that the Bill will allow. In that sense, the legislation is good.

I have some concerns about the complex legal problems that are inherent in the legislation, namely, problems of ownership and equity, company structures and possible conflict with the Trade Practices Act. From the briefing that the Minister was kind enough to ensure that I received, I understand that that perceived conflict with the Trade Practices Act may well be covered by the amendments that the Minister intends to move at the Committee stage. I am concerned that it may only be a perception and that ultimately some conflicts may arise. We must monitor that issue carefully.

I leave a parting reminder that it is a shame that the legislation must be passed so quickly. As I have said, I understand the reasons for that. If problems occur with the legislation, the Minister should bring it back into the House quickly so that it can be amended. The Opposition is happy to cooperate in that. The legislation is important. It is important to get the infrastructure up and running quickly. With those few words, I support the legislation.

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—Minister for Minerals and Energy) (11.15 p.m.), in reply: I thank the shadow Minister for his support of the legislation. As he acknowledges, the Bill has been driven by the need to get those two pipelines up and running. As he may be aware, over a period, including the past couple of days, we have had lengthy negotiations with the people involved. The amendments to the Act are complex, but they are designed to facilitate the construction of the two major pipelines, which the honourable member said will bring untold wealth not only to the Carpentaria/Mount Isa mineral province but also to Brisbane.

Mr Gilmore: It is not only just the two pipelines; it does impact on other industries.

Mr McGRADY: Of course. That is the point that I am trying to make. I said that the legislation is complex. As late as today, we have had negotiations, and we have tried to brief the honourable member on the developments. I give the honourable member the assurance that, if there are any further developments on the matter, as the representative of the Opposition he will be informed.

The honourable member mentioned also that further amendments may need to be made. I accept that. I assume that he will be prepared to support the Government, and I appreciate that. The Government appreciates that. We cannot afford to wait for COAG. On 23 December last year, I sat in my electorate office waiting for the heads of agreement to come through so that we could sign it,

because the development means so much to the north west of the State and to Brisbane.

We are about to see another industry come into the State that will make Queensland the gas capital of the Commonwealth. Today, people came to Queensland to talk about coal bed methane. All the time, we have visits from people who want to invest in this State. It is an exciting new industry.

The reason why the Government brought the complex legislation into the House tonight is that the heads of agreement were signed and we had to get the legislation agreed to by 31 March. There is no point in my going any further into the matter. The topic was covered by the shadow Minister. I thank him for the support that he gave the Government.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. T. McGrady (Mount Isa—Minister for Minerals and Energy) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—

Mr McGRADY (11.19 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

"At page 9, lines 7 to 9—

omit, insert—

'(a) for a pipeline licensed before 11 March 1995—a day or event stated in the licence (or, if no day or event is stated, declared under a regulation) to be a review event for the pipeline; or'.

At page 9, lines 22 and 23—

omit, insert—

'(a) for a licensed pipeline—a configuration specified in the licence (or, if no configuration is specified, declared under a regulation); or'." Amendments agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12—

Mr McGRADY (11.20 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 17, after line 18—

insert—

'(7) Subsections (2), (3) and (4) apply subject to the conditions of the licence or refinery permission.'."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—.

Mr McGRADY (11.20 p.m.) I move the following amendments—

"At page 19, lines 18 and 19, ', or a stated provision of this part,'—

omit.

At page 21, after line 29—

insert—

'(2) A regulation may declare that this section, or a stated provision of this section, does not apply to a stated facility owner or user.'.

At page 23, after line 8—

insert—

' 'Access principles may provide for different indicative tariffs

'61KA.(1) Access principles may provide for access agreements to be made providing for different tariffs for the same service.

'(2) Access principles mentioned is subsection (1), and agreements made under the principles, are authorised for the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (Cwlth).'.

At page 23, lines 14 and 15—

omit, insert—

'(b) the legitimate business interests of the facility owner;

(ba) the legitimate business interests of existing facility users and possible future facility users;'.

At page 24, line 13, 'subsection (4)'—

omit, insert—

'subsection (5)'.

At page 25, lines 8 to 11—

omit, insert—

' '(8) However, the Minister may include in the access principles a requirement that the facility owner must pay all or part of the cost of increasing the facility's capacity only if the facility owner agrees or a licence condition requires the increase in the capacity.'.

At page 28, line 8, 'under the terms of'—

omit, insert—

'in accordance with'.

At page 30, lines 6 to 9—

omit, insert—

' '(3) Before approving the request, the Minister must consider the extent to which the facility's capacity may be increased.

'(4) If the Minister decides to approve the request, the Minister must, by written notice, require the facility owner to give to the Minister, within 3 months after a stated day, proposed access principles for the increased capacity.

'(5) The facility owner must comply with the request.

Maximum penalty—100 penalty units.

'(6) If the Minister does not approve the proposed access principles within 6 months after the day stated in the notice under subsection (4), the Minister may decide the access principles for the increased capacity.

'(7) However, the Minister may include in the access principles a requirement that the facility owner must pay all or part of the cost of increasing the capacity only if the facility owner agrees.

'(8) Also, if a review event happens for the facility for the nominal capacity before the increase, the facility owner is not required to review the access principles for the increased capacity merely because the review event happens.'.

At page 30, lines 20 to 29—

omit.

At page 31, line 13, after 'this section'—

insert—

', or a stated provision of this section,'.

At page 31, lines 17 and 18, 'it may only be assigned with the Minister's approval'—

omit, insert—

'it may not be assigned'."

Mr GILMORE: I refer to page 27 and proposed section 61S that deals with priority in negotiation. I wonder about the overzealous nature of that provision. I believe that there is hardly the necessity for legislation to contain a section which simply says that, in terms of negotiation procedures, it is a case of first in, best dressed. It says quite clearly that the first person who negotiates with the owner of a property for access agreements cannot be gazumped at the negotiation table by somebody who offers a better deal. I believe that that is an unreasonable section to put into the legislation. I do not feel strongly enough about it to try to amend it or to divide the Committee, but I suspect that it should have been thought through a little more carefully.

On page 30, proposed section 61Z(1) states—

> "A facility owner who owns a pipeline must not carry on a business other than the business of—"

This is another case of overzealousness. Out of enthusiasm to do the job and pass the legislation, I think the Government is becoming overly bureaucratic.

Proposed section 61Z(3) is unnecessarily restrictive.

Proposed section 61Z(4) is a matter of some concern because it complicates the corporate structure and the exemption; proposed section 61Z(5) recognises that. The Government has said, "You cannot go and do all that stuff; however, if we think it is all right, we will move a regulation which says that you can." There is no necessity to do that.

On page 36, under the heading "Arbitrator's power when making an award", proposed section 61ZK(4)(e) states that an arbitrator must not make an award that—

> "makes, or may make, a facility user an owner of any part of the facility without the facility owner's consent."

That proposed section was pointed out to me by the gentleman who was giving me the briefing. He pointed out that there may be some problem with equity if at a major pipeline construction there is perceived to be excess capacity in that pipeline to be obtained either through pressurisation or simply underutilisation. If special works are required to provide the pipeline with greater capacity—and it will cost millions of dollars to install compressors—I am concerned that an equity problem might arise.

