TUESDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2002

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. R. K. Hollis, Redcliffe) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 a.m.

QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE

Annual Report

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay upon the table of the House the Parliamentary Service annual report for 2001-02. I take this opportunity to encourage honourable members to read the annual report in its new format. I also thank the annual report committee: the Clerk of the Parliament, Ms Leanne Clare, Ms Meg Hoban and Ms Debbie Jeffrey.

PETITION

Red Light Cameras, Days Road and Lanham Street

Mr Fouras from 19 petitioners requesting the House to fit red light cameras at the intersection of Days Road and Lanham Street to catch offenders and thus keep safe the many school children that cross at this crossing.

PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The Acting Clerk informed the House that the following papers, received during the recess, were tabled on the dates indicated—

25 October 2002—

Response from the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines to a petition presented by Dr Kingston from 158 petitioners, regarding the eradication of dingoes in the Woocoo Shire Area

Mr R D Doyle
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Doyle

I refer to your letter of 18 September 2002 forwarding a copy of a Petition lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, requesting the House to arrange for the eradication of dingoes in the Woocoo Shire Area.

My Department of Natural Resources and Mines shares the concerns of Woocoo Shire residents over the problems created by wild dogs. Pest managers must rely on managing impacts because it is rarely possible to completely eradicate pest animals that are well established. Eradication is only possible in exceptional circumstances, such as on islands.

Officers of my Department have drawn the wild dog problem to the attention of the Woocoo Shire Council. Council officers have recently worked with local landholders to conduct a wild dog-baiting program. In addition, Council officers have been humanely trapping animals, and I am informed that the Council makes humane traps available to landholders.

My Department supports local governments and landholders in fulfilling their responsibilities under the Rural Lands Protection Act 1985 to manage declared pest animals. The Act places the responsibility for declared animal control, including wild dogs, in the hands of landowners and local governments. My Department provides support and coordination for declared animal control where multiple landowners or managers need to be involved to ensure the success of control programs. Coordinated efforts of this kind are often required in relatively densely settled areas where groups of animals can range across many properties. In the long term, successful management of wild dogs must be based on an improved awareness of the causes of the problem, and implementation of a variety of preventative measures.

I suggest that landholders in Woocoo Shire continue to provide Council officers with specific information on the locations and circumstances of wild dog problems. Departmental officers will continue to provide expertise and support to the Woocoo Shire Council to ensure coordinated and effective pest animal management.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP

28 October 2002—

Guardianship and Administration Tribunal – Annual Report 2001-02

Townsville Hospital Foundation – Annual Report 2001-02

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Acting Clerk—

Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994—

Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Amendment Standard (No. 2) 2002, No. 278

Drug Rehabilitation (North Queensland Court Diversion Initiative) Amendment Act 2002—

Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 279

State Housing Act 1945—

State Housing Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 280

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

Workplace Health and Safety (Advisory Standards) Amendment Notice (No. 3) 2002, No. 281

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Northbank

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.32 a.m.), by leave: On Monday the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, Robert Schwarten, and I released on behalf of cabinet four options for the redevelopment of the north bank of the Brisbane River in the CBD. The government wants to create a new precinct called Northbank to open up a neglected, under-utilised stretch of the river between the William Jolly Bridge and the Goodwill Bridge to the people of Queensland. I should say, that the vista from South Bank to the city is quite ugly. That is what the Minister for Public Works is going to fix.

We are inviting the private sector to come forward with plans for commercial, residential and recreational developments. Some of the proposals may involve constructing buildings above and beside the Riverside Expressway, the idea being to obscure an ugly spaghetti mix of roadways. We are inviting the private sector to come on board because taxpayers' money will not be used to develop this area. Developers will have to guarantee public access to the riverfront and ensure their proposals are economically viable and environmentally sustainable. Northbank will complement South Bank, creating a new heart for Brisbane and a new tourist attraction for Queensland.

The four options have been released for public comment. They are being displayed in the foyer of the Executive Building and on the Internet. The public consultation period ends on 30 November. I urge all Queenslanders to have a look at the proposals and tell us what they think about Northbank. I table on behalf of the government a package on Northbank which Robert Schwarten and I handed out at yesterday's news conference. Inside is *Northbank options on show*, including an options paper to be completed by anyone who is interested. I urge members to go out and highlight it to the community.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Palace Memorial Building, Childers

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.33 a.m.), by leave: On Saturday I opened the Palace Memorial Building in Childers and attended the unveiling of a memorial wall and painting which commemorates the 15 young lives which were tragically lost in the hostel fire just over two years ago. The unveiling was done by the Acting Prime Minister, John Anderson. I was joined by the Minister for Local Government and member for Bundaberg, Nita Cunningham; the local member for Burnett, Trevor Strong; the Leader of the Opposition, Mike Horan; the local federal member, Paul Neville; and the member for Callide, Jeff Seeney.

The memorial is a fitting tribute to the vibrancy and spirit of the backpackers, who will not be forgotten by the Childers community or indeed Queenslanders. It was an extremely moving occasion, made even more poignant by the presence of 11 of the 14 families who lost children in the fire. There were 15 young people who lost their lives, but there were twins lost. It was also an important turning point for the community of Childers, which has lived with the legacy of the tragedy since June 2000.

The Palace Memorial Building is not only a place for reflection; it will also be an important community facility. I place on record my appreciation of everything that has been done by the Isis Shire Council, in particular the mayor, Bill Trevor, who has worked tirelessly to ensure the victims

and their families are not forgotten. I also thank Nita Cunningham and Trevor Strong, both of whom have kept me fully informed in relation to the Childers memorial. As I said on that occasion, I think they have all done very well, particularly Bill Trevor, who I think is a great Australian. I also thank the Commonwealth, British and Dutch governments for their contribution to the memorial and the refurbishment of the Palace building.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ethanol

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: The government is setting the national pace on supporting expansion of the fuel ethanol industry. More than a year ago, in September 2001, cabinet established an interdepartmental committee to work on this issue. Our vehicle fleet, Q-Fleet, is the first government fleet in the country to have access to a 10 per cent ethanol blend fuel, E10, at government garages and a range of BP service stations in south-east Queensland. I thank the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Public Works for bringing it about. The Minister for Environment will have something to say about this in a minute.

Cabinet yesterday noted the findings of a report from the interdepartmental committee. I am pleased to share some of these with the House. The report confirms that the best way to increase use of ethanol as a fuel additive is through the collaboration of governments, industry and consumers. There are also compelling legal and constitutional reasons for a national approach to be led by the Commonwealth. Anything but a Commonwealth led approach could be challenged as unconstitutional. It would risk running foul of mutual recognition legislation.

The report recommends that Queensland ask the Commonwealth to examine measures to alter the current national fuel mix. I am writing today to the Prime Minister in support of this recommendation. My message to the Prime Minister is that the Commonwealth should either retain the production subsidy for domestically produced fuel ethanol or give the industry alternative support for long enough to enable it to establish in Australia. I will suggest that support should be provided for the next five years, not the current 12 months that is in place. If the Commonwealth wanted to go beyond five years, I would be delighted.

Cabinet has also agreed that the Commonwealth should set a national ceiling of 10 per cent ethanol content. Consumers will need the protection of compulsory labelling of ethanol-petrol blends to clearly show the content of fuel they are buying for their vehicles. That is important. I will also be asking the federal government to reveal its long-term strategy for biofuels as soon as possible. This needs to include an increased national target for biofuels production. I believe this is a rational approach to an industry which could benefit our primary producers and the environment and also assist regional and rural employment, regional development and our balance of trade figures.

The Minister for State Development, supported by the Minister for Primary Industries, is out there trying to assist our sugar industry. This is a vital time to do it. I have talked about a ceiling of 10 per cent. We do need to mandate a percentage of fuel, but we need to determine that by how much ethanol Australia can support. That is important, otherwise we will end up with import problems. That is why we have to stop imports and ensure there is protection for the industry for that five-year period, until our industry gets off the ground and can support itself.

This is a rational and sensible approach. I have written to the Prime Minister. Because of the importance of this issue, I seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard* my letter to the Prime Minister and the executive summary of the report. I think it is important for all members of the House to be aware of what cabinet considered yesterday.

Leave granted.

The Hon John Howard, MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

State Cabinet yesterday noted the findings of a report of the Queensland Ethanol Industry Interdepartmental Committee, and resolved that I write to you regarding support for expansion of the ethanol industry.

The committee, established in September 2001, reinforces the imperative for the Commonwealth to lead a national approach to this issue.

There can be no doubting that the best way to increase use of ethanol as a fuel additive is through collaboration of governments, industry and consumers.

There are also compelling legal and constitutional reasons for the Commonwealth to take the lead on this issue.

Accordingly, I seek your support for the following initiatives:

- Retention of a production subsidy for domestically produced fuel ethanol or some alternative support mechanism for a domestic ethanol industry, for sufficient time to allow the industry to become established in Australia. Five years would be more appropriate than the current 12 months time frame;
- Establishment of a 10% ceiling for the ethanol content of petrol Australia-wide;
- Introduction of compulsory labelling of ethanol/petrol blends to clearly show the ethanol content of the fuel; and
- An announcement, as soon as possible, of the Commonwealth's long-term strategy for biofuels. This should include an increased target for Australian production of these fuels.

As you are aware, the production of ethanol for blending with motor fuel has potential to deliver a range of benefits to the Australian community.

These include regional development, employment opportunities for rural and regional communities, improved fuel self-sufficiency and a cleaner environment.

I look forward to your response, and to a collaborative approach to this important matter.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Peter Beattie MP
Premier and Minister for Trade

ATTACHMENT

QEIIDC ISSUES PAPER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 A national ten per cent ethanol blend sourced domestically for motor fuel would require ethanol production to be increased twelve (12) times on the existing annual production of 154 million litres.

2. The uptake of ethanol as a fuel additive would be facilitated best as a staged transition to minimise disruption to industry and the community and diminish the need for imported product.

3. Ethanol is a renewable energy source capable of being produced in significantly increased volumes in Queensland. Ethanol's environmental performance rests upon the sustainability of the supply chain of production. Mechanisms for ensuring sustainability in the ethanol industry are yet to be extensively investigated or costed.

4. Ethanol blended with motor fuel delivers some beneficial environmental outcomes, regional development and employment opportunities, and improved fuel self-sufficiency for Queensland. It has been suggested that further modelling is necessary by respective agencies to investigate the extent of these benefits in Queensland.

5. State prerogatives to mandate unilaterally specific fuel blends involving ethanol are constrained by the commerce provisions of the Australian Constitution and the Mutual Recognition legislation.

6. A mandated fuel strategy is not an optimal policy instrument to assist the development of the ethanol industry and runs the risk of prejudicing its early development through competition from imported product.

7. The most effective way to assist the ethanol industry is to provide producer subsidies in the establishment phase of the industry, particularly in the absence of mandate use of ethanol in transport fuel. This takes into account the recent Commonwealth Government decision to improve the full rate of fuel excise on ethanol.

8. Government support for ethanol blends will be most effective when presented within an incontestable framework at the Commonwealth level and Queensland should request the Commonwealth to examine measures to alter the current national fuel mix.

9. Successful expansion of the fuel ethanol sector will require consumer support for ethanol-blended vehicle fuel, a product preference that should be assisted by Government promotion and by imposition of a "ceiling" for ethanol content in transport fuels and by clear labelling for consumers of fuel composition.

10. The expansion of ethanol as a vehicle fuel additive will be achieved best through the collaborative efforts of governments, industry and consumers.

11. The Australian transport liquid fuels market is controlled largely by a petroleum industry that views ethanol as a competitor fuel.

12. While ethanol use as a blended oxygenator in motor vehicle fuel will, on balance, deliver positive environmental benefits, lifecycle analysis of the product points to a number of potential negative impacts arising from significantly expanded production of feedstocks.

13. The ethanol industry depends on agricultural production for its feedstock, building on and diversifying expertise in agricultural industries, however expansion of the fuel ethanol sector will only be sustainable when not compromising the availability of grain to the intensive livestock sector, especially in times of impending drought.

14. The ethanol industry is concerned about the effects Queensland's Reid Vapour Pressure (RVP) prescriptions will have on the viability of ethanol/petrol blends and have requested consideration of exemptions.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I am trying to be of assistance. I have put in the executive summary and the letter to the Prime Minister so everyone knows. There are no secrets about this report. I put it all on the record.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bushfires

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: I was again in Toowoomba at the weekend. On this occasion, it was an unplanned visit as I was there to get a first-hand awareness of the fire situation. Firstly, I want to thank the firefighters and fire crews and all the emergency service people and volunteers for their efforts. The Bali bombings, the Farmhand drought support program and now the fires have shown us that Australians are by nature caring, supportive people who are always keen to chip in and help a mate in need. The firefighters, the aerial bomber crews, the emergency services people, the volunteers, the local council officers—everyone involved—can all be proud of a job well done. I want to thank them very sincerely. In all, it is reported that there were more than 100 sorties flown by the aerial bombers in the Toowoomba area. I had an opportunity to talk to the pilots when I was there. They did a really fantastic job.

In the Toowoomba-Ballandean-Gatton fires, about 48,500 hectares of land has been burnt. Sadly, there was the one fatality and four injuries. More than 20 structures were destroyed, including four houses, and in total several hundred people evacuated. Fire crews from as far as Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Maryborough, the Sunshine and Gold coasts and West Moreton were involved. Including urban and rural fire officers, their crews and volunteers, more than 1,500 people were involved. And add to that the hundreds and hundreds of volunteers who kept up the food and drinks for them. In total, there were more than 140 urban and rural fire trucks as well as support from fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, bulldozers, graders and water tankers.

While in Toowoomba I met with Toowoomba Mayor, Councillor Dianne Thorley. She raised a number of issues about fire preparedness with me. Between the state government and the Toowoomba City Council, we will review issues relating to their management of escarpment parkland. Back-burning and control management issues need to be addressed. I also want to thank local member Kerry Shine for his efforts. Kerry was given leave to remain in Toowoomba last Thursday to keep us informed of the situation in his electorate. Kerry and Mike Reynolds—and Mike accompanied me on the visit—and Mike Horan joined me in Toowoomba on Sunday morning to review the situation. I know that Mike was fully briefed and he and I discussed it on a number of occasions and I thank him for his cooperation.

At this time I also remind people who start fires that they risk life in prison for such stupidity. The minister has declared a total fire ban. That is currently in place. The ban is for two weeks. Can I say that, notwithstanding the success of the prayers for rain that we said last week—and I thank all honourable members; the only one who is unhappy with our praying for rain is the Deputy Premier and the minister for the Indy, who thought that we prayed too early, because it obviously had a significant impact on the Indy on Sunday—I need to point out that there is still drought in large parts of the state. Queensland is a tinderbox in many areas. A cigarette out the window or carelessness with fire can lead to a loss of life and a loss of property. People can go to jail for life. I just appeal to people to be sensible when it comes to the use of fire.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

2002 Honda Indy 300

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (9.42 a.m.), by leave: The 2002 Honda Indy 300 has been run and won for another year. This four-day carnival is Australia's premier sporting and social event and this year proved no different. Not even the rain on race day could put a dampener on the festivities. A record crowd of 297,835 people went through the gates over the four days, which is four per cent up on last year's attendance. On Sunday, 103,351 people attended and if fine weather had prevailed we would no doubt have seen that figure climb and push the overall attendance past the 300,000 milestone. People are voting with their feet and this is a positive sign for the long-term future success of the event.

When the Gold Coast first staged the race back in 1991, it attracted approximately 150,000 people. This year, we virtually doubled that. In fact, on Saturday I was on hand to present a major prize to the two millionth spectator to attend a cart race this year—a Gold Coast local who had attended 11 of the 12 Indy events on the Gold Coast. Corporate sales were also strong with 6,000 people enjoying corporate packages each day.

The Beattie government has always been a strong supporter of the Indy. This year, our government contributed $10.95 million towards staging the event. Every year Indy organisers prove to us that it is money well spent. We estimate that it generates more than 175,000 visitor nights in Queensland and has triggered economic benefits from $9.5 million in 1991 to more than $50 million this year. It also delivers an employment boost, creating more than 700 jobs across several industries.

Queensland enjoys tremendous exposure from the Indy and the Gold Coast is well and truly in the spotlight. This exposure is enhanced through television. The race was broadcast to a potential international audience of more than 700 million people in more than 190 countries. Images of Gold Coast beaches, the high-charged racing action and the party atmosphere all helped to raise the international profile of the Gold Coast and Queensland as an ideal tourist destination. The event also grows in popularity across Australia. It is estimated that more than two million viewers across Australia watched the race on television. In all, 700 accredited media representatives from across the globe covered the event this year.

I would also like to recognise the wonderful army of volunteers who make the Indy a success every year. On Sunday night, I had the pleasure of celebrating yet another successful Indy with volunteers and publicly thanking them for their efforts. There were 1,500 altogether and without them the Indy simply would not happen.

As members can see, the Indy marks an important time of the year for the Gold Coast. It was explained to me last week by somebody as schoolies week for oldies. In fact, its future on the Gold Coast has been secured for another six years. The Premier and I announced an in-principle agreement on Friday that would see the cart contract extended from 2003 to 2008. This agreement is great news for everyone involved in the event at all levels and great news for Queensland because, as I have explained, the Gold Coast Indy is an event well worth the time, effort and money.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Instant Scratch-Its

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (9.46 a.m.), by leave: Members may recall that I made a ministerial statement to the House on 9 April 2002—

An honourable member: Yes, I remember that real well.

Mr MACKENROTH: Good. The member will remember it. It concerned problems encountered with Golden Casket Lottery Corporation Ltd's Instant Scratch-Its validation system. At that time I advised that the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation had received a complaint from an Instant Scratch-Its player alleging that a validation terminal, as used by most casket agents, was able to check whether an unscratched ticket was, in fact, a winning ticket.

Following verification of this allegation, and while only a small number of validators appeared to be affected, Golden Casket Lottery Corporation Ltd, in consultation with the gaming regulator, moved to quickly restore integrity to the system. This was achieved by introducing an additional system validation procedure requiring that a security code be entered into the terminal to validate the ticket. To read the security code, the ticket must be scratched.

The Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation has examined all facets of this matter and I must again thank the original complainant for his cooperation and assistance during this investigation. The Compliance Division of the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation has now completed its investigation into this matter and, based on its findings, has issued a number of formal directions to the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation Ltd in relation to management and operational practices.

Importantly, the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation is now seeking Crown law advice as to whether a prima facie case exists in relation to a significant breach of the Lotteries Act 1997 with a possible view to prosecution of the corporation. As a shareholding minister of the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation Ltd and minister responsible for gaming regulation in Queensland, I

am determined to ensure that the corporation conducts its lottery activities to the highest standards and strictly complies with the requirements of the Lotteries Act 1997 and associated subordinate legislation. As such, I will be monitoring closely the course of any prosecution action by the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation to ensure the absolute integrity of the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation Ltd's operations and products is maintained.

I have also written to the chairman of the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation seeking his urgent advice as to how the series of events identified by the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation was allowed to occur and what the board intends to do to ensure that similar events do not occur in the future. I would expect that his response will cover the role of the management of the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation in these events and the board's own processes and controls for corporate governance. The Golden Casket Lottery Corporation has a long and justly deserved reputation for the quality of its products and the integrity of its systems and I will ensure that there is no diminution in this reputation.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Home Schooling

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.51 a.m.), by leave: The Queensland government is determined to improve the quality of life for young Queenslanders through education. Some Queensland families choose to educate their children outside the formal education system through home schooling. Parents who want to make this choice must seek dispensation from the legal requirement for their children to re-enrol in a school between the ages of six and 15. Times have changed since the legislation permitting home schooling was introduced in 1989. The number of families seeking to use home schooling as an option for their children has increased. The reasons for choosing home schooling are varied and include philosophical and religious grounds, a need for flexibility to combine school studies with other activities and providing flexibility for students with particular needs.

The Beattie government acknowledges the right of parents to choose the form of schooling they believe is best for their child. But the government also wants to ensure that every child has access to a high quality education that will give them the best possible chances for the future. To ensure this, I advise the House that I have initiated a review of home schooling policy and practice. Work on the review will begin this month and a report will be delivered to me by mid-2003.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Indigenous Smart Jobs

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Youth Affairs and Minister for the Arts) (9.53 a.m.), by leave: The powerful medium of indigenous radio is playing a key role in promoting smart training as the pathway to smart jobs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland. The campaign is a joint effort of the Department of Employment and Training, TAFE Queensland and the National Indigenous Radio Service which reaches 41 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander radio stations and communities across the state. It features interviews with seven indigenous Queenslander achievers who have done or are doing training on the way to finding rewarding jobs. They tell listeners what they have done, how they did it and how it has helped their lives. They come from across the state—from Thursday and Palm Islands to suburban Brisbane—and represent a variety of career paths. Aboriginal television personality Ernie Dingo, who himself knows all about smart training having started his working life as an apprentice signwriter, generously agreed to record a series of promos for the series and introduce each interview. I thank Ernie for his valuable time and endorsement of this worthwhile series.

I table a CD of this material entitled 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Smart Jobs Series'. Coinciding with this project is the release of the publication *Kaulder Jibbijah*, the Department of Employment and Training's annual report on programs and services for indigenous peoples. The publication, now in its third year, provides program and service benchmarks so employment and training outcomes for indigenous Queenslanders can be tracked on an annual basis. I table that publication.

The Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives are also targeting special areas of need when it comes to providing assistance in finding a job. The latest Bureau of Statistics figures on

work force trends, released on 16 October, show that we must continue this work, particularly when it comes to women. Among the projects that are making their mark on improving female participation in the work force is the 9 to 5 Project, which has received a $149,000 Community Jobs Plan grant. Currently, 12 young, mature-age, indigenous and unemployed women from northern Brisbane suburbs are participating in the project, which is one of several that Brisbane City Council has been funded to operate. Participants are developing skills in a variety of areas, including customer service, word processing and spreadsheets. They are also working in community organisations such as Lifeline, the John Wesley Gardens Aged Care Facility and Jabiru Community Youth and Children's Services. Another organisation working very hard in partnership with the government to address female unemployment is the Women Re-entry to Work Association. To date, it has operated 13 projects with Breaking the Unemployment Cycle funding. Since it was launched in 1998, the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative has assisted 1,852 women through the Community Jobs Plan program and 8,558 women through the Community Employment Assistance Program.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mackay Tactical Crime Squad

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (9.55 a.m.), by leave: I inform the parliament of a concrete example of one of the Beattie government's law and order election commitments bearing fruit. As members would be aware, in 2001 our government made a commitment to establish 16 14-officer tactical crime squads during this term. We are meeting that commitment. We funded the establishment of five squads last financial year and will fund another six in 2002-03. These squads are effective because they provide highly visible, saturated patrolling where needed, work with local officers in operations and target crime problems specific to their area. Mackay's tactical crime squad is one such example. Between July and the end of September, this squad made 126 arrests on 165 charges and solved a number of major drug and property related crimes. This squad is currently only at a half strength of seven officers and is being gradually ramped up in numbers. Imagine the impact that eventual 14-officer squad will have on crime in that area.

In an article in the local *Pioneer News* a local officer said the following—

> The significance of the tactical crime squad for the people of Mackay has been two-fold. The first is the amount of property and drug-related arrests that have been made, which has a positive impact on the whole community. Secondly, the extra officers in the crime squad are taking the pressure off other staff such as our general duties officers, so they now have more time to provide a faster response time for call outs and a better service to the general public.

I am pleased to hear that local police are supportive of the new squad and I am certain the Mackay community is as well. Certainly Tim Mulherin and Jan Jarratt tell me all of the time about just how well this squad is performing. The tactical crime squads would not be possible without the 300 extra police officers we are employing each year as part of our program to boost police numbers. We have already boosted the service by nearly 1,300 extra officers since coming to office.

Similar success stories are being reported in all the areas the tactical crime squads have been established, including Cairns, Townsville, the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast, Logan, the City/Valley area and Rockhampton. Work is under way to establish more squads in Toowoomba, Ipswich and South Brisbane for the metro south region. The Logan/Gold Coast combined squad is also being split to create two separate, 14-officer squads for each area. The reason the squads are proving so effective is that their work is self-generated, not reactive like general duties officers, so the squads are specifically assigned to research and target local crime problems. I have no doubt that as the squads are built up to their full 14-officer capacity they will meet with even more success.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drivers Licences, Older Drivers

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (9.58 a.m.), by leave: I refer to a speech made in parliament last week by the member for Gladstone and to an article in last week's *Sunday Mail* in relation to the licensing of older drivers. The assertion made that older drivers are only eligible for an annual licence is not Queensland Transport policy. People over 75 years of age are in fact

able to purchase a licence for any annual period between one and five years and pay the relevant charges. It may be necessary to have a driver's medical certificate renewed during the period of the licence, but these details can be recorded at no additional cost. Should a medical certificate not be renewed, the unused portion of the driver's licence fee is fully refunded. It is possible, however, that some customer service centre staff and some medical practitioners have continued to advise customers in accordance with an old policy, a policy that no longer exists. Queensland Transport is initiating action to ensure that all customer service centre staff and medical practitioners are aware of the current rules.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ethanol

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (9.59 a.m.), by leave: There is potential for significant expansion of fuel ethanol production in Queensland over the next few years, delivering more jobs for Queenslanders, providing a cleaner air environment and improving fuel self-sufficiency for the state. As the Premier said earlier, the government foresaw the potential benefits of an expanded fuel ethanol industry in Queensland and established an interdepartmental committee in 2001 to advise the government on how best to support expansion of the industry in Queensland. This government also pursued assurances from vehicle manufacturers that the use of petrol blends containing 10 per cent ethanol, or E10, would not damage vehicles or void their warranties. But also in 2001 this government became the first institutional buyer of E10 in Queensland. The Minister for Public Works was instrumental in ensuring that we used the purchasing power of government to kick-start a market for ethanol in south-east Queensland.

The state government was also a major sponsor of the Pacific Ethanol Conference held in Brisbane earlier this year. I am pleased to advise that the international community has responded to the positive stance that the Queensland government is taking on ethanol, inviting me to provide the keynote address at the Biofuels 2002 conference to be held in Brisbane on 31 October to 1 November. The Biofuels 2002 conference will bring together delegates from around the world and include presentations from the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage, the Australian Greenhouse Office, the Australian Biofuels Association and the Australian Petroleum Institute. This conference will bring together all the stakeholders involved in the developing biofuels industry in Australia and will provide the first opportunity to discuss, assess and understand holistically the practical challenges, issues, economic and political impacts influencing Australia's fledgling biofuels industry.

I will use the opportunity of this conference to once again affirm this government's commitment to the development of a sustainable biofuels industry in Queensland—an industry with the potential to make a major contribution to regional development and employment in Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Northbank

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (10.01 a.m.), by leave: As the Premier has already told the House this morning, yesterday we made an exciting announcement about the possible redevelopment of the north bank of the Brisbane River in the CBD. The area earmarked for Northbank stretches from the William Jolly Bridge to the Goodwill Bridge. This will open to the public an underutilised stretch of the river and will attract new business opportunities to Brisbane. We want to stimulate ideas for the private sector to invest in commercial, residential and recreational developments for this unique project.

The Department of Public Works has developed four options as part of a master planning study for consideration by the public. Some of Queensland's most renowned architects and urban designers have developed the four master plan options, which involve proposals for new leisure and entertainment amenities, public plazas and residential and commercial facilities. The four options vary in intensity of development. This includes—

Option 1, which involves enhancing the waterfront with minor development along the banks;

Option 2 will include limited development along the waterfront and near the expressway;

Option 3 involves more concentrated development with waterfront upgrades and activity nodes near the bridges and at Alice Street; and

Option 4 would transform the waterfront area and could involve significant development along the entire length of the expressway.

All of these options will allow for public access, safety and transport, as well as maintaining access to heritage and culture. The master plan will unlock the potential of this part of the Brisbane River and CBD. The four Northbank master plan options will be on public display for consideration by the community, the private sector and government. The public display will be in the Executive Building foyer, 100 George Street, from the 29 October to 30 November 2002. The project team will be available to answer questions at the Executive Building display on Wednesday, 13 November, between 12 p.m. and 2 p.m., and Wednesday, 20 November, between 12 p.m. and 2 p.m.

I urge all Queenslanders to have a look at the proposals and tell us what they think about Northbank. Once feedback on these options has been received, a final option will be developed for approval by the government in early 2003.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Meeting Challenges, Making Choices

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services and Minister for Seniors) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: The Beattie government is moving quickly to break the cycle of violence and alcohol abuse that afflicts indigenous communities in Queensland. Since the enactment of the Community Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 and the Indigenous Communities Liquor Licences Bill 2002, senior DATSIP officers, including the director-general, deputy director-general, the executive director of the department's Regional Operations Directorate and respective regional directors have led a series of visits across the state to Aboriginal communities to discuss how the legislation will be implemented. The community consultations have also been supported by senior Brisbane based and regional staff of the Liquor Licensing Division and the Queensland Police Service. For example, the visit to the Yarrabah community was also attended by Assistant Commissioner Alan Roberts.

More than 20 visits have been made involving discussions with all mainland councils. Bamaga Island Council was visited twice in September and was offered the opportunity for a briefing. On both occasions this offer was refused. Many of the visits also included discussions with existing community justice groups, elders groups and women's groups. In a number of cases, specialised briefings were also given by DATSIP staff, to other government and community employees, such as Queensland Health staff, local police and canteen managers. The visits were also supported by an information package specifically prepared by DATSIP to ensure all stakeholders have an accurate overview of the legislative reforms and associated government programs and initiatives.

This communication package has proved so successful that DATSIP continues to receive requests for further copies from government staff working in the regions and a wide range of community members. The visits promoted good discussion at the local level around the legislation and—

reinforced the need for these reforms;

confirmed the fact that communities are deeply concerned about the damaging effects of alcohol on individuals, families and their overall quality of life;

confirmed that indigenous Queenslanders are generally eager to work with the government to introduce positive alcohol related reforms in their communities; and

demonstrated the need for ongoing dialogue between senior government officers and community members about these serious issues.

DATSIP will pursue the development of negotiation tables as real and meaningful mechanisms for community engagement between the government and each community. Government directors-general have also visited communities or are planning future trips to communities as part of their newly adopted role as Community Champions. For example, Ms Helen Ringrose, Director-General of the Department of Corrective Services, visited Kowanyama. Her meeting with

community members was very well attended and indicated strong support for the Community Champion concept. Dr Leo Keliher, Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, has visited Hope Vale, and Mr Frank Rockett, Director-General of DATSIP, has visited Doomadgee.

The establishment of the Cape York Partnerships Units in Cairns is nearing completion and they will be responsible for the intensive work required to integrate and coordinate government service delivery and assist communities develop their alcohol management plans. Implementation of the legislation will be through a staged approach. Priority communities where these reforms will be introduced in the first instance are: Aurukun, Lockhart River, Wujal Wujal, Hope Vale, Doomadgee and Mornington Island.

It is only when we have addressed the unacceptable levels of violence and alcohol abuse that we will be able to really improve health, education and other social outcomes in indigenous communities. I trust the bipartisan support for legislative reform will extend to other reforms necessary to create a real future for indigenous children and families.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drought, Exceptional Circumstances Assistance

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: I can report to the House that I sent an application for exceptional circumstances assistance for the drought-stricken producers in Peak Downs shire and parts of Belyando and Emerald shires to federal Agriculture Minister Warren Truss yesterday. The application was prepared by Agforce and the Queensland government through the Department of Primary Industries. The application area covers about 220 properties and there is also a recommendation for a buffer zone. I believe that this application meets the tests for an EC declaration.

The application cites DPI estimates that the gross value of agricultural production in Peak Downs shire declined by 50 per cent to $45 million in 2001-02 compared with the year 2000-01, and a further fall of 45 per cent to $27 million is projected for this financial year. Exceptional circumstances assistance is in the form of welfare measures and farm business support which is in the form of interest rate subsidies. The federal government must first determine if the application is a prima facie case for exceptional circumstances assistance and, if so, welfare assistance is immediately triggered.

As minister, I have actively sought reforms that will ensure needy farming families can not only access exceptional circumstance assistance, but that they can do it quickly. Despite the agreement of all Australian governments for EC reform, the federal minister will not implement changes such as a four-week deadline for assistance applications until the Commonwealth gets agreement to reduce its share of funding for its own program. In the case of this application, the reforms could be the difference between producers receiving full exceptional circumstance assistance before Christmas.

My argument has been based on what is in the best interests of our farming communities. I have also noticed that, in September, the National Party federal council decided to require that exceptional circumstance applications be assessed within four weeks. It is unfortunate that our Queensland Nationals support Mr Truss's refusal to implement exceptional circumstance reforms because they ignore what farmers need, what the states want and what their own party demands of them.

I would also like to thank Queenslanders for their support of the Farmhand appeal for drought assistance. On Saturday night, together with Stuart Copeland, his wife and my wife, I joined farming families and local residents in Clifton on the Darling Downs. Clifton was one of three centres in Australia to host special barbecues to coincide with the Farmhand concert in Sydney. The Farmhand appeal has now raised more than $30 million. The Queensland government has contributed $500,000 towards that appeal. Farmers appreciate the help but, more importantly, they appreciate that people now understand what they are going through.

While some areas have received some rain in recent days, the falls have been too light and too sparse to be of real benefit. Unfortunately for some producers the dark clouds also brought hail which devastated some crops. Our producers appreciate the rain that has fallen but there needs to be more—much, much more.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Airline Seat Capacity

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (10.13 a.m.), by leave: Queensland has recovered rapidly from the disastrous Ansett collapse of September last year when overnight we lost more than 40 per cent of domestic capacity. The rapid response by Qantas and Virgin, working in cooperation with the Queensland Government to identify capacity gaps and then servicing the needs, has resulted in 93 per cent of pre-collapse domestic capacity being reinstated. The state's capital and major regional centres are now well serviced by the two airlines and new arrival Alliance Airlines also is playing a vital role in providing services.

On 15 September, Virgin Blue moved its operations at Brisbane Airport from the existing common user area to the former Ansett terminal to facilitate the airline's future expansion. On 1 September Virgin Blue announced further expansion into Queensland with the introduction of direct flights from Sydney to the Sunshine Coast commencing from 17 October. As a result of strong forward bookings, Virgin Blue introduced an additional Sunday service on the Maroochydore-Sydney route from last weekend. These eight new services will provide a further 1,152 seats per week on this route—or 153 per cent of September 2001 capacity. There are now more than 1,000 extra seats—a capacity increase of 45 per cent—on the Sydney-Sunshine Coast route and 575 more seats, or 70 per cent more capacity, into the Sunshine Coast from Melbourne.

On 2 October, Virgin Blue announced its northern winter schedule which takes effect from last weekend. The changes include an extra daily service on the Melbourne-Brisbane route, providing an additional 1,071 seats a week into Brisbane. There is also an additional Sunday service, Gold Coast-Melbourne, taking capacity on the route to 117 per cent of pre-collapse seats. Last week, Virgin Blue announced daily return flights between Perth and Brisbane from 12 December.

The popular tropical north is also well ahead of September 2001 capacity. There has been a seven per cent boost—an extra 500 seats a week—from Sydney, while there are 1,746 extra seats a week from Melbourne. On 31 July 2002, Queensland Airline Holdings, which acquired the assets of the former Flight West, announced the creation of a new domestic carrier, Alliance Airlines, which introduced services on three new routes—Brisbane-Rockhampton, Brisbane-Norfolk Island and Brisbane-Gladstone. The airline operates 12 services per week between Brisbane and Rockhampton, providing an additional 1,092 seats a week, and 18 services between Brisbane and Gladstone, providing a total of 540 seats a week. Alliance also operates six return flights a week Townsville-Brisbane, providing 546 additional seats a week on the route.

The government has now guaranteed air services to the bush through a new $7 million annual government subsidy. Under the plan the government will subsidise and regulate 10 air routes throughout central and western Queensland through five-year contracts with Macair and QantasLink. The government, working closely with the airlines, has achieved much since the Ansett collapse.

We have rebuilt capacity from New Zealand and the take-off of Australian Airlines over the weekend heralds the dawning of a bright new era. The tropical north and Gold Coast will be the major beneficiaries. I was pleased to be on hand at Gold Coast Airport yesterday to welcome the first incoming Australian Airlines flight. But we will not rest on our laurels. Air access is vital for the continued growth of regional Queensland and our tourism industry. We will continue the work to boost capacity to destinations across Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bushfires

Hon. M. F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland) (10.16 a.m.), by leave: Having toured fire ravaged communities in the past couple of weeks, it never ceases to amaze me how Australians club together in times of need. Just as we all were coming to terms with the Bali tragedy, devastating bush and grassfires swept through communities in the state's south. Tragically, as I mentioned to members last week, one woman died in a blaze on the Granite Belt and several firefighters were also injured. Then over the past few days we have again been put to the test as a series of fires in the Toowoomba, Tara, Withcott and Gatton areas forced evacuations as hundreds of homes

came under threat. Undoubtedly all members would have seen, read and heard much in the media about these efforts in recent days.

However, I would like to pay tribute to all the work that goes on behind the scenes that is often unnoticed by the community. There is also a fantastic working relationship between the various emergency agencies who band together to help when the going gets tough. Just as happened in the New South Wales fires over Christmas-New Year, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service's integrated rural-urban firefighting force again came to the fore. The way these paid and volunteer crews stood side by side in the planning, management, support and response roles is very uplifting. I am sure the member for Toowoomba North, who toured these areas with me, would agree. It is also reassuring for members of the community to know that firefighters came to battle blazes from hundreds of kilometres away to help those most in need. It did not matter that it was a working day or a weekend, or that the conditions they faced were at best unpleasant, or at worst life threatening. I am sure there were times, under extreme stress and strain, when some things did not work perfectly. But I know there were hundreds of people who returned to their homes on Saturday night and Sunday and they were enormously thankful that they had homes to return to. Many of these fires were stopped just metres from homes. The Premier, the member for Toowoomba North and I inspected the area on Sunday morning. How lucky those people were to have the fire force that they had behind them!

Also unnoticed behind the scenes was the work of the incident management teams, often working in offices or halls. They worked around the clock to ensure that operational firefighters had the best possible equipment, planning and support. Included in the list of equipment used to great effect were a number of cost-effective aircraft, including the Department of Emergency Services Queensland rescue 500 helicopter, a community helicopter and several fixed-wing, crop-spraying aircraft—air tractors as they are affectionately known.

These aircraft water bombed the fires at Toowoomba, Tara and Withcott, dumping more than 900,000 litres of water and, very importantly, fire-retardant foam. As I have been telling members opposite for some months now, Elvis the helitanker is not the sole aerial firefighting strategy for fighting bushfires in Queensland. Sadly, not all property has been saved in the fires over the past few days, but despite what could only be described as the ferocity of the firestorm it is a great credit to all involved that the number of lost homes has been kept low. I would like today to again praise this state's firefighters. It makes me feel proud as minister to say again, 'Job well done.'

SITTING HOURS; ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.19 a.m.): I remind honourable members that the House will meet for the purpose of electing a senator at 7.05 p.m. today. Government business will be adjourned at 5.30 p.m. followed by a 30-minute adjournment debate. A dinner break of one hour will then be taken.

TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE

Report

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (10.20 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Travelsafe Committee's annual report for 2001-02 and move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bushfires

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.20 a.m.): In recent weeks we have seen incredible courage and dedication by the firefighters of this state in fighting the fires in Stanthorpe and the border area, Toowoomba, Tara and the Lockyer areas of south-east Queensland. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the firefighters from the urban firefighting service but also particularly to the rural firefighting service, to all the police officers who have been involved particularly over the last few days in Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley, to the SES, to the ambulance officers, to Mayor Di Thorley and the Toowoomba City Council, and particularly to the staff who manned water tankers and gave other assistance, to Lifeline, and to all the many volunteers, including the Toowoomba Grammar School which assisted in evacuation and backup support services.

Only last week in this parliament we raised the need for additional support for our firefighters in these difficult and dangerous situations by using aviation methods to fight fires. We put forward the concept of the helitanker and fixed-wing aircraft. The minister is also aware that there are emergency services helicopters based at Cooroy. All of these suggestions were put forward by the shadow minister. After a valiant fight for some four days by the firefighters, the introduction of aircraft to fight the fires was the turning point on Saturday afternoon. From a practical point of view, they were terrific even though it took them 10 minutes to do the round trip to the airport and drop 3,000 litres plus the fire retardant. A helitanker would have been some 20 seconds from the fire being bombed to the hydrants. It is time to bring some sense and practicality into this debate. There needs to be maximum support to protect lives, houses and the firefighters themselves. The minister said last week that aerial assistance to fight fires would be minimal because the geography of Queensland was different to other states. That statement has been proved wrong, because we saw the practical benefits of using aircraft on these fires. One thing—

Time expired.

Red Cross Blood Bank; Organ Donation

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (10.22 a.m.): Following the Bali tragedy, the Red Cross Blood Bank asked for people to donate blood. In keeping with that, the member for Bulimba, the member for Ashgrove and I attended the Red Cross Blood Bank yesterday and donated blood. However, I want to reinforce that it should not take a tragedy such as Bali to motivate people to attend the Red Cross Blood Bank to donate blood. It is important that all Queenslanders try to attend the Red Cross Blood Bank to donate whole blood every three months. For those people who have more regular working hours than I currently experience, they can also donate plasma. When I was a police officer I was a plasma donor. The benefit is that one can donate plasma every three to four weeks. I would encourage people with that kind of lifestyle and work regime to take up the opportunity to contribute to Queensland society by donating plasma.

Another program run through the Red Cross Blood Bank is the bone marrow registry. One does not have to be a blood donor or a plasma donor. Anyone in Queensland can register and be put on the bone marrow registry. All it takes is a simple—

Mrs Edmond: Unless you are over 50.

Mr ENGLISH: Yes, unless you are over 50. I thank the minister. It takes a quick visit to the Red Cross Blood Bank, a short blood test and then the person is logged on to the registry. Potentially, that person may then save the life of anyone living anywhere around the world. I would encourage all Queenslanders to take this initiative on board.

A number of years ago on 2 November a very good friend of mine, Simon, lost his son Matthew, who was nine years of age. I was with Simon at the hospital while his family dealt with this tragedy. I compliment Simon for the decision he made at that stressful time to donate his son's organs for the purposes of organ transplants. I am extremely proud of the decision Simon made on that occasion and realise that it was a very tough decision. In making that decision, I believe that he has honoured Matthew's memory. Again, I call on all Queenslanders to support the organ donation program.

Time expired.

Atherton Hospital

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (10.25 a.m.): I rise once again to speak on the shameful state of the Queensland health system. We are supposedly living in a first-world country with a health system which is fast degenerating into Third World standards. I was told of a gentleman who was passing blood and who was told that he had a three-month wait for a colonoscopy at the Atherton Hospital. Those three months were nearly up and so I inquired on his behalf, only to be told that he could not see the doctor until next year as he was not considered an emergency. The keyword here is 'emergency', yet the Queensland Cancer Foundation advises anyone with such symptoms to see their doctor immediately. An article in the *Cairns Post* on 19 October reported that the ALP members for Barron River, Cairns and Mulgrave have finally joined to present, as the paper described it, 'a united front against their own Health Minister'. The member for Cairns said in part—

I have a feeling of desperation about the whole thing, wondering if Brisbane will ever get the message.

I am glad that they are finally coming on board about the poor level of health services, as the impact of user pays continues to strip services from this area.

But as bad as it is in Cairns, it is worse in my electorate. My constituents are finding their beds replaced by chairs. The maternity section has been shifted to the surgical ward. If a person is over 100 kilos in weight, no anaesthetic can be administered at the Atherton Hospital. Instead, local patients have to be shunted off to the Cairns Base Hospital, but even it cannot cope as even it is only equipped and staffed for emergency situations despite the millions of dollars which have gone into the supposed upgrade—perhaps mostly into the car park. I am sorry to say that my office regularly receives complaints about people having to wait for days and weeks for beds in Cairns. They even have to wait on trolleys in corridors and, on occasions, in ambulances out the front. This is not smart. Shameful, yes; but smart, no way! It appears, however, that I have some unexpected allies amongst the minister's own party members.

Time expired.

Breast Cancer Screening

Ms KEECH (Albert—ALP) (10.27 a.m.): Every day across the length and breadths of Queensland hundreds of women wait anxiously for the mail. No, it is not a letter from a loved one nor even the tax cheque for which they wait. What these women wait patiently for is in fact a letter from Queensland Health informing them of the results of their recent breast cancer screening test. Detecting and treating breast cancer early is vital for surviving this disease. Given that yesterday was national Breast Cancer Day, it is timely to reflect on the success of the BreastScreen Queensland program. There has been a 25 per cent reduction in deaths from breast cancer in Queensland between 1995 and 2000. This is certainly good news, since it is the most common cause of cancer death among Queensland women. This reduction is likely to have resulted from a combination of two factors: early detection and improvement in treatment. A breast screen every two years is strongly recommended for women aged between 50 to 69 years, as this is the age group where the benefits from screening have been most clearly demonstrated. Over 70 per cent of breast cancers occur in women over 50. For women like myself, who have a very strong family history of breast cancer, screening is recommended to start when a woman turns 40.

The service I attend each year at the Beenleigh Community Health Centre is free, convenient and local. The professional staff are friendly and caring and, I hasten to add, there is no waiting time. During the visit of the relocatable service at Beenleigh recently, more than 800 women were screened. Like I did yesterday, the great majority receive a follow-up letter giving them the welcome news that they are all clear. That is 800 local women and their families who, thanks to the support of Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, sleep better at night knowing that the Labor government initiated BreastScreen service—

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for private members' statements has expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Illegal Weapons

Mr HORAN (10.30 a.m.): My question is directed to the Premier. Yesterday the Premier said that the National Party's five-10-life plan for gun-wielding criminals was dumb. Is the Premier aware that of 470 adults found guilty of armed robbery in Queensland since 1998, 116 did not spend even one night in jail? Why does the Premier want the courts to continue to allow violent criminals back on the streets when the National Party's plan makes the punishment fit the crime? Can the Premier guarantee that the criminals who use these stolen weapons to commit crimes in Queensland will go to jail? If not, why not?

Mr BEATTIE: Let us be really clear about all of this. I said that the strategy that was being pursued by Lawrence—I was asked this at a news conference—in relation to some matters he had raised was a dumb strategy. The Leader of the Opposition should not try to misrepresent the broader issue and turn it into something that it is not. This broad policy which the Leader of the Opposition has referred to, which I have not heard the detail of, was not referred to at all. If my memory serves me correctly, I was asked about some comments that Lawrence had made.

Mr McGrady: And you said some nice things about Lawrence.

Mr BEATTIE: I did say some nice things about Lawrence. I always say nice things about Lawrence because, frankly, the sooner we get Lawrence to be the Leader of the Opposition the sooner we will get some real policies. I commend Lawrence. I admire his ingenuity. He was trying to reshape his position. I said that it was ingenious and that I admired it. In fact, I said that if I was

Leader of the Opposition I would have been in awe of the strategy he had pursued to get this outcome.

Let me talk about these issues very clearly. The Queensland government will campaign to reduce illegal firearm ownership by legislating for a new weapons amnesty. The Minister for Police and I announced this yesterday. Laws to be introduced into parliament this week will enable the Police Commissioner, with the permission of the Police Minister and cabinet, to call for a weapons amnesty.

Our aim is to reduce the number of illegal firearms in Queensland. We are urging unlicensed firearm owners to do the right thing and to help us decrease the number of illegal weapons in the community. During the amnesty, people in possession of illegal firearms can either obtain a licence or surrender the firearm to the state without fear of prosecution. We know that these amnesties work because during the last amnesty, in the wake of the Port Arthur massacre, 130,000 firearms were surrendered in Queensland while 650,000 were surrendered nationally. A similar amnesty in New South Wales in the second half of last year led to approximately 72,000 firearm registrations during six months and the recording of an extra 956 new licence applications on average each month.

Mr HORAN: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The question was about the five-10-life proposal. Can the Premier guarantee that people who use stolen weapons will go to jail and not be allowed to walk the streets? We would like an answer.

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

Mr BEATTIE: The government is determined to ensure every avenue is pursued in order to reduce the number of illegal weapons. While there will be no compensation offered, unlike with the first firearms amnesty in 1996-97, it is anticipated that the opportunity to register illegal weapons without prosecution will be a sufficient motivation.

Let me make it very clear. There are no guarantees in life about anything. What we have are very tough penalties in relation to illegal guns. We know that the National Party has been seeking to undermine the guns strategy that we have pursued. We are determined—

Time expired.

Illegal Weapons

Mr HORAN: My question is directed to—

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition asked me a question. For the last minute he consistently interjected when I tried to get to the point. Can I simply ask for some courtesy?

Mr HORAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. I refer to his comments on ABC Radio on 23 October that—

> ... the evidence suggests that the real problem, the real problem, doesn't come from those people who have licensed weapons. The problem comes from those people who have illegal handguns.

Will the minister guarantee that the government will maintain the existing ownership and usage rights that licensed, law-abiding sporting, recreational, occupational and professional firearm owners currently have under Queensland's tough weapons laws?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. What I can guarantee and what I will guarantee is that I, as the Police Minister representing Queensland, will go to the next police ministers' meeting and discuss and debate the proposals put forward to us by the Prime Minister. It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition to come into this place and start talking about firearms. Let me tell this parliament and the people of Queensland what the real issue is. The real issue is the importation into this country of illegal weapons from overseas.

Let me also say that I and the other police ministers had an almighty battle with the Commonwealth to try to retain the powers and the resources which the coalition government attempted to take away from the Australian Crime Commission. That was one almighty battle we went into, and to some extent we won. The federal government was trying to strip away the resources the Australian Crime Commission had or wanted to have. So the real battle is trying to create an environment whereby the federal customs authority has the powers to beat the Mr Bigs who are importing the illegal weapons on a daily basis. That is what the real issue is. That is the real problem.

We can do anything at all with figures. It has been estimated that there are some 50,000 illegal weapons in Australia. This government is trying to get some agreement with the other states and the Prime Minister. I have said that we will take on board the suggestions from the Prime Minister and the federal colleagues and friends of the Leader of the Opposition. If after the consultation which I have arranged for the next two weeks we believe there is merit in his proposals, I will take them to cabinet. If the cabinet agrees, the Premier will go down to the heads of government meeting and make the necessary agreements. This has arisen from suggestions from the Leader of the Opposition's colleagues, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. We will react accordingly.

Safety of Children in Schools

Ms KEECH: My question is directed to the Premier. Every day parents throughout Queensland send their children to schools in the expectation that their young ones will be safe and sound. Can the Premier please inform the House of any new action to improve the safety and security of children whilst at school?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for Albert for the question. There is nothing more important than the safety and security of our children. Parents and caregivers have every right to expect that when their children go to school they will be safe and sound. Unfortunately this has not always been the case, sometimes because students themselves have carried potentially dangerous implements, such as knives, into school grounds. Until now there have been some legal question marks about the powers of police to take action against these knife carriers, because school grounds are not deemed to be public places. The Minister for Education recently alerted the government to this problem. Cabinet has acted to remove the ambiguity in order to improve the protection of our children, as well as teachers and other staff, in all public and private schools in Queensland.

Amendments to be introduced by the Minister for Police and Corrective Services in the Weapons and Another Act Amendment Bill 2002 will make it crystal clear that a police officer may enter a school for the purpose of dealing with an offence of physical possession of a knife without reasonable excuse. 'Without reasonable excuse' is a crucial phrase. Our children's safety cannot be compromised, so we are making sure all school grounds in Queensland are off limits to anyone who has a knife without a reasonable excuse for possessing the knife.

As I mentioned earlier, the Police Minister will also introduce legislation to clear the way for a firearms amnesty to help us reduce the number of illegal firearms in the community. We all know that these amnesties work because during the last amnesty, in the wake of the Port Arthur massacre, 130,000 firearms were surrendered in Queensland while 650,000 were surrendered nationally.

We are also tightening the requirement for a licensed gun owner to be a fit and proper person throughout the life of the licence. This clarifies, for example, the power to revoke the weapons licence of anyone guilty of domestic violence. This is all about improving community safety and security and making our state a more harmonious and livable place.

I stress that these changes are separate to the national debate about hand gun controls. The federal government has proposed tougher laws relating to hand guns and, at this stage, the Queensland government is going to work very closely with it. If, after the consultation, the Minister for Police determines that there is a need for tougher requirements, then we will support tougher laws. Queensland already has very tough firearms laws. We are now improving those laws and enhancing the protection of the most precious of Queenslanders—our children and our young people.

At the recent meeting with the Prime Minister and other premiers, I urged the Prime Minister to take a stronger position in terms of customs and the importation of illegal firearms. Illegal hand guns are coming into this country because, in our view, the Customs Service is not properly financed and it needs more funds. That is where illegal guns are coming into the country. We have to stop them at the source, and that is the importation.

Water Infrastructure

Mr JOHNSON: I ask the Minister for State Development to please detail his government's plans for building the Nullinga dam on the tablelands, which would benefit agriculture and sustain growth and development in the Cairns region, and the Urannah dam and Elliott channel projects, which would sustain growth and development in the Bowen region. I ask: does the minister have

any plan to address the critical shortage of water infrastructure in south-east Queensland to address water shortages and ensure water supply so desperately needed to service existing and projected growth and development?

Mr BARTON: The member's question is a very important one in terms of what we are doing with water resources right across the state. As the member is aware, a number of water resources plans are being put forward and worked through by my colleague the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines.

With regard to the first dam that the member mentioned on the Atherton Tableland, that is subject to consideration by a water resources plan for the Barron River that is not yet complete. That is a project that clearly will be brought forward for consideration once that water resources plan is completed by the Department of Natural Resources.

In terms of other water resources for the state, the member is well aware that we are well progressed by the formation of Burnett Water—by the passing of special legislation through this parliament—and, in turn, by changes to the water resources plan for the Burnett to allow us to go forward. That project is, in fact, on schedule. I have put through some designations the week before last. We have seen the Minister for Environment come into this House and put forward the revocation for a part of the Goodnight forest that will, in fact, be replaced by twice as much suitable land for conservation purposes to help facilitate that.

We anticipate being able to start the actual construction late next year or early in 2004 for the Paradise dam and the other associated weirs, but we also anticipate being on site early next year doing a lot of the preliminary work that we need to do to assess the geological position for the foundations of the wall of the Paradise dam. We are also working through—and this government has put forward something in the order of $1 million—the studies for the City to Soil project for grey water to the Lockyer and Darling Downs 2000.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr BARTON: I take that interjection. We need to ensure that these projects are going to be sustainable. There is no joy in building a second Fred Haigh Dam that theoretically can have a yield, but never ever fills and never achieves the outcome while at the same time doing environmental damage.

We are also undertaking studies on the Urannah dam, which is in the electorate of the member for Whitsunday. We are working with the SUDAW group in regard to the Nathan dam project. A range of water resources projects are covered in the 10-year state infrastructure plan, many of which are dependent, in fact, on getting those water resources plans together before we take the next step for provision.

We are watching very closely issues at Gladstone and are bringing forward proposals to make sure that we can meet the industrial water needs of Gladstone. In fact, several months ago we completed the raising of the Awoonga Weir, but sadly we have not had rain to fill it. A lot of projects are under way.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Algester, could I welcome to the public gallery from the Lockyer electorate the Helensvale Senior Citizens Association, led by President Ernie Crumblin.

Queensland Economy

Ms STRUTHERS: I refer the Premier to the strategies adopted by the state government over the past four years to position Queensland as the Smart State and to create long-term jobs for Queenslanders. I note that Commerce Queensland is due to release its quarterly business survey today, and I ask the Premier: is he able to give the House any details from the survey?

Mr BEATTIE: I am, and I thank the honourable member for Algester for her question. Last night I had the opportunity of welcoming the Australian Stock Exchange organisation to Queensland. They had their annual general meeting here. It is great to have them here—as I said—at the centre of the universe. During my address last night I talked about the positive things that are happening in Queensland. At the time, little did I know that the Queensland Pulse survey for the October quarter had such good news. Had I had it last night, I would have shared it with the Australian Stock Exchange.

My government's strategies and policies of job creation, of turning Queensland into the Smart State, and of creating the right climate for business growth are paying dividends. We are

leading the nation in job creation and today's Pulse survey by Commerce Queensland for the October quarter shows that results have surpassed all previous levels of activity and expectations since the December quarter 1994. Commerce Queensland says that expectations for the December quarter suggest further improvements in general business conditions for the majority of industries. It says that general business conditions are expected to continue to perform at levels unprecedented since December 1994. The report says that construction, transport and storage are expected to come back to the boil in the December quarter and that most regions throughout the state are expected to maintain their current levels of performance into the December quarter.

Survey respondents indicate that expectations are for the Queensland economy to continue to strengthen over the coming 12 months. But expectations over the medium term for the Australian economy are less robust. The Commerce Queensland survey acknowledges that government business support programs—and to a lesser extent the application of risk management processes—will continue to have a positive influence on business performance. I say: well done, Tom. Seventy-two per cent of businesses indicated that government business support and advisory services would have a positive or very positive influence on business performance in the next 12 months. Figures for building and plant equipment expenditure indicate that during the September quarter businesses experienced an overall increase in investment, which should provide the basis for sustained and strong levels of business growth in coming quarters.

I table a copy of the report for the information of all members. Last night at the Australian Stock Exchange dinner I talked about well-functioning capital markets and how crucial they are to economic growth, and the Australian Stock Exchange having a critical role in all of that process. But I also highlighted the importance of what this government has done to encourage the Smart State and investment. This is one of the reasons why the incentives program that we run is so important. On Sunday, Merri Rose and Steve Bredhauer were there for the launch of Australian Airlines. Yesterday, Merri was on the coast. It is very simple: if it were not for the program run by State Development, Australian Airlines would not be in Cairns. At the Australian Stock Exchange dinner, I talked about AMC. I said that that technology would be in North America if it were not for the programs that are pursued by this state government in cooperation with the Commonwealth. That is what the incentives program is all about: growth for Queensland.

Cairns Water Supply

Ms LEE LONG: I direct a question to the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines. The Cairns City Council had bought land for a pumping station at Gordonvale and was on the verge of drawing new, high-quality water from the Mulgrave River when it was forced by the state government to source future supplies from the low-quality Barron River. This was done at great expense. I ask: why has the Cairns City Council been forced to use the low-grade Barron River water to top up future supplies to the city instead of using the high-quality water from the Mulgrave River, which runs out to sea just a few kilometres south?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the member for the question. As the member is well aware—because she has now asked a number of questions in relation to water supply issues in the Barron River catchments—we are undertaking a WRP for the whole Barron catchment. That planning study will be completed by the end of this year. It provides an in-depth analysis of the future water needs for Cairns and the tablelands. In that water resource plan are a number of scenarios. Those scenarios are based on a number of principles. The first principle is to assess the existing level of extractions from rivers and other storages in the catchment to ensure that they are used in the most efficient manner. The second scenario provides for additional water supplies for the growing population of the city of Cairns. The third scenario outlined in the plan also contemplates future infrastructure needs that may be brought into play should there be an expansion in demand for water supply in the Barron catchment. It is a responsible approach to take to ensure that existing infrastructure and existing sources of water supply are used to their maximum efficiency to give maximum return for taxpayers' investment. That is the nature of the discussions that are ongoing between Cairns Water and ourselves.

There has been some debate over the last few weeks, particularly in the *Cairns Post*, alleging that the state government is not serious about providing secure water supplies for the Cairns region. That is utter rubbish. Earlier this year we released the draft water resource plan for the Barron River catchment. As I said, that process will be completed by the end of this year. There has been a lot of discussion—and the member for Gregory asked this question of the Minister for State Development—about the future of Nullinga dam on the Walsh River. I encourage members

to visit the department's web site and to download the various studies that underpin the water resource plan. If members view those documents they will understand that preliminary cost assessments for the Nullinga dam on the Walsh River at this stage are about $120 million. Indicatively and at this point in time, the price of water to be drawn from a dam on the Walsh River would be about $200 to $220 per megalitre. Sugar farmers on the Mareeba-Dimbulah water supply scheme are currently paying about $44 and are complaining about that. Indicative costs are at $220. That is why we are not announcing at this stage a dam on the Walsh River until we get the figures right and until we can assure that farmers—

Time expired.

Defence Sector Equipment Contracts

Ms BARRY: My question is directed to the Minister for State Development. The defence sector presents significant business opportunities for Queensland companies. Could the minister outline what the government is doing to capitalise on this and to assist local companies win work?

Mr BARTON: The member takes a very keen interest in small business interests in her electorate and as recently as last week was lobbying me—I must say successfully—for more support for small businesses in her electorate and region. With regard to the question, this also is a very important issue in that only last week I had great pleasure in addressing the 2002 Land Warfare Conference at the Brisbane Convention Centre. The conference provided—

Mr Lucas: Was that the Liberal Party convention?

Mr BARTON: No, it is a different sort of warfare, but I prefer the other type. The conference provided a unique forum for participants to closely explore new visionary ideas at the forefront of land weapon systems. In these uncertain times and for a long time prior to that, my department took an interest in working with the defence forces of Australia and indeed our other allies in the region, such as Singapore, in terms of making sure that businesses in this state get a share of providing the equipment and the maintenance needed. The Queensland government has targeted the defence sector for the expanding role it can play in our economic future. For example, just seven years ago Queensland firms won only four per cent of Australian defence contracts. Last year, Queensland firms won 17 per cent, and this represented about $1.4 billion of defence contracts. That is a huge jump in that seven year period and it shows a continuing trend where Queensland businesses are being successful in getting an even larger share. This is most important when this increase comes at a time when Queensland is getting runs on the board in high technology and in innovative, defence-related products. In particular, I am talking about projects like our locally developed fibre composite materials. Of course, we also saw the very successful recent firing of the world's first SCRAM jet by a team from Queensland University that may have some very significant long-term positive implications for defence work in this state.

These capabilities position Queensland as a competitive provider of electronic manufacturing for the defence forces, a few examples of the cutting edge products that the Queensland defence sector is aiming to further commercialise as part of our involvement with the Institute of Commercialisation. For instance, officers of my department provide companies with advice on defence related market opportunities and also help firms that wish to market specific products or services to the Australian defence industries. The department plays a very pivotal role in working with those businesses to identify potential contracts with the defence services, to go after them and, where necessary, provide the support to make sure that they win those contracts.

Bushfires, Water Bombing

Mr MALONE: I refer the Minister for Emergency Services to his previous statements in this House and in the media that 'Queensland's geography did not lend itself to aerial water bombing fire control and putting money towards that would be better spent elsewhere'. Has the minister now changed his opinion given the very successful aerial water bombing fire control performed over the weekend in Toowoomba? Will the minister now urgently formalise agreements with these service providers throughout Queensland and guarantee that we have them in action much earlier in a bushfire outbreak in this state?

Mr REYNOLDS: It does not cease to amaze me how the opposition and particularly the shadow spokesman try to weave around the truth of the various statements I have made on this matter. I am sure members opposite will whinge about that as well. The one thing that those opposite in this House have not done is tell the truth about what the federal government has offered in regard to the Ericksson helicopter. Let me tell members opposite the truth—and I would

like them to listen to it. The member is not bothered with listening to the truth. On every occasion, members opposite stick up for the mob in Canberra who offer this state and every other state the lousiest of deals. Let us go back to what was said by the member's mate, Wilson Tuckey.

Mr Malone interjected.

Mr REYNOLDS: You don't like the answer. He offered three helitankers. He then welched and said that he would pay half the cost of having three helitankers here on the ground. As I have said in this House before—and I will reiterate it today—we have an aerial firefighting strategy. What have our air rescue helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft been doing in the past? We have an aerial firefighting strategy. That will come into place at any time it is needed in exactly the same way as it did in Toowoomba and Tara. Once again, the member wants to let his mates in Canberra off the hook and just lie beside them. Let me tell the member what is the cost of the three helitankers—$5.5 million for the current year. The federal government is expecting the states to pay half. The fact is that the helitankers that have been asked for by the opposition were put into gear in New South Wales only about 10 days ago. They have not even been in Australia. We have an aerial firefighting strategy; the member knows that. The member has seen our aerial firefighting strategy in place around the Mackay area. What is the member talking about? The member is struggling with the truth today. We have an aerial firefighting strategy that has been in place. We successfully used that in Toowoomba and in Tara. Mr Hobbs actually wrote to me on this issue and we had the Jones family out there in Tara and Toowoomba. What are members opposite whingeing about? Nine-hundred thousand litres of water and foam was added. The opposition is trying to play petty politics. My advice comes from the Fire Commissioner. I am sticking to that advice. Get away from the politics.

Teacher Scholarships

Mr REEVES: I refer the Minister for Education to the fact that last Friday was World Teachers Day. Having my wife Meagan as a schoolteacher, I understand and often get told about the important role they play. I ask: could the minister please tell members how the government celebrated the work of teachers during the week?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. Can I say how pleased I was last week to meet the reason for his wife's current leave from the profession of teaching and how proud he must be. World Teachers Day was last week. I am very pleased to announce that we presented 10 scholarships to Queensland teachers for the first time. These inaugural scholarships were to recognise Queensland's most outstanding teachers. There were two scholarship programs. One was the Westfield Premier's educational scholarships to teachers of science, which were awarded last Thursday at a science for teachers conference, and then five Premier's Smart State teacher excellence scholarships to teachers were awarded here on Friday. The Westfield scholarships are so named because they are sponsored by Westfield. Frank Lowy has done this in a number of states and has given the right for the Premier to nominate which area of teaching should be receiving these awards. Not surprisingly, in the Smart State the Premier nominated science, and the science teachers who attended the scholarships presentation the other day were very pleased to see their excellence being recognised.