I point out for the sake of clarity that, if people are forced to invest in this pipeline infrastructure, they are buying only the access—the right to negotiate—and the saving in the transportation costs of their product would make the difference in the cost of the infrastructure development over the years. That is the way we are getting around that equity consideration. Now that I have talked that through, I am fairly comfortable with it.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 14, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 15 to 18, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (INTERIM) REGULATION 1995 (SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION No. 46 OF 1995)

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

Mr SLACK (Burnett) (11.28 p.m.): I move that the Environmental Protection (Interim) Regulation 1995 (Subordinate Legislation No. 46 of 1995) tabled in Parliament on 21 March 1995 be disallowed.

The regulations before the House can only be referred to as the politically correct version. They are the politically sanitised version. These regulations are the interim policies to help the Goss Government through the State election period. These regulations are about the preservation of the Goss Government and about good, sound, positive, sensible environmental laws.

Political considerations have taken priority over impartial and commonsense policies. Under the Goss Government, the Department of Environment and Heritage has lost its way in the administration and management of environmental protection laws. It has lost its way through a web of Green Papers, reviews, committees, inquiries and reports. After three years, the Government has got it wrong.

The practical work of inspections has not been a priority since the run-down in environmental standards. The only weapon the Goss Government had left to bring some semblance of credibility to its waywardness was the big stick. The big stick is contained in the annual licence fees, in the red tape compliance and the liability clauses for company managers and directors. The big stick is used five years on to cover up the failure of the Goss administration to administer pollution laws and to ensure compliance. Pollution control lost out to the glamour end of the environment—national parks. Like every Government department, the Department of Environment and Heritage has lost its way. In practical terms, it is a disaster. Departments under the Goss Government are political tools that are concerned about the politics of the day instead of the basic administration and management of laws.

One only has to look at the record of the Goss Government on environmental protection to know that it has failed the environmental test. At the Local Government Association liquid waste seminar last week, a senior public servant painted a picture of previous widespread non-compliance with environmental pollution laws and controls. The reported is outlined in the *Courier-Mail*. Previous to that there was the CJC Matthews report into the improper disposal of liquid waste in south-east Queensland, the environment program evaluation report, the internal review report, the PSMC reviews and various audits. Each of these resulted in critical reports or reviews. It is a sorry record—a record that the Government is trying to address with the Environmental Protection Act and with these regulations.

The irony is that the emphasis is on the industry's non-compliance with pollution controls but it is the Goss Government that should wear non-compliance like an electoral noose around its neck. The environmental program evaluation report of 1992 stated—

> "Compliance auditing and monitoring have not only been decoupled but have both been downgraded over the last 3 years in terms of resource inputs and program recognition in direct contradiction to explicit Government and departmental policy intent.
>
> There can be little question that the licensing subsystem is falling apart at the seams and is now only recognisable as just licence issuance straining an already under resourced licence issuance workforce—the only client product is the licence and so the licence issuance workforce becomes the brunt of the internal and external discontent system performance."

Do members opposite wish me to read it again? It is very damning. This is the Government's own internal report. It states further—

> "The inspectorate workforce are disillusioned and have complained bitterly about the poor equality of licence construction."

As I said, that is the Government's own internal report. I do not have the time to continue with the damning evidence against the Government's administration of protection laws.

The situation now is that the problem has become so large that the Government is using the sledgehammer approach, albeit a sledgehammer that has been lightened somewhat out of fear of an electoral backlash. Members will recall the backflip of the Goss Government effected by the Premier following the concerns of local government that the new fees would add between $30 and $120 to individual rate bills and that some businessmen would refuse to pay. Local government claimed forcibly and loudly that the cost of applying the laws would increase the cost of running utilities.

Following much angst in local government ranks and in business and to remove a political problem in an election year, the Premier himself overrode his Minister and her department and reduced the horrendous levies. The Premier is always the bearer of good news! He said, without consulting the Minister, that they would be changed. Furthermore, he also had the taxpayers provide some of the initial funding for environment inspectors by subsidising the councils. In an election year, the proposition was—

> "In the first year of operation of the Act, the State Government will fully subsidise all licences and approvals issued by local government for devolved environmentally relevant activities.
>
> This means that during this period, local businesses will not be liable for licence and approval fees."

A deal is in place for 12 months, but what will happen after 12 months is anyone's guess. It is quite obvious that the fees will still be in place.

The staggered introductions of the various sections of the Act shows the lack of policy clarity on the part of the Government. For example, some regulations commence on 1 May 1995, others on 1 June 1995, others on 1 March 1996, others on 1 July 1996, others on 1 March 1997, and the remaining provisions commenced on 1 March 1995. Confusion reigns supreme and, once again, people question the ability of this administration.

The only notification that came out on 1 March was this ad in the *Courier-Mail*—

> "Today the environment IS different."

Have members noticed any difference since 1 March 1995? What an ad! What a joke! I rang a representative of industry, who said to me that no-one knows what it is all about. There is confusion because of the change of dates, there is confusion because the regulations are not released, people cannot get anything in print, and there is confusion over what people have to comply with. As I say, after a three-year period in which the Government was supposed to get it right, confusion reigns supreme.

The purpose is to provide a lead time for compliance, but the point I make is that this Goss Government is five years too late in managing this State's environmental protection laws. The evidence is there for members to see in the reports that were delivered, that is, the CJC report and the internal report, as well as the outcry over these laws that the Government has introduced.

The regulations before the House are very complex and industry, particularly small businesses, should talk to trade associations about the regulations and their application to their particular businesses. I urge them to get good advice, or some environmental lawyers might make a fortune and some small businesses will be forced out of business. The red tape involved in these regulations is exceedingly expensive and pervasive. One only has to look at Division 4, in particular section 55 of that division, which relates to the register of environmental management programs. The concern is that there is going to be such extensive reporting that inspectors will be office bound and they will be unable to do their work. Unless the so-called administering authority has the support personnel, there is going to be a huge mess. As I said, it is a very complex system.

As I said before, the problem for the Government is that the horse has bolted and it is trying to shut the gate with a sledgehammer. If the Goss Government had been doing its job over the past five years, then these regulations would not have been necessary. If the Goss Government had been doing its job over the past five years, the army of environmental protection inspectors—and I am told that there are 175—would not be necessary.

The coalition is of the view that the annual licence fee structure is still expensive despite the changes ordered at the behest of the Premier. Let me make it quite clear to this House that the Opposition supports environmental laws and requirements that are necessary to protect the environment. However, the legislation needs to be appropriate and, of course, it needs to be resourced adequately. There is no doubt that business, the Opposition and the environmentalists all want to see the cowboys

who pollute the environment removed from the system. There is no question about that, and let there be no argument about it. However, as the shadow Minister for Small Business will say, businesses do not want to be fleeced. They do not mind being policed, but they do not want to be fleeced. The problem with this regulation is that there is no incentive built into it. If Government members were genuine about protecting the environment——

Mr Robertson: There is. You're wrong.

Mr SLACK: I am right. The Government should have built incentives into many facets of the regulations; it has not. Let me point out where the incentives are not built into the regulations. There is no real incentive within the proposed licensing system for people to introduce machinery or whatever other means are necessary to lessen their pollution output. Sure, there is a scale of fees, but there is no real incentive for decreasing licence fees in certain industries if they decrease their pollution output. That is one of the major failings of these regulations. There is no structure for an appeal process so that people who believe they are doing the right thing in industry can appeal for a lessening in their licence fee. There is no provision for people to be able to adhere to compliance requirements for these particular regulations.