These scholarships were designed to recognise and reward innovative classroom teaching practice. They will become an annual event for at least the next five years as part of the agreement with Westfield. The scholarships really are about valuing teaching but also recognising the importance of professional development. Teachers who were awarded these scholarships had to prove that they had contributed to improved learning outcomes for students. It was very much about recognising teachers who are doing very innovative things in the classroom which have already demonstrated very clear outcomes for young people. In both cases, they were nominated by their peers which, in my view, is another testament to the strength of what they are doing. I understand the selection panels had a very tough choice, but I am pleased to advise the House that the Westfield Premier's educational scholarships for science winners, which came from both state and non-state schools, were awarded to Simone Baker, from Holy Spirit College, Mackay; Rebecca Hack, Rockhampton State High School; Greg Smith, Burnside State High School, near Nambour; David Lang, from Nanango State High School; and Peter Jackson, from Goondiwindi State High School.

I take this opportunity to thank the sponsors—Westfield Holdings and Ginger Max. The winners will receive $24,000 and up to three months release to do further study in science overseas. The second round of scholarships, the Premier's Smart State scholarships, went to Vinesh Chandra, from Mansfield State High School, in the electorate of the honourable member;

Joy Pohlner, from Cannon Hill State High School; Michael Goodwin, from Mackay North State High School; Grace Sarra, from Cherbourg State School; and John Gurn, from Craigslea State High School. These teachers have won $25,000 and up to three months release for further study. These teachers will share their experiences with colleagues back in their schools. I expect that their experience in these scholarships will have a ripple effect not only in their own schools but also in their local communities.

Stamp Duty, Nonprofit Organisations

Miss ELISA ROBERTS: I refer the Treasurer to the fact that at a recent show society conference held at Mount Tamborine it was put forward that the waiving of stamp duty for nonprofit organisations would assist in allowing these types of organisations to continue to operate. As the minister would be aware, the Gympie District Show is one of the biggest and best shows in Queensland, and I ask: will he consider the cessation of stamp duty charges to nonprofit organisations?

Mr MACKENROTH: If the member had been here on budget day, she would know that I had announced it.

Mr Cebic, Alleged Harassment of Public Housing Staff

Mr PURCELL: I refer the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing to a recent news story regarding the harassment of Department of Housing staff at South Brisbane and his office by a Mr Cebic, and I ask: can the minister advise what measures are being taken to ensure the protection of public sector employees?

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes, I am aware of that particular news report on Channel 7 last night where Mr Cebic made certain allegations about workers in the Department of Housing. Let me say that they are completely without foundation whatsoever. Because of people like Mr Cebic we have had to install some $100,000 worth of protective security arrangements, including a security guard, at the Stones Corner office. The truth is that Mr Cebic has been in contact with that office on something like 30 occasions. It does not seem that he can be satisfied with any efforts that are made to assist him. The reality is that he has turned down a number of housing offers, one of which was on the grounds that he did not like the carpets on the floor, another that he did not like where it was and he preferred to live in Stones Corner. He proposed the idea that he should be allowed to go around and hand-pick his accommodation. He indicated that where he came from that was an option, because the government owned all of the housing in that part of the world. The reality is that we are seeing some confusion in that regard, because obviously he believes that he is being victimised, and that is certainly not the case. Nobody gets to pick their housing in Queensland Housing. There is a need. It is needs based. It is prioritised accordingly.

The reality is that our lives are not made any easier by people like Mr Cebic who persist in annoying the people at the area office and making unreasonable demands. Unfortunately, the situation seems to be getting worse in all our area offices with higher demand coming on board and fewer resources thanks to the federal government. Last week's—

Mr Terry Sullivan: Shameful.

Mr SCHWARTEN:—shameful effort by the federal government in not replacing the GST funding is going to make it worse. I am very proud of the effort that Queensland Housing workers put in. They go out of their way to help people. I will not tolerate people like Mr Cebic harassing these people, trying to intimidate them and trying to suggest that he is not getting served properly. I will table for the information of honourable members details of the 30-odd occasions on which he simply would not be satisfied. The reality is that we will deal with people compassionately and we do not expect to get contempt in return.

Mr Terry Sullivan: He shouldn't try to queue jump somebody else.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Not only would he queue jump somebody else; he believes he should be treated in a different way from everybody else. Unfortunately for him, that is not the way we do business in Queensland. We treat everybody according to a priority of need and we will look after them accordingly.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Hinchinbrook, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers from the Birkdale State School in the electorate of Cleveland.

Canegrowers, Unsecured Creditor Status

Mr ROWELL: I refer the Minister for Primary Industries to the fact that canegrowers in Queensland are regarded as unsecured creditors for payments of their crop proceeds from Queensland Sugar Limited, and I ask: will he make the necessary legislative changes to make canegrowers secured creditors?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I understand the position from where the honourable member is coming. Unfortunately, as the situation stands currently, negotiation is still under way with the National Australia Bank, and I will leave the answer to my question at that.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the honourable member for Burleigh.

Mr Rowell interjected.

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

Written-off Vehicle Register

Mrs SMITH: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition! I cannot hear the questioner.

Mrs SMITH: I refer the minister to the 30 September introduction of Queensland's Written-off Vehicle Register, and I ask: can the minister please advise the House of progress so far?

Mr BREDHAUER: I appreciate the honourable member's persevering with that question. Until recently, professional thieves were able to use identifiers from wrecked vehicles to mask the identity of a stolen vehicle. This process is known as rebirthing. With the introduction of the Written-off Vehicle Register, Queensland is now no longer a target for rebirthing and registration of stolen vehicles. A written-off vehicle inspection is a thorough check to ensure the identity of the vehicle is legitimate.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hinchinbrook. This is my final warning. I shall warn the member next time under standing order 123A.

Mr BREDHAUER: The Written-off Vehicle Register went live on 1 October 2002. In only four weeks over 1,700 written-off vehicles have been recorded in the written-off vehicle register. Nearly 500 statutory write-offs will not be allowed back onto Queensland roads. That is almost 500 unsafe vehicles that have been kept off Queensland roads. Three hundred and eleven organisations have registered to notify Queensland Transport when vehicles are written off. Twenty-eight vehicles have undergone a written-off vehicle inspection.

We have already had one case of a vehicle failing an identity inspection. This matter has been referred to the Queensland Police Service. Over 3,000 written-off vehicle certificates have been issued to industry and the public. Queensland is leading the way in the fight against professional motor vehicle theft. The written-off vehicle inspection certificate is unique to Queensland. No other state provides them. No other state has a completely electronic system for the notification of written-off vehicles. Queensland has made significant progress in the fight to reduce professional motor vehicle theft in Queensland and to keep inappropriate and unsafe vehicles off Queensland roads.

May I conclude by thanking the Minister for Fair Trading and the Minister for Police for their assistance in making sure that we keep unsafe vehicles off our roads and make sure that written-off vehicles are not rebirthed through stolen vehicle rackets.

Investigation into Chief Magistrate, Ms D. Fingleton

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. I refer the Attorney-General to the ongoing mess in the Queensland magistracy where Chief Magistrate Di Fingleton is currently facing an investigation into whether or not she perverted the course of justice. The Attorney-General is on record as saying that the state government, and therefore the taxpayers, will foot the bill of Ms Fingleton's legal expenses if there are no adverse findings against her. However, if there are adverse findings against Ms Fingleton will the Minister ensure fairness and consistency by guaranteeing to pay the legal expenses of magistrate Basil Gribbin, who made the allegations against her?

Mr WELFORD: I thank the honourable member for his question. As I have already indicated publicly in relation to this matter, I do not really want to get into discussing it in any great detail. I

think it is certainly an unfortunate set of circumstances where the internal conflicts in the magistracy have been taken into the public arena.

The basis on which the funding of legal advice for the chief magistrate is being provided is the same basis on which legal advice is provided to all senior officers of government who are indemnified for action taken against them in the course of their duty. It is not normally the case that the government will fund private actions taken by individual members of the Public Service on their own behalf. Really, the actions taken against Chief Magistrate Fingleton have been taken on that basis.

I do not presently see any basis on which I or the government should properly fund actions initiated by public servants in order to pursue grievances they may have. The issue of the reasonable level of legal funding that is provided to the chief magistrate is a matter which the chief executive of the Department of Justice has to determine at the end of the day.

Tourist Mines, Safety

Mr PEARCE: My question is directed to the Minister for Natural Resources. I refer to the tragic death of a young boy killed by falling rocks at a central Queensland tourist mine earlier this year and ask: what steps has the government taken to monitor and improve safety at tourist mines in Queensland?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. Honourable members will recall the tragic death that occurred in July this year when a seven year old boy was killed by falling rocks at the Mount Hay tourist mine near Rockhampton. Following the accident, I instructed my department's Chief Inspector of Mines to take all action necessary to monitor and improve safety at tourist mines in Queensland.

There are 14 tourist mines located throughout Queensland, most of which are gemstone mines west of Emerald or opal mines near Quilpie. All are classified as small mines under the Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999 and employ fewer than 10 people. Preliminary investigations undertaken by the mines inspectorate found that the health and safety knowledge and skills of operators at these tourist mines vary. Some operations were quite professionally organised while others were unaware of the need for safety awareness. Because the inherent safety risks to untrained visitors at tourist mines may be higher than to experienced mine workers, the site senior executives at these mines will require specific safety competency training.

As a consequence, the Chief Inspector of Mines has now issued a written directive to site senior executives at all tourist mines requiring them to undergo additional safety skills training. Mine senior managers will now be required to attain certificates of competency in three areas—risk management, investigations and communication—to bring their safety skills into line with those held by supervisors of larger mines employing more than 10 workers.

The risk management competency will assist tourist mine operators in identifying the hazards to which visitors may be exposed and in establishing controls over those hazards. The investigations competency will assist operators to investigate any incidents which may occur at the mine and to identify any changes that need to be put in place to prevent incident recurrence. The communication competency will assist operators to better communicate essential information, including that about hazards and risks at the site to visitors to ensure their understanding of the information.

Competency training will be available through training organisations in Queensland, including TAFE colleges and through the government's Safety in Mines Training and Research Station—SIMTARS. Site senior executives at all tourist mines will be required to be assessed as competent in these three areas of expertise by no later than 30 March next year. These measures are evidence of the Beattie government's ongoing commitment to mine safety in Queensland. They will go a long way towards making mines a whole lot safer for workers and visitors alike.

Mudgeeraba, New School

Mr LINGARD: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Minister, you have been criticised in the weekend papers for shabby politics and failing to keep the public informed of changes because they are being introduced by stealth. Why are you now building a new school in the electorate of Mudgeeraba by ministerial designation when this designation allows you to go ahead regardless of council opposition, regardless of public opposition and regardless of traffic concerns detailed in official reports?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question. I would have thought he would have known that the ministerial designation process is still in train. I am the decision maker, I have not made any decision and on that basis it would be inappropriate for me to comment.

University Students, Business Experience

Mr CHOI: My question is directed to the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy. Minister, more and more these days emerging industries are seeking employees with experience in helping to run businesses and commercialised products. Can he outline any new initiatives helping our university students to gain real life skills and become business savvy before they graduate?

Mr LUCAS: At the outset may I acknowledge the presence in the parliamentary gallery of students from Iona College within my own electorate. It is a school of which I am very proud and where the Government Whip was a teacher. They learnt many things from him in those days, as we still do here in this chamber.

I thank the member for the question because it is true that many enterprises in the Smart State do not meet their full potential through lack of business know-how. They are doing great science, they are doing great innovation, but they miss out on their opportunities through that lack of business training.

When I accompanied the Premier to the United States earlier this year as part of the biotechnology trip, I spoke with a number of expatriate venture capitalists in San Francisco about some of the views that they had about our strengths and weaknesses in Australia. One of the real problems we have is a lack of high quality management. Often people have to go overseas to get that management training. We need to make our scientists better businesspeople and our businesspeople better scientists.

That is why two weeks ago I was absolutely delighted to help launch Queensland University of Technology's student bio-enterprise program. The state government supported this program with a $200,000 grant which helps run the program. This is about giving young science students hands-on expertise. I was told that the business faculty complimented them very highly in relation to their business skills even though they are doing essentially a split degree.

These young, inspiring entrepreneurs have formed five virtual start-up companies. They learn communication skills, they learn how to pitch their ideas and they learn how to work as a team. The Agnis team is developing personalised cancer diagnostic tests. That is being done at the Mater Medical Research Institute and QIMR in relation to dendritic cell treatments. InnoTeQ is an education package for high school students. Again, that is a project in which this government is interested. Genero is a project directed to collecting early stage research information. That is what venture capitalists are telling us they need today when they want to look at investment in Queensland companies. PTA Information Services is similarly providing information needed for financial and venture capital markets in order to allow them to better understand their investments.

This is all about us saying that we are no longer going to export overseas our scientists and our great ideas. We want to keep them in this country. We want the bright minds of the students in the public gallery and other students who come to this parliament to know that there is a future for them in science, not just for science's sake but because there will be high-quality jobs for everybody, and that is the real importance of the Smart State. Projects such as the Australian Magnesium Corporation plant at Stanwell are not just about science; they are about jobs. The Smart State is about spin-offs. The QUT is a great university when it comes to its record of spin-offs, such as Farmacule in mass producing high-value proteins and PanBio, a world leader when it comes to diagnostics. There are world-class research facilities here and the Smart State Research Facilities Fund is a leader when it comes to Australian supported infrastructure, but we need to ensure that we have people there to support it. That is what this program is about.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Nicklin, I officially welcome the students and teachers from Iona College in the electorate of Lytton.

Sunshine Coast, Electricity Supply

Mr WELLINGTON: I refer the Treasurer to his responsibility for the operation of the electricity Energy Consumer Protection Office. Over recent times Sunshine Coast residents have complained of unusual and repeated electricity supply breakdowns and delays in electricity

reconnection when compared with service standards operating 10 years ago. I ask: what can and will the minister do to stop Energex management's reduction in the employment of frontline maintenance crew and require that Energex management return to employing appropriate numbers of frontline crews for the Sunshine Coast region?

Mr MACKENROTH: I believe that Energex does have the appropriate number of people employed. There have been a number of blackouts in some areas. Normally it is because of trees in areas where people build their homes. Areas where homes are threatened by fires are facing that situation now. There are blackouts where electricity goes through areas which have many trees. Whilst Energex has a program of cutting back trees, it will never stop all those blackouts. It does have the appropriate numbers of people. If the member gives me examples of any instances where he believes that it has not acted quickly enough or where there have been problems that have not been fixed, I will have them checked out for him.

Electrical Safety Reforms

Mr POOLE: I refer the Minister for Industrial Relations to the significant electrical safety reforms put in place by the Beattie government, and I ask: what has been the initial public response to these reforms?

Mr NUTTALL: I firstly thank the honourable member for his question.

A government member interjected.

Mr NUTTALL: It is a good question. I am particularly pleased to say that the initial response to the new electrical safety reforms has been quite overwhelming. More than 10,200 electrical workers have attended education seminars across the length and breadth of Queensland to learn about new laws which came into effect only four weeks ago, on 1 October. Those seminars have been run by my department in conjunction with the National Electrical and Communications Association and of course the Electrical Trades Union. Queensland's new electrical safety reforms add new responsibilities for all stakeholders—from workers to employers, unions, the distributors, the inspectors, industry in general, the government, and of course the general community. They now set new Australian standards in electrical safety in an effort to reduce the once unacceptable number of Queenslanders killed or injured in electrical incidents in the workplace and at home. These seminars do play a critical role in educating industry members about changes under the new act, and I have been very encouraged by the responses to date.

As I said, more than 10,200 electrical workers attended 96 sessions across the length and breadth of this state. Some 34 of those have been throughout regional Queensland. But laws alone will not reduce the number of people killed and injured each year. The essence of how effective these laws will be lies in the effort that every stakeholder is willing to contribute. In addition to these seminars, we have recorded more than 15,000 hits on the web site that outlines the new electrical safety laws. I am particularly pleased to inform the House that this little device in my hand has caused quite a deal of interest. Of course, this little device is an electrical safety switch.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr NUTTALL: No, it is better than that little gadget that the minister has in his hand. Honourable members will recall that this government made safety switches mandatory in all homes sold after 1 September this year, and we are the only state in the country that has done that. This is about making homes safe for all Queenslanders. I am particularly proud that we have been the first state—the Smart State—to be able to do that. There have also been considerable responses to the 1300 telephone number which is set up to provide information for the community and industry. I urge all honourable members to ensure that their constituents are aware of the new laws.

Townsville Hospital, Radiation Therapy Waiting List

Miss SIMPSON: I refer the Minister for Health to the fact that, according to radiation therapists, the waiting list for treatment at Townsville Hospital is at least eight weeks, not three as her Director-General, Rob Stable, indicated a few weeks ago. Radiation therapists also claim that cancer patients wait at least six weeks at the Princess Alexandra and the Mater, and the Queensland Cancer Fund backs up these figures. I table a petition from nearly 30 radiation therapists threatening not to register because of poor pay and the excessive registration cost of $220. There is already a chronic radiation therapist shortage and excessive waiting times for

cancer patients. Long waits mean that some people with curable cancer who are generally not priority patients can become people with incurable cancer. I ask: why will the minister not fix this problem? Why is the director-general misleading the public on waiting times?

Mrs EDMOND: I reject the slur on the Director-General of Queensland Health. Patients who require urgent radiation therapy, such as those who have spinal compression problems and mediastinal compression issues and children requiring urgent treatment, receive that treatment urgently. There are waits for less urgent radiation therapy, as there are in other states. Queensland has been the only state to expand its range of radiation services. That has meant that there have been some vacancies created as we have expanded those services with a whole new department at the Princess Alexandra Hospital this year. Prior to that, I understand that there were no vacancies in Queensland radiation services. Since that time with the increased number of people employed by Queensland Health and the fact that some have gone overseas and some have gone on maternity leave, there have been some vacancies created. It is not something that I desire. It is something that I regret in that we have not been able to fill those vacancies. I understand that in New South Wales, for instance, there are something like six or seven linear accelerators that cannot be staffed by radiation therapists, so we are not unique in having this problem.

I welcome the federal government's recent decision to increase the number of training places in universities. Obviously that will have some impact three or four years down the track. This year we have also taken the unique step of advertising overseas for health professionals, especially radiation therapists, dentists and other professions that we are short of. We will pay their way to come home. As they face the gloom and the wet and the cold of a European winter, they will see that advertisement and take advantage of the opportunity to come home to Queensland and the sunshine and a job in Queensland Health.

Film Industry, Government Assistance

Mrs CROFT: I refer the Minister for the Arts to the film production *Blurred*, set to open in cinemas this Friday. I ask: can the minister explain the significance of this production to the Queensland film industry and what government assistance was provided to this venture?

Mr FOLEY: This is a very significant film because it is a Queensland film. It will be the first internationally distributed feature film to be wholly written, produced and directed by Queenslanders since Charles Chauvel's 1949 romantic epic, *Sons of Matthew*. We should be very proud that the Pacific Film and Television Commission invested over $440,000 in the project and the federal government film agency, the Australia Film Finance Corporation, invested $1.6 million. It is great to get the Hollywood productions here, but it is even better when we can support a local film industry telling local stories with local people which is locally written, locally produced and locally directed. That is what nurturing a screen culture is all about. We want the jobs from the big Hollywood productions, but we also want to nurture a local film industry which sees the world through Australian and Queensland eyes and which speaks the Queensland and Australian stories that make life so fascinating.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Proposed Hand Gun Reforms

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): The shooting tragedy at Monash University in Melbourne last week was a terrible act of a shameless coward. Two innocent young people lost their lives and five more people were injured as a result of the offender's actions. On behalf of the Queensland Nationals I pay our respects and extend our condolences to the families of those two victims. I also wish those who were injured a good recovery from their injuries and pay tribute to the brave actions of those students and the lecturer who disarmed the attacker so quickly.

After the initial shock of this attack, the media and public attention has again turned to the issue of gun laws and their effectiveness. It is this issue I want to address today. I want to use this opportunity to put the Queensland Nationals' position regarding the current debate about hand gun laws on the record. I want to use this opportunity to appeal for a considered and reasonable debate in place of sensationalism, to urge commonsense decisions instead of knee-jerk and populist political quick fixes, and to demand that the rights of licensed, law-abiding Queensland gun owners are protected.

The fact is that, irrespective of any law that any government may pass, evil people will do evil things. No matter what restrictions are introduced, no matter what threats of penalty are imposed, there will always be that minority of our society who, for whatever reason, will commit evil against their community. With that fact in mind, the challenge for us as a society, and us as law-makers in our society, is to strive to build an environment in which evil is discouraged at every opportunity and an environment where those who insist on perpetuating evil are isolated from society and punished. The answer is not to punish the law-abiding majority for the actions of an evil minority.

Following the Monash shooting there have been renewed calls for tighter gun control in this country. There have been calls by some for a complete ban on the ownership and use of hand guns. There have been calls for enhanced border control and a crackdown on the illegal importation, sale and use of hand guns and other weapons. And in this climate the Prime Minister has proposed a series of measures which state and federal governments are currently considering ahead of their consideration at the next COAG meeting on 29 November.

The debate on gun control must be had in context. It must be had with recognition that this was an isolated incidence of evil. It must be had with recognition that, following the Port Arthur tragedy, Australian governments of both political persuasions introduced some of the toughest gun laws in the world. The debate must recognise that the vast majority of gun owners are decent, law-abiding Australians who use hand guns and other firearms for legitimate, necessary and other worthwhile reasons.

Whether some people like guns or not, they are a tool of trade for law enforcers, military and security services; for occupational users, such as farmers and land-holders; and for sportsmen and women. Therefore, it is unrealistic to suggest that firearms or hand guns should be banned. The question then is: how should the ownership and use of hand guns be regulated to ensure that law-abiding people can continue to undertake these legitimate pursuits while, to the best possible extent practical, the misuse of firearms is prevented?

As a starting point, state and federal governments should recognise the rights of law-abiding Australians and not set out to make those legitimate licensed gun owners the target of any so-called law reform. They should not set out to punish the 190,000 licensed shooters in Queensland for the evil actions of one man in an isolated incident in Melbourne.

It has been reported that the gunman was a licensed shooter who held permits to possess seven hand guns. In their second step, the state and federal governments, and particularly the Victorian government, should establish how a foreign national, living in suburban Melbourne and with only a limited grasp of the English language, was able to obtain a licence for any gun, let alone seven hand guns. They should establish how it was that he was able to pass the comprehensive examinations that are supposed to be undertaken before a gun licence is issued and how it was that he was able to satisfy the licensing authority in that state that he had legitimate cause to own a gun.

As their third step, the state and federal governments should examine what has been identified for some time as the real issue in this debate—the illegal importation, sale, distribution and use of firearms by the criminal element in this country. They should examine why it is that, according to the Police Minister, there are some 50,000 illegal and concealable weapons or hand guns in Australia today and why they have not targeted this as an issue of the highest priority—until now when, in a frantic attempt to cover up the lax performance of the respective authorities in detecting the import and illegal distribution and use of these weapons and in catching and prosecuting the offenders, they have thrown almost every facet of firearm regulation on the table for review, including the regulation of those who have committed no crime.

The fact is that the evidence does not support the wholesale restriction of firearm ownership. Even the Police Minister acknowledges this. He told Susan Mitchell on 612 4QR on 23 October—

> At the present time we have 190,000 licensed shooters here in Queensland. Of them, 13,000 have licences for hand guns. Now the evidence suggests that the real problem, the real problem, doesn't come from those people who have licensed weapons. The problem comes from those people who have illegal hand guns and obviously they would be coming from the importation of hand guns from crooks and criminals.

They are the words of the Police Minister. The director of the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research went further and hit the nail on the head when it comes to addressing this issue. He told the *Australian* newspaper in a story printed on 26 October that 'what is really needed are not more laws but more aggressive law enforcement'. He said that law enforcement should be 'just old-fashioned, hard slog detective work'. He said—

> ... someone is out there buying and selling the stuff, and what you need to do is get them ... just like you do with drugs.

The Australian Institute of Criminology found that of the 117 offenders who killed with firearms between 1997 and 1999 only 11 were licensed gun owners who had permits for their weapons—11 out of the 764,518 individual firearm licence holders in Australia. In the words of Jenny Mouzos, manager of the institute's national firearms monitoring program, 'in other words, licensed firearm owners were not responsible for the majority of firearm related homicides'.

The Queensland Nationals have already moved to act on the evidence—to act on the real issue. Yesterday we called for tough, mandatory sentencing for criminal users of firearms. We have proposed a five-10-life policy for people who use guns to commit crimes. Under our proposal, if you pull a gun you will get five years jail, if you pull the trigger you will get 10 years jail and if you shoot someone you will get life. We can guarantee that.

While the Police Minister has said that the real problem comes from those people who have illegal hand guns, and while 116 of the 470 adults found guilty of armed robbery in Queensland since 1998 did not spend one night in jail, the Premier yesterday was already going soft on our proposal. The Queensland Nationals can guarantee that those people will go to jail. If the Premier is at all fair dinkum—if he has any credibility—he will support our proposal, and he will get the chance to do so.

There are already tough regulations governing firearm ownership and use in Queensland. They were introduced by the former coalition state government following the dreadful tragedy at Port Arthur. They required prospective firearm owners to undergo a rigorous application and assessment process. The applicant must undergo extensive training, must demonstrate a legitimate and genuine reason to justify ownership of a firearm and must prove that he or she does not have a criminal, violent or mental record.

These laws provide that the issuing authority, the Queensland Police Service, can investigate the applicant, seek further information to satisfy the applicant's identity or physical and mental health, inspect the secure storage facilities for the weapon and require the applicant display an adequate knowledge of the safety practices for the use, storage and maintenance of the firearm. Had the Monash gunman tried to obtain a firearms licence in Queensland, he almost certainly would have been refused.

The Queensland Nationals will defend absolutely the legitimate, law-abiding licensed firearm owners of Queensland. We will not allow the current gun control debate to be sidetracked or misdirected by any government which makes law-abiding Queensland gun owners the inappropriate target of any firearm law reform. We will not tolerate a knee-jerk reaction to the Monash shooting and allow the state or federal governments to again take the easy option—the political quick fix—and ratchet up the restrictions on licensed firearm owners while the crooks and the criminals are allowed to get away again.

We will not accept any silly restrictions on hand guns that have a legitimate use or foolish suggestions that all hand guns be stored in central locations such as gun club clubhouses that will attract criminal elements like bees to a honey pot. We will stand up for the sporting shooters. We will stand up for the occupational users, such as the farmers and land-holders, whose legitimate interests have so far been discounted in the gun law debate. We will continue to call on both the Beattie government and the Howard government to crack down on the criminals and to target the illegal importation, the illegal distribution and the illegal use of firearms. The Queensland Nationals will not sign any blank cheques when it comes to gun laws.

Bushfires

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): As most of the House would be aware, Toowoomba has been in the state's and the nation's spotlight in the past week. While I am extremely proud of my home town and its people, and I welcome any opportunity to promote Toowoomba to our nation, I wish that my city could have been in the spotlight for other reasons.

Toowoomba and its surrounding areas were threatened by menacing bushfires fuelled by dry conditions, and particularly on Wednesday by a dust storm. Between Wednesday and Sunday, authorities believed that five homes were destroyed completely, 800 people were evacuated from their homes, more than 1,110 square kilometres of bushland was burnt around Toowoomba, and the damage bill is still being counted. While my city has lost a great deal, so much was saved. More than 1,000 homes were in the fire's direct path. Emergency services crew, police, volunteers and the general public united together and were able to prevent further tragedy from unfolding.

As the smoke clears and life starts returning to normal for Toowoomba, stories are beginning to emerge of volunteers and members of our emergency services team who went beyond the call

of duty to save lives and homes. Each and every person who assisted the community between Wednesday and Sunday deserves to be mentioned publicly and thanked. That in itself is impossible to do. Most were just nameless faces who put up their hands to do a job without seeking thanks or publicity for their efforts. I am talking about literally hundreds of people who preserved so much: homes, lives, livelihoods, hopes, histories, memories and dreams. May I publicly say to each and every one of them: thank you. If I miss out someone or some groups, it is not because their efforts were not appreciated; rather, it is a simple oversight.

Places around Toowoomba that provided shelter and assistance to evacuated families and provided a base for emergency services to work out of include the Blue Mountain Hotel, Toowoomba Grammar School, Harlaxton Neighbourhood Hall and Withcott Hall. Those who volunteered their time over the four days put up their hands even though it was not part of their profession to provide assistance. In particular, thanks go to people from St John Ambulance, Lifeline, the Salvation Army, and St Vincent de Paul. These volunteers cared for and provided assistance to the people who were evacuated. They also provided assistance to emergency service crews.

Volunteers, led by Maureen Fewtrell who coordinated the efforts at the evacuation centre, included Brenda Briskey; Sandra Hill; Zelda McMurtrie; Ann Elks; Janice Cooper; Wendy, Kerry and Kelly Proellocks; Gloria Mundt; Anette and Tracey Hill; Jessie Proellocks; May Wilson and Tom Fewtrell. Government groups and individuals involved were the Emergency Services Department, who have deliberately asked me not to single out individuals who played a role in fighting these blazes. These selfless individuals live by the motto that they all work as one for the team. So may I make mention of these teams from southern Queensland, made up of thousands of people who united together with little warning to do our city and state proud: the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service team, led by Assistant Commissioner Steve Rothwell; the Rural Fire and Rescue Service, led by Regional Inspector Ray Robinson; the Queensland Ambulance Service team, led by Assistant Commissioner Murray Excell, and the Counter Disaster Rescue Service team, led by Rhys Fraser. Each of these teams was supported by services from outside south-east Queensland. May I make mention of the emergency services crews from Brisbane, the south-east region; the north coast; Roma; Mackay; Oakey; Caboolture; Kingaroy and Maryborough, just to name a few who helped in many different areas. Key commanders from Cairns and Rockhampton also came to Toowoomba to assist in the incident management. The outstanding cooperation between each of those local departments and between other departments from around the state at both the strategic and ground levels has been praised far and wide. So may I say: thank you all.

Of course, the police assisted in different facets: strategic planning of control effort, road closures, managing sightseers, and generally keeping the public safe. I give thanks to Gary Wells, the Disaster District Coordinator; Executive Officer, Bob Gutridge, and their entire teams. Local governments assisted. The Toowoomba City Council, led by Mayor Di Thorley and CEO Peter Taylor, worked beyond description. Thanks also go to Crows Nest Shire Mayor, Geoff Patch and CEO, David McEvoy and Gatton Mayor, Jim McDonald. The Toowoomba Disaster District functional lead agencies included Mike Burmingham and his team from the Department of Families; Rob Gear from the Department of Works—Q-Build; Mike Harris and his team from Main Roads and the Department of Transport; Dr Andy Cumming and Virgil Kelk and their teams from the Department of Health who all came together and provided timely, swift and efficient services in their respective areas. Ergon Energy also provided valuable assistance when it was most required, as did Telstra.

Today, we have heard about the effect of water bombers provided by Jones Air of St George, who provided three aircraft, and Aerotec from Toowoomba and Pittsworth, who also provided two aircraft. CareFlight and Rescue 500 from Queensland Emergency Services also provided an invaluable service to the people of Toowoomba and its surrounding areas.

Time expired.

International Monetary Fund; Third World Debt

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (11.44 a.m.): The IMF has recently issued a report card on the Australia economy. Its report lauds the recent performance of our economy and the many micro-economic reforms that have already been made. However, the IMF states that we need further reforms if the economy's rapid growth is to be sustained. The IMF recommends a comprehensive and coordinated package of major changes in the tax, income support and

industrial relations systems. Within such a package, their major priority is to enhance incentives to work, save and invest by reforming the personal income tax system.

The IMF wants to cut in particular the top tax rate. What has been advocated is a very expensive tax cut and one that would favour about one in 10 taxpayers who would benefit by a tax saving of 17 cents in every dollar of income above $60,000. Any person earning $100,000 a year would benefit by $6,800. or $130 a week. Someone on $200,000 a year would save $23,800 a year, or $460 per week. The CEO of the Commonwealth Bank, who earns $7 million, would save more than $1 million a year. At the other end of our social scale, the IMF wants the eligibility requirements for income support programs and penalties for breach of obligations to be rigorously applied and tightened.

When it comes to industrial relations, the IMF believes that minimum wages remain very high in Australia relative to other advanced economies and that their lowering would enhance employment prospects for low-skilled workers. Simply put, the IMF's reform package advocates more carrot for the rich and a bigger stick for the poor.

Australia is indeed fortunate that it cannot be coerced by the IMF to submit to such unbalanced policies. However, many Third World countries, which are in the clutches of the IMF, are not so lucky as they are not in a position to be able to reject such obscene policies. These countries have been obliged by the IMF to submit to the demands of free market deregulatory economic policies; they are forced to cut or abandon spending on education, health and welfare; to end support for their domestic industries; to produce food for export instead of for their own consumption; and to sell their most productive assets to western buyers. The IMF's flawed Third World development model of borrow, invest and repay has led to a collapse in the value of their currencies. As a consequence, western buyers have bought all of those countries' wealth-producing assets at bargain basement prices.

The IMF argues that those fortunate workers who are on high salaries need to be motivated by huge tax cuts whilst the poor, many of whom face high effective tax rates, are apparently unmotivated by money and need more stick to get them off their backsides. The IMF package would not only increase social conflict but it is also poor economics. It is no wonder that the IMF is hated by the citizens of Third World countries. It is time for the IMF to be consigned to the dustbin of history. Their special pleadings on behalf of the rich are not needed. The rich are powerful enough to look after themselves.

World debt is growing exponentially. It is now about $US2.4 trillion. In 1971, Argentina owed $2.3 billion. In 1998, their debit was $133 billion. The current levels of debt are inherently unrepayable. That indicates the broad failure of the economic institutions involved in the accounting of world trade, such as the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation. The need for the further cancellation of world debt is an issue that will not go away. In relation to the pressures from economic migration and refugees because of this debt crisis, I think that the developed world will have to come to terms with that crisis, because it also will not go away.

When I read that report from the IMF, which was all about carrots for the rich and stick for the poor, I was just outraged. I understand that we are fortunate enough to not be a debtor nation that has had to borrow money from the World Bank through the IMF—nations that have had to undertake structural adjustments that mean that they sell off their assets for very little. The wealth is being taken out of those countries and more people are living in worse and worse circumstances. Jubilee 2000 was about getting rid of Third World debt, but what was forgiven was less than one per cent of Third World debt. I think that the world needs to get away from this economic rationalist agenda and make sure that we have a society that can function and that we have a society that looks after all its citizens. As the Greeks said, the true testament of democracy—

Time expired.

Reclaim the Night

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (11.50 a.m.): On Friday 25 October our community participated in the Reclaim the Night program, a recognition of the reality of violence against women and children and a focus on ways to reduce that violence. Some very, I think, concerning statistics in relation to domestic violence were taken from a survey reproduced in the *Future Directions* publication. Those statistics indicated that one in five interviewed said that they believed violence by a man against his female partner is acceptable in certain circumstances. One in 20 thought that more extreme forms of violence, such as kicking, beating and threatening

to or using a weapon, can be justified against either a wife or a child. One in three think that domestic violence is a private matter for families. One in four said that they would ignore a case of domestic violence in their neighbourhood. Myths about domestic violence taken from the Domestic Violence Service of Queensland include violence is a healthy release, is understandable and the relationship will get better; and if you ignore violence, it will simply go away.

Reclaim the Night endeavours to refocus our attention on violence committed against women and children. In Gladstone, the program is run by the Women's Health Centre. I commend them for the program that was put together, particularly in this year. In the past we have held marches and other commemorations of the violence committed against women, but this year there was a completely different format. It was run and organised by sexual assault worker Lynette Coleman. I commend her for the work she did. The program had speakers, including a local psychologist, Paul. They had poems from a mature woman and from a younger woman. They also had some very confronting stories from survivors of sexual assault. One woman in particular, Deb, was most confronting about the issues that she highlighted. She had been assaulted as a child and raped as an adult and had decided only a few years ago to reclaim her life. There was also a candle lighting ceremony that gave an opportunity for everybody present, men and women, to be involved in the gesture of saying that the right and the ability of women and children to walk safely any time of the day is one that we must reclaim.

A lot of myths are perpetuated and stories talked about in relation to rape. The stories are that men are excited or not excited by the type of clothes that a person wears; that it is safe to stay with people we know when the facts are that often rapes are committed by people known to the victim; that it is safe to go out with a female friend when statistics show that often people in small groups are just as vulnerable; that it is strangers we have to be most concerned about while statistics show that rape and sexual assaults occur when fathers, grandfathers, uncles and even brothers are involved. It has been said that it is safe for women to go out if they have a male companion. The fact is that in many instances the male is assaulted before the female. It is said that it is safer to stay at home. The facts show that intruders and relatives see us as a potential victim irrespective of where we are. It is said that old age is protection from rapists, but we have seen stories in the media recently where quite elderly women have not been safe in their own homes and have been brutally attacked. It is said that if you are a child you are safe. Again, history shows that that is not the case.

The only solution to this is for recognition and action by the whole community—not just the police—and a statement that this is not acceptable, that it will not be tolerated, that people who commit violence against women and children will be dealt with severely by the law, that in our modern society violence against men and young male children will not be tolerated and that people convicted of those crimes will be dealt with severely. I look forward to when in my lifetime women and children in particular, because of Reclaim the Night, can go out and enjoy themselves with a measure of safety and confidence not because of who they are with but because they have a democratic right to move freely in our community. Again, I commend the Women's Health Centre in my electorate and in other electorates where the Reclaim the Night celebration occurred. It is wholesome. It is certainly positive, and for those survivors of sexual assault—

Time expired.

Sugar Industry

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (11.55 a.m.): I rise to talk about the sugar industry, a vitally important industry for this state. I also rise to ask the Leader of the Opposition where he stands on support for this great industry. The Queensland government has entered into a partnership with the federal government to deliver $150 million in assistance over the next four years to the sugar industry and the communities that depend on it. This assistance includes both short and long-term emergency assistance for struggling growers and longer term support for the industry to become more commercial and innovative. The federal National Party has supported this agreement as an appropriate response by both governments to the problems confronting the sugar industry. The cooperation between the governments is quite unprecedented. Minister Warren Truss signed the memorandum of understanding, and I understand that the Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the National Party, John Anderson, has been urging growers to support it.

The sugar industry has complained for a long time, fairly I think, that it does not want to be a political football between governments. Now that a federal coalition government and a state

Labor government have agreed on a joint approach, this will not happen anymore. I want to know whether the Leader of the Opposition supports his federal colleagues in seeing this $150 million package as a good thing for the sugar industry. Is the Queensland National Party going to reject intergovernmental cooperation, reject the approach of their own federal colleagues and oppose this package of support for the sugar industry? What is their position? Of course they cannot say they accept the federal part of the package and reject the state part. This is one package—you either support it or you do not. And if they are going to oppose the federal government on this issue, will they also oppose them on their policies on ethanol? These policies, of course, provide a subsidy for one year to existing domestic producers. The policy seems more about stopping a shipment of Brazilian ethanol than about real support for the ethanol industry. The subsidy offers nothing to potential new ethanol producers. Instead, it builds up the position of the dominant Manildra group, which supplies 95 per cent of Australia's ethanol for blending in fuel.

So, if the Leader of the Opposition does not accept the joint federal-state approach, will he also oppose his party's policies on ethanol? And I also want to know where the Leader of the Opposition stands on the Katter eight-point plan. Does he support this piece of populist posturing by his former colleague? Members may not be aware, but this alleged plan has been proposed by Mr Katter and some of his extremist friends as the salvation of the sugar industry. It really is a cruel trick being played on growers—exploiting their fears, promising what cannot be delivered and leading them down the path to disaster. This plan, in effect, calls for a massive taxpayer subsidy to growers alone of $200 million a year indefinitely through a massive levy on retail sugar sales. This is to be supported by tariffs and production controls. It is not to be linked to any sort of change or progress in the industry. It is to continue even in good times. This is nothing less than pure snake oil.

A 25 cent levy on retail sugar forever would be an unjustified slug on ordinary Australian consumers. It would take $200 million from consumers and give it to growers, with no strings attached. No other area of the economy, no other primary industry, would ever receive such a large amount of funding with absolutely no performance requirements. And Mr Katter wants his money only for growers. He does not worry about harvesters or mills or mill workers or communities. He has a very lopsided view of the industry. I find it amazing that he wants production controls on the industry. This is turning the clock back. At the moment, we need to produce as much as possible, and indeed low production is a real problem for the industry.

To actually impose restrictions seems to fly in the face of reality. But, then again, that is what this whole plan does. Mr Katter does not think any change is needed. The fact that sugar prices are in long-term decline, just like all other agricultural commodities, is of no interest to him. The presence of Brazil does not matter. Nothing needs to change. There is no room for doing things differently. All that is required is greater public subsidies. This is nonsense, something out of Peron's Argentina or Mussolini's Italy. Mr Katter is in denial. He does not want to face the realities of world markets. He wants to stop the industry moving ahead; he wants to move it into the past. And, of course, this is part of a bid to establish a new political party, the New Country Party. And, worse still, Mr Katter is using growers for his own private political purposes.

I wonder if the Queensland Nationals see this new party as a threat? Is that why they have been so quiet on the Katter plan? I think they need to stand up and be counted. Do they support the Katter plan or do they not? If they do not support it, they should get in behind the federal and state governments, stop trying to score cheap political points and make a positive contribution to the industry. I call on the Leader of the Opposition to clarify his position. Who does he support? The Federal and Queensland governments or Mr Katter? He owes this House an answer, and he owes the sugar industry and the communities that depend on it an answer. The House will be waiting for his response.

Drought; Dust Storms

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.00 p.m.): Today I wish to speak about a fabrication of the facts surrounding the dust storm that Queensland experienced last week. A *Courier-Mail* article from last Friday, 25 October, stated—

... a cloud of dirt stretched from Victoria to Mount Isa and stretched 6km into the sky over Charleville.

I inform the ignorant and ill-informed that in many parts of the state we are currently experiencing one of the worst droughts in our history. Queensland Conservation Council Coordinator Felicity Wishart blamed the severity of the dust storm partly on runaway land clearing and a surge in cattle numbers. This dust came from the desert regions of South Australia, Queensland and the

Northern Territory, where there is only natural habitat and where no land clearing has occurred. In South Australia there is no cultivation above the Goyder line, and the shires of Bulloo, Quilpie, Barcoo, Diamantina, Boulia, Mount Isa and Burke retain habitats very close to the natural habitat that existed in this country in 1788. That throws the argument over land clearing out the window.

The point about cattle is also without foundation, as graziers and pastoralists in dry times sell off or lighten off their stocking numbers. So they have lost out again through false and cheap comment. Pastoralists are conservationists. They would not survive in these dry, arid lands if they did not manage their properties in a proper fashion. A *Courier-Mail* article of last Friday, 25 October, states—

Griffith University dust storm expert Grant McTainsh said ...

...

'We did a study for the first Queensland state of the environment report which found that in areas with the highest frequency of storms, like Birdsville, land use management was having the least impact ... Human-induced changes were much more important in the Charleville area but storms are less frequent there.'

Mr McTainsh is right. Those areas around Birdsville, as I just stated, are part of the Diamantina shire and there is no land clearing at all.

Mr Springborg: They have never had a tree on them.

Mr JOHNSON: As the member for Southern Downs just said, it is in its natural state—the heart of the Simpson Desert. Why are these people fabricating evidence? One group that has got it right is Landcare Australia. In the same article it was quoted as stating—

... the dust storm should not necessarily be blamed on poor land management and was due mainly to strong winds and a once-in-a-century drought.

Chief executive Brian Scarsbrick claimed that the event could have been made much worse if not for techniques like zero tillage, sowing of crops suited to dry conditions and planting of native grasses.

In 1965 we used to have two and three of those dust storms a week. They used to float right across the eastern seaboard and went as far as New Zealand. I think the one last week did the same. That rebuts the argument by these scaremongering people who do not have their facts right. It is about time they researched the issue properly and gave us the truth.

I have heard people comment on the Mitchell grass plains of the west and ask why they have been cleared again. They have not. They are in their natural state. Again, these people are ignorant of the truth. What we need to correct the problem is widespread general rain, not the whipping up of hysteria by ignorant and ill-informed people who are endeavouring to gain support for their argument through their total disregard for the truth. Landcare is an integral part of Queensland communities now. This goes to show how we have better managed the environment in recent years.

I wish to quote briefly from a document titled *The production, economic and environmental impacts of tree clearing in Queensland—A report to the Working Group of the Ministerial Consultative Committee on Tree Clearing* from 1995, which stated—

Time expired.

Racing Industry

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (12.05 p.m.): We are all aware of the current changes to the Queensland racing industry. It is a challenging time for all, as some are welcoming change, some are proud and supportive of the industry's rich, historical roots and some have mixed reservations. Nevertheless, I wish to bring to the attention of the House the wonderful contribution of this dynamic industry in the areas of export and education.

Queensland Race Training is the Queensland racing industry's own provider of education and training for people in the racing industry. Based in the northern Brisbane suburb of Deagon, it is close to the major metropolitan racing venues of Eagle Farm and Doomben. It also has easy access to Queensland's major training stables and thoroughbred studs. QRT is the only training centre owned by and operated for the racing industry in Queensland and it delivers a wide range of training to Queensland jockeys, stable hands and trainers and attracts international students from Japan. This includes track work riding, basic riding, stable and horse handling skills, horse health and grooming, feed and nutrition and computer skills. In addition, it offers work experience and international students are also taught English. It is also the only Queensland training centre endorsed by the state government and the racing industry to train apprentice jockeys.

All of the major courses offered by QRT are officially accredited by the appropriate Australian authorities and lead to a qualification which is recognised in Australia and, in some countries, overseas. It provides training for Queensland's three racing codes—thoroughbred, harness and greyhound—in the employment areas of apprentice jockeys, stable hands, track work riders, harness drivers and trainers. I commend QRT's commitment to the training and skills development of the racing industry as it provides a strong foundation to expand the industry's export potential.

Along with racing being marketed to a new generation of people through a flagship event like the Queensland Winter Racing Carnival and partnering with the state's tourism strategies, the Queensland racing industry is becoming a significant contributor to the Queensland economy. One successful export example of Queensland's racing industry is the Queensland thoroughbred breeding industry's increase of business and trade opportunities into Asia. The recently conducted Magic Millions Horses in Training sale was highlighted by the purchase of the top priced lots that have found homes in Asia. A colt by Sequalo, a stallion that stands at the historic Lyndhurst Stud farm at Warwick, was sold to Singapore interests for $90,000, while a colt by Clang, the sire of this year's Golden Slipper winner, Calaway Gal, which was bred, raised, trained and owned in Queensland, was sold to Malaysia for $80,000.

The Singapore Turf Club and the Malaysia Jockey Club purchased nearly a quarter of the horses sold, of which all but one was Queensland bred, and all were priced well above the sale average. Mr David Chester, managing director of the Magic Millions Sale company whose headquarters are based on the Gold Coast, recently highlighted that Queensland produced racehorses are becoming increasingly attractive to Asian racehorse owners. Mr Chester stated—

While the Asians have been very active in purchasing Australian horses for many years now, the Queensland horse has improved substantially in recent years through significant investment by Queensland breeders in acquiring stallions and broodmares of a greater quality. This improved quality of stock, combined with the price factor for the horses produced which is seen as offering value for money, has led to the greater level of buyer interest not just from Asia but also from New Zealand.

In addition to the increased business for Queensland bred horses from Singapore, Malaysia, Macau and Hong Kong, there are also enormous opportunities to sell to the Philippines and Korea, which are nations that are quickly developing their respective horseracing industries. This is fantastic for the industry on an international level, as Queensland horses are competitive on the track in these countries and have a substantial price advantage over their interstate and New Zealand produced counterparts.

Queensland breeders have recognised the need to expand international markets for the horses they produce. The initiatives these producers have put in place over the last few years have already started to meet with solid commercial results in the sale ring and augur well for the future. I want to commend these breeders, the QRT and the rest of the industry who are actively thinking outside of the box to sustain their livelihood and this vital industry during a dynamic and fluctuating time of global economic change.

Water Use Efficiency

Dr KINGSTON (Maryborough—Ind) (12.10 p.m.): The last speaker, the member for Clayfield, referred to the subject of exporting horses. I would like to point out that the export of working horses is also very important. I was very happy to export some of our horses to the Philippines at $15,000 each.

The subject I want to speak about today is water. Water today is obviously a topical subject, as evidenced by questions asked by the member for Gregory and the member for Tablelands. In particular, I want to talk about water use efficiency. In south-east Queensland at the moment several local government authorities are introducing water meters. The introduction of water meters is inevitable as there is an increasing amount of evidence that the world is becoming increasingly deficient in water per capita at a very rapid rate. The objective of water meters, although often unpopular, is to hopefully decrease water usage and, above all, water wastage.

Water meter introduction would be more popular if the local government authorities read some of David Suzuki's new book and ensured that their constituents understood the full reasons for the introduction of water meters. In his book entitled *Some Good News for a Change*, David Suzuki states—

The skill of successfully reducing water usage and water wastage and increasing water re-use lies not in the top-down regulation but on the generation of bottom-up enthusiasm for the technologies which are already available.

I have researched those technologies and distributed them within my electorate. I am surprised at the number that exist.

Allerd Stikker of the Amsterdam based Ecological Management Foundation states—

The issue today ... is that while the only renewable source of fresh water is continental rainfall, the world population keeps increasing by roughly 85 million per year. Therefore the availability of fresh water per head is decreasing rapidly. But this water is not being consumed just to slake the thirst of all the newly arrived humans. Agriculture uses close to 70% and industry 25%; less than 10% goes to households and municipalities. The amount the three categories use is doubling every 20 years; that is more than twice the increase in the population—

and I repeat that, that water use is doubling at more than twice the increase in population—

so wastage and excess use are obviously at work.

Considering the more local situation for me, the Mary River catchment currently supports a population of over 300,000 who rely on the water resources of the catchment, although a high percentage of these people do not live within the actual catchment. Within the next 20 years the population of the Sunshine Coast is expected to increase dramatically with a corresponding increase in water demand. To be more precise, within the next 20 years the resident population which will be dependent on the water resources of the Mary River is expected to increase to over 500,000. Furthermore, it is estimated that the number of visitor days per annum by tourists will increase from the current 3.5 million to 12 million over the same period.

It has been estimated that the increase in the actual draw-off of water for urban areas will amount to about 135 per cent over this period. Additionally, an overall increase of 60 per cent has been predicated in rural water requirements. Consequently, the overall water consumption over a 20-year planning horizon is expected to increase by 89 per cent. A number of augmentation projects have been proposed to meet this increase in demand, but at this stage they are only suggestions. Thus, it is not surprising to find that the three-month and six-month low flow rates at 20- and 50-year recurrence intervals will not be able to cater for the increase in water demand. Thus, during these low flow intervals the Mary River will be in stress.

I urge all local government authorities, industry bodies and this government to take a hard look at the situation in the Mary River and take it into their planning considerations.

Time expired.

Election to Senate of Mr S. Santoro

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (12.16 p.m.): I am not one for giving tips on the stock market but with the Senate appointment tonight anyone would be missing a wonderful growth stock opportunity if they did not buy Telstra shares. Honourable members will recall that the Speaker quite reasonably capped the cost of mobile phone bills ostensibly because of the huge bill racked up by the former member for Clayfield. This had an immediate negative impact on Telstra's share price and it has been languishing ever since. Our new senator will now have access to unlimited federal government mobile phone calls and I confidently predict that the Telstra share price will recover.

As well as being a human stock market divining rod, the new senator has other qualities which I ask the parliament to consider when they vote tonight. The recent Liberal Party preselection shows that the former member has psychic powers that surpass even the television program *Crossing Over* where the moderator communicates with the dead.

Under the Liberal Party constitution provisions each FEC is entitled to send 10 delegates to a Senate selection. They represent the branches of the FEC. In Mr Santoro's federal division of Lilley there are just nine active branches. To ensure that there were 10 delegates, the Santoro faction chose a delegate from the Banyo branch. This was unexceptional but for one fact: the Banyo branch of the Liberal Party is dead. It died 18 months ago. Its bank accounts were closed and the few remaining branch members were transferred elsewhere. It is not a bad effort to raise the dead but it is a greater effort to get the dead out to vote, and that is exactly what Lazarus Santoro did. It should have made the *Guiness Book of Records*. As the late Fred Daly used to say, if you did not believe in life after death, then take a look at the Senate. Anyone who can bring the dead back to life and then activate them to vote in a preselection certainly belongs in the Senate.

But there is another Liberal Party preselection rule for the Senate that honourable members should remember. Each FEC has to have 100 members. With one of the Rankin power brokers, the Deen brothers, asleep on the job in Fortitude Valley, the numbers in Rankin had fallen below 100. I am reliably informed that ethnic Chinese were simply transferred into Rankin branches to

give our great friend the numbers. Under Santoro, the Liberal Party had the highest overseas membership of any branch of any political party in Australia. He borrowed the Peter Allen song, 'I've been to cities that never close down'. At least one thing you can say for the Liberals, they have given a lot of overseas visitors an insight into parts of Queensland that they never would have visited without the benefits of a preselection.

The same rort occurred in Blair, the home of the famous South Burnett branch of the Liberal Party. The FEC there did not have 100 members. The numbers were transferred from the neighbouring seat of Ryan. Speaking of Ryan—and I could not let today go by without speaking about it—there was a ballot to choose the 10 Ryan delegates to the Senate selection council. There were 20 candidates and the order on the ballot paper was determined in secret by the state director. In spite of this secrecy, the pro-Santoro group was able to produce a how-to-vote card which had the 20 candidates in exactly the right order. I am told that the odds against this happening in the correct ticket sequence are 69 million to one.

Next week, members should ring the Santoro team for a Melbourne Cup tip. They will not only give members the winner but they will also place the whole field in the correct finishing order. In an age when people believe we are overgoverned, the former member for Clayfield has provided a solution. When he took control of the Liberal Party in 1997 they were in government in Queensland and Canberra. They had 15 members in this House. In just four short years his successes in eliminating government have been breathtaking. Within a year they lost government in Queensland and, admittedly over two elections, he took their numbers from 15 to three members. A true leader by example, he took himself out in that process.

There is no doubt that the former member for Clayfield had a hand in making the Liberal Party in Queensland what it is today, and I am confident that when we put him in the Senate he will achieve the same success at a federal level. In his short time here he saw off four leaders and countless numbers of state presidents and state directors. If you are a Liberal believing in smaller government, or in fact no government, then Santo's your man. Peter Costello should be waiting at the airport when the senator arrives. If Howard will not go, then Costello could gently seek out advice from a man with a true track record of helping out leaders! I am delighted that my prediction for the former member has come true. I predicted on the night of the Senate vote for George Brandis that the former member for Clayfield would replace Senator Herron and the then member for Clayfield replied in typical humility that he was not going anywhere. If someone is not going anywhere in politics, there is no better place than the Senate. Tonight I would urge all honourable members to put aside their prejudices and put him in the Senate.

Staffing, Health Services

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (12.20 p.m.): I was intrigued to hear of Health Minister Wendy Edmond's offer of a free flight home for expat doctors, dentists, radiation therapists, pharmacists and of course nurses, even though, according to Queensland Health, there is not a nursing shortage. The minister has provided $50,000 towards this plan. Without appearing too cynical, a mere $50,000 seems pretty measly for a program designed to attract more medical professionals considering the extent of the Queensland Health crisis. I raise this point for the minister and hope that she takes it on board. This may come as a bit of a shock to her, but it is time she realised that the problems Queensland has in attracting nurses and doctors has absolutely nothing to do with the expense of an air fare.

Can members imagine it? Let us take, say, Flo Nightingale from Brisbane who is currently working as a nurse in London. She has applied for a two-year working visa and still has a year left. Somehow she hears about the offer for a free flight home and she thinks, 'Well, I have a choice. I can remain here for another year and earn at least double what I would if I returned to Australia, or I could go back home and work twice as hard for Wendy Edmond in an understaffed hospital for half the pay. Mmm, that's a hard choice!' In fact, this fly-home-free campaign is about as misguided as giving teachers $50,000 to leave the profession when there is a teacher shortage. I hate to tell the minister, but nurses are not going to come home just because they can come home free; they will come home when their working visa is up.

The fundamental issue that the Beattie government fails to realise is that nurses are concerned about pay and working conditions in Queensland public hospitals. If those issues were addressed by the Beattie government, then perhaps there would not be a chronic staff shortage in public hospitals. As revealed in the budget estimates recently, the Beattie government is forking out $15 million for agency nurses to cover the shortfall. In the long run, the government

would be better off providing a better deal for nurses. I realise that the past four years of financial mismanagement have left the Beattie government strapped for cash, but let us face it: the health crisis did not just occur suddenly. There were warning signs and, frankly, more money should have been put aside in the last few budgets for not only nurses but also hospitals.

I turn now to the issue of doctors, and I will use my remaining time to tell the minister why this fly-home-free campaign will fail to attract sufficient doctors and specialists to fix the crisis. Again, doctors and specialists are not suddenly going to be persuaded home just because of a free flight home. I am sure that that is the least of their problems. Minister, the issue is medical indemnity cover. I know that she has trouble grasping the concept of there being a problem with the medical indemnity cover provided by Queensland Health, but I can assure her that fixing that problem would be a real step towards addressing the doctor shortage in the public system. I say it again: doctors and health professionals should be covered by Queensland Health unless proven criminally negligent in a court of law. That is what they want, and I am sure that implementing that would not even cost $50,000. But let us face it: that $50,000 was just a token gesture anyway. But it will not wash with the Queensland people, because they know that the problems within the health system go beyond the cost of air travel.

We are seeing a situation in hospitals throughout Queensland where existing doctors and specialists and other health professionals are withdrawing their services because of the failure of this Health Minister to address the lack of adequate medical indemnity cover in the public system. This is easily fixed, yet it is a disgrace that maternity wards have closed in regional Queensland, that a number of hospitals have withdrawn all of their gynaecological services, that people have to wait years to get even an eye appointment, and that mothers have to travel hours to get to a place where they can deliver their baby when the local hospital provided that service in the last 12 months. Things are at a critical point. These services are being lost while the Health Minister does nothing to address a fundamental issue which is totally within her hands to address.

Election to Senate of Mr S. Santoro

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (12.25 p.m.): Tonight members of the Labor Party will follow a very important principle and agree to the nomination of the person chosen by the Liberal Party to fill a casual Senate vacancy. We will not do what Joe Bjelke-Petersen did some years ago for our own political ends; we will do what is right. There will be another political principle that will apply from tonight as well, and that is the higher the star of Santo Santoro rises in Queensland the lower are political achievements of the Liberal Party within this state. The member for Logan alluded to this when he said that the lack of government seems to be the achievement that the former member for Merthyr and former member for Clayfield has brought into his political achievements. I will mention some of those in a short time, but I am certain that as the new senator goes to Canberra, the Liberal Party will be the ones watching their backs rather than the Labor Party.

Following the redistribution of 1992, I lived just outside my electorate—just across Kedron Brook—and had the privilege of living in the electorate of Clayfield. It used to irk the then member that my vote cancelled his out. I had to deal with him personally and professionally on a much more regular basis than did most members in the House. If some members thought it was bad having to sit through parliament when he was here, they should have lived in his electorate and have him as their local member. I have had to deal with Liberals such as Councillors Carol Cashman, Tim Nicholls and Jim Wilding, Liberal MP John Goss and federal member Teresa Gambaro. I have been able to have civil working relationships with all of those people and a professional working relationship between our offices. The only one with whom I did not have a professional working relationship and who could not put party politics above his own ends was the former member for Clayfield, Santo Santoro. His shameful acts of labelling public servants and simply denigrating them and saying that they were party hacks, totally disregarding their professionalism, were two of his most shameful acts in this House.

But where do we go from here? A couple of phone calls to my house on Sunday gave me a bit of a clue as to what might happen, because in Santoro's acceptance speech he praised the good work of Senator Brett Mason, but he did not mention George. He left out George Brandis, and George has got a problem. Because he backed Russell Trood, George's position on the Senate ticket is in doubt. We all remember what Santoro did to do over Senator MacGibbon and put him third on the ticket to get Brett Mason up. Well, George, watch your back, because Santo is out to do it to you now!

Senator Brett Mason also has a problem, because he has certain personal loyalties to George Brandis but has now sold his political soul to Santoro, and he is going to have to pay up. But this has some further implications, because the Libs now have the Santoro-Carroll faction rather than the Carroll-Santoro faction and Santoro will be calling the shots. Bob Quinn smiled when he said that he wished him well in Canberra—in other words, thank God he is leaving us—and Bob only has about 30 per cent of Liberal support. But the other player in this is Michael Caltabiano, because Michael Caltabiano wants to get into the seat of Moggill. But how is he going to do that? What he will probably do to try to get rid of Councillor de Wit and tie others up is get the Liberal Party to call for preselection for those seats not held by the Liberal Party—that is, all the seats except Moggill.

He will tie up Councillor de Wit and other people like that, get them in place and then call for Moggill last so that he gets the safest Liberal seat in Queensland. With Caltabiano settled, Santoro will then try to get Councillor Tim Nicholls, his protege, to try to run in Clayfield. Councillor Tim has made it clear to people on the north side that he cannot stand the mundane issues of the city council. He hates dealing with barking dogs, rubbish and footpaths, and he has pleaded to get out of what he considers a dead-end career.

What I say to colleagues in Canberra, on both the Liberal and Labor sides, is: do not worry so much about your current political opponents; just watch the man who is coming down there. He has proved that he is prepared to do anything to get his way up here. He will backstab anyone he can to get up the greasy pole. George Brandis, watch out. Canberra, you won't know what's hit you.

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (12.30 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to make various amendments of Queensland statute law.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Ms Bligh, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (12.31 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2002 is essentially an omnibus bill that makes amendments to 53 acts, where the amendments are concise, of a minor nature and non-controversial. The bill is designed to enable legislation to be corrected and updated in circumstances where the preparation of a separate bill is not justified. This allows for the efficient operation of the parliament by amending a large number of acts via one bill. It also provides for quality up-to-date legislation, with the most effective use of time for all concerned, including departments. Honourable members may note that the explanatory notes to the bill are contained within the bill itself. This is for ease of reference and reiterates the minor nature of the proposed amendments.

The following amendments allow for retrospective commencement. Amendment 1 and amendment 3 to the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 are taken to commence on 8 September 1995 and 22 November 1995 respectively and correct minor errors. Amendment 1 corrects the commencement date of section 12, and amendment 3 corrects the expiry date of section 77 of the Statute Law (Minor Amendments) Act (No. 2) 1995.

Amendment 1 of the Community Services (Torres Strait) Act 1984 amends section 32 of the Community Service Legislation Amendment Act 2001, which inserted a new part 10, division 2. The division 2 heading that was inserted incorrectly described the amending act. As section 32 of the amending act commenced on 17 May 2002, it is necessary to make this amendment retrospective to that date.

The Public Records Act 2002 changed the title of the Libraries Act 1988 (previously Libraries and Archives Act 1988) and inserted section 89a into the Libraries Act 1988. Section 89a incorrectly omits to refer to the act by its previous title. Amendment 1 to the Libraries Act 1988 corrects this error and as section 89a commenced on 1 July 2002 it is necessary to make this amendment retrospective to this date.

Amendment 1 to the Racing and Betting Act 1980 updates references to the Interim Thoroughbred Racing Board. Section 28 of the Racing and Betting Act 1980 was inadvertently not amended by schedule 2 of the Racing and Betting Amendment Act (No. 2) 2001 (the amending act). As schedule 2 of the amending act commenced on 5 April 2002, it is necessary to make this amendment retrospective to that date.

Amendment 5 of the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996 (the act) clarifies the intent of section 590 of the act. Section 590 was intended to revive certain entitlements to seek damage for loss of consortium, which had been previously excluded under the act. Due to the use of a particular defined term, section 590 has not achieved its intent. Amendment 5 replaces the problematic term and is given retrospective commencement to 1 July 2001 to ensure entitlements are revived from the date of commencement of section 590. All other amendments take effect from the date of assent. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

WEAPONS AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (12.35 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Weapons Act 1990 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr McGrady, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (12.36 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Weapons and Another Act Amendment Bill 2002 will amend the Weapons Act 1990 and the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. The first objective of the bill will provide suitable amnesty provisions within the Weapons Act to enable the conduct of future amnesties, in accordance with a resolution of the Australasian Police Ministers Council.