When I say there is no incentive for people to comply with it, I mean that there is no provision through which they can obtain loans at a competitive rate of interest, or at no interest, to enable them to introduce new technology into their businesses so that they are able to decrease their pollution output, which is incorporated in environmental legislation in other States and which the Government is supposed to have studied before it introduced these regulations. The real reason behind this legislation is the imposition of fees. The Government has even miscalculated its fee base. It has no idea of the number of people it is going to tax—which is what most people regard it as. They do not mind paying something towards the policing of those people who do pollute or operates outside their licences.

Such a wide-ranging set of fees can indicate only that the Government is going to set up a big bureaucracy. And there is no indication that anything is going to change within that bureaucracy—no indication whatsoever. That much was evident from the Government's announcement that this regulation would commence on 1 March. As one person said to me, the CJC brought its report down and said, "It's no good bringing in legislation unless the attitude of the department changes in the administration of that legislation." What came forward on 1 March was an ad headed "Today the environment IS different". What has changed within the system? People feel as though they are just paying more fees and charges into the system. And for what? Nothing will change. The charges being collected by other departments for inspection fees and so on are still in place. The aquaculture industry, primary production, feedlots, piggeries—all of those industries are complaining about the same thing. There appears to be a lack of consultation between the Department of Primary Industries and the Environment and Heritage Department in respect of the application of fees and who is responsible for what. This applies not only in relation to environmental matters but across the whole ambit of the legislation's application.

Businesses do not mind paying some fees, but this Government is notorious for its fee structure. It says, "No new taxes, but we are going to have all these fees." There is a fee for the Workplace Health and Safety Act, for the environment and everything else. One fee on its own may not hurt small business or put it out of operation, but when they are all lumped together, small business is sent reeling,. As I said, no-one out there is against proper, sensible environmental laws. No-one is against the application of those laws or the policing of them, but people are against being made to feel like they are being singled out.

A *Courier-Mail* article was headed "Noise problem disturbing". I have had complaints ad infinitum about inaction on noise complaints by the Environment and Heritage Department. These things have gone through already, as honourable members said, but I am still receiving complaints. A fellow from Slacks Creek says that he reports the same problem every day to the Environment and Heritage Department, but nothing happens. What is going to change? All that will change under the Government's administration is that there will be more charges, more rhetoric and more of the sales pitch, "We are doing this, we are doing that", but when we look at it, we see that nothing is happening.

Time expired.

Mr CONNOR (Nerang) (11.43 p.m.): I rise to second the motion. What was the depth of deceit that the Goss Labor Government descended to over past months in relation to the green levy? For example, it said that the levy would affect only 5,000

businesses. The Government maintained that it would hit only 5,000 businesses in Queensland. Very quickly this was changed to 5,000 "new" businesses, when its argument was found to be totally unsustainable.

Then, after having received the draft schedule of fees which included a list of those industries that had not previously been levied, I proceeded to match Australian Bureau of Statistics figures against those industry categories, and I found that the Government's figure of 5,000 new businesses was equally deceitful. For instance, the ABS figure for just motor vehicle repairs and servicing amounts to 4,868. That is only part of one new industry targeted for the new levy, yet there is a multitude of new industries to be levied. For instance, according to the Government's schedule of fees, mechanical workshops will be hit. The ABS's figure is 2,915 businesses in that industry in Queensland. For metal finishing, such as spray painting and so on, the ABS figure is 697. For manufacturing or fabrication of wood products, the figure was 2,018, and that does not include builders, many of whom have joineries.

The figure for commercial printing was 574. The figure for service/repair of motor vehicles is at least 5,985. For ship or boat building repairs, 174. Under the keeping of animals for commercial purposes, according to the ABS there are 318 vets registered, and that does not include kennels and catteries. Those few industries that I have just mentioned total in excess of 12,000, yet this is only a very small proportion of the new industries targeted.

But honourable members should not take my word for it. What does the peak industry body in Queensland say? We would imagine that it would have a fair grasp of industry statistics. What did it have to say about the number of businesses targeted? The Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry—QCCI—said the following in a media release dated 7 March this year—

> "The impact on business will be vastly higher than anticipated because at least twice as many new businesses will be regulated than the Government estimated."

I maintain that it will be much closer to 50,000 new business paying the levy than it will be to the Government's figure of 5,000.

What other propaganda is the Government peddling? The Minister responsible for small business, Warren Pitt, stated in Parliament just this week—

> "Queenslanders are quite comfortable with the new Environment Protection Act. Business accepts the need for regulation in this respect."

And further, he said that "business in general has fallen into line."

The Minister is obviously not talking to the same business people as I am, because every major business organisation in Queensland is absolutely appalled by the new green levy. The peak industry body, the QCCI, had the following to say—

> ". . . major flaws in the Environmental Protection Act should have been addressed before it took effect . . ."

Further, it said—

> "Business will now be hamstrung by the inconsistencies in the legislation relating to multiple regulators, complex approval processes and unavailability of licence application forms."

What about the Metal Trades Industry Association? I remind the House that the Metal Trades Industry Association—the MTIA—is a peak industry association representing over 1,400 Queensland business enterprises in the State's manufacturing, engineering and construction industries. What was its position? I think these few quotes really sum up the position of not just the MTIA but most affected industry groups. It stated—

> "The Association is opposed to such fees and views their imposition as an unwarranted taxation on Queensland industry."

And further, it stated—

> "Such increases will prejudice the international competitiveness of Queensland industry".

Mr Pitt's and the Government's credibility on this subject is zero. He does not even understand how the levy operates. In fact, last week it was necessary for the Department of Environment and Heritage to contradict an answer that Mr Pitt gave in Parliament. Mr Pitt maintained that if businesses met pollution impact requirements they would not fall within the levy net and further said—

> "We will ensure that only those businesses that have an environmental impact will be subject to the levy."

That is dead wrong. It is simply not true. It was confirmed by the Department of Environment and Heritage. Irrespective of whether a business complies with the Act, if it falls within the levy net it will pay the levy. So we have

one Minister peddling these untruths around Queensland while yet another, the Minister responsible for the legislation, is saying something totally different.

And what about the cynical move of the Government to delay the introduction of the levy until after the election? It simply does not have the guts to face up to the political storm that will erupt once business finds out that it will have to pay the levy and how much it is. The Government simply does not have the guts. The Lord Mayor of Brisbane has been sending literally thousands of letters to businesses telling them of their requirement to comply and be licensed, yet he has failed to inform them that, once they are licensed from March next year, they will be hit with astronomically high fees. Mr Soorley quite carelessly forgot to mention that. Strange, is it not?

In some cases, the levy will even close businesses down. Let us look at what else industry bodies have had to say about the green levy. Not only is the MTIA complaining bitterly about the costs associated with the legislation but also is complaining about the process by which these fees were determined. It stated—

> "MTIA strongly submits that Queensland industry has a right to know how the proposed fees have been derived, in other words, what it will be paying for."