Section 168B provides authority to enable the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service, with the approval of the minister, to declare an amnesty for firearms of particular types. The section provides the advertising requirements for the conduct of the amnesty. Future amnesties will have the following possible outcomes. A person may choose to—

(1) surrender an illegal firearm to a police officer or a licensed dealer for disposal, or
(2) register a firearm to an existing firearm licence, or
(3) apply for a firearm licence to lawfully possess that firearm.

During an amnesty, persons who voluntarily surrender for disposal illegal firearms or who apply for a firearm licence or to register firearms to an existing licence in their possession may do so without fear of prosecution for possession of the illegal firearm. An amnesty will not provide protection to any person possessing an illegal firearm other than surrendering it to a police officer, registering the firearm to an existing licence or applying for a firearm licence. A person surrendering a firearm during an amnesty will not be paid compensation for the surrender of the firearm.

Section 168C provides that a surrendered firearm becomes the property of the state and is taken to be forfeited to the state to be dealt with by the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service in accordance with the requirements of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act.

Renewal of licences

This bill removes the strict requirement to lodge a renewal application at least 14 days prior to the expiry date by changing the latest date for lodgment of an application for the renewal of a weapons licence to the date of the licence expiry. Consequently, the bill provides for the licence to remain valid, beyond the date of expiry, until the authorised officer determines the application. The authorised officer must do so within a maximum of 42 days after the date of the licence expiry. The authorised officer may then request further particulars from a person to resolve any identified issues prior to the expiry of a licence.

The bill inserts new subsections 18(8) and 18(9) into the Weapons Act in order to provide legislative links to the relevant sections of the act that apply to the renewal of a licence. In addition, these amendments also clarify that a person who is renewing a weapons licence does not need to complete another Weapons Act safety course prior to applying to have the person's licence renewed.

Alternative proof of weapons competency

The new section 10A(4) of the Weapons Act allows a person to provide as an alternative proof of weapons competency evidence that the person had possessed a valid firearms licence within a nominated period of six months. In addition to this new section 10A(4), this bill amends section 10—limitations on issue of licence—by removing the ambiguity associated with the section, by separating this section into the following specific sections.

(1) Section 10. This section provides the general limitations of the issue of a licence under this act.

(2) Section 10A. This section 10A provides the minimum requirements necessary for a person to have an adequate knowledge of safety practices for the use, storage and maintenance of a weapon, or category of weapon, the possession of which is to be authorised by a licence under this act.

(3) Section 10B. This section 10B outlines the things that the authorised officer must consider, when deciding whether a person is a fit and proper person, for the issue, renewal, suspension or revocation of a licence under this act.

These amendments have the effect of clearly providing what sections 10, 10A and 10B apply to across the Weapons Act. To effect this purpose, the bill makes suitable references to these sections in the relevant sections of the act.

Knives in schools

This bill amends section 51—possession of a knife without a reasonable excuse—of the Weapons Act to remove the uncertainty as to whether or not a school is a public place for the purpose of this section.

Drafting error

This bill corrects an identified drafting error within section 34A—definitions for part 3—of the Weapons Act. This enables the definitions within this section to be applied for part 3 of the act.

Weapons trafficking

This bill amends section 65 of the Weapons Act by removing the element 'to facilitate the commission of a crime' from the offence of trafficking. This element has precluded successful prosecution of persons who are identified as unlawfully trafficking weapons. The difficulties experienced with section 65 of the act are that to prove the crime investigating police must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the vendor acted with the knowledge that the firearm was being procured for the commission of a crime. This is very difficult without specific admissions from the offender or purchaser of the illegal firearms. This amendment will enable police to effectively institute proceedings against persons illegally trafficking in weapons.

New offence for licensed dealers or armourers making false or misleading entries into a weapons register

There are no provisions within the Weapons Act that enable police to commence proceedings against a dealer for an offence relating to making false or misleading entries in a weapons register. The lack of an appropriate offence provision is inconsistent with other provisions within the act which create offences for collectors and other like licensed persons making false or misleading entries into a weapons register. This bill remedies that difficulty by inserting a new offence provision to provide that a licensed dealer or armourer making a false or misleading entry in the weapons register knowing the entry to be false or misleading in a material particular commits an offence and is liable to a penalty of 40 penalty units.

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000

In addition to amending the Weapons Act, this bill also makes essential amendments to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 to establish a comprehensive regulatory regime within the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act to—

(1) allow the Police Service to have access to dangerous drugs for training purposes; and

(2) ensure that dangerous drugs in the possession of the Police Service for training purposes—

(a) are carefully handled to ensure their effectiveness for training purposes is not compromised; and

(b) are subject to strict tracking and accountability requirements.

These amendments to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act are essential to enable the Queensland Police Service to continue and expand a recently commenced a program, promised by the Beattie Labor government prior to the 2001 election, which has seen the introduction of drug detection dogs to policing in Queensland. To date, two handlers and one trainer have undergone an eight- week drug detector dog training course being conducted by the Australian Customs Service in Canberra. These dogs are trained in the detection of heroin, cocaine, amphetamine and ecstasy. To maintain the high skill level acquired in Canberra, it is crucial that high-quality dangerous drugs are obtained to aid in the ongoing training of these dogs.

The bill will enable the regulated consolidation and expansion of this excellent policing program through the creation of balanced legislative requirements that will ensure accountability relating to the use of dangerous drugs and the safety of persons associated with their use.

This bill identifies the functions and powers of a drug control officer, who has been appointed by the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service to administer and control batches of dangerous drugs, in accordance with the directions of the commissioner, that—

(1) are received into the possession of the Police Service for training purposes;
(2) are stored by the Police Service;
(3) are used for the purposes of training; and
(4) leave the possession of the Police Service.

The bill prescribes strict accountability mechanisms that require that a register must be kept and that regular independent audits must be conducted by an independent person and supervised by an independent police officer of at least the rank of inspector who is not directly associated with the keeping or use of dangerous drugs for training purposes. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Before calling the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, I would like to welcome to the public gallery parents, teachers and students from Iona College in the electorate of Lytton.

QUEENSLAND BUILDING SERVICES AUTHORITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (12.47 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Schwarten, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (12.48 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Today I present a bill that provides for the ongoing maintenance of proper standards within the building industry. This bill builds on the Better Building Industry reforms put in place by the then Minister for Fair Trading, Judy Spence, in October 1999. Minister Spence should be applauded

for those reforms and the platform they have given the industry to make it financially viable and fair to all participants.

One important aspect of those reforms is the five-year ban from the industry for persons who have had a financial failure as an individual or who have been a director, secretary or influential person in a company that has failed. The intention behind that ban was to remove from the industry people who have demonstrated their unsuitability.

This bill goes a number of steps further than the approach taken in 1999. This bill provides for life bans for second or subsequent financial failures, life bans for persons convicted of asset-stripping, bans of three years or life for persons who carry out grossly defective building work and bans of three years or life for those who consistently fail to comply with their contractual and payment obligations.

Let us take these issues in order. Under the current legislation, if a licensee takes advantage of bankruptcy laws or holds a position of influence in a licensed company that goes into administration, they face a five-year ban. For example, a licensed builder mismanages their business and enters into bankruptcy leaving debts unpaid. Unless this builder is able to convince the Queensland Building Services Authority (BSA) or on review, the Queensland Building Tribunal, that they took all reasonable steps to avoid the circumstances that resulted in the failure, then they will be banned for five years.

After this five-year ban or perhaps even during the course of the ban, the former builder sets up another company, of which he or she is a director or influential person. Again, this person fails to ensure the business remains solvent and the company proceeds into liquidation. After the commencement of the amended Act, such a second financial failure is likely to result in a ban for life, even if the second financial failure occurs outside of the building industry while the individual is serving the first ban of five years. This means no contractor's licence, no supervisor's licence, no directorship of a licensed company, no influential management position in a licensed company and no significant shareholding in a licensed company—a total ban from any position of influence in the industry.

Let me stress, the government has no desire to add to the suffering of people who have been unfortunate victims of circumstances. If the applicant is able to satisfy the BSA that they took all reasonable steps to avoid the circumstances that led to their financial failure, they may be categorised as a permitted individual and will not be banned.

However, an important aspect of running a business is ensuring that it remains solvent and that debts are paid on time. If people take advantage of bankruptcy laws to avoid paying their debts, they will face a ban from the industry. Of course, they may apply to the Queensland Tribunal for a review of the BSA's decision to ban them. Phoenix operations were once a blight on the building industry, leaving creditors out of pocket time and time again and causing hardship for thousands of subcontractors, suppliers and consumers. These strong measures are aimed at stopping phoenix operations for good but at the same time providing natural justice for the individuals concerned.

In addition, the bill also gives the BSA the power to ban a person from the industry for life if they are convicted of asset stripping under the Corporations Act. The bill provides that a successful prosecution under section 596, subsection (b) or (c) of the Corporations Act 2001 must have been obtained for a person to be banned from the industry for asset stripping. Once again this means no contractor's licence, no supervisor's licence, no directorship of a licensed company, no influential management position in a licensed company and no significant shareholding in a licensed company. I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my second reading into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Some Members familiar with the Commonwealth's limited success in relation to this offence may question the need for such provisions. However, with the Act as it currently stands, if a person convicted of fraudulently stripping assets from a company applied for a licence, the BSA would be required to expend considerable time and resources to substantiate a case that the applicant was not fit and proper to hold a licence. This amendment removes the need to conduct investigations into matters that have already been determined, usually by the Federal Court. The ban is mandatory and is for life.

A new range of bans is also introduced for carrying out grossly defective building work.

This Bill establishes a regime whereby the perpetrators of grossly defective building work, termed "tier 1" defective work will be banned from the industry.

The first time a contractor carries out this work after the commencement of the amended Act, they will face a three-year ban. The second time, if it is within 10 years of a notice for the previous ban, they will be banned for life. Once again, life in this case means life.

Tier 1 work is grossly defective building work that falls below the standard reasonably expected of a licensed contractor and is so defective that it adversely affects the structural performance of a building to the extent that a person could not reasonably be expected to use the building for the purpose for which it was built or it is likely to cause death or grievous bodily harm. Let me be clear. Contractors will not face bans for minor defective work. The contractors who will be banned for tier 1 work are those responsible for the buildings that are so unsafe or unserviceable that they have to be demolished or have major reconstruction.

When companies carry out this grossly defective work, the directors, secretary, nominee and any influential persons in the company will also face bans. While it is recognised that many of these individuals will have little to do with the physical carrying out of building work, they are responsible for the supervision policies and practices of the company. It is up to these individuals to make sure that adequate systems are in place to ensure proper building standards are met so that this type of grossly defective work is never carried out.

Of course, there are defences for these individuals. If they were not in a position to influence the conduct of the company's affairs in relation to the work, or they exercised reasonable diligence to ensure that the work carried out was not defective, then they will not be banned.

The maximum penalties for persons who fail to rectify defective work will be doubled, up to $30,000 for an individual and $150,000 for a company. These penalties also apply to all other disciplinary actions that may be taken against them.

Through a system of demerit points, bans will also be imposed on individuals who consistently fail to comply with their contractual and payment obligations. Demerit points will be allocated to licensees who are found to have breached their contractual obligations, for example, failing to put contracts or variations in writing or in the domestic sector, demanding progress payments before stages are completed, will earn 2 demerit points.

Ten demerit points will be allocated for unsatisfied judgment debts. Too often a court of competent jurisdiction orders payment but a practitioner fails to comply promptly.

Demerit points allocated to company licensees will transfer to directors, nominees and other influential persons, so that they will be held personally accountable for the behaviour of the company under their control.

Individuals who acquire the maximum of 30 or more demerit points over a 3-year period will face a ban from the industry for three years. On their return to the industry if they repeat their pattern of behaviour within 10 years of the first ban, they will be banned for life. As with other compliance measures, licensees will be able to review a decision to ban them in the Queensland Building Tribunal.

These strong measures are aimed at protecting the rights of subcontractors, consumers and suppliers and will target those operators who think they are above the law. Faced with a ban from the industry, even the most recalcitrant practitioners are likely to pay their debts.

The Bill also contains provisions that remedy an error in the delegation of powers for the Queensland Building Services Board to make certain policies. As the Board has now been in operation for some 10 years the provisions necessarily have to be of retrospective effect to remedy the error in delegation so as to not adversely affect the rights of any person.

One additional matter is retrospectively validated by these provisions. This matter relates to the issuing of "Non-Trading Licences" between November 1999 and May 2001 to builders who were no longer trading but who wished to retain a licence. These licenses were the subject of an invalid administrative action on the part of the BSA in that they did not have the power to grant a licence of this type.

The BSA has reviewed the matters the subject of these validating provisions and is confident that no person's rights will be adversely affected. Quite the reverse applies in that everyone in the industry has been acting on the assumption that the Board and BSA's actions were valid and for them to be anything other than valid would adversely affect every person in the industry.

The Bill also recognises that certain persons in the industry should not be required to be licensed. The Bill provides that persons who subcontract to a licensed trade contractor, for work within that licensee's scope, do not have to hold a licence themselves. This will result in less demand for restricted licences and allow people to be employed in the industry under supervision while they are gaining the necessary qualifications and experience to obtain a trade contractor's licence.

At the same time, the Bill creates an offence for building contractors to contract with persons who are not appropriately licensed. For example, a builder must not contract directly with an unlicensed carpenter. This is not an onerous requirement as a simple request to sight a current licence card or an enquiry to the BSA will soon put the matter beyond doubt.

In support of this requirement and the ongoing compliance requirements under the Act, the Bill also expands the powers of BSA inspectors to enter sites for the purposes of ensuring compliance with the Act.

Currently BSA inspectors must either receive the permission of the person in control of the building site or obtain a Queensland Building Tribunal warrant before they can enter a building site, even if just to interview people to see if they have a licence.

Under the provisions of the Bill, access will be at times when building work is being carried out and may be without the permission of those in control of the site. Access to dwelling houses or residences will be continue to be by permission or warrant only, with the exception of access to the property around the residence for the purposes of asking permission.

There are a number of other minor initiatives contained in the Bill only one of which I will outline at this time. The Bill also makes a minor amendment to the State Housing Act 1945 to alter the mechanism for calculating the rent on commercial leases under section 22B of the Act and to validate the past calculation and collection of rent by the Queensland Housing Commission for these leases.

Changes to the State Housing Act in 1998 allowed for a regulation to prescribe the percentage of unimproved land value on which rent is calculated for commercial leases. Prior to the amendment the prescribed percentage was set by order in council. The 1998 regulation did not make provision for the prescribed percentage but the Commission continued to charge rent at the rate of 10 percent based on the repealed order in council. The amendment validates this past calculation and collection of rent and provides that in future rent on these commercial leases will be assessed at 10 percent of unimproved land value unless otherwise prescribed by regulation.

Some Members may be concerned at the tough measures proposed in this Bill. Life bans for financial failures. Life bans for asset stripping. Three year and life bans for grossly defective work. Three year and life bans for breaching contractual and payment requirements. These are tough measures and I make no apology for that. Tough decisions have had to be made and I am proud that this Government is making those decisions.

I would urge Members and anyone who has an interest in ensuring that the building industry is populated with competent, honest and financially sound individuals, to join with the Government and support this Bill and the initiatives contained in it.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE BILL

Hon. N. I. CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Planning) (12.53 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act about plumbing and drainage, the licensing of plumbers and drainers, on-site sewerage facilities, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mrs Nita Cunningham, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. N. I. CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Planning) (12.53 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The bill introduces new plumbing and drainage legislation, makes changes to the private building certification system, and implements recommendations from the National Competition Policy reviews into the Building Act 1975 and the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949. Firstly, the bill repeals the outdated Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949 and replaces it with a modern legislative framework for plumbing and drainage. This includes new provisions relating to the licensing of plumbers and drainers, and the approval of plumbing and drainage works, including on-site sewerage treatment facilities. In doing so, the bill provides for increased accountability for the actions of local government and better protection of the rights of individuals through more transparent decision-making and improved appeal processes.

Secondly, the bill amends the Building Act 1975 and Integrated Planning Act 1997 to improve the performance of the private building certification system. The changes will increase minimum competency standards for private certifiers, provide a far more effective disciplinary system for dealing with complaints, and increase powers to impose penalties and orders. Thirdly, the bill amends the Integrated Planning Act 1997 and the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2001 to extend certain transitional arrangements and address some minor consequential matters.

Fourthly, the bill transfers to the Local Government Act 1993 provisions relating to the control of stormwater drainage that were previously dealt with under the Sewerage and Water Supply Act. Further amendments to the Local Government Act 1993 provide for fairer competition between local governments and private certifiers in providing building certification services. This will complement amendments to the Building Act relating to the private certification system. Lastly, the bill transfers to the Water Act 2000 certain provisions relevant to water and sewerage service providers that were previously dealt with under the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949.

The bill modernises the regulation of plumbing and drainage in this state and makes major improvements to the private building certification system. In addition it will improve public confidence in the local government system where it interacts with these activities. I will outline the

components of the bill in the order in which they are presented. The proposed Plumbing and Drainage Act will replace the existing Sewerage and Water Supply Act. Like the Sewerage and Water Supply Act, its purpose is to protect the environment, public heath and safety through the licensing of plumbers and drainers; the approval and inspection of plumbing and drainage work by local government; and providing for regulations containing the technical standards for plumbing and drainage. Existing grey areas in the legislation have been clarified. All plumbing and drainage work, by governments, private persons or companies anywhere in Queensland, must comply with the technical requirements that will be in regulations.

The bill implements the recommendations of the National Competition Policy review of the Sewerage and Water Supply Act by retaining local government approvals and inspections of plumbing and drainage work. The bill clarifies responsibilities where work takes place on land not under local government control. This is where land is under the control of another entity such as a port authority or is not part of any local government area. This applies to developments extending below the high water mark, such as piers or wharves.

In these cases, the entity responsible for the land is also responsible for ensuring that plumbing and drainage work complies with the relevant technical standards. These entities can ask the local government to undertake the assessment and inspection of plumbing and drainage work on its behalf. Local governments will continue to be responsible for approving and inspecting plumbing work. The compliance assessment process introduced under the bill will provide greater certainty and consistency in decision making for the community and the plumbing industry.

In addition, local governments will continue to be able to determine which work requires the prior approval of plans before work commences, and which work can be approved on-site. This will allow local governments to offer the plumbing industry a highly efficient approval service, particularly for straightforward work. There will still be a statutory body licensing plumbers and drainers, renamed the Plumbers and Drainers Board. The appointment and procedures for the board will be updated and will comply with modern standards of accountability. Members of the board will continue to represent relevant organisations, such as the plumbing industry, the relevant plumbing union, local government and relevant state departments. A new member representing consumer interests will be added to the board. I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Board will issue plumbers and drainers with occupational licences, and discipline those not meeting standards or working without holding the relevant licence.

However, appeals against decisions of the Board on a licensing matter will no longer be heard by me, but by the Queensland Building Tribunal.

The categories of licences for plumbers and drainers have been rationalised from a multitude of different types of licences. The Bill provides for a licence to be endorsed with additional competencies or the licensee restricted to specific works.

Provisional licences provide for persons who do not yet have the full competencies to work alone, and require the supervision of a licensed person.

Industry concerns about declining standards due to persons undertaking plumbing work without obtaining approvals or holding the relevant licence will be addressed by changes to the Plumbers and Drainers Board. The Board is being provided with the powers and the funds to be more active in disciplining and prosecuting in the industry.

Amendments to the Building Act and Integrated Planning Act will improve the performance of the private building certification system.

Since becoming Minister for Local Government and Planning, I have closely scrutinised the private certification system, and listened to the concerns of local government, certifiers and the community. While private certification has provided the public with faster building approvals, it has also brought with it a number of other problems that need to be resolved.

A key concern that is often raised is whether the responsibility for protecting the public interest, which existed under the previous local government building approval system, is still there. The Bill makes changes to the Building Act and Integrated Planning Act to address this problem, along with a range of other matters arising from an extensive review of the building certification system.

Mr Speaker, the Bill will ensure the private building certification system operates to the highest possible standards, and that public interests are properly protected.

One of the key criticisms of the system has been the limited powers of the Building Services Authority to deal with complaints against private certifiers. Therefore, the Bill provides a more efficient and effective disciplinary system for building certifiers by transferring to the Queensland Building Tribunal the authority to decide complaints of professional misconduct.

Consumers will have better protection from faulty work as the Bill provides the Building Services Authority and Queensland Building Tribunal with increased powers to make orders requiring a certifier to bring work into compliance with the legislation. If necessary, the Building Tribunal will also be able to impose penalties.

To address council concerns about certifiers ignoring town planning requirements, the Bill proposes two important changes.

Firstly, councils will be able to take complaints about private certifiers directly to the Queensland Building Tribunal, instead of relying on the Building Services Authority to fight their case. This will significantly streamline the current process.

And secondly, it appears that some private certifiers do not fully understand their legislative responsibilities in respect of having to ensure the council has issued all necessary planning approvals before issuing a building approval.

Therefore compliance with planning schemes will be improved by increasing planning competency requirements for building certifiers who issue building approvals.

Mr Speaker, recent changes to the Integrated Planning Act also enable councils to apply to the Court to revoke invalid approvals issued by a certifier.

To address concerns by members of the public that certifiers may not be acting in the public interest, the Bill will increase accountability requirements by ensuring owners are aware that a private certifier has been engaged by the builder to approve their building work.

A further change to address conflicts between local governments and private building certifiers is addressed in proposed amendments to the Local Government Act that I will outline later in my speech.

To address concerns about the safety of young children, the Bill imposes more stringent requirements for inspecting swimming pool fencing. Under the changes, a pool cannot be filled until the fencing has been inspected and approved.

In addition, the Bill clarifies that all pool fencing, whether built before or after the commencement of pool fencing legislation in 1991, must be maintained to the standard required for that fencing.

Proposed amendments to the Integrated Planning Act 1997 and Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2001 extend certain transitional arrangements and address some minor consequential matters.

These include three minor amendments to the Integrated Planning Act all of which are designed to extend the effect of transitional arrangements.

Amendments are needed to extend certain sunset clauses because provisions in the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2001 that will provide for new charging and cost recovery arrangements are not yet in force.

These amendments will allow local governments to continue to make policies about infrastructure contributions and to levy infrastructure contributions until the relevant changes to the Integrated Planning Act are in force.

Another amendment is to continue the operation of the Local Government (Robina Central Planning Agreement) Act 1992 that was to have terminated in March 2003 and be replaced by provisions in the Integrated Planning Act. It has become apparent that a better solution is to continue the Local Government (Robina Central Planning Agreement) Act in force, but make some amendments for it to operate effectively under the Integrated Planning Act.

Removing the sunset clause will allow time for these amendments to be made.

Amendments to the Local Government Act also implement recommendations from the National Competition Policy Review of the Building Act. The key recommendation was to address the conflicts of interest that arise because local governments provide building certification services in competition with private certifiers, as well as undertaking regulatory functions on which private certifiers rely.

The Bill will provide for an independent process to hear complaints from private certifiers that local governments are competing unfairly. This complaints process already applies to certain other local government business activities.

These requirements however, will not apply to all local governments, but only those identified in a regulation. This will be the local governments where there is sufficient development happening for there to be real market competition for building certification services.

I expect that this will be the larger local governments, mostly in south east Queensland and major provincial centres, where there is a high level of development occurring.

Lastly, proposed amendments to the Water Act 2000 will transfer to it, provisions relevant to service providers from subordinate legislation under the Sewerage and Water Supply Act.

Mr Speaker, to conclude, there has been extensive consultation with local government, and the building and plumbing industry in the development of this Bill. This includes the public release of draft National Competition Policy reviews of the Building Act and Sewerage and Water Supply Act for comment, and the establishment of local government and industry working groups to advise on the development of the legislation.

In addition, the proposed changes to the private building certification system address the concerns raised in the Local Government Association of Queensland's own review into the building certification system.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

STATUTORY BODIES FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (2.30 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Mackenroth, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (2.31 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Amendment Bill 2002 makes a number of clarifying and technical amendments to the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982—the SBFA Act. In particular, the amendments will—

clarify the application of part 7 division 3 and part 2B;

amend the definition of 'financial arrangement';

update references to Queensland Investment Corporation and Queensland Treasury Corporation investment products contained in part 6;

amend part 9 division 2 to allow for conditions to be attached to general approvals; and

make some minor technical amendments.

I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of the speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The main thrust of the amendments is to ensure there is adequate regulatory control over some of the higher risk financial arrangements that statutory bodies may enter under part 7 division 3 of the SBFA Act. There has been uncertainty in its application, resulting from differing legal opinions on whether there is a mandatory approval requirement in the SBFA Act for part 7, division 3. The amendments will overcome this uncertainty with respect to high risk arrangements that will now be defined as type 1 financial arrangements.

A type 1 financial arrangement includes forming corporations, entering into joint ventures, and acquiring shares. For these types of arrangements, and any others listed as a type 1 financial arrangement, the prior approval of the Treasurer will be required unless a statutory body has an express power in its authorising Act or another Act to undertake this type of arrangement. The amendments to part 7 division 3 and part 2B will clarify the position that a statutory body cannot rely on its general competence powers to undertake these types of arrangements but, will not impact on any express powers contained in the statutory body's authorising Act.

There will of course be some cases where type 1 financial arrangements may be a feature of the general business activities of a statutory body. In appropriate cases, these will be covered by the provision of general approvals to avoid the need for regular business functions to require a specific approval in each instance.

The remaining types of financial arrangements that previously were dealt with under part 7 division 3 are now called type 2 financial arrangements and will be dealt with under a new part 7A. Statutory bodies will usually have sufficient general competence powers to enter type 2 financial arrangements, however if this is not the case they can still seek the Treasurer's approval under part 7A, if required. This allows a statutory body a sufficient degree of flexibility to undertake some of the more general types of financial arrangements that form part of its day to day business functions, without imposing a mandatory approval requirement.

The changes to the Queensland Investment Corporation and Queensland Treasury Corporation investment products listed in the SBFA Act are necessary as there have been name and product changes made since 1996 when they were first listed. The amendment to the SBFA Act allows a regulation to prescribe the relevant investment products for Queensland Investment Corporation and Queensland Treasury Corporation. There is no impact on what statutory bodies can invest in—rather this amendment will allow future product developments by Queensland Investment Corporation and Queensland Treasury Corporation to be more readily dealt with by regulation.

The Treasurer's power to issue general and specific approvals is contained in part 9 of the SBFA Act. Currently it is clear that specific approvals may be given subject to conditions, but the SBFA Act is silent in respect to general approvals. The amendment to part 9, division 2 is to ensure the Treasurer can issue general approvals subject to conditions, as was always intended.

The remaining amendments are of a technical nature, or required as a result of the changes to part 7 and the definition of financial arrangement.

The Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Amendment Bill 2002 has been drafted with the intention of providing certainty in the management and regulation of certain financial powers of statutory bodies in this State, whilst still allowing statutory bodies to maintain some flexibility to undertake their general business functions.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Horan, adjourned.

TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 21 August (see p. 3015).

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.32 p.m.): The Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 has a number of objectives and covers a number of different acts. It is mainly designed to make a number of technical amendments to legislation administered by the Treasury Department. In particular, there are some changes to the Payroll Tax Act and the Electricity Act which do, we believe, involve some changes in government policy.

The amendments to the Electricity Act 1994 retrospectively validate existing commercial arrangements entered into by bodies corporate for the on-selling of electricity to residents. However, the changes have generally been supported by industry stakeholders in the interests of commercial certainty. It is argued by the government that the changes will not adversely impact on existing contractual arrangements between bodies corporate, retailers and consumers.

Some concerns have been expressed by the Business Regulation Reform Unit in relation to some of the amendments that have been proposed to the Gas Act in this bill. However, the government has stated that all parties have been consulted and are generally in agreement with the changes. The Treasury Department, though, is in some disagreement with the BRRU. The Treasury Department states that the current government policy has not been changed.

Mr Mackenroth: Treasury would be right. You've been in government; you'd know that.

Mr HORAN: I might discuss that with the minister's colleague Mr Barton, who is responsible for the Business Regulation Review Unit.

Mr Mackenroth: At the end of the day, they are always right.

Mr HORAN: The member is not saying there is financial blackmail? The proposed changes involving the Duties Act 2001 are designed to strengthen the revenue base by extending dutiable vesting of property to include vesting under any legislation or court order. However, these transactions were previously dutiable under the old Stamp Act, the Stamp Act 1894. Therefore, there is ostensibly no extra revenue to be gained from these particular changes.

In relation to the Electricity Act 1994, one of the two major changes proposed under this act concerns the on-selling arrangements for electricity by bodies corporate to retailers and consumers. Since the early 1990s, the governments of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory have been creating a national electricity market, or NEM. In 1996, three intergovernmental agreements were signed by the states in preparation for the establishment of the NEM. The NEM commenced in the states on 13 December 1998, although Queensland did not become physically connected to the main New South Wales transmission system until 14 February 2001. That was the interconnector line.

The Queensland electricity industry was restructured on 1 July 1997 to prepare the industry for the NEM. The first step was splitting the then single government owned generation corporation into three competing generation corporations called CS Energy, Tarong Energy and Stanwell Corporation. Retail electricity was also separated from the distribution business. Two government owned retail corporations were created—Energex Retail and Ergon Energy Retail. Further restructuring continued on 16 February 1999. Six regional distribution corporations were amalgamated into a single distributor corporation—Ergon Energy—with Ergon Energy Retail being a subsidiary.

The retail competition in Queensland under the NEM introduced contestability in retail supply and has been phased in for some electricity users since the commencement of that NEM. The process has happened in a number of stages. Stage 1 was effective from 29 March 1998 and involved electricity usage of more than 20 gigawatt hours per annum, or electricity bills of more than $2.3 million per annum. The second stage became effective from 1 October 1998 and involved electricity usage of more than four gigawatt hours per annum, or electricity bills of more than $250,000 per annum. This mainly applied to large factories, office buildings, shopping centres and so on. The third stage became effective on 1 July 1999 and involved electricity usage of more than 250 megawatt hours, or electricity bills of more than $20,000 per annum. Generally speaking, this would be small to medium retail and commercial outlets, for example, a hot chicken store. Generally, stage 3 is where bodies corporate fit in, that is, 200 megawatt hours per year, or electricity bills of more than $20,000 per annum.

Stage 4 was to provide full retail contestability, but this is not going to be implemented in Queensland. Stage 4 would have been all of the households. The government decided not to

introduce full retail contestability in light of a cost-benefit analysis done which showed significant detriment for regional consumers. We supported that decision because it means the equalisation of power throughout Queensland. The National Party wants to see everybody in the state, regardless of where they live, getting a fair and equitable charge for their electricity.

Mr Mackenroth: Did you see the benefits of retail competition in South Australia a couple of weeks ago?

Mr HORAN: No, I did not.

Mr Mackenroth: Their bills went up by 25 per cent. They are very lucky to have—

Mr HORAN: A Labor government!

Mr Mackenroth: No, no, no.

Mr HORAN: They have got a Labor government down there which has just whacked up the bills. I think the Queensland Labor government was lucky to have had some good advice from the National Party. It is aware that our position has always been to support the equitable charging and sharing of electricity costs around the state. We certainly agreed with not bringing in that final process, which would have seen some increased charges for different parts of the state and would have been quite inequitable.

The stage 3 implementation of retail contestability has meant that small operators such as a typical hot chicken store or, as in this bill, bodies corporate, are of sufficient size to be considered contestable. The on-selling of electricity by bodies corporate is already a reality in the Queensland market, and the proposed changes will increase the commercial certainty of these contracts by validating their existence in the market and what they are currently doing.

Another part of this bill deals with changes to energy arbitrators. The government proposes to increase the number of energy arbitrators in the state. These are the people responsible for dealing with disputes between electricity entities and their customers. There are currently seven of these arbitrators and the increase is designed to place more arbitrators around the state. The changes are also designed to help deal with the workload currently being faced by the energy arbitrators.

In this House in November 2001 I said that the opposition could not support the Electricity Amendment Bill that was currently before the House because it did not accept the concept of an electricity ombudsman to serve the interests of the consumers. That bill went through and we now have the system of arbitrators. That is history; it is in place. This current bill is looking at providing additional arbitrators.

The Energy Consumer Protection Office—ECPO—that was set up under the legislation I referred to is supposed to provide effective and accessible dispute resolution processes to assist Queensland electricity customers who have a dispute with their particular electricity entity. The ECPO offers a process of having complaints investigated, mediated and resolved by an independent third party if Queensland electricity customers are not satisfied with the response they receive from their electricity entity. The customer must initially contact the entity concerned in an attempt to resolve the complaint before they can access that particular consumer protection scheme. If the complaint is not able to be successfully resolved the customer can then approach the ECPO to have the complaint investigated and/or mediated by a third party. If that does not reach an outcome or a result satisfactory to the customer the matter can be referred by the regulator to the independent arbitrator which is part of this bill. These independent arbitrators have authority to make decisions and orders which are binding on the electricity industry. Common complaints that are dealt with by the office include disconnection due to non-payment, interruptions to supply, claims for damages due to interruptions to supply, the onselling of electricity—one of the items dealt with in this bill—and vegetation control.

The Gas Act 1965 is concerned with this bill. The changes to the Gas Act are designed to pave the way for the introduction of gas retail contestability. In 1997, the state government, along with all other states, committed itself to implementing the national access regime and undertaking reforms necessary to promote gas market competition. The agreement commits the states to implementing timetables for introducing gas retail competition until the entire gas retail market is open to competition—that is, full retail gas contestability. A non-contestable consumer must buy their gas from the local gas franchise in which the customer resides. Queensland customers consuming at least 100 terajoules per annum became contestable on 1 July 2001. Full retail contestability is due to commence on 1 January 2003 subject to a cost benefit analysis.

Large scale industrial users of gas have always been contestable in Queensland. The Queensland gas market is characterised by a small number of larger users which account for the bulk of gas usage in Queensland. This small group accounts for about 82 per cent of the annual gas demand in this state. Non-contestable consumers account for about 11 per cent of the market for gas.

The impetus for the present changes is that effective operational procedures need to be in place before full retail contestability is put in place. Again, the BRRU believes that these changes to the Gas Act should not be implemented until a cost benefit study has been carried out into the introduction of full retail contestability in the gas industry. The BRRU also believes that the mechanism being proposed for effecting changes to the current contestability arrangements could undermine the principal legislation that would be developed in the event of full retail contestability being introduced.

Again, the Treasury and BRRU are in disagreement over this matter. The Treasury states that current government policy is not being changed. The full implementation of full retail contestability in the gas industry will be subjected to cost-benefit analysis and ultimately the contestability arrangements that will be enacted by regulation will be in accordance with the Gas Act and will accord with government policy, and therefore, according to Treasury, there will be no undermining of government policy. I would ask the minister to give us some explanation during his reply regarding the Treasury Department's view and the view of the BRRU in this particular matter.

Mr Mackenroth: Where are you getting the BRRU view from?

Mr HORAN: We picked it up in research. They believe that the mechanism being proposed to effect changes could undermine the principal legislation that would be developed in the event of full retail contestability being introduced.

The changes to the Payroll Tax Act, according to the Treasurer, are necessary because the Payroll Tax Act currently contains an exemption for wages paid to trainees and apprentices. The exemption will not apply to wages paid to trainees who are existing workers, subject to limited exemptions, such as where the employee progresses from Certificate II to a Certificate III traineeship in the same training package or occupation stream. In the Treasurer's words, the amendment will not impact on wages paid to trainees under an existing training contract which started prior to the commencement of the amendments. The other change seeks to ensure that the exemption will still apply in the event of a change of ownership of a business.

There are currently in Queensland 6,479 employees classified as existing workers who commenced traineeships in Queensland in the 2001-02 financial year. The proposed changes will not affect these trainees as they commenced their traineeships after the commencement of the act. The total number of traineeship commencements up until September was 33,302.

Since the announcement of the proposed changes a number of concerns have been raised by the opposition, and particularly the member for Warrego, who has issued a press release entitled ‘Group training schemes set to be hit by state government tax creep’. The press release stated—

... group training schemes such as Golden West Group Training who manage and administer 600 apprentices and traineeships in almost every community from Toowoomba to Longreach, could be paying out thousands of dollars extra each month if the payroll tax exemption is moved. Group training schemes could be severely disadvantaged as most of their host employers are small businesses, which would already be exempt from payroll tax by virtue of the $850,000 exemption threshold. However when group schemes consolidate all those trainee wages they may not be exempt once the Beattie government passes this legislation.

I have myself also expressed serious concerns about the proposed changes in a press release in September entitled 'Not so smart tax creep snares workplace trainees'. In that I stated that Queensland businesses will be discouraged from training their employees under the Beattie government's plans to introduce another new tax. This new tax directly attacks those employers who will be doing the right thing by attempting to train up and upskill their existing staff. It is a deceitful move by the Beattie government which promised people that there would be no new taxes, fees or charges. It is a move by the government to cast the payroll tax net even further after the changes to the tax net were already introduced in relation to sweeping superannuation, fringe benefits and eligible termination payments into the net over the past two years. Just recently we saw where the grossed-up value of fringe benefits were taken into the payroll tax net to provide that substantial increase in payroll tax that is being paid into government coffers.

There is an expectation that the increase in payroll tax paid in this financial year will be of the order of $100 million. No doubt a larger part of that is due to the fact that the government

increased the net two years ago by sweeping in superannuation, and sweeping in the grossed-up benefit of fringe benefit taxes in the last financial year.

In a briefing from the Treasury Department—and I thank it for the briefing provided to my staff regarding the changes—we were advised that the changes were designed to address a problem with the integrity of training schemes. It has become apparent that some employers will sack staff on a Friday and employ them again on the Monday as a trainee to attract the subsidy, or the potential exists for that to happen. I do not know whether or not that is a widespread practice, but the potential certainly exists for that to happen. I would ask the Treasurer to provide the House with information on that issue when he sums the debate up—that is, how often this happens. We would like to see some consistency, and it would also be interesting to know what the Minister for Training thinks about this matter.

Mr Foley: I support the legislation, because I think it will help.

Mr HORAN: It would be nice to see the minister standing up for trainees and to ensure that we do everything we possibly can to increase the number of traineeships. It is a wonderful system and provides flexibility for those trainees who would not be able to get a four- or five-year apprenticeship but are able to move from one employer to another during the training process.

This bill also amends the Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997. The proposed changes have two major aspects. The first is to allow for the formation of a panel of associate members to improve the ability of the commission to investigate, mediate and arbitrate disputes in a timely manner. Association members were previously involved in the investigation, mediation and arbitration of disputes. However, in the past they were individually appointed by the chairman for specific tasks only. The second limb of the changes deals with the definition of the 'state' under the act. These changes signal a move by the government to ensure that there is no ability of the commission to make determinative decisions regarding public water suppliers.

The Queensland Competition Authority was established by the Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997. The creation of the QCA arose out of a series of Council of Australian Government agreements which aimed to forge a national approach to the implementation of competition policy. The QCA is an independent statutory authority consisting of members appointed by the Governor in Council. While the authority is subject to the written directions of the ministers in performing its functions, it is not subject to government direction in relation to the conduct of investigations, reports or access to services.

The changes to the Queensland Treasury Corporation Act, which are incorporated in this bill, are designed to clarify a number of provisions with respect to financial arrangements entered into by the QTC or an affiliate. The definition of an affiliate is contained in the act and is specified as meaning any company, partnership or any other association or body of persons, whether corporate or unincorporated, in which the corporation has a controlling interest or which the corporation is directly or indirectly in a position to control. The first amendment clarifies that the clause applies to an affiliate as well as to the corporation. The section deals with the situation where the corporation or affiliate gives an undertaking, covenant, promise, guarantee or indemnity to make any payment irrespective of any occurrence that may negate the ability of the corporation or affiliate to make the payment at law. It will be enforceable against the corporation or affiliate despite the operation of any act or rule of law to the contrary. There are a number of other clauses that I will ask some questions on during the committee stage of the debate. I do not particularly want to go over those now because I will be doing that in debate on the clauses.

Finally, there are also amendments dealing with the Taxation Administration Act. These deal with the situation where a taxpayer has incurred a penalty tax and is liable for interest on that amount. The amendment will basically read that the commissioner is not required to give an assessment notice if after the payment is received by the commissioner for the taxpayer's liability the taxpayer no longer has a liability. The change is designed to increase administrative efficiencies at no extra cost to the taxpayer. The opposition is in agreement with most of this bill. Depending upon the responses received from the Treasurer, we will be considering an amendment in relation to the payroll tax amendment. I will come to that when we debate the clauses.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (2.54 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to support the Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill before the House. When treasury bills come to the House, I find it a challenge to find a way to translate them so they are of interest to people in the suburbs of Cairns. That is in fact a difficult ask, because many of the amendments contained within this bill are technical changes that will not have a dramatic or significant effect on the lives of most people

in the suburbs of Brisbane or Cairns. This bill contains amendments to the Taxation Administration Act 2001, the Queensland Treasury Corporation Act 1988, the Gas Act, the Duties Act and also the Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997. I recognise these changes to these acts but do not particularly wish to discuss them. The one I do wish to discuss is the most important provision in the bill to me, and that is the changes being made to the Payroll Tax Act 1971 in relation to the exemption for trainees and apprentices.

I disagree entirely with the words of the previous speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, because I am sorry to say that I have had experience of the misuse of traineeships by some employers in Cairns finding a loophole. I suppose to some extent we expect that from Australian businesspeople when it comes to their paying taxes and duties to governments at all levels. It became known around Cairns that a number of employers were shifting existing employees to traineeships in order to avoid paying payroll tax. That is not a legitimate use at all of traineeship money and it is not at all appropriate in terms of payroll tax. We have very fair rates of payroll tax. Whether or not employers agree, it is not appropriate to use this sidestep as a way of avoiding it.

This has a more serious impact than simply sidestepping to avoid paying appropriate duties. The amount of traineeship money available should be limited to those who really need it and who are truly the ones at which it is targeted. That is where this bill is indeed relevant to the people in the suburbs of Cairns, particularly the western suburbs. In those suburbs too many people are unemployed and a good proportion of these people admit that, as much as anything else, the reason for that is that their educational years were not very successful. They did not work hard at school. They did not find the way to a good education. They have no post-high school qualifications or training and that leaves them with very limited choices in the job market. The tremendous success of traineeships particularly over the last four years means that competition for traineeships is considerably high. It is right and appropriate that we should close off the loopholes and ensure that traineeships are available to the right people and not used by employers for existing employees.

There is another small matter in the bill to which I want to draw attention, as I have had recent experience of this myself—that is, an amendment the bill makes to the Taxation Administration Act 2001. The amendment will remove the commissioner's obligation when remitting assessed interest by way of an assessment to issue a notice to the taxpayer where, after any remission and application of payments received, there is no unpaid amount for an instrument or transaction. This will no doubt improve administrative efficiency, but it will also reduce the annoyance of those who might be in the position of receiving a purposelessness notice. My own experience of this was only a month ago and came from the Taxation Office in the form of six separate letters, each containing a form telling me that I did not need to pay it any GST.

These six letters were for six different months, so I suppose the obligation of the Taxation Commissioner had been backed up for some time and was running behind. Somehow the computer in his department had spat out the letters all at once. Not being as skilled as others in the ways of the administration of the GST, I did what many others would do and checked with my accountant as to whether this really meant what it appeared to mean—that is, there was no business between us and there was nothing to do and that I did not owe it anything and it was not giving me anything either. Rather, it was just six letters at taxpayers' expense to no benefit, and that indeed is what my accountant confirmed.

In a small way, therefore, I am pleased for all of those people around Queensland who might have, through an obligation that was not well spelt out in the legislation prior to this date, got those purposeless sorts of letters under the Taxation Administration Act. They will no longer when of course this legislation passes through the House. I am pleased indeed to support it.

Mr RODGERS (Burdekin—ALP) (3.00 p.m.): I rise today to speak to the Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. The bill generally deals with technical changes to a number of Treasury acts. One part that is of interest to me is the Pay-roll Tax Act 1971, the amendments to which will ensure the proper utilisation of payroll tax exemptions for trainees and preserve the benefits for Queensland businesses.

The Pay-roll Tax Act 1971 also currently contains an exemption for wages paid to apprentices and trainees, which is increasingly being exploited by employers converting existing employees to trainees. In other words, employers are simply converting existing employees, sometimes en masse, to trainee classifications without ever actually changing any of their employment conditions.

To prevent the exemption from being abused, the proposed amendment will align the exemption more closely with the circumstances in which traineeships attract state government financial assistance from the Department of Employment and Training. The amended exemption will however allow exemption to apply to wages paid to trainees who are existing workers in certain circumstances, such as where an employee progresses from a Certificate II to Certificate III traineeship in the same qualification stream. Also, the amendment will not impact on wages paid to trainees who enter into a trainee contract prior to the amendment's commencement.

The revenue impact of this change cannot be accurately estimated, as exempt wages are not included in payroll tax returns. Therefore, the payroll tax revenue forgone as a result of employers converting existing employees to traineeships cannot be determined. The amendments in no way change the current payroll tax exemption for apprentices or existing trainees.

Under this government, payroll tax has been progressively reduced by five per cent to 4.75 per cent. With the reduction of this rate to 4.75 per cent from 1 July this year, Queensland has maintained the lowest payroll tax rate of any state or territory. Further, an employer paying taxable wages of less than $850,000 per annum is not liable for payroll tax. This is the highest exemption threshold of any mainland state, ensuring that the vast majority of Queensland businesses never have to pay payroll tax. To keep Queensland the low-tax state we need to ensure that our tax exemptions are applied to those intended with clear and unambiguous legislation. This bill achieves that measure for payroll tax.

Apart from the amendments to the Pay-roll Tax Act 1971, the proposed amendments are generally of a technical nature and do not include any significant policy changes. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Treasurer and his staff on the changes they will make to this act. It makes it easier to understand and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (3.05 p.m.): The purpose of this bill is to make a number of technical changes to acts administered by the Treasury Department. I wish to make mention of the amendments to the Electricity Act 1994 which have two purposes: firstly, to allow for more than seven energy arbitrators who deal with disputes between electricity entities and their customers to be appointed by the regulator, given the need for arbitrators to be situated throughout the state and the workload of persons appointed as arbitrators; and, secondly, to validate existing arrangements for on-selling electricity by bodies corporate to unit occupiers to provide commercial certainty with response to deficiencies recently identified in the Electricity Act 1994 and the Electricity Regulation 1994.

In speaking about electricity and funding changes by this government, I must make mention of my officiating on behalf of the Treasurer at the turning on of the lights at the Kawana Waters Bowls Club on 14 October 2002. The lighting was installed around the club's three lawn bowls greens with financial assistance from the state government. It contributed $23,100 towards the total project cost of over $38,000. The lighting has made the bowling greens safer and more comfortable to play on during the summer months and will significantly benefit a large proportion of older adults. The club has some 3,300 members and caters to men's, ladies' and mixed competitions, and allows schools to use the facility.

Over the last two years 31 minor facilities program projects have been approved in the Sunshine Coast local government areas of Maroochy shire, Noosa shire and Caloundra city. This represents a total investment of over $1 million by the state in sport and recreation infrastructure. Mr Kevin Duffy, chairman of the board of the Kawana Waters Bowls Club, was the master of ceremonies. Although I was invited to stay and participate in a game of bowls under the lights following the opening ceremony, I bowled only three down. I was very pleased with my beginner's luck, so to speak, but due to another electorate commitment at Neighbourhood Watch I needed to leave.

I must also make mention that under this Treasurer and the Beattie Labor government we have seen the Queensland unemployment rate drop again. Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed that Queensland's trend unemployment rate dropped to 7.1 per cent last month. I believe this is the lowest rate recorded in Queensland since 1990. These figures are a great boost for job seekers and prove that the job creation policies put in place by this Beattie Labor government are paying off.

Jobs have always been our No. 1 priority. Despite tough national and international economic conditions, we have managed to create an environment in the Smart State that fosters hard work and innovation and is attractive to business. These figures were another endorsement of the

overall health of the Queensland economy. Earlier, the ANZ Job Advertisement Series showed that the number of job ads in Queensland rose by 25.1 per cent during the previous 12 months—the best job prospects of any state or territory in Australia. In addition, in its *Budget Monitor* of all states and territories Access Economics gave our economy a tick and stated—

We do think an investment surge has started and Queensland is in the forefront of it.

I believe we should be happy with these figures, but we should not be satisfied until every Queenslander who wants a job has a job.

Members of this House should acknowledge that the Pay-roll Tax Act 1971 currently contains an exemption for wages paid to apprentices and trainees. The amendments will more closely align the exemption with the circumstances in which trainees attract state government financial assistance from the Department of Employment and Training.

I commend the minister, who is in the House at the moment, for the dedicated work he and his parliamentary secretary have done in ensuring that apprenticeships and traineeships right across Queensland continue to increase, giving our youth an opportunity to enter into the work force and receive good training. A Smart State is one in which we can continue to push for tertiary education. Not everyone will have the opportunity to go on to tertiary education, and we always will need tradesmen.

The amendment will not impact on wages paid to trainees on an existing trainee contract started prior to the amendment's commencement. The amendment to the Taxation Administration Act 2001 will remove the commissioner's obligation when remitting assessed interest by way of an assessment to issue a notice to the taxpayer where, after any remission and application of payments received, there is no unpaid amount for an instrument or transaction. This will improve administrative efficiency without adversely impacting on the taxpayer. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (3.09 p.m.): I have a few things that I would like to say to the Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. The object of the bill is to make a number of technical changes to acts administered by the Treasury Department that do not involve significant policy issues. This bill amends the Gaming Machine Act 1991, the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999, the Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994, the Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990 and the Public Officers Superannuation Benefits Recovery Act 1988. The bill also makes a minor amendment to the Keno Act 1996.

As I have indicated, these amendments are purely technical in nature. The amendments to the Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990 bring this act into line with Commonwealth amendments to the Family Law Act, which enable superannuation to be split between people who are getting divorced. That means that at some point in time by agreement, if possible, or by the court if not, people who are involved in the Public Service superannuation scheme will be able to have their superannuation split between the divorcing parties. A fund will be set up for both people, separately, so that when they go their separate ways the money is there for both of them in the future.

The amendments to the Public Officers Superannuation Benefits Recovery Act 1988 make it possible for the superannuation fund to recover employer contributed funds of superannuation benefits from people who have been convicted of certain prescribed offences where there has been an out-of-court settlement. So if a person has committed an indictable offence while they have been a public servant, that is, they used their job for corrupt purposes and to their own benefit, then that person is in danger of losing their superannuation. Even if an out-of-court settlement is made, that person can still lose their superannuation. There has been a bit of that going on lately. Certainly, a public servant is required to act in the public interest at all times.

The bill makes amendments to the Gaming Machine Act 1991. It is proposed to amend the number of members of the Queensland Gaming Commission in order to accommodate the reduction in the workload of the commission. This amendment is currently pending ministerial approval. So these amendments will make the act operate more efficiently and in the way it should.

The bill also makes amendments to the Motor Accident Insurance Act to bring it into line with other acts that the government administers in regard to common law. For example, I understand that these amendments bring this act into line with the workers compensation acts in terms of claims. These amendments are also in line with a promise that the government made in regard to endeavouring to keep premiums at a reasonable cost for all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (3.13 p.m.), in reply: I would like to thank members for their contribution to the bill. The Leader of the Opposition raised an issue in relation to BRRU. I had that matter checked out during this debate. I am advised that BRRU had some concerns about the amendment taking place prior to the cost-benefit analysis being completed. In relation to the date of commencement being taken out of the legislation and being made by way of regulation, the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee did not raise concerns about that matter. I would have thought that, in this Westminster system, the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee would certainly take precedence over BRRU. Almost everyone else does.

I would also like to raise the issue in relation to trainees. The Leader of the Opposition raised concerns about that. I have made this amendment because some employers were taking advantage of the system by changing the status of employees to traineeships so that they did not pay the correct amount of payroll tax. All we are doing with this amendment is ensuring that the people for whom the benefit was intended are the people who are actually going to receive it. That is exactly what this amendment will do. I thank the members for their contribution.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Mr MACKENROTH (3.16 p.m.): I move amendment No. 1—

1. Clause 2—

At page 6, line 7, 'November'—

omit, insert—

'December'.

All that this amendment does is change the commencement date of the payroll tax amendment from 1 November to 1 December.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr HORAN (3.17 p.m.): Clause 7 deals with the appointment of a panel of energy arbitrators. I have some questions to ask of the Treasurer. I ask: in what areas has the government experienced increases in energy disputes to require such a large number of energy arbitrators to operate in Queensland? By what number does the Treasurer intend to increase the number of arbitrators? What has been the major problem that has brought about this need to increase the number of arbitrators? I would like to know how many arbitrators the government intends to appoint. What would be the increasing costs associated with appointing more energy arbitrators? On the other hand, each time the Treasurer puts on another arbitrator, what is the cost and in what regions will the energy arbitrators be appointed? Are they representative of all the various regions of the state?

Mr MACKENROTH: The intention is to allow us to appoint more than the seven that was contained in the initial legislation and to have a larger range of people to appoint to particular panels. They do not get paid unless they are actually doing the work. So it is not a case of any extra cost involved. It also will enable us to have arbitrators outside of Brisbane. The major complaints which we would get and which the arbitrators would deal with would be in relation to connections, billing procedures, et cetera.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—

Mr HORAN (3.20 p.m.): This clause refers to changes to the Gas Act. This clause and subsequent clauses deal with this amendment. Is 1 January still the date for introduction of full retail contestability in the gas market? Has a cost-benefit analysis been commissioned? What

further legislative changes will need to occur if full retail contestability in the gas market is introduced?

Mr MACKENROTH: The cost-benefit analysis is currently under way and will not be completed to enable that to start on 1 January. Once that is completed, the decision will be made as to the date on which it will start.

Mr HORAN: I take it that the understanding is that full gas retail contestability will be for all households. For some of us it is a little bit hard to understand how customers will determine which gas they will have if it is the same pipeline to the house. I presume that the gas is coming from one source. Is it simply an accounting exercise where that adjustment or change is made? Does the Treasurer have any idea of when this would be introduced?

Mr MACKENROTH: It will come down in the one pipe. The pipe does not change. That is owned by a company that would charge the retailer to use the pipe. The company selling the gas would buy it from the manufacturer or the wholesaler of the gas and then would retail it to a household. Individuals will make the decision as to from which retailer they wish to purchase gas. I guess that decision is made in relation to the price or what other benefits are offered to them. The householder will only see the difference, I guess, in the bill or the deal that they get. How the gas gets to their house is probably something that would never be of concern to them. The cost-benefit analysis is being completed. After that has been completed we would be looking at starting. We do not have a date for that, but it will not be too far away.

Mr HORAN: If the cost-benefit analysis shows that there is no particular benefit to the consumer, I presume the government will reconsider whether or not that system is put in place.

Mr MACKENROTH: At the household level, yes. That is what happened with electricity. I interjected before in relation to South Australia and the member trying to blame the Labor government. It actually was the Liberal government there that sold the electricity assets of the state and changed legislation to ensure that any future energy minister in South Australia has no say whatsoever in the price of electricity. For the benefit of having FRC in their electricity markets, they have just received a 25 per cent increase in their electricity bill. The member's federal counterparts are still trying to argue with me—and the member would know his own federal member is looking at the energy markets—that we should introduce FRC into Queensland. I cannot be convinced by anybody that introducing a system that would see electricity companies increase people's bills by 25 per cent is in any way saying to someone, 'We have done you a favour.' The only people that we usually do favours for are the American energy companies. In relation to that, we will look at the cost benefits and make the final decisions.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 12 to 18, as read, agreed to.

Clause 19—

Mr HORAN (3.27 p.m.): I move—

1. Clause 19—

At page 16, lines 16 to 24, page 17, lines 1 to 36, and page 18, lines 1 to 7—

omit.

We have some serious concerns about this clause and how it will affect those seeking traineeships and apprenticeships. I understand that the reasoning for this is to prevent businesses changing the status of someone regarded as an employee or a worker to that of a trainee.

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr HORAN: Just understand that that is what it is about. There could be circumstances where someone is at a particular level of job training and they want to be upskilled through a traineeship or apprenticeship, even as a mature age, to a particular skill.

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr HORAN: That's what this is all about. Some concerns have been raised, for example, about the group training schemes and how they could be affected. There is the example of Golden West Group Training which manages and administers over 600 apprentices and trainees in almost every community from Toowoomba to Longreach. If the payroll exemption applies to them because they reach their total, that could cost them thousands of dollars each month. The reason that these group training schemes do operate in that way is that in many cases an employer is able to take on an apprentice or a trainee only for a small period. For example,

someone undertaking a four-year apprenticeship as an apprentice chef might work for a number of different employers. They might work in a restaurant at one time, in an institutional catering facility for another or in a different restaurant. In that way they are able to get full training. The employer who is not able to keep them on for the full time would still find it useful to employ the apprentice or the trainee for that period of time. It might be that someone in the hospitality industry has a major event that they have to work up to. When they need a trainee for three or six months, the trainee gets that experience and, under the umbrella of the group training scheme, is able to move from one employer to another.

There is some serious concern that this change will put that training scheme into financial jeopardy with a new tax slug. The concern is that the 600 apprentices and trainees in, for example, the Golden West Group Training Scheme, which is almost every community from Toowoomba to Longreach, could be paying out thousands of dollars extra each month if the payroll tax exemption is removed. We need an explanation for this amendment so as to ensure that that does not happen.

Does the Treasurer have cases where people have abused this exemption? Section 10 of the act states that there is an exemption from payroll tax for a person who is an apprentice or trainee under the Training and Employment Act 2000, as the apprentice or trainee, for the period of the person's apprenticeship or traineeship. We have to be very careful about taking away this exemption, if that is what will happen under this bill. If this exemption is taken away, it is a very serious matter.

In giving his response to this proposed amendment, I would like a clear indication regarding the continued provision of the payroll tax exemption to employers in respect of the wages of apprentices and trainees under group training schemes. If we are not satisfied with the explanation or with what is happening in this bill, we have an amendment; we believe it would be totally unfair to remove that exemption.

The government is trying to catch people who may have someone employed as a worker and whose status is changed from worker to trainee. I understand that they would not be able to change their status to trainee or apprentice unless they actually had the papers and were undergoing a traineeship or apprenticeship. There may well be cases where people are employed perhaps as a labourer and want to obtain new or extra skills and could be employed as a trainee for that period so they can obtain those skills and give themselves better opportunities in that business or an opportunity to move to a better job elsewhere through the training and skills they have been able to obtain. That is the basis for our moving this amendment. Why do these exemptions have to be dropped in order to increase the integrity of the scheme? Is it not possible to ensure that the integrity is maintained by simply ensuring that people have the correct papers and have gone through the correct process to change from being a worker to a trainee, if that in fact happens in a number of rare cases?

Mr MACKENROTH: I listened to the Leader of the Opposition's arguments. He mentioned somebody out west who may have to pay $1,000 a month extra in payroll tax as a result of this. Let us just look at the reality of that. For a start, an employer would not pay payroll tax if their payroll was $60,000, in round figures or below, per month. Firstly, they would have to be paying $60,000 a month in payroll before they even reached the stage of starting to pay payroll tax. In addition, to pay $1,000 a month they would need to be paying well over $20,000 in payroll tax.

Mr Horan: This is a group scheme that manages 600 people.

Mr MACKENROTH: There is a very minimal effect to any group scheme. In fact, most group schemes are exempt from payroll tax, anyway. If they are not-for-profit organisations, they are exempt. If they are profit organisations, they would have to pay payroll tax. But this would not affect the majority of the apprentices that actually work for them. That is the advice that I have from my department. That is the advice the Minister for Training has.

Mr Foley: Minimal impact on group training.

Mr MACKENROTH: There would be a very minimal impact. The sorts of figures the member is quoting are ridiculous. It would never, ever come to that. What we are endeavouring to do is to stop a situation where some employers were changing the status of employees when they basically were doing the same job. They were calling them trainees and not paying payroll tax. I do not believe that anybody should be able to use the system in that way to gain a benefit. In Queensland we have the lowest payroll tax of any state in Australia. We are able to do that because we are a low-tax state. But the people who should be paying their rightful amount should

be paying it and they should not be paying less because they are able to manipulate the system and, by doing so, cause other people to have to pay more into that system.

In relation to the amendments that we are putting up, if the member has had put to him from a group training scheme that they will now have to pay payroll tax on 600 employees, they probably should have come to us rather than to the member; we would have been able to set them straight, because that is just not right.

Mr HORAN: The Treasurer mentioned a figure of $60,000. The group training scheme that we are talking about—and it would be typical of many—manages and administers over 600 apprentices and trainees. For example, if they were on $200 a week, there would certainly be a payroll there in the order of $120,000 a week. The minister mentioned that the changes to the payroll tax that they pay would be minimal. I have a couple of questions. The minister said that they would be exempt from payroll tax? Is the minister certain of that? The minister said if they were a registered charitable organisation they would be exempt from payroll tax. I would like to be certain about whether they are paying payroll tax or not. The minister mentioned that there would be minimal change. That indicates that they are already paying payroll tax. What would be the effect on an organisation like this of these amendments?

Mr MACKENROTH: What I said before is that not-for-profit group training schemes are exempt from payroll tax. That is already the case. This does not change anything in relation to them. Group training schemes that are being run for profit for an organisation would have to pay what the law requires them to pay. My advice is that there is very minimal effect from these changes to those people, that the majority of exemptions that are given to them now for trainees or apprentices will continue.

Mr HORAN: Is the Treasurer saying to me that in relation to trainees and apprentices under the auspices of a group training scheme, if payroll tax was applicable—if it was a group training scheme that had to pay payroll tax—there would still be a deduction; they would not be eligible to pay payroll tax on those apprentices or trainees? I would also like from the minister an explanation of whether in these amendments the government is going to take away the payroll tax exemption for all trainees and all apprentices. Or is it simply addressing those particular circumstances where there is a transfer of someone from the status of being an employee to a trainee, in other words, worker to trainee. That is the anomaly that the minister has said that he is trying to address, that is, if someone is an existing worker and their status is changed to trainee. I would have thought that to do that someone could not be classified as a trainee unless they had the particular papers and were undergoing a training course.

I do not see how an employer could try to rort the system by changing the classification of a person from Friday to Monday unless they were actually doing it. A trainee has to be registered and be undertaking a training course. He has to be taught the particular skills. There are a lot of guidelines covering what he has to do. An employer cannot say that on Friday someone is a worker and then change his classification to a trainee on Monday if he is not undertaking a formal training course or apprenticeship. I would like the Treasurer to explain how he is trying to address that particular anomaly. As I see it, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to do such a thing. I do not know how a deduction could be claimed for someone who is not taking part in a formal training course and who is not a bona fide trainee or apprentice.

Mr MACKENROTH: Let me assure the Leader of the Opposition that if employers were not doing it we would not be moving this amendment. The Leader of the Opposition asked me about organisations that are exempt. It will depend on the individual circumstance of the particular group training organisation. For example, charitable institutions do not pay. I also need to reiterate that this will not affect existing traineeships. Any trainee currently undergoing a traineeship will not be affected. We are ensuring into the future that employers are not able to change the status of an employee from one job to another simply in order to make use of the exemption. This was happening. All we are doing is tightening it up to make sure that people are not able to abuse the system.

Clause 19, as read, agreed to.

Clause 20—

Mr HORAN (3.42 p.m.): I need some clarification on this matter. Clause 20 amends the Queensland Competition Authority Act. As I understand it, this concerns issues dealing with water. I ask the minister why these particular changes to the Queensland Competition Authority Act were necessary. How has the ability of the Queensland Competition Authority to investigate, mediate

and arbitrate disputes been lacking in the past? What changes have occurred that need clarification of these matters?

Mr MACKENROTH: The point of having a panel of arbitrators is simply to speed up the process. At present it is taking too long. We are enabling people with the necessary expertise in those matters to be appointed in order to speed up the process.

Mr HORAN: Treasurer, in your second reading speech you said that part of the reason for these amendments was to clarify the definition of water supplier to ensure that only private sector water suppliers are considered under Part 5A of the Act. In the provision of water supplies throughout the state we have private suppliers and public suppliers. I am seeking clarity as to why it is that only private sector water suppliers will be considered under this part of the Act.

Mr MACKENROTH: Part 5A allows the QCA to make determinations in relation to that. Public water suppliers are taken out of that. The final decision in relation to public water suppliers is made by the minister and not by the QCA.

Clause 20, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 21 to 29, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Third Reading

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

SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 30 July (see p. 2289).

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.48 p.m.): The Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 is a bill which contains a number of amendments, in the first part, to the governor and judges' pension scheme. This has come about because the Queensland government has received certain advice in respect of the operation of those two pension schemes. This concerns the application of the Commonwealth government's surcharge regime which depends upon the existence of a recognisable superannuation provider. The Solicitor-General has advised that the federal surcharge may be inoperable in Queensland due to the inability to recognise and identify a suitable superannuation provider in the case of judges and governors.

The changes to the judges act seek to provide consistency within the parliamentary act with regard to judges' pensions. Other changes to the parliamentary act are designed to clarify the administration of pensions for members or former members to ensure equity and simplicity as well as consistency with the federal parliamentary act. Consultation undertaken during the drafting of the amendments took place with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Government Superannuation Office. With regard to the amendment of the Governors' Pension Act 1977, the proposed changes to this act serve the purpose of aligning the states' judges and governors' pension schemes with the Commonwealth surcharge regime. The Commonwealth system depends on the existence of a superannuation provider. The proposed changes will name the relevant minister as the manager of each scheme, enabling the Commonwealth to apply the surcharge to Queensland's governors and judges. This will ensure that the governors and judges are charged in line with other high-income earners.