And further, when referring to the Licence Fee Advisory Committee, which was set up to look into the green levy fee structure, it said—

> "The Committee which only met on three occasions, failed to reach any consensus with your departmental advisers on a final proposal. Industry representatives on the Committee were unanimous in their stance that any fees, if introduced, needed to be transparent to the business sector."

Quite clearly, that has not occurred. The fee structure has entered into the public arena through these regulations at a level that not only is unfair and unsustainable, but with glaring anomalies and without a process for their determination. Industry cannot even appeal against a particular licence fee through a normal bureaucratic process because there is no basis on which to appeal about the way it is quantified. The size of the individual levies are purely ad hoc and subject to the whim or the greed of the Government of the day. It therefore has a potential for substantially varying costs to industry which cannot be anticipated, thus creating uncertainty in industry. As we all know, there is nothing more dangerous to industry than uncertainty.

The MTIA concluded its letter by stating—

> "In summary, MTIA opposes the introduction of environmental licence fees as they are totally inconsistent with the State Government's economic policy and there has been insufficient consultation with the business sector . . ."

I turn now to a representative of the rural industry—the Queensland Produce, Seed and Grain Merchants Association, which had this to say—

> "I write . . . to protest most strenuously against the introduction of the above legislation, particularly at this time when small business, and especially regional small business, is struggling to survive four years of drought. Many businesses will not survive.
>
> It is possible that many people responsible for this Bill and supporting it are unaware of the true financial situation facing rural Queensland in 1995."

That letter states further—

> "It is hard to understand how any responsible Government having regard to the present seasonal and economic circumstances could contemplate making business more untenable by inflicting upon it additional financial problems."

In conclusion, the letter stated—

> "If you proceed with this legislation, it is our belief that you will preside over the dissolution of a fair percentage of regional small business."

That is what a representative of the rural industry had to say.

I turn now to the meat industry. This is the area that highlights the startling anomalies in the fee structure. I can only suggest that these anomalies were a result of the breakdown in consultation with industry groups. The most glaring anomaly is the levy being charged on meat-rendering operations of 10 tonnes design capacity or more, which includes, of course, the production of tallow. As highlighted recently in the Parliament by me, the average price for tallow is only $400 a tonne, yet the Government is inflicting a green levy of $6,020 per annum on producers of 10 tonnes or more which, in theory, could create a situation in which producers are receiving less for their production than what they will have to pay in the levy to undertake this operation. This leaves wide open the potential for many to

close their operations and simply dump the waste products from the meat-killing operations. This, of course, runs counter to the intent of the legislation by further damaging the environment.

Last but not least, the Motor Trades Association stated—

> "We believe the proposed fee structure is unbalanced and have asked the Department to closely consider this situation."

To sum it up—we have almost every industry body representing affected businesses blasting the Government over the fees.

Mr ARDILL (Archerfield) (11.53 p.m.): Here we see the test of the green credentials of the National Party—and what a sickly shade of green it is! We know about the Liberals; they have no interest in the environment. Their only interest is in profit margins, so we do not expect anything of them. But in recent times, the National Party has been masquerading as a friend of the green movement. What a sickly shade of green it is!

All the discussion tonight has focused on the scale of fees. Who will pay for policing, processing and disposal? If the people who produce the pollution are not the ones to pay for it, who will?

Mr Elliott interjected.

Mr ARDILL: I can shout down the member for Cunningham any time! I listened to the contribution by the member for Nerang; it was absolute garbage. Every industry outlined in this list is producing some level of pollution that must be processed and disposed of. Such pollution also has to be policed because, unless it is policed, it will not be disposed of in the correct manner. This levy will provide for the policing, processing and disposal of the pollution produced by those industries. Government members are committed to protecting the environment. Therefore, we support this levy. Protection of the environment was a cornerstone of the policies that brought us to power in Queensland.

Mr Elliott: Do you believe there is equity there if a huge output is going to be charged——

Mr ARDILL: I have answered that issue.

Let us examine the history of the National Party in Government. Let us remember the trips to Rio. Let us remember its failure to do anything about air pollution, water pollution or pollution of any type. What did the National Party do in its 32 years in Government? It created the environmental mess that this Government has inherited. Yet National Party members have the hide to criticise us for taking so long to rectify the problems! There was such a long list of matters that needed attention that it is a wonder that this Government has got around to rectifying any of them.

Under the National Party, what was the situation with national parks? Queensland had half the quantum of national parks of any other State. What was the situation with pollution? The National Party allowed dumping to occur all over the countryside. As a result, there are now polluted lands all over Queensland. However, this levy will start to address those problems by providing a sufficient level of policing to stop the polluters who are still out there and were there during the National Party's 32 years of Government.

The aims of these regulations are: to reduce the use of ozone-depleting substances such as solvents, refrigerants, propellants and halons; to reduce the emission of CO_2 and methane and other greenhouse gases; to reduce pollutants such as lead, nitrogen oxides and other emissions that combine to produce photochemical smog and damage the health of people; to reduce the level of pollutants in our streams; and to reduce noise pollution. To achieve any of those aims, pollution must be policed. There is no other way of ensuring that the cowboys to whom the member for Burnett referred are stopped from creating pollution. We can do that only by providing a sufficient level of policing, and the only way to fund such a measure is to make the industries responsible for pollution pay and ensure that the pollutants are disposed of correctly.

I have no doubt that some of these charges will have a deleterious effect on some small businesses in the interim, but sooner or later they will demand that those who construct industrial buildings provide sufficient facilities within those structures to enable pollutants to be treated on site. Local governments will have to consider that issue urgently and ensure that building regulations provide for sufficient pits, spray booths and other facilities to allow the industries currently being charged rent to operate within the law.

The greenhouse problem is such that we cannot allow widespread pollution to continue. The extent of the depletion of the ozone layer is such that we cannot allow propellants, halons, solvents and so forth to continue to be discharged into the atmosphere, further

exacerbating the problems created over the past 150 years. The effects of pollution are steadily becoming worse, and we cannot allow that to continue. By proposing that these regulations be thrown out, the Opposition is saying that it supports further depletion of our natural environment. I have challenged the member for Burnett to outline the alternatives proposed by the Opposition, but thus far he has refused to respond to me.

The Opposition has no alternative. The only way this issue can be tackled is to make sure that sufficient funds are available to handle the absolutely abysmal situation that the National Party Government allowed to develop. The ignorance, which in some cases has been there for 100 years, is no longer justifiable because all of the evidence is there. The Opposition's Green credentials have been destroyed by its attitude tonight. It is a very sickly shade of green.

As a responsible Government, we cannot allow this to continue. The Minister is doing something about it; she has been working towards fixing the brown environment ever since she became the Minister. This is one of the stages that has been introduced under this present Minister. It has to have the support of any responsible person, and Opposition members stand condemned for their attempts to destroy these regulations, which will not entirely solve the problem, but will do something to bring Queensland into line with world best practice, which they are always talking about. I oppose the motion.

Mrs McCAULEY (Callide) (12.02 a.m.): I find it extremely difficult at this hour of night to string two words together, but I will try.

Government members interjected.