In terms of background information to the court cases being pursued by state and federal judges, including judges from Queensland, they began arguing in the High Court on 19 June 2002 that they should not have to pay the 15 per cent surcharge on superannuation contributions which applies to other high-income earners. The judges argue that the controversial tax makes it less attractive for people to become judges. The Queensland Attorney-General said that he was reluctant to fund a challenge that would be hard to win. He said that there were enough states involved in the action without the need for Queensland to get involved. As I said, this surcharge is paid by people earning over $85,000. The judges argue that their pension is not a superannuation payout capable of attracting the surcharge because no contributions are paid and no assets or money are set aside. The benefits are paid from the state's consolidated revenue and not a super fund, so it differs in that way from the normal superannuation fund.

The judges in the High Court hearing the case have described Australia's superannuation legislation as mysterious and ludicrous. The Australian superannuation scheme involves three stages of taxation. Firstly, when the money is invested there is the 15 per cent tax on contributions. Secondly, while the money is invested there is a 30 per cent tax on earnings. Finally, when the funds are withdrawn there is another 15 per cent tax. For high-income earners there is a fourth application of tax in the 15 per cent surcharge. In the federal government's May budget it decided to drop the surcharge from 15 per cent to 10.5 per cent over three years.

In terms of amendments to the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957, the proposed changes entitle the spouse of a judge who dies before retirement to receive a pension for the rest of the spouse's life as opposed to the current system where the spouse receives the pension until they remarry. The stated intention is to bring judges' widows into line with other widows under the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act. This bill also amends the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1970. These amendments address competing claims for widows' entitlements for members or former members of the Legislative Assembly. The amendments allow for the entitlements to be divided between the widows in a manner to be decided by the trustee. The amount payable cannot be more than that which would be payable if there were only a single entitlement.

This endeavours to address in a very fair way the superannuation distribution in cases where there may be more than one widow. The minister might be able to confirm this when he sums the debate up, but these amendments particularly refer to where there are competing claims by former spouses with regard to the superannuation of a former member. That member could be either alive or deceased, because in the case of their being deceased there is still an entitlement. This effectively endeavours to bring fairness into the system where there may have been a separation during the member's term in parliament and, as a result, there are competing interests for a benefit from superannuation. This amendment tries to bring a fair and just judgment into that process.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr HORAN: I just ask the minister to confirm for the House when he sums up the debate that that is exactly what this is about. The opposition will be supporting this bill.

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (3.56 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill, I am glad that I am the second member to speak to it because it is highly possible that a very astute chair would find our comments on these limited number of clauses certainly repetitions and perhaps tedious, and I said that I would try to be brief under those circumstances. With regard to the judges act, it is important that legislation treats the remarriage of a widow of a judge or a retired judge consistently with that relating to the treatment of widows under the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act. When the widow of a member of parliament remarries, they do not have to give away their pension paid for by their spouse.

The issue that interests me in a pecuniary way is that, currently, when a member retires they have to pay the superannuation surcharge. The only way it can be paid at the moment after they retire is out of their own pocket, which is the same thing as it coming out of the scheme. However, there was no option before for it to be paid out of the pension entitlement. This amendment gives a second option to members to pay the superannuation surcharge from their pension after they retire and of course that would decrease their pension. I presume that they would also have the option of sending a cheque and keeping the full pension.

The Treasurer would be interested to hear that the he, Vince Lester and I no longer have to worry about the federal government's superannuation surcharge because we have reached 20 years of service in this parliament. It is unfortunate for new members because the employer pays a higher rate of accrual in the earlier years. In fact, from years nought to eight it is six and a quarter per cent per annum, which means that in eight years a member gets 50 per cent of their salary. For the next 12 years it slows down to 2.5 per cent per annum. In the early days, all new members would note that the surcharge is substantially higher than it is later. However, the Treasurer and I do not have to worry about that. This bill is good in that it gives us a choice when we go to either—

Mr Mackenroth: I have reached the stage where I pay nothing.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr FOURAS: That is true. The bottom line is that it does not involve us.

With regard to a member having a wife and a de facto when he passes away, I note that this amendment states there can be only one total payment for that amount and it goes to the trustees of the fund. Normally the trustees are the Leader of the Opposition, the Premier and the Speaker of the day. I imagine those circumstances would give rise to quite an interesting debate. They would have to have the wisdom of Solomon.

Mr Purcell: Put the knife into it—straight down the guts. Half each and that's the end of it.

Mr FOURAS: I do not think that is a rule of thumb. If it were, I think it would be stated in the legislation. It is a very complicated matter.

Members of parliament are criticised by some people, particularly journalists, who say that we have this unbelievably wonderful superannuation scheme. I said to someone the other day, 'If you looked at what the Treasurer of the day or the Premier of the day are paid for extra duties—what they do as well as being a member of parliament—you would see that it is the largest underpayment you could ever imagine.' As people who make the sacrifice, give up careers and so on, we do have a meaningful superannuation scheme—and I think justifiably so. The amendments before the House will be accepted by the opposition, and I am happy to wholeheartedly support the bill.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (4.01 p.m.): The Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 provides for the amendment of the Governors' Pensions Act 1977 and the Judges (Pension and Long Leave) Act 1957 to name the respective minister as the person who manages the scheme for the purposes of the Commonwealth government superannuation surcharge legislation.

The amendment bill will remove the requirement that a pension cease upon the remarriage of a widow of a judge or retired judge. In November 2000 the parliamentary act was amended to recognise de facto relationships. Therefore, it is possible for a deceased member to leave both a legal spouse and a de facto spouse surviving.

I note what my colleague the member for Ashgrove said previously about there being two potential beneficiaries. I was trustee of the Queensland Building Union's superannuation scheme, and I can assure members that two would have been a luxury. I think the most we had was eight. I wish there had been more money in the fund for the eight, but there was only a finite amount. Then there were various children from various marriages and de facto relationships. Judges might be able to organise their lives a bit better if they only get to two. There are other people who probably take a bite out of a lot of apples rather than the one. This amendment is to assist the trustees to sort out that kind of matter.

Amendments to the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1970 are to ensure that only one total widow's benefit is payable in the event of a deceased member or former member. The amendment will allow former members or other persons in receipt of a pension to change part of that pension entitlement to a lump sum to meet surcharge debts. I thought the merry widow part of it was abolished some time ago. Widows could get the lump sum and then get a pension.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr PURCELL: Thank you, Treasurer. I note that the Treasurer contributes now to the pension of everybody else in this House. What a great man he is! He assists us all so that the pension fund stays very healthy.

There will also be minor technical amendments made to the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1970 and the Public Officers Superannuation Benefits Recovery Act 1988. I support the bill.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (4.04 p.m.), in reply: I thank members for their support for the legislation. The Leader of the Opposition asked me a question in relation to widows. The only way a deceased member can have two widows is if he is still married and is in a de facto relationship. That is the only way he can have two widows. If he had been married and was divorced, he would then have only one widow if he had a de facto or had married again. We are talking about a situation where a person remains married and enters into a de facto relationship. Then he would have two widows. That is when the trustee would have to make a decision.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

RACING BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 24 October (see p. 4060).

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (4.08 p.m.), continuing: I want to reiterate the importance of racing in rural and regional Queensland. Not only does it provide an important opportunity for people to get together recreationally and socially; it also provides an opportunity for many small groups in the community to use the venue, the facilities and indeed race meetings, whether they are full-on race meetings or ghost meetings, to raise funds for local charities as well as more widespread charities such as the Flying Doctor Service, ambulances and hospitals.

The information that the minister supplied on this bill reiterated on more than one occasion that this legislation will remove government completely from involvement in the racing industry and that the control board will control racing. So the government removes itself from accountability and, unfortunately, also from influence. I can recall occasions in the past on which concerns about rural and regional racing have been raised in this House.

I remember not too many years ago when the greyhound racing industry based in the south-east corner withdrew hundreds of thousands of dollars from north Queensland greyhound racing because the south-east corner was suffering stress. People from the north contacted my office in relation to that matter and the officer who I spoke to in the relevant department at the time said, 'The south-east corner is in trouble. We will go back and revisit the north of Queensland once the south-east corner has regenerated itself.' At the time my response was, because it was the response from north Queensland, 'By the time you come back to help them, they will not exist.'

My genuine concern and the concern of many others in rural and regional Queensland is that the larger clubs, such as those in Brisbane and Toowoomba—those very big race clubs in the highly populated areas—will be able to influence this independent board to invest a greater and greater amount of funds into the centralised racing industry and that rural and regional Queensland racing will starve or significantly deteriorate. There are major centres such as Townsville and Rockhampton—and perhaps Bundaberg; I am not sure of the size of the racing industry in Bundaberg—that may still be able to influence the board, but those clubs in my area of Gladstone and Calliope and other smaller race clubs such as Thangool and Yeppoon may suffer significantly because of the emphasis that the new board will give to racing in the south-east corner.

During the debate on this bill last Thursday, I referred to the Gladstone Turf Club and its long-term plans to relocate. There had been discussions with the previous racing minister, the Hon. Russell Cooper, and I believe with the current Racing Minister. A relocation committee has been established and has been working hard for a number of years. In fact, I think that Peter Little, who is the chair of that committee, has begun to think that he may never see the club relocated despite very strong support that has been received by the club not only locally but also in Brisbane. My information indicates that there was an agreement, or agreement in principle, that the block of land that the turf club is currently located on would be made freehold and sold. There has been information in the media that indicates that Bunnings hardware is interested. In fact, it has a contract on the property. The amount of money that was indicated was around about $4.85 million. There has historically been—and I use the word 'agreement' because I do not know the legalities—an understanding that that money would be used to relocate the turf club and reinvest in racing facilitates out at the ash ponds. That amount of money would be necessary, because I believe that the club wishes to establish a grass track and a number of other coordinated facilitates, including a more appropriate building for the supporters to meet in and more appropriate buildings and facilities for owners and trainers.

That is certainly what Gladstone needs. It has a growing population in terms of the growing number of people employed in the construction industry as well as full-time permanent workers. Many of those have an interest in racing. When Bob Bentley was a member of the turf club board some years ago—not in its current incarnation, but previously—he knew and knows of the turf club and its proposals. I hope that he continues his level of support for the club's proposals. But under this new structure, there is a concern about the realisation of the sale of the current site of the turf club, which is strategically placed in a triangle with two of the major shopping centres in Gladstone, the K mart centre and the Kin Kora centre. Admittedly, it has a cemetery in between, but it is located in that very dynamic area where there is a lot of—

Mr Lawlor: Beside a cemetery?

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: No, the cemetery is not, but it is dynamic in that a lot of people pass that area for shopping purposes and also to access the Windmill centre for various services, including medical. There also is a very good Catholic school, Chanel College, that is expanding as well. It is a very desirable block of land that is in a good location that has good street frontage and a lot of passing traffic.

I seek clarification from the minister that, in adopting this new structure, those long-term proposals—those in-principle agreements—can be changed significantly and particularly to the point at which the proceeds of the sale could be creamed off so that only a small proportion of the sale money is made available to the Gladstone Turf Club. I ask that question, because a handful of people have really worked hard to get the new proposal up and running, to get plans in place and to talk among people in the racing fraternity to see what is needed and what will see racing in the Gladstone district prosper. It would be an absolute tragedy to see a change like this undermine that long-term work.

As I said, the $4.8 million, which was the amount that was in the paper some time ago now as the contract price, would re-establish racing in a very, very favourable position in our region. It would ensure its long-term survival. The club would have facilitates that would be self-generating. I seek the minister's comment on that matter, because I know that constituents in my electorate are concerned that changes in the structure of racing could mean that they have to go back to taws in terms of the relocation of the racetrack.

I know that the member for Fitzroy, in a very genuine way, raised some concerns—and he did not do it in terms of criticising the minister; he did it in terms of raising issues of concern raised by his constituency. My constituents share those concerns, perhaps in a slightly different way, but they are about regional and rural racing. Racing is as important to members of my community as it is to people who go to Doomben. In some ways, it is more important, because the opportunities for racing in rural Queensland have diminished over time. A number of race meetings have been cancelled and prize money has been reallocated. It is true to say that, in many ways, country racing is an incubator for the racing industry. People start out there with a small interest—maybe with horses that would do well only in country areas. Not only the animals but also the trainers and the other people involved in the industry gain a great deal of experience through country racing. It would be a tragedy to see that industry starved or disassembled.

So I seek the minister's assurances that racing in my electorate will not be detrimentally affected by these changes, that the relocation of that club can and will proceed in the manner that has been agreed to in principle, and that the new racing board, once it is established, will not be able to gut country and rural and regional Queensland racing in a bid to improve and enhance racing in the south-east corner. We are a diverse state. We need to have the support of that diversity. It appears that the influence of government will be reduced significantly, if not altogether. I seek the assurance from the minister that that relocation will continue.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (4.18 p.m.): The purpose of the Racing Bill 2002 is to repeal the Racing and Betting Act 1980 and to provide a modern legislative framework for the management and regulation of the Queensland racing industry. The bill implements the recommendations of the national competition policy review of the Racing and Betting Act 1980 by providing an opportunity for new codes of racing to be approved. It also removes the prohibition on proprietary racing and removes advertising restriction on racing bookmakers.

Proprietary racing, or for-profit racing, was outlawed across Australia in the 1920s in response to the proliferation of illegal betting activities on unregulated racing. The prohibition on proprietary racing has resulted in all race clubs across Queensland being required to operate as not-for-profit organisations. This means that currently race clubs must operate their affairs for the benefit of their members and not distribute profits to the members of the club. I know, Mr Deputy Speaker,

that you have a love of racing and the racing industry, but I should also commend Racing Queensland for retaining the stand-alone Saturday race day at the Sunshine Coast Turf Club, its Caloundra Cup. I was a proud member of the Caloundra City Council which has supported the Caloundra Cup. Former mayor Des Dwyer and current mayor Don Aldeus have well supported and continue to support the Sunshine Coast Turf Club at Corbould Park. I know that many members of this House enjoy the surroundings and a visit to Caloundra and the Sunshine Coast to take in a great race day at Corbould Park at the Sunshine Coast Turf Club. Former councillors Jock Alcock, Sharyn Bonney, Ian Bryce and present councillors Del Winkler, deputy mayor Don Smith, Chris White and one of Queensland's longest serving and well-respected councillors, Betty Cristado, are also great advocates for what I consider to be Australia's premier racing facility, Corbould Park on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. The Sunshine Coast Turf Club has, in my opinion, a focused, supportive and hardworking committee. Under Les Geeves, chairman, who the minister knows well, a very hard but fair man, a former great footballer—

Ms Rose interjected.

Mr CUMMINS: I don't know if he was a fair man back in those days, but I know that he was a hard man on the field. Under Les Geeves' chairmanship—and I also pay a compliment to his equally impressive wife, Daphne—I know that the Sunshine Coast Turf Club will continue to go from strength to strength. Having one stand-alone Saturday race day confirmed and hopefully set in stone for the Sunshine Coast is excellent news, but I believe we on the Sunshine Coast should be pushing for a second, as the south coast has. Members would acknowledge with me the tremendously talented general manager, Mick Sullivan. I know that the minister applauds the good work that Mick does up there. My wife and family, visitors and locals alike sincerely thank the Sunshine Coast Turf Club for its marvellous hospitality. They have very entertaining race days.

The dynamic committee of the Sunshine Coast Turf Club includes Neil Mansell, the deputy chairman, a major force in the construction industry via his well recognised Mansell Concrete and Transport business. It is a major Sunshine Coast employer and Neil does put a lot back into the community and into the Sunshine Coast. Mary Henzell is a very well known and highly respected Caloundra identity and a very kind lady who I know also loves her races. Tom Blacklaw is a valuable asset to the Sunshine Coast. Blacklaw and Shadforth is a well-respected business based just outside of my electorate at Forest Glen. Again, they are businesspeople putting a lot back into the community via racing and the Sunshine Coast Turf Club. Mick Mair is very successful in racing circles and is well known. Mick is a very good voice for owners and trainers in the industry and is a valued member of the Sunshine Coast community and indeed the Sunshine Coast Turf Club. Jan McMillan-Walford is from the northern end of the Sunshine Coast at Noosa, or North Kawana as we sometimes like to call it. Her position shows that the Sunshine Coast Turf Club is a true regional facility. Jan also serves on the RNA. Don Moffat, as the minister would well know, is a great mate of mine who I believe truly deserves life membership of Tourism Sunshine Coast. So, it is crossing over two portfolios. Don has put in years of commitment to Tourism Sunshine Coast and is also a member of the Sunshine Coast Turf Club. Don's love of horse racing is very well acknowledged. I do appreciate all of the committee's input in terms of what they often tell me to lobby the minister on.

Dr Bernie Spilsbury is from the Sunshine Coast hinterland. Again, that proves that the turf club is not just Caloundra based but is a true Sunshine Coast based regional facility. I believe that Bernie operates out of a surgery in Mooloolaba. He is making a very positive contribution. Last, but not least, Bill Wendt works with CADET. Bill is also a committee member of the turf club. CADET is a training group which ensures jobs are created on the Sunshine Coast. Bill and his wife, Lorraine, are always happy to host visitors to the Sunshine Coast Turf Club.

The 2000 national competition policy review examined the need for legislative restrictions on the manner in which a race club may conduct its business. The NCP review concluded that, while control bodies need to have control over the manner in which clubs conduct their racing operations to ensure the viability of Queensland racing, it was not necessary to require every race club in Queensland to operate on a not-for-profit basis. At this point, I encourage Caloundra City Council to think a little bit outside the square in a way that can contribute to Queensland racing and indeed the Sunshine Coast Turf Club. There are areas of land around Corbould Park that it should consider rezoning to allow for a racing specific precinct. This would possibly allow for more thoroughbred training facilities and for owners of thoroughbred race horses to be in locations that are more accessible to the race track at the Sunshine Coast. Just over Caloundra Road and to the north is an ideal area, if it were rezoned, for trainers and owners to locate their facilities as there are areas of land large enough to build homes so that they can participate in their love of

training and racing thoroughbreds. It is a business. It is one of Queensland's largest businesses and employers. It is something very positive. In my opinion, it is a good, clean, green industry that thousands of people right across the state and indeed Australia participate in and enjoy.

The Racing Bill 2002 contemplates that in the future it will be possible for a control body to register a race club that conducts race meetings for the purpose of making a return to shareholders. To ensure the integrity of races conducted by for-profit clubs, all races conducted by a proprietary race club must be regulated by the control body for the code of racing. Those control bodies will also receive annual accounts from proprietary race clubs which must specify particular information set out in the Racing Bill 2002. In conclusion, I commend the minister, her advisers and indeed the department for showing determination and strength in standing up to what I could call the bully boys in the racing industry. Although a minority of the Queensland industry, their unfounded slander, slurs and criticism are a poor reflection of the bad old days under corrupt conservatives. I commend the minister for her strong stance in taking the industry to a new level and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (4.27 p.m.): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Racing Bill 2002. I do so with some trepidation and with somewhat of a heavy heart. I want to reinforce this afternoon some of the comments of previous speakers about the bleak future facing country racing. In my electorate, as in so many other electorates that cover rural and regional Queensland, the racing industry provides a very important avenue for social interaction. It constitutes a very important part of the lifestyle of so many of the communities that I represent. There are a number of race clubs within the Callide electorate. Some of them have been there for a very long time. If we start at the southern end of the Callide electorate, there are the South Burnett Jockey Club races at Wondai. The Gayndah Jockey Club, the oldest race club in Queensland, has been there for over 130 years. The Eidsvold Race Club is another very old race club, as is the club at Mount Perry. Those three clubs are probably some of the oldest clubs in Queensland. Monto has an excellent race facility and, of course, Thangool, which the member for Gladstone spoke about, is a very active race club.

There are also race clubs at Theodore, on the Dawson River, and at Taroom. They are all typical country race clubs and they are all facing a very bleak future. That is of grave concern to the communities that those race clubs have been a part of for so many years. It is certainly a concern for the people I represent. It is a concern for the people who have put a lot of time into those race clubs over the years. It is too easy to forget that those clubs, by and large, have been built and come about through the efforts of people who have worked in a voluntary capacity to make their community a better place in which to live and to provide facilities in their communities for the types of social events that only country races can offer.

Those race clubs are important not only to the communities in which they have grown up; they are also, I would suggest, a lot more important to the racing industry than the current minister and the current administration of the industry are giving them credit for. Those race clubs have always been, and could continue to be, incubators for the racing industry in a whole range of spheres. There are a couple of good examples from the Callide electorate and the clubs that I have mentioned.

Most people who are even vaguely familiar with the racing industry would have heard of Ken Russell. Ken Russell was one of Queensland's greatest jockeys before he was tragically killed in a race fall at Orange. Ken Russell started his racing career at Monto riding track work for his father on the Monto racetrack. He went from that level in the racing industry to the very top. There are many other examples of people who have started in the racing industry in a country club and have gone on to be successful to differing degrees in the racing industry. And so it is with horses. Most people would have heard of Wondai's Mate. He was a great pacer from Wondai. Wondai still proudly proclaims that it is the home of Wondai's Mate. So they should. He is just one of the many hundreds of horses that have started off on country racetracks and ended up playing significant roles in the racing industry at the very top level.

The contribution that those clubs make in terms of encouraging and providing an avenue for participants in the racing industry to begin is being sadly underestimated with the current proposals being put forward by the minister. There is also another avenue that I think is sadly underestimated in that the country race clubs, because of their social function, provide an opportunity for people to get interested in the racing industry. Even if it is only at a level of punting on the races, at least it gives people an opportunity to get interested in the racing industry, and that interest and involvement makes a contribution later on.

All of those clubs are under threat. It is a great shame, firstly, that there is a degree of uncertainty—and a very understandable degree of uncertainty—amongst those country race clubs. On Saturday I was at the Mount Perry Race Club. I wish to speak about the Mount Perry club as an example. I could have picked any one of the eight clubs within the Callide electorate. However, I wish to speak briefly about the Mount Perry Race Club. As I said, it is one of the oldest race clubs in Queensland. They have been racing at Mount Perry for 130 years. Mount Perry was an old gold mining town and the race club has been there for a very long time.

There were 1,400 people on the course at Mount Perry on Saturday. Every one of them was concerned about the fact that after 130 years Saturday's meeting was most probably going to be the last race meeting at Mount Perry. The fact that Mount Perry can draw such a crowd is in itself an indication—

Ms Rose: They would know, because the racing calendar is not going to change from the current calendar.

Mr SEENEY: I would love the minister to stand up in this House today and give me an assurance that I can take back to those 1,400 people that Saturday's race meeting was not the last meeting at Mount Perry. I would love the minister to do that either now, if she likes, or when she sums up in this debate. She should stand up in this House and give those people an assurance that the Mount Perry club can continue to race twice a year as it has been doing. It holds two meetings a year—an autumn meeting and a spring meeting. The spring meeting was last Saturday. If the minister can give those people that assurance, it would be a great thing for the minister to take away the uncertainty that has plagued not only that club but so many other country clubs also.

A petition was circulated at the meeting on Saturday and was signed by about 500 people. I intend to present it to the parliament tomorrow morning. That petition indicates the degree of angst and uncertainty there is among country race clubs and courses. They collected 500 signatures in one afternoon at one race meeting. The letter that accompanied the petition states—

The support demonstrated in the Petition from Country Racing patrons, every Trainer, Owner, Jockey, Bookmaker, Staff and Industry Participant who attended our races.

Given the significant response in the short timeframe it received at the races, should indicate to the Government the ever increasing angst among the racing industry and public alike.

I could not say it any better than that. Because there is such uncertainty, anger and worry out there, the concerns that have been represented by the people signing this petition should be addressed by the minister. I look forward to the minister's response in that regard. The petition states that 'Queensland Racing, formerly the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board, has the intention of closing a considerable number of Queensland country race clubs in the very near future'.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr SEENEY: The member should just hang on. I will come to his interjection shortly. It continues—

This closure would have a detrimental effect on the economic and social structure of many rural areas and your petitioners therefore request the House to put a stop to the proposed closures of country race clubs immediately and provide a consistent level of funding to Queensland racing for country race clubs to enable them to continue providing the grassroots services to the racing industry and the economic and social structure of the communities.

As I said, the Mount Perry Race Club is a great club. It is lucky in terms of where it is located in that it is reasonably close to Bundaberg and can draw quite a reasonable crowd from Bundaberg and the surrounding urban areas. That is why a club such as Mount Perry is able to draw crowds of over 1,000 people to each of its two race meetings. Saturday was not a good day for drawing a crowd to anything. It was incredibly hot and very dry and dusty, as most members would know. Yet the Mount Perry club was still able to attract well over 1,000 people to its Cox Plate meeting. It was a great day.

The other race clubs in my electorate certainly battle to draw crowds such as that. Each of them is under the same types of stress. The Thangool Race Club traditionally holds a Melbourne Cup racing meeting and will do so again this year. Once again, it is facing the possibility that that will be the last Melbourne Cup race meeting to be staged at Thangool.

Ms Rose: Are you going?

Mr SEENEY: Of course I am going. If the minister wants to appreciate the difficulties and problems being faced by country racing, she would come to Thangool with me and stand up—I

will get the microphone for her—and explain to those people at Thangool why they have to face the uncertainty of this Melbourne Cup meeting being their last, just as the people at Mount Perry have to face the possibility that their race meeting last Saturday will be the last meeting of 130 years. If the minister comes with me to Thangool she might well understand the difficulties of country racing and the reason that these issues need to be addressed. A letter from the Thangool Race Club states—

> Whilst our club wishes to be progressive, the demands of your board are making it increasingly difficult more difficult for this club to survive. Whilst it is quite obvious that the aim of your board, particularly with your present committee, is to reduce the number of country race clubs, we are not prepared to lie down and cop whatever treatment is handed out in order to make this club unviable. Over the years it has become increasingly more difficult to survive. This club has been run effectively and profitably on voluntary workmanship. Thangool is a very small town but enjoys a big reputation as far as racing is concerned. A lot of good jockeys and trainers have originated from this area. If your board continues to impose levies, this club, together with many other country clubs, will disappear and whilst your board might think that that will be a good thing, in time, you will find that once you deprive country people of racing facilities, your city racing will also decline.

That encapsulates the frustration and the anger that is being felt by members of country race clubs.

I want to come now to the interjection that was made earlier about the fact that the government cannot do anything about it. What absolute rubbish! That proposition has also been put forward by the minister. The minister wrote to me, as I guess she wrote to every other member, when this legislation was introduced into the House and before this debate commenced. She included some information that is quite clearly wrong. The minister stated—

> The Racing Bill 2002 will remove government further from the day to day operations of the racing industry but enhance the government's role in demanding accountability and transparency in the industry in matters impacting upon the probity and integrity of racing. The government currently has no role in making or influencing the thoroughbred code to make decisions not related to probity and integrity matters. For example, specific issues such as the allocation of race dates, prize money and field sizes are decisions that are currently the decision of the control bodies and will remain so.

That is simply an example of the minister opting out of her responsibilities. It is simply a matter of the government distancing itself from its responsibilities to ensure that country race clubs, such as those in my electorate, will survive. Clause 45 of this bill before the House authorises the minister to give a ministerial direction to a control body if such control direction is necessary to 'ensure public confidence in the racing industry or ensure that management is in the interests of the code of racing concerned'.

Obviously, it would be in the interests of the code of racing concerned for country racing to survive the way it has. Obviously it would be in the public interest and boost public confidence in the racing industry if those country race clubs that have raced for 130 years were able to continue to race. The minister and the government have a responsibility to ensure that the administration of the racing industry is carried out in such a way that it enables clubs such as Thangool, Mount Perry, Monto, Theodore, Taroom, Wondai and all the other country race clubs to survive. That is clearly not happening at the moment.

What we have at the moment is a minister who is attempting to distance herself from her responsibilities. We have a government that is attempting to distance itself from this decision which will, regrettably, mean the end of country race clubs. If that is the intent of the minister and the government, then let them be brave enough to take the responsibility. Let them take up my invitation and come out to the country race clubs and explain to them why the minister and the government are not prepared to give the directions to those control bodies that they set up which will ensure that the industry is administered in a way that will enable those clubs to continue to race as they have done for so long.

It will be a tragedy for the communities I represent. It will be a tragedy for the people who have given so much of their time in a voluntary capacity to build those clubs over such a long period of time if a situation is allowed to come into being which will mean that those clubs will fold. It means a degree of uncertainty for the whole community because race clubs do not exist in isolation. They are very much an integral part of the community. They are a favourite means of fundraising for so many worthy organisations which play an important role in the community. To threaten the race clubs is to threaten the fundraising capability of so many other organisations.

There are organisations that benefit directly from donations made by the clubs. There are organisations which work for clubs in such areas as catering and manning the gate and undertaking such other duties. The opportunities will be lost for those organisations.

This is not a situation that is unique to my electorate. The clubs in my electorate are probably in no different a position than country race clubs all over the state. It is a situation that needs to be addressed in a manner that ensures that these country race clubs can continue to operate. The fact that the Mount Perry club or the Gayndah club have operated in those venues for 130 years is probably not, of itself, a reason for them to continue, but it is something that should be taken into consideration by anyone who is administering the industry and by the minister who is responsible for that administration. That something has been operating for 130 years would make anyone think twice. I have already gone into a whole range of other reasons that these clubs should be allowed to continue. I refer particularly to the important role that they play as incubators for the industry as a whole.

As the shadow minister said in his contribution to this debate, the Queensland racing industry is in a great deal of trouble because of decisions that have been taken by the minister, but no part of the industry is in more trouble than the race clubs in the communities that I represent. That is where racing has had its roots. So many participants in the racing industry have entered the industry through those clubs.

Time expired.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (4.49 p.m.): Across Australia there are currently three codes of racing on which lawful betting may occur: thoroughbred racing, harness racing and greyhound racing. The 2000 national competition policy review of the Racing and Betting Act 1980 considered whether there was a public benefit in preventing betting being conducted on races involving other breeds of horses such as Arabians, quarter horses and other animals such as camels. The review identified that Queensland racing legislation should not prohibit betting on new codes of racing provided that any new codes were regulated.

The Racing Bill 2002 provides for a system whereby a new control body or regulator of a code of racing may be approved to regulate a new code of racing. Any new control body for a new code of racing will have to meet the same criteria that is applied to the current three control bodies of the codes of racing in Queensland. Before a new code of racing may be approved, the applicant control body will have to demonstrate that it has the ability to properly regulate the code of racing, that the code of racing is safe and that the racing activities may be conducted with integrity, ensuring the welfare of the licensed animals involved.

Opening the doors to new codes of racing does not mean opening the floodgates to Queenslanders betting on flies crawling up the walls. The Minister for Racing has the responsibility for approving a new control body for a new code of racing, and the minister may only approve a control body for a new code of racing if it meets the criteria set out in the bill.

The proposed Racing Bill 2002 repeals the Racing and Betting Act 1980 and establishes a regulatory regime for animal racing conducted in Queensland on which lawful betting may be conducted. The need to regulate the racing industry in Queensland was examined in the 2000 national competition review of the Racing and Betting Act 1980. A further public benefit test of the Racing Bill 2002 was conducted to examine restrictions upon competition contained in the bill that were not addressed in the 2000 PBT and are inconsistent with the recommendations contained in the 2000 NCP report.

The Racing Bill 2002 is the outcome of extensive consultation with members of the racing industry in Queensland during the following reform processes: first, the creation of the Queensland Principal Club in 1990; second, the corporatisation and privatisation of TABQ Ltd in 1998-99; third, the racing industry strategic planning exercise in 1999; fourth, the review of bookmaking operations in 1999-2000; fifth, the 2000 PBT; sixth, the governance reviews of control bodies of racing in 2001; seventh, the Racing Appeals Authority review undertaken in 2001-02; and, eighth, direct consultation with key stakeholders during the drafting of the Racing Bill 2002. Significant amendments to the Racing and Betting Act 1980 were made in 2000 to remove numerous restrictions upon the manner in which bookmakers conduct their activities. The Cross-Border Betting Task Force, which is a national task force consisting of representatives from governments and industries of all states and territories, has identified the method by which Queensland's legislation treats racing bookmakers as licensees of the racing industry.