Mrs McCAULEY: I would hate to disappoint Government members. As the local government spokesman for the Opposition, I feel that it is very much my duty to register the strongest possible protest on behalf of local government, who will be the losers in this legislation. When this legislation was passed in November last year, I protested that the really important aspects that are now in this document that I have with me here would come through as subordinate legislation by way of regulations rather than being in the Bill itself. The whole thing was a shambles—it was a disgrace—and it should not have happened.

While the LGAQ supported the Bill at that stage, it raised the question about the schedule of fees. Local government right throughout Queensland has been worrying and waiting for the schedule of fees to see where their responsibilities will lie, because a lot of the responsibilities have been devolved onto local government. The legal liability and the enormous cost to them is of concern.

The fact that this Government has seen fit to postpone the fees is simply a political stunt in an election year. It is as simple as that. That stunt will not fool too many people. Most people are aware that the problem has just been postponed, not solved in any way, shape or form. I think that probably accounts for the feeling that I get within local government circles of the very poor opinion people have of the Minister for Environment and Heritage. I feel as though I should defend the Minister because, after all, we are both females in a very male-dominated arena, but I cannot. I just cannot do that. I think it is a very sad and sorry day when the Department of Environment and Heritage is looking on itself simply as a tax gatherer. This is the concern that the Opposition has with this legislation.

It is of no surprise to me that Peter Morley had the information from local government all over the front page of the *Courier-Mail* long before it went to Cabinet, simply because of the feeling within local government circles that this legislation has engendered. The fact that the payment of fees is being postponed for 12 months is only putting off the day of reckoning.

When I looked at the schedule of fees, which is of big concern, the first thing that I saw were all the little asterisks for the particular areas that have been devolved to local government. A couple of them caught my eye. The fee for the extraction of rock or other material, gravel, loam, etc.—those sorts of things in which local governments deal—and for pits or quarries using plant or equipment having a designed capacity of not more than five tonnes has been waived, but only for 12 months. If it is five tonnes or more but less than 10,000 tonnes, the fee is $3,960—nearly $4,000. If it is over 10,000 tonnes a year, the fee is $4,480. The same applies for screening materials, which again is something in which local government deals greatly. The fee for crushing, etc., of road building material less than 5,000 tonnes has been waived, only for 12 months, but for over 5,000 tonnes and less than 10,000 tonnes the fee is $3,960. For 10,000 tonnes or over the fee is almost $5,000.

What will the level of those fees be in 12 months' time, when the Minister comes along and puts the charge on them? It will be an extra cost. I refer to little things like the incinerators for cremating pet remains at the

local vet surgery. The poor old vet will have to pay $400, and he also has to pay another $500 on top of that just to register his business. The vet is going to be up for fees that he did not know that he would have to pay.

The aquaculture industry is certainly going at a million miles an hour in my electorate. It is the primary industry that has really come good and is really making money. However, it is not going to be missed. If the business operates 10 hectares or more, the fee will be $3,300, and the fees slide down to $500. Those people will not be missed, that is for sure.

The fee for cattle feed lots will be $500. What about piggeries? For piggeries with 500 sows or more—and there is certainly more than one piggery in my electorate of that capacity—the fee will be $2,200.

An Opposition member: And they're all on their knees, the piggeries.

Mrs McCAULEY: They are. They are all scratching, trying to weather this dreadful drought, and this Government is going to give them a rabbit chop.

There are many poultry farmers in my electorate. They are going to be very pleased to learn that, if they have less than 200,000 birds, which they would have, they will have their fee waived for 12 months, but it will be hanging over their heads. What will be charged after the middle of next year when the election is safely behind us?

I think that these fees are an iniquitous imposition on rural communities at this time. The fact that local government is being forced to administer them is even more Machiavellian. I heartily agree with the member for Nerang's comments about small business. In fact, if I had thought about it sooner, I would have counted very carefully the number of small businesses in my electorate that will have to pay this fee. I bet that there will be an awful lot of them. The amount of money that will come out of the Callide electorate as a result of this legislation will be quite a sizeable amount of money. Due to the drought, my electorate is just staggering, yet the Government is saying, "We will help you; we will take all your money off you." It is just incredible.

Another issue that concerns me, and perhaps the Minister will be able to answer this, is that when I opened this regulation to have a look at it, I noticed that it deals with people recharging airconditioning units in vehicles and farm machinery, etc. It says that only a qualified person can install, commission, service or decommission the article. According to one of the schedules, "a qualified person" means that the person has to have done a course and have a document to say that he or she is a qualified person. On all our farming properties with large machinery that is airconditioned, if the airconditioning unit needs changing, they do it themselves. What will happen to them? Will they have to get a certificate so that they can fix the airconditioning unit on their tractors? They cannot wait for the airconditioning mechanic to come along because they do not come along very often out in the bush.

Mr Ardill: Are you fair dinkum about the ozone layer or aren't you?

Mrs McCAULEY: Yes, but surely there can be a compromise. Surely that important issue can be considered and some give and take allowed so that a common ground can be reached whereby we are not threatening the ozone layer and driving poor old farmers out of business by saying that they must have an airconditioning certificate so that they can service their tractors.

Mr Slack: It is the inflexibility of it.

Mrs McCAULEY: Exactly. If the grain growers ever get some rain to enable them to grow a crop again, they will all be talking about that issue. They have raised this matter previously. When they are driving their tractors day and night during planting, they like to have airconditioning, particularly in hot weather. I hope that the Minister will tell members whether or not that will be a problem.

I shall read the last part of the speech prepared by the member for Nerang which he did not have a chance to read. I thought that his speech was excellent. His speech reads—

> "Every responsible Queenslander wants a healthy environment, now, for their children and their grandchildren. They also understand that to achieve that, appropriate legislation and regulations need to be put in place. The Opposition is no different.
>
> The Opposition fully supports wide-ranging environment protection in Queensland. At the same time, to be able to live and enjoy life in Queensland, you have to have an economy that is vibrant and growing. You need an economy that will support employment and support the level of taxes necessary to ensure that the environment is protected.

This legislation and the associated fee structure will wreak havoc on Queensland industry and will not achieve what it set out to do. If anything it is likely to increase damage to our environment and close down many businesses that pay the taxes that protect it."

Time expired.

Dr CLARK (Barron River) (12.12 a.m.): When the tough new Environment Protection Act came into effect on 1 March this year, Environment Minister Molly Robson said—

"Although the new Environment Protection Act has been five years in the making, the time has been well spent to get it right and to accommodate all the legitimate concerns of business, local government and the environment movement."

Despite all the hysteria that we have heard from Opposition members, that is exactly what the legislation and the regulations do.

In my contribution to the debate, I will focus on local government. I would like to tell members a story that is different from and in stark contrast to the one that we heard from the Opposition spokesperson on local government. I refer to what the Local Government Association has to say, because it presents a very different picture. Consultation and cooperation have been a hallmark of this legislation and the accompanying regulations.

Mr Connor: That's rubbish. It's absolute rubbish.

Dr CLARK: It is not rubbish. Nowhere is cooperation seen more clearly than in the environment protocol to be signed by the Minister for the Environment, Molly Robson, and Councillor Jim Pennell, the President of the Local Government Association. That protocol, which is a first for Australia, has its genesis in the intergovernmental agreement on the environment, which recognises the roles and responsibilities of State and local government in environmental management. The honourable member would not even know what the intergovernmental agreement is. He has probably never heard of it. He does not know what goes on in regard to the environment, but I will tell him. A segment from that intergovernmental agreement states—

"The States will consult with and involve Local Government in the application of the principles and the discharge of responsibilities contained in this Agreement to the extent that State statutes and administrative arrangements authorise or delegate responsibilities to Local Government, and in a manner which reflects the concept of partnership between the Commonwealth, State and Local Governments."

The regulations that the Opposition opposes are a result of extensive negotiation with the Local Government Association over a period of several months to address its concerns. The success of those negotiations is evident in the words of Councillor Pennell in a Local Government Association press release that was issued in February of this year. He said—

"I welcome the consideration and responsiveness shown by the State Government in dealing with the concerns expressed by Councils. The Premier, in particular, is to be congratulated for his keen personal interest to ensure that the Environmental Protection regulations are more pragmatic and workable. The Association is more than willing to cooperate with Molly Robson and her department to make these new measures work."

That is what the President of the Local Government Association had to say.

Mr Ardill: That spoils their argument.

Dr CLARK: It certainly does. Opposition members do not want to hear that part. They like to avoid things that do not suit what they want to say.

The measures contained in the regulations and the environment protocol are based on two fundamental principles that the honourable member for Nerang does not understand or does not care about. Those are principles such as ecologically sustainable development and polluter pays in the management of Queensland's environment. The honourable member does not want to hear about that. He does not think that businesses should contribute. The parties to the protocol recognise the need for rationalisation of Government decision making and management on environmental matters to the most appropriate sphere of Government. State or regional issues or industries of greater complexity and likely environmental impact should be administered by the State Government, while local government should administer local industries, issues and operations with lower environmental risk and localised pollution potential.

The regulations that members are debating tonight set out the specific roles and responsibilities of local and State Government in a way that is practicable, workable and fair. I know that Opposition members are sceptical; they do not want to hear all of that, so I will read to them another quote from Jim Pennell, and maybe that will get the message across. He said—

> "On the key issues, the fees payable by Councils and autonomy for Local Government to determine fee levels for the devolved activities it will administer on behalf of the State, the Government has come through with flying colours.
>
> The fees payable by Councils have reduced by about a factor of five, taking much of the pressure off the smaller rural Shires."

Mr Connor: You demand the whole year's fees in advance.

Dr CLARK: We listened, and we acted on what they had to say. Mr Pennell stated further—

> "While Councils, and not the State Government, will now set the fees . . ."

That is what they wanted, and that is what the Government delivered. They will set those fees themselves for devolved activities along the lines of the polluter-pays principle.

Specifically, the new licence fee system contained in the regulations will achieve two key objectives. First of all, the 12-month phase-in period for environmentally relevant activities licensed by local authorities means that some 5,000 small businesses will pay no fees; that is where the 5,000 came in. The honourable member used that figure for his own purposes.

Mr Connor: I quoted it.

Dr CLARK: Yes, but it is the 5,000 businesses for the devolved activities. The member collected everybody together.

Mr Connor: That's wrong, too.

Dr CLARK: It certainly is not by the member's figures.

Those small businesses will not pay fees for the first 12 months, and that will cost the Government $2.7m. That is the Government's commitment to small business. The honourable member does not want to hear that. Instead of receiving licence fees from small business, local government will now receive a $500 fee relief payment from the Government. We did not hear that from the Opposition spokesperson for local government. Those people will receive a $500 fee relief payment from the Government for every business that they license in the first year. That will provide the revenue for local government while establishing an early movement to the polluter-pays system by encouraging businesses to become licensed. Local government will also receive $200 for every approval for more environmentally significant activities.

During the first year, the State Government will cooperate with the Local Government Association and other relevant bodies in developing a model fee structure that will reward good performers whose operations have little impact on the environment with minimal fees, while polluters will pay higher fees. The honourable member wanted to know what will happen next year. That is what will happen next year; the Government will work with local government. The people who deserve to pay minimal fees because they are good operators will pay minimal fees, and the people who are polluting will pay. Importantly, however, local governments will have the autonomy to set their own fees because they know who the good guys and the bad guys are in their areas. They will have the autonomy that they want to take account of local situations and the performance of businesses.

The existence of that model fee structure will provide a benchmark in case any local governments think that this is a good way of exploiting people and that they can charge anything they like. They will not be able to do that. The model fees will provide a benchmark, so local governments cannot get away with charging fees that are out of all proportion to the impact of an operation on the environment.

I want to mention some other important changes that have been made in the licence fees payable to the State Government by local governments for their own activities. Following discussions with the LGAQ, a consolidated licence may be available for the same activity taking place in several locations within a local government's boundaries. For example, all the sewage treatment plants operated by local government may be covered by a single licence. The licence fees for all of the plants will be set at the fee applicable to the largest plant. The effect is that all the remaining sewage plants will be licensed free of charge. Again, we have listened, and we are providing an appropriate scale of fees for local government.

In order to obtain a consolidated licence, local governments must demonstrate that they have in place an integrated management system. They have to show that they are going to perform. Of course, we are going to be checking that; that is only proper. They will have to have an integrated management system in place to ensure that all of the sewage treatment plants are managed in such a way as to produce sound environmental performance. Similar arrangements will apply for rubbish tips, quarries and water supply treatment plants. Where industry can demonstrate that it has an integrated management system for like activities, it may also benefit from those consolidated licensing arrangements.

I turn to land development construction activities, which are going to be licensed by local government. They will be given two years to dovetail in with the requirements of the new planning legislation. That will avoid duplication and confusion. We will work that out over a period to ensure that that system works for local government.

Local Governments are also concerned about the licensing of the quarries that we have heard about tonight. Small quarries which take road base and fill are certainly going to be able to continue to operate at no charge. We want to support local government and we are supporting local government. We are concerned that local government is not burdened with the administration of environmentally relevant activities of Statewide or regional significance. The environmental protocol provides for councils to apply to the State Government to take over the administration of the EARs which, in the council's opinion, have State and regional environmental significance. We have accepted those positions.

We are going to follow through on noise pollution so that local government does not have the responsibility for general complaints, but those that are devolved onto local government.

Time expired.

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham) (12.22 p.m.): If I can attract the Minister's attention, I would like to ask a question. I do not know whether she will listen. Does the Minister understand how the fee for operations for feedlots is levied at present and whether or not that fee was taken into account when the Government decided to double dip? The Department of Primary Industries, in conjunction with local authorities and the Department of Environment and Heritage, will consider the impact of a feedlot-—particularly the bigger feedlots—on a surrounding area. It will investigate whether the smell of a feedlot is going to be a problem and how it will impact on small villages, bigger towns or local residents. Consideration will be given to the management of the run-off from those feedlots and whether it could pollute streams.

I understand that, under the current system, all of those considerations are into account when the amount of the fee is being determined. My understanding is that those owners are currently paying around $2,000-odd a year for such an operation to be licensed. If that is not the case, I ask the Minister to explain to the House how the system does operate at the moment. If it is the case, can the Minister explain to me why it is necessary for the protection of the environment that the Government double dip by charging those people another fee to operate?

Over the past five years, that industry has been pushed fairly hard because of the drought. The operators have seen the price of grain rise from $100 to $120 a tonne to $240 to $250 a tonne. I ask the Minister to justify to the House how she justifies that double dipping. That is not reasonable. The Government has imposed quality assurance requirements, and those operators now have to pay another levy in order to pass muster. So those operators are going to pay three times. Could the Minister point out another industry that is being treated similarly? I do not think that it is reasonable.

Many environmentalists are running around saying that the animals in feedlots are producing methane. Is the Government going to impose a flatulence levy? Will those animals be fitted with gas meters that are strapped on their behinds? I do not know whether the members opposite would pass muster if they were subjected to a flatulence tax. I suggest that this issue is getting a little bit out of hand. The Minister might say that I am being facetious; maybe I am. However, I say that the Minister is the one who has gone over the top.

The problem is that many Government bureaucrats need to be able to justify their jobs. They need an answer to the question, "What have you done lately to justify that wonderful salary that you are paid?" That is why those people are wandering around looking at each other. They push a bit of paper in one direction and another person passes it back. Bureaucracy in this State has gone mad. Honourable members can examine the statistics and ask themselves

how many additional bureaucrats the Government has employed since coming to office. Is there any real growth in the Goss Government? The answer is, "Yes, there is." Tremendous growth has occurred in the bureaucracy. That is where the real growth in jobs has taken place since the members opposite came to office.

We need to be practical and down-to-earth about protecting the environment. No-one is more concerned about people who do the wrong thing or more prepared to see them jumped on than I am. However, as I have said, the Government is going over the top. The Minister's predecessor did exactly the same thing. At the time of the introduction of the heritage legislation, the Government got out the biggest stick it could find and said, "We are going to belt them over the head." They did not think to dangle a carrot or two on the end of the stick and give these operations some incentive to do the right thing. The way to overcome these problems is to offer financial incentives.

The same comments apply to the tree-clearing legislation that the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Environment and Heritage are proposing to introduce. The Government will use its spy in the sky to turn this State into a mini-Russia. Under that proposal, people will be spied on by satellites, and then bureaucrats will go onto properties and take offenders apart. Why does the Government not offer a little bit of incentive for a change? My father always used to say to me, "You catch a lot more flies with honey than you do with vinegar." That is not a bad saying. Honourable members opposite should remember it.

The members opposite are totally impractical. There is only one practical bloke on that whole side of the Chamber. I will not name him because I do not want to embarrass him. He is the only bloke on that side of the House who has any experience and business acumen. The Government does not put him into the Cabinet because he is too practical. He would display too much practical commonsense and the Government would not like that.

Mr Perrett: They wouldn't understand commonsense.

Mr ELLIOTT: No, unfortunately they do not understand any commonsense. Why is the Government bringing in this legislation? I can tell the Government the answer. It has employed so many bureaucrats—and I am not referring only to the Minister's department but right across-the-board—that it has to raise some more money. It is the biggest-spending Government left in Australia. It does not seem to be able to achieve anything.

Honourable members can ask my colleague the member for Toowoomba North, the Opposition spokesman on Health, whether the Government is doing any good. It throws money at the problem, but it does not seem to have any practical commonsense or any ability to spend it where it will really help. A good analogy is the Workplace Health and Safety Act. Bureaucrats are running amok everywhere checking on people. They are going in and annoying employers.

Mr Bredhauer: Trying to make workplaces safer.

Mr ELLIOTT: That is right. They are running around annoying everyone, but are they actually solving the problem? No, they are not. They are not doing any good at all. A way to enforce the provisions of the Workplace Health and Safety Act is through the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act, which offers incentives to people. I understand that the Government is also going to put incentives into the Workplace Health and Safety Act, which is a good exercise. If Matt Foley does that, he is to be congratulated. However, the other Government members seem to have the attitude that the only way they will get anywhere is to get out a huge stick and belt people over the head with it.

Mr Stephan: They use jackboots.

Mr ELLIOTT: Exactly, jackboots. Government members talk about the Bjelke-Petersen Government and say it was reactionary and that it understood only one thing, and that was to attack. This is not the way to go about it. If we want to get somewhere with environmental protection, we have to start with the kids and educate them. We are winning the environmental war because the kids understand the damage that has been caused to the ozone layer. They understand the need for clean air, clean water and all the rest of it. Once those people grow up and become executives of companies, they will do something about it.

Time expired.

Mr ROBERTSON (Sunnybank) (12.32 a.m.): In rising to speak against the motion, I say that the mere fact that the Opposition spokesman on Environment, Mr Slack, should move this disallowance motion against the environmental protection interim regulations is a clear demonstration that the Liberal and National Parties are not fair dinkum about protecting our environment. They do not have

a clue about national or international trends in environmental protection.

No amount of posturing by the Opposition, no amount of cosy photographs with the Greens and no amount of Indiana Jones-style trips to Cape York can disguise the fact that, when it comes to crucial questions of environmental protection, the Opposition spokesperson on Environment and the B team that followed him tonight are miserable failures and frauds.

Dr Clark: They had 30 years and what did they do?

Mr ROBERTSON: Absolutely nothing. I await with great interest the public response we hear from Drew Hutton when he learns of the stance of the Liberal and National Parties on these regulations. If Mr Hutton has any credibility, he will condemn the Opposition for moving this disallowance motion. Interestingly, after the member for Burnett's performance during the second-reading debate on the Environmental Protection Bill, when he first raised his objections to the new environmental regulations, Mr Hutton remained silent when he should have been condemning the Liberal and National Party Opposition for its disgraceful, narrow-minded stance. I suspect that, after this debate, we will see a repeat of this non-performance by the Greens spokesperson, which is a shame—a shame for those people in our community who really want to protect our environment and a shame for those who believe that Mr Hutton is some kind of honest broker in terms of analysing the performances of this Labor Government and the National and Liberal Party Opposition on environment protection.

The issue before the House is very simple: does Queensland want tough environmental laws that have as their base that the polluter should pay for the harm that he or she causes, deliberately or otherwise, to the environment? Does Queensland want a well resourced and trained environmental inspectorate that will ensure that business and industry are doing the right thing when it comes to minimising pollution of our air, our water, our land and our communities? If the answer to both of those questions is, "Yes", then popular support for these regulations will be a foregone conclusion. I believe that Queenslanders have already said "Yes" to these questions.

I intend to concentrate on the fee structure that forms part of these regulations. Since the introduction of pollution control legislation about 25 years ago, most developed countries have endeavoured to minimise environmental damage by licensing discharges to the environment. Queensland's Clean Air Act and Clean Waters Act are examples of that type of legislation. Some of the deficiencies in licensing conducted under those Acts are, firstly, that the current licence fees are based upon the volume of discharge for water or relate to the amount of goods produced for discharge of air emissions from a chimney. Secondly, the current fees are not integrated with the waste production cycle of industry and makes their use to influence behaviour limited. Thirdly, the current fees are inequitable across industry sectors—which is something that no Opposition member admitted to—and do not reflect the level of risk of contamination to the environment. Lastly, insubstantial charges do not provide an incentive to invest in better pollution controls or cleaner technologies.

So the new environmental protection legislation and the regulations have as their object the protection of Queensland's environment. They will achieve that through an integrated management program consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development—something that Opposition members probably cannot even pronounce.

Licensing will remain one of the environmental strategies to ensure that the persons who cause environmental harm pay the associated costs. Under this legislation, a new licensing fee system has been established based on the following principles: firstly, a charge is levied where a service is provided for the benefit of a specific user which has the capacity to pay; secondly, the dollar value of a charge is set to recover the full cost of providing the service; thirdly, charges are designed to minimise administrative costs and maximise the incentive for responsible environmental management; and, lastly, the charges incorporate a polluter-pays component to reflect the use of the environment.

The charging system contained in these regulations replaces 53 different existing charges currently specified in two separate Acts, and it extends charges to cover noise emission licences, which currently attract no fee. Mr Slack went on about the problems of noise pollution. At any stage did he admit that noise polluters have a responsibility to contribute to monitoring? No, not one word. He did not recognise that at all. This current system is clearly inequitable but, unfortunately, it is a system that the Opposition continues to support.

On the question of consultation with respect to this new fee structure, I think that it is important to note the extensive consultation that occurred in the drafting of not just the Bill but also the regulations.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: Organisations involved in that consultation process included the LGAQ, the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Metal Trades Industry Association, the Queensland Farmers Federation, the Queensland Mining Council and, for the benefit of the member for Warwick, I point out that the Queensland Environmental Law Association, the Environmental Defenders Office, trade union representatives, the Australian Littoral Society, the Wildlife Preservation Society and the Queensland Conservation Society were also involved. I have succeeded in shutting him up for a while.

Two committees were established with an emphasis on fees—the fee structure committee, which comprised representatives of departments, local government, industry associations, unions and conservation groups, and a devolution working party comprising departmental and local government interests, which also raised issues regarding fees. Importantly, I point out for the mouth from the south that an agreement was reached on the fee structure based on the user-pays principle.

Mr Connor: No, it wasn't.

Mr ROBERTSON: The honourable member is known as a bit of a wit around here, but with comments like that he is in danger of halving that reputation tonight.

It was a transparent formula to calculate fees to cover administration, inspections, assessment of data, risk assessment and other charges relating to pollution. Importantly, how does Queensland's new fee structure compare with, firstly, the old structure; and, secondly, with fee structures in the other Australian States? Because of the time that is available to me, I will concentrate on the fees that apply in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria for the purpose of that comparison. Let us forget about Western Australia. Its belligerent attitude towards environmental protection does not deserve any comparison whatsoever. For the benefit of the members opposite, I will give a few examples. What is the current licensing fee applying in Queensland to abattoirs? Some abattoirs get off scot-free; others pay up to $6,967 a year. What will be the new fee in Queensland? It will be $5,220. Is there any recognition for that reduction in fee for some abattoirs? No. How does that compare with the fees interstate? In New South Wales they pay $4,935, so there is not much difference there. However, in Victoria they pay up to $12,570. What about chemical manufacturers? Currently in Queensland chemical manufacturers can pay up to $7,745. Under the new regulations they will be paying $5,200. That is a reduction. What about the interstate comparison? In New South Wales, they pay $16,000-odd. In Victoria, they pay $13,000. In South Australia, they pay a little less.

What about concrete batching? Let us take another example. Currently, concrete batching plants pay $3,078. Under the new fee structure, they will pay $650. What a reduction! What a benefit to small business. How does that compare to interstate? In New South, they pay $1,400. In South Australia, they pay anything up to $1,600. What about foundries? What about incinerators? In all of these areas, there is a reduction in the fees that businesses are currently paying. Those fees are less than is paid by the same industries in other States. And Opposition members say that we are anti-business! Our record speaks for itself, because businesses will pay reduced fees. However, does the Opposition admit to this? Does it recognise that? Of course not, because that does not suit its cynical argument; they would have to tell the truth. What about the disgraceful performance by the member for Barambah in the second-reading debate? He listed fee after fee that he said would apply. Under the new regulations, only one fee applies.

Time expired.

Hon. M. J. ROBSON (Springwood—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (12.42 a.m.), in reply: The member for Sunnybank summed up well. It is very late at night and we are all very tired. We have been over this legislation before. The Opposition has obviously moved this disgraceful disallowance motion just to have another go with the benefit of the homework that it did not do before.

We have already passed this legislation through the Parliament. I know it is difficult to get our messages across, and I know that the issue is complex. However, I thought we were very patient. We have certainly done a bit of groundwork in briefing the Opposition so that it would hopefully be able to mount some sort of a meaningful debate. However, once again we have heard the same litany of incorrect quotes from the media and various distorted sources

that is typical of the Opposition's very shallow research. Clearly, it does not understand the need in the community and the demand by the community to adopt a polluter-pays approach to environmental protection.

Taxpayers right around this country have clearly indicated that they are sick and tired of paying for the polluting effects of industries that cannot be bothered, or are too profit motivated, to put aside a bit of capital to try to break down the effect on the environment of their activities. The time has come, whether members opposite like it or not, to move in this direction, which we are doing. This legislation is the tool which is taking us in that direction. It is contemporary legislation. It is appropriate and it is what the people want.

The member for Nerang is always raving about the effect on business. He is unbelievable. He cannot seem to grasp the concept that what we are trying to do is minimise the impact on the environment. The honourable member may think it is funny and that he is half smart about it, but he got it so far wrong that he will be a laughing stock after the first year.

Mr Stephan: You will be the laughing stock.

Ms ROBSON: The honourable member wishes.

The reality is that the businesses that are polluting will pay. That is it. Those who pollute the most will pay the most. Those who take the trouble to minimise their pollution will pay less. The legislation is clearly designed to achieve that and it will achieve it.

The member for Cunningham talked about incentives, but the fact that we have given them $2.7m worth of incentives totally bypassed him. We have acknowledged the impact on business. We have listened to them and consulted with them repeatedly over a long time. We have acknowledged that by saying that we will give them relief to ease this in for the first year. We have recognised economic conditions, and we have done it. But, of course, members opposite could not recognise and acknowledge that that is an appropriate way to go.

The environment legislation and this regulation which declares it have the desired impact that the community has demanded of us. I am very proud that we have been able to get through what has been a long, convoluted, detailed and thorough process to reach the point at which this State, for the first time ever, has legislation that will stand and which has penalties in it which are genuine disincentives for people to do the wrong thing. And the community is supporting the introduction of this legislation.

I want to thank the members of my committee who spoke tonight. They have been very much a part of the design of this legislation. We have all been through the processes together. They have contributed and, very often, have helped us to overcome problems as we have encountered them. I am genuinely appreciative of their efforts, and they can very proud of the contribution that they have made. I thank all members for participating.

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

AYES, 28—Beanland, Connor, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Goss J. N., Grice, Hobbs, Horan, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Rowell, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Turner, Watson *Tellers:* Laming, Springborg

NOES, 44—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bennett, Bird, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Burns, Campbell, D'Arcy, Davies, Dollin, Edmond, Fenlon, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Mackenroth, McElligott, McGrady, Milliner, Nunn, Nuttall, Pearce, Purcell, Pyke, Robertson, Robson, Rose, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Sullivan T. B., Szczerbanik, Vaughan, Warner, Welford, Wells, Woodgate *Tellers:* Budd, Livingstone

Resolved in the **negative**.

The House adjourned at 12.54 a.m. (Friday)