I am a proud member of the Ipswich Turf Club and have been for many years. Racing is part and parcel of my family's life. My Uncle George Kitching goes to every race meeting at Bundamba apart from when he is in hospital and my loved grandma, Gramps, absolutely loved the races. In fact, I can still remember when she had a big win in the 1960s and she replaced the washing machine, the fridge, the TV and a lot of other paraphernalia. Back then it was like she had won Gold Lotto. In fact, she won the treble in the Stradbroke Handicap when a roughie called

Spedito came hurtling home. Whenever there is a race day at the Bundamba track I like to get there, even if it is only for an hour or so. Unfortunately, not many go to the track these days, but I always have lunch with the other members, the retired coalminers and railway workers and their families and friends. Charmaine looks after all of us at the track.

Ipswich Cup Day is always a highlight of the social calendar for the people of Ipswich. This year there was a record crowd, with tents all over the course and with tents in the centre. The *Queensland Times* double-decker bus was ferrying people to tents all day. Everyone had a great time, as they do every year. You never know: I might even have a tent site for next year. The racing industry is very important to the city of Ipswich. It supports trainers like Stuart Hinks. There are many Ipswich people who also own horses and train them locally. My Uncle George has owned Noted Lady, Jolly Bacon and Drury's Star and has a new and as yet unnamed foal. The Ipswich Turf Club Committee does a great job. Wayne Patch is chairman, Jeff McLean the deputy chairman and Leon Tansey the treasurer, and members of the committee are Danny Bowden, Dr Byrnes, Ray Lescke, Gary Purcell and Paul Pisasale.

The TAB at the Prince Alfred Hotel at Booval is where all the retired miners gather every Saturday to talk about the state of the world. In fact, I get a lot of constituent work from the TAB at Booval, the TAB lounge at St Ives at Goodna and the TAB at the Goodna RSL. In fact, many members of the Labor Party are institutions at the TAB on Saturdays, including Dave Suffleet and Darryl Skinner. I know that they are there every Saturday from 11.45 a.m. right up until the last race. In fact, election days are a pain for them because they have to alter their routine to give out how-to-vote cards for me, but rest assured that their bets are on and in the background the radio is blaring away. Actually, on election days my branch members are often asked for tips for the day and the best bets. So after they have completed their civic duty—

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mrs MILLER: Yes, they always back me. So after they have completed their civic duty and hopefully voted for me, they also end up with a winning tip. Everybody is happy in the electorate of Bundamba. The racing industry is happy and my branch members are happy. In conclusion, I thank the minister for her good work on this bill. The racing industry will applaud her for the bill, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (4.54 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Racing Bill 2002, I want to talk about a few things that are happening to country people. As all members know, I am a member of the Bell Race Club, which is a very strong country town race club. It holds four race meetings a year which many bookies attend.

Mr Shine: Are you the clerk of the course?

Mr HOPPER: I am the clerk of the course. I am the red coat at Bell. Many trainers bring the orang-outangs to Bell because they know that I am going to get them into the barriers and let them go. Any horses that they cannot handle in Toowoomba or Brisbane are brought to Bell because they know that they are going to get a start at Bell.

At the moment many country people are very concerned about what is happening with country racing, and the minister has heard about this issue from previous speakers so there is no doubt that she is aware of it. Let us take Warra for instance. Warra has two functions a year and they are the race meetings. I know that the Taylors and many people put all of their time and effort into those race meetings in that country town. Our race clubs are not to be laughed at. Country people work their guts out, to put it mildly, to make those two days a year what they are. If we were to lose them, it would be horrific for country people.

The Labor government must look seriously at country races. Dalby holds a number of race meetings each year. It is a very strong club. It works very hard and does very well. The minister is in charge of this, and a number of people have come to me extremely worried about what is happening with the racing industry. I invite the minister to come to Bell or Warra. I will personally see to it that she is looked after to get a feel as to what is happening with country races. If we ever take those away, those towns and people will be gone. One only needs to look at country towns like Crows Nest and Oakey. Even Cooranga North had a race club once, but they are all gone. We have to build and promote what we have now. That is all I am asking the minister to do. I implore the minister not to take these races away from us because of all the money they generate in those small towns.

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (4.57 p.m.): We are all aware of the current changes to the Queensland racing industry and it is a challenging time for all. Hence I rise today to join in the debate and critical discussion about the Racing Bill 2002 that is proposed to supersede the

Racing and Betting Act 1980. I do so as a member whose electorate of Clayfield comprises some of Queensland's key contributors to this dynamic industry. These include the Doomben and Eagle Farm racecourses, the Albion Park paceway and the significant number of trainers, jockeys, stewards, breeders and other industry workers who live in the electorate.

As members would be aware, the racing industry comprising thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing is a major contributor to the Queensland economy. Its impact on gross state product starts at around $250 million in direct contribution and with all flow-on impacts taken into account rises to around $600 million. It has been estimated by KPMG that more than 50 per cent of this contribution is attributable to Brisbane metropolitan thoroughbred racing at Eagle Farm and Doomben. In employment terms, the racing industry generates around 24,000 full-time, part-time and casual jobs. Of the estimated 14,000 full-time equivalent jobs in the industry, KPMG estimates that around 6,700 full-time jobs are created by the Brisbane metropolitan thoroughbred racing industry.

The new legislation will provide the framework for facilitating change in this dynamic industry, and I want to highlight three major aspects of the legislation that will establish a foundation for supporting the industry to capitalise on the growth opportunities facing the sector. The legislation is about moving the Queensland industry forward. First, the legislation has established Queensland Racing as the independent control body for the sector and is responsible for the management and regulation of its code of racing. This includes policies about some of the following responsibilities: licensing animals, clubs, participants and venues and testing their performance against control body policies, including the consultation it must undertake; providing education and training for other licensees and other participants; allocating funding to licensed racing clubs and venues; and implementing plans for developing, promoting and marketing the code's commercial operations.

Second, the legislation includes the obligation to enter into agreement about scientific and professional services. Clause 40 requires a control body to enter into an agreement with an accredited facility for the provision of integrated scientific services that is independent of the control body. As the provision of drug control services is central to the integrity of the racing industry in Queensland, it is essential that a control body obtains its drug control and related services from a facility that is independent of the control body. For a facility to be independent of the control body, there must be no conflicts of interest between the staff at the facility and the control body. The processes and procedures established by the facility must not be able to be influenced by or controlled in any way by the control body.

Third, and the most significant aspect for my constituency, is that it recognises the need for ongoing consultation and discussion with all stakeholders. This is essential given that change always brings uncertainty. For change to be effective, it must be managed in a constructive, positive and inclusive way. I intend to ensure that all stakeholders in my electorate are given the opportunity to participate fully in the change process.

Subclause 81(a) provides that a control body must develop policy about how it will make policies, including the consultation it will undertake with affected persons. It is envisaged that such a policy should address the level of consultation that is appropriate having regard to the nature of the issues. A policy in relation to an issue that is controversial and that may affect a large number of persons may require more consultation than a policy about a matter that is well settled and not controversial. Therefore, this subclause is an extremely important and great window of opportunity for control bodies, clubs and associations, as it will enable them to engage with contentious issues as an industry, instead of working in isolation.

This subclause will also provide an opportunity for critical debate and embrace the entire industry, whose parts are the onion layers that feed and support each other—not only at the top end of town but in all the layers in between. If one of those layers goes or is seriously affected by either poor or ill-managed policies, then the entire sector suffers. Therefore, it is essential that all decision making processes and policy outcomes are transparent and that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to understand the processes, to participate in the processes and to assess and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes.

There has been a lot of discussion over the setting up of Queensland Racing. I also know that many people within the industry wanted an independent body. Now that we have that, there still seems to be some angst. And the angst seems to be that, while there is an expectation for the control body to be independent of the government, there is a fear—possibly unfounded but a fear nonetheless—that the new board will operate independently of stakeholders.

The racing industry is moving forward, and with that move there will be trials and there will be tribulations. It is a great industry. It is about the people, their livelihood and lifeblood into the broader community that sustains, rejuvenates and celebrates the Queensland racing industry. I would like to acknowledge the minister and her team for their work on this very important bill and I commend it to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (5.03 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Racing Bill 2002. Once again we see a bill which is proposed to keep in line with national competition policy and which represents a major overhaul of the Queensland racing industry. It is proposed that control bodies be structured as companies under the Corporations Act 2001, with directors being answerable to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. This model, it is hoped, will be considered by government no later than October 2003. All three codes of racing—thoroughbred, harness and greyhound—will be similarly restructured.

The racing industry employs some 24,000 people and is now Queensland's fourth largest industry. It is estimated that the popularity of racing in rural areas is between 12 per cent and 20 per cent, second only to Australian Rules but more popular than motor sports, Rugby League and cricket. I must say that I would be surprised if Rugby League was not more popular than AFL in my electorate.

If the racing industry is significantly rationalised, as has been suggested by Queensland Racing chairman Bob Bentley, it will result in the loss of thousands of jobs. This is not a smart result. There is also huge concern in rural areas, particularly in far-north Queensland, at the proposed cuts to the number of race meetings effective from 2003. Mr Bentley has announced a huge reduction in race meetings to be held in Cairns, from 33 to 12. That announcement sent shock waves through the whole of the far north and is a mighty blow to the Cairns racing fraternity and the Cairns economy in general. Cairns was where we always raced our better quality horses in the far north and was the venue with the best prize money. This slashing of meetings will be a big blow to its viability.

Atherton and Mareeba on the tablelands and Innisfail and Gordonvale on the coast have already seen their number of meetings reduced, especially over the last few years since the privatisation of the TAB. With the reduction of meetings in Cairns, those other clubs are hopeful of gaining a few more race dates next year, especially at the Atherton and Mareeba tracks. Our climatic conditions up on the tablelands are more conducive to year-round racing than those on the coast. It is essential that we get those extra meetings that have been taken off Cairns so that in the far north we have at least one meeting to attend per week. Otherwise owners and trainers will find continuing unviable. They cannot wait around for weeks or months on end, feeding and training horses, waiting for a suitable race to come up.

The Atherton club has been managed very well and has very good facilities. Mareeba, likewise, has excellent year-round facilities. Atherton has produced some very successful owners, trainers and jockeys, particularly over recent years, and a lot of money has been spent on infrastructure in the area, resulting in a better quality of horse being produced. Atherton has a cooler, more temperate climate than some of the other centres, and this is the reason new stables have been set up in the area. In fact, 2001-02 statistics indicate that Atherton had the most stables in the area during that period—even more than Cairns.

Some of the larger owners and trainers are now taking their horses as far afield as Townsville, chasing the more lucrative prize money which can be won there as Townsville has more TAB meetings than Cairns, which results in much higher prize money. Naturally, the owners and trainers have to win prize money to continue in the game, as the costs involved are very high. Smaller owners and trainers cannot afford to travel the long distances to Townsville.

I want to emphasise the importance of distance. Racing, especially thoroughbred racing, is not a portable industry. If a club and track close down almost anywhere in the far north, it is almost a guarantee that all of the industry around it—and remember, we are talking about the fourth biggest industry in the state—will also disappear. It is simply not possible to transport even one horse the hundreds of kilometres to the next track, even if it had weekly meetings.

The cost of feed, vets, trainers, fees and charges, transport and so on are forever increasing. Already, many of the owner-trainers who have been involved in racing as a hobby for many years have been forced out of the industry. These are people who have loved their horses and loved the racing. They have been the bread and butter of the industry and are now forced out because government says 'you have to get big or get out'. It appears that 'get big or get out' is even

applying to people's hobbies in this state. They certainly do not want you if you are a little fellow any more. What a shame.

The problems in the racing industry seem to have compounded since the privatisation of the TAB. Profits are going to the shareholders in that operation and not coming back into the industry. The government receives some $50 million in payments each year from the TAB, but this is not tied to the racing industry and is spent as the Beattie government sees fit—obviously not as prize money in the industry.

There are many non-TAB race meetings in Queensland, where the TAB does not or is not likely to offer wagering. Racing calendars for these clubs will be made by the control body. It is interesting to note that for the first time provisions have been made for the licensing of corporations as bookmakers.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has voiced its concerns regarding various clauses of the bill which displace the rehabilitation period provisions of the Criminal Law Act 1986 and include in the definition of 'criminal history' charges which did not result in convictions. The bill also requires various applicants or associates of applicants to provide their fingerprints. It questions whether these provisions have sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of the persons affected by them. A similar provision was contained in the Child Care Bill recently debated in this place. While I do not question the priority of child safety, I think we would do well to be very cautious about legislation which essentially creates a situation where an unproven complaint can impact on a person's activities. The recent incident involving a swimming coach has shown the damage that can be caused by a complaint. Yet here we are looking to enshrine in legislation that unproven complaints in this area must be taken into account.

Another concern is a provision that a person must not possess a drug at, among other places, a licensed racetrack unless the person has a reasonable excuse. This is a broadly based provision and could impact on innocent racing patrons. I ask: what are the range of drugs that are presently contained in the Commonwealth standard? Is the provision contained in clause 317 in relation to licensed venues justified, as a breach of this provision carries a maximum penalty of 400 penalty units, or $30,000, or two years imprisonment?

The committee also noted that the bill confers on authorised officers powers of entry that extend significantly beyond situations where the occupier consents or where a warrant has been obtained. Also, once entry has been effected, the bill confers upon authorised officers a further wide range of powers, including powers to obtain information. Clause 304(2) denies persons the benefit of the rule against self-incrimination in relation to the compulsory production of documents required to be kept by the person under the provisions of the bill. The committee questions whether this is justifiable.

The committee also raised concerns as to whether clause 339 contains a justifiable reversal of onus of proof and has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals. We have seen this provision in many bills and amendments in recent times, and it is of concern.

Lastly, certain decisions made by the minister and chief executive in relation to control bodies and accredited facilities are not subject to merit review. There are questions as to whether the denial of merit review in relation to decisions of the minister to discipline a control body and of the chief executive about accredited facilitates has sufficient regard to the rights of persons affected by such decisions.

As I understand it, the core of the government's argument is that the racing industry must stand on its own feet and is responsible for its own viability. It must compete with the burgeoning number of alternative entertainment venues and gambling activities that are proliferating in our society. I believe that racing is essentially an industry of local consumption. By that I mean that the vast majority of racing patrons are local. It is not rocket science to conclude that those venues that have big local populations, such as Brisbane, or those that are in very near proximity to big population centres will get the largest crowds, the most punters, the biggest betting and the most prize money and so the best horses and jockeys and the best racing. It appears that the rest of the state has been left to fend for itself in dealing with the clash between fewer TAB meetings but a need to hold enough meetings to keep owners and trainers in the industry. Yet I see nothing in this bill that addresses that issue, and it is an issue for the rest of Queensland.

That is a pity, as we have all seen the impact of rationalisation on industry after industry. Yet here we are going down the same old path. I think it not unreasonable to expect that, if the government is forcing such great change on the racing industry, it accept some of that burden.

Perhaps a racing innovation fund that is aimed directly at helping the industry to meet those new challenges and to meet them across the entire state would be a useful exercise.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (5.12 p.m.): Annually, the Queensland racing industry, comprising thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing, contributes through its wagering activities over $70 million to government coffers. It is worth repeating the statistics that were outlined by the member for Clayfield. The industry's impact on gross state product starts at around $250 million in direct contribution and with all flow-on impacts taken into account around $600 million. It has been estimated by KPMG that more than 50 per cent of this contribution is attributable to Brisbane metropolitan thoroughbred racing at Eagle Farm and Doomben. In employment terms, the racing industry generates around 24,000 full-time, part-time and casual jobs. Of the estimated 14,000 full-time equivalent jobs in the industry, KPMG estimates that around 6,700 full-time jobs are created by the Brisbane metropolitan thoroughbred racing industry.

As further evidence of the industry's significance, ABS surveys show that it rates as one of the most popular spectator sports, rating similar popularity levels to Australian Rules Football and Rugby League. The industry's importance to Queensland's social, cultural and economic landscape is indisputable and the foundation upon which we base any debate on its future.

Like most sectors of the economy, the racing industry has experienced increasing commercial pressures in recent years—increased competition from other forms of entertainment, costs pressures and increased expectations from investors for better returns. There is nothing spectacular about this. It is a set of circumstances that is confronting most industries and sectors of the economy.

These pressures have underpinned a number of significant changes to the operational side of the industry—the TAB privatisation and the recent restructuring of the industry governance arrangements being the more significant. The privatisation of the TAB significantly changed the government's relationship with the racing industry. The government's role in providing funding directly to race clubs effectively ceased, as did the provision of grants for capital works from the Racing Development Fund. However, the government has continued to contribute directly via the training track subsidy scheme and also direct grants for the winter racing carnival and the Gold Coast summer racing carnival. These funding decisions are dealt with annually within the normal annual budget process.

However, the government has secured a solid income stream for the industry via the product and program fee arrangements with the TAB. Last year, the Queensland Principal Club received nearly $98 million from this source, accounting for about 88 per cent of its total income. Agreed proportions of the product and program fee are distributed to the various codes of racing for distribution as prize money.

The clear outcome and policy decision that arose out of the privatisation of the TAB was the removal of government from the day-to-day operations of the racing industry. Such responsibilities were allocated to the respective control bodies: the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board, which is now known as Queensland Racing; the Queensland Harness Racing Board; and the Greyhound Racing Authority. The role of government had shifted to a focus on putting in place mechanisms to ensure the probity and integrity of racing and to more generally protect the public interest.

The reforms have placed an increasing obligation on the control bodies and race clubs to manage their affairs in a commercially sustainable way. One of the developments arising out of the changed arrangements to facilitate this was the transfer of ownership of racecourses to a number of clubs and the Deagon training facility to the industry. This has provided the industry with a solid base for future development.

The Racing Bill 2002 will further clarify the separation between the day-to-day operations of the industry and the government. The bill clearly gives such responsibility to the respective control bodies. Therefore, government has no direct role in making decisions about issues such as the allocation of race dates, prize money or the future operation and development of clubs. It is also important to note that the Australian Rules of Racing have specific provisions to prevent government from having a direct involvement in the day-to-day management issues of the racing industry.

I want to make just a few comments about the key features of the bill. The bill establishes the process to allow the minister to approve control bodies for each code of racing and also it allows for new codes of racing to be established. The bill clearly outlines the functions and powers

of control bodies and, as part of their accountability to the industry, will be required to develop and publish policies on a range of issues of importance to the management of the industry and its day-to-day operations. As an additional safeguard, the minister may direct a control body to make a new policy or review an existing policy if the minister needs to ensure public confidence in the industry or to ensure that a control body is managing its code in the interests of the code.

Appeals within the industry are to be dealt with at three levels. A control body can establish an appeals mechanism to handle appeals against decisions which fall within certain limits, a racing appeals tribunal will be established that both individuals and clubs can access, and appeals on questions of law can be taken to the District Court. The bill also establishes a racing animal welfare and integrity board to monitor, advise and make recommendations on the welfare of racing animals and integrity issues within the industry, including drug testing and control. Another significant provision in the bill allows for the establishment of proprietary race clubs—an issue I will make some more comment on later.

I want to return briefly to the issue of state government involvement in the operational side of the industry. Even a cursory scrutiny of the provisions of the bill will reveal the minimal influence government will have on the day-to-day operations of the industry. However, there are some strategic and public policy situations where the government can intervene. Part 4 of chapter 2 of the bill outlines the limited circumstances where the minister can intervene in relation to control bodies and codes of racing.

Under division 1 of part 4, the minister is able to give a direction to a control body about its policies or rules. The ability of the minister to give such directions is restricted to matters of public confidence, integrity, proper processes and the welfare of animals. It does not extend to day-to-day management decisions. The minister can only exercise his or her powers by giving directions to make a new policy or rule or review an existing policy or rule. Under division 3 of part 4, the minister is also able to take disciplinary action against a control body on matters which essentially go to the control body's capacity to manage its code of racing.

I am labouring the point about the limited and restricted role of the minister and government because this is an issue that is not well understood or accepted by many people within the industry. That being said, it is also important to acknowledge that some proposals or decisions of a control body are not immune from public, local member or even government criticism. Control bodies have been given significant powers which they are required to exercise in the best interests of their code. Given the significant changes in the industry in recent years, and the expectation that many more significant issues will have to be dealt with in the future, one can expect that there will be vigorous debate within the industry about some control body decisions and proposals.

One current example is the debate about the capital development of Eagle Farm and Doomben race clubs. Facilities in Brisbane's metropolitan thoroughbred racetracks area are in need of significant upgrade. Together, the Queensland Turf Club and Brisbane Turf Club have their own development proposals valued at around $51 million and $5.1 million respectively. Since the privatisation of the TAB, the former Queensland Principal Club and the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board, now Queensland Racing, has continued to approve and fund small to medium capital works projects on racecourses. Over the past couple of years, a little over $2 million, or three per cent of its annual expenditure, has been allocated to clubs for this purpose. This is obviously far short of what is required for the major works being discussed on the major tracks and is a significant issue for the industry.

Recently, it was reported that Queensland Racing had floated an option of a fire sale of both Doomben and Eagle Farm racecourses to fund the development of a new state-of-the-art racing facility at a nearby greenfield site. I understand that it was just one of several options for consideration. Although I am highly sceptical about this proposal, I do not want to use this speech to get into a public slanging match with Queensland Racing over the issue. It is recognised that such proposals, whatever their final form, will elicit strong responses from affected parties, particularly if there is no agreement or if the proposal conflicts with a club's own redevelopment proposals. There is nothing wrong with such debates. They are to be expected, but I would hope that these issues are ultimately resolved through proper consultation and discussion with the parties affected.

I cannot imagine a situation where either the QTC or BTC would be forced to sell their racetracks against their wishes. Both clubs have freehold title over these properties and the protection of that title is an issue which the courts would be able to get involved in should any direction be given beyond the power of the legislation. I note that clause 113 of the bill stipulates

that non-proprietary race clubs cannot sell or dispose of a racing venue or training track without first obtaining the approval of the minister.

I also wanted to make a brief comment in response to Bill Carter's article in today's *Courier-Mail*. First, I acknowledge the contribution Bill Carter has made to racing over many years. However, I do not share his views about proprietary racing. Whereas there is no doubt that proprietary racing will present significant challenges to the industry, such race clubs will still be required to operate under the same rules as non-proprietary clubs. They will be subject to the same control body policies and will have to meet the same requirements for licensing and operation of race meetings. Despite the provisions of the bill, I still believe that non-proprietary racing will maintain its role as the pre-eminent provider of racing in Queensland.

I welcome the provisions which require control bodies to have a policy which addresses training needs within its code and also that they may establish, manage or fund a facility or process for education and training purposes. There is no doubt that this will result in a significant increase in demand for training in the racing industry, across all codes. Queensland Racing is well placed to meet the challenges that lie ahead. Queensland Race Training Pty Ltd, located at Deagon training track, provides accredited training for stable hands, track work riders, apprentice jockeys, harness drivers and trainers, thoroughbred trainers and farriers. As well as providing training to new entrants to the industry, it also delivers training to upskill people already working in the industry. I recently visited the Deagon training centre and was briefed on its operations by business manager Suzi Sereda. The centre is delivering much-needed training to both the local and the international racing industry. It has enormous potential and is well placed to deliver the training requirements of the industry well into the future.

Since its establishment, Queensland Racing has revealed a determination and capacity to tackle some of the difficult issues confronting the racing industry. Whereas there will be much debate about the merits of decisions or proposals put forward by Queensland Racing, the fact that difficult issues are being addressed is a positive for the industry. The structure of the former Queensland Principal Club was a major impediment to its dealing effectively with the serious issues now confronting the industry. I wish Queensland Racing well in its endeavours to build a strong thoroughbred racing industry in metropolitan, country and regional areas. Like many in this chamber, I love this great sport and great industry. I only hope that the necessary reforms and changes that must be made can be achieved through proper consultation and constructive debate and partnerships with industry participants. I recognise the significant efforts of the minister, her staff and department in putting this bill together and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lawlor, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (5.27 p.m.): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Health Services, Gympie

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—Ind) (5.27 p.m.): No wonder John Anderson is threatening to withdraw millions of dollars of federal funding to the states unless they start contributing in a more tangible and productive way to assist farmers who are on the verge of financial collapse due to the current drought. This government seems to disregard farmers at every turn and appears to want to kick them when they are down by adding more regulations and increased fees at a time when they can hardly afford to put food on their tables.

This government is continuing to ignore the problems of Queenslanders north of Brisbane. Public hospitals have waiting times and lists which could be life threatening. Districts do not have enough ambulances to transport patients and there are not enough doctors to treat the number of patients who present at public hospitals. Recent examples in my electorate include a man who had severed his thumb and who waited four hours for an ambulance to take him from Gympie to Nambour. Another man with a collapsed lung who was in need of surgery had to wait 12 hours for treatment. First, he was to be transported to Nambour and then, after the man's wife had driven 45 minutes to Nambour to meet him, was told he would not be going to Nambour because Nambour had no more beds. His wife had to be contacted to return to Gympie. The man was then supposed to travel to Maryborough, then he was not, because it was out of the jurisdiction of

the Gympie ambulance staff; then he was, then he was not, and then he became so critical that emergency surgery had to be carried out there and then in the treatment room at Gympie Hospital without a senior doctor present.

Due to staff shortages at Gympie, more than one critical patient cannot be seen at a time. Such is the situation where a six-month-old baby with meningococcal was kept in the waiting room for approximately six hours before an ambulance was free and the child was taken to Nambour where antibiotics were finally administered. My personal favourite has to be that if a person rings for an ambulance on behalf on another, as I did for my father prior to his death three months ago, the person who is in need of an ambulance has to be contacted first to see if they really need an ambulance. This apparently is routine procedure. Never in my life have I ever had either to hand the telephone over to the person I was ringing on behalf of or give the telephone number of the ill person to the operator. What was my father, as an untrained medical layman, supposed to say? 'Yes, I have acute emphysema and I am dying of not-yet-diagnosed lung cancer and I can't breathe properly and I feel like I am having a heart attack. Can you please send an ambulance?' Or what about when my mother was suffering from a stroke and was unable to speak or move? Would this government have wanted her to self-diagnose over the phone?

When I questioned the Ambulance Service regarding what happened with my father, they had the audacity to say, 'Well, he didn't die before an ambulance got to him, so what's the big deal?' If this government's 20/20 vision for the future of health and health diagnosis is not simply an April fool's joke, then this is the future of our health system; or, alternatively, if you feel your life is not deemed worth living—

Time expired.

Childers Backpacker Memorial Ceremony

Mr STRONG (Burnett—ALP) (5.30 p.m.): I take this opportunity to speak about the Childers backpacker memorial ceremony that took place there last Saturday. Amongst the attendees was Governor Peter Arnison and his wife, the Premier, the Deputy Prime Minister, ambassadors, and at least two representatives of each nationality of the people who lost their lives in that tragedy. Also, a lot of members from this House took part in that ceremony—me, the members for Bundaberg, Callide and Toowoomba South.

The Isis shire and its councillors did a wonderful job. Apart from the work they did on the night of the tragedy, a lot of their work goes unsung and was not mentioned. They were there to help. In addition, the staff also played the role. The public played a role, for example, by volunteering to man the kitchens or barbecues. They had a barbecue going around the clock manned by volunteers, not necessarily from the SES or any Rotary or Apex club, just people who turned up at the community centre and put up their hand to help.

People were called from other areas such as Moore Park and Burnett Heads in the role of SES and traffic management. The main road was blocked off for quite some time. People were drawn from outlying regions. The ceremony was an appropriate one. It was emotive, and 11 of the 14 families affected by the tragedy attended. Mr Slarke made a tremendous speech. He lost two daughters yet he held up well under the pressure.

There was a gathering of the parents organised by Bill Trevor and the staff of Isis shire the night before. This gave the parents a fair measure of closure on their grieving. It was the first time that those 11 parents have gotten together. From the perspective of an outsider, it seemed a healing process because there was a reasonable will during this tragic ceremony.

This has brought an end to this tragedy for the people of Childers. The building has been finished outstandingly. The architect did an outstanding job, especially given what he had to work with. Portions of the old walls remain just as they were found after the fire—bare brickwork. It is a solemn reminder of the conditions in which these people were found. This will be the last time I speak on this subject. I am pleased that for our region an element of closure has been provided.

Dust Storms

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (5.32 p.m.): I have been very concerned to read and hear in the media over the past week a range of hysterical comments from conservation groups and elsewhere with respect to the origin of the dust storm that swept across much of eastern Australia last week. One would be forgiven for believing that that arose only as a consequence of agricultural techniques adopted in this country since European settlement.

However, nothing could be further from the truth. Any cursory glimpse at the records of the scientists that have been written in this country over the last few decades would indicate that windstorms and dust storms are something that have been part of the landscape for many tens, if not hundreds, thousands or millions of years. There is also no doubt, as they point out, that agricultural development has contributed in some way to the amount of dust which is whipped up in a storm. But the jury is far from conclusive that that represents the majority of the dust. In fact, it appears that it contributes the minor amount.

The satellite photo taken the other day indicated that the section of the dust storm in Queensland originated west of Charleville and was over Quilpie. The government's figures would indicate that 97 per cent of that area has its original vegetation. Further west, much of the country had no vegetation at all at the time of European settlement. Much of the red dust originates from the Simpson Desert and that has been blowing into our oceans now for hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of years. I was on the South Island of New Zealand a couple of years ago and was able to glimpse in the glaciers the red dust from the centre of Australia blown over there in dust storms.

If we are going to have these debates, we need to have debates based on science, not from Greens whipping up hysteria in the community among people who are genuinely concerned about these events. We need to make sure they have the right information.

In 1939 and 1983, Melbourne had its largest dust storms on record. Some of that pre-dated any broadscale land clearing. The year 1962 in Queensland was significant, as was 1994. Also, in recent times some of the latest research would indicate that the dust from inland Australia which lies in the Pacific and Indian oceans has lain there for millions of years as a consequence of wind action. Also, the rich iron in that dust is important to the build-up of phytoplankton, which assists it to not be affected by anaemia. This also assists in phytoplankton take up of carbon dioxide. As we know, carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas. Phytoplankton is also the start of the food chain in our oceans. Many of these processes are natural. Many of these processes have also happened for a long time. We have to also make sure that we do not unduly add to them. We have to make sure that there is not this hysterical nonsense out there which is not based on fact.

Mr S. Santoro; Noosa Triathlon

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (5.35 p.m.): Firstly, I offer my condolences to the federal Senate. Whereas Santoro's removal from this place has had the effect of dramatically raising the average IQ level in this place, unfortunately his appointment to the federal Senate will only have the effect of lowering the average IQ of that honourable place. I wish to express my condolences to our fellow members in the federal Senate.

On a much brighter note, I wish to draw the attention of the House to the upcoming Noosa Triathlon. Living in Peregian Beach affords me and my family the opportunity to be part of the Noosa Triathlon multisport festival sponsored by Queensland Events, the Noosa Community Tourism Board, Light Start, New Balance, Fourex, Bacardi Rum, Rosemount Estate and Lipton Ice Tea.

This festival has grown so much in the past 20 years it has become famous for being the world's biggest triathlon multisport festival and last year was awarded the Australian Best Sports Tourism Event. Is it any wonder? The ingredient we have in Noosa is the strength of our volunteers who put so much effort into making this great festival what it is today. No doubt United Sports Marketing—Garth Proud, Donna Croft and Nick Croft—have been the key players, and I congratulate them. But it is also the little people from the volunteer organisations who turn out in their hundreds to ensure this event carries with it the pride and community spirit felt in all of the villages that make the Noosa electorate what it is. Volunteers from all over the electorate turn out—the Lions, the Rotarians, the Tri Club, Noosa Outriggers, Surf-lifesavers from Coolum, Sunshine, Noosa Heads, cycling clubs, Noosa Daybreak Rotary, health care professionals, Noosa Coastguard, our local SES, police, firies. You name it and we are there.

The big deal for us is the kids triathlon. My Bonnie will try her best to have fun, I am sure. Mum and dad, with our friends from all over the area, will thrash it out in the Big M Eyeline Swim. It is all good, healthy fun. For the serious competitors, Sunday morning will be the telling time. Good luck to all our children, friends, families and visitors. Well done for being such a wonderful host to our visitors to Noosa.

Daylight Saving

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (5.37 p.m.): Daylight saving is an issue which appears to have more comebacks than Phar Lap's race wins. It is something which has gone to the people of Queensland and been rejected by the people, yet I see in the weekend media that the member for Robina wants the issue to be resolved once and for all. This, after a statewide referendum had delivered the judgment of the electors of this state! No, it is not a difficult concept, yet the member for Robina is calling for the government to put a mechanism in place to resolve the issue. If a referendum, if the voice of people, is not mechanism enough, I cannot imagine what mechanism would be suitable. Perhaps one that ignores what the majority of Queenslanders want and just delivers what the Liberal Party wants? Why does that sound familiar? In the same comment, the Beattie government was attacked for ducking and weaving on daylight saving. As I understand it, on this issue at least the member for Brisbane Central has been clear. He has said he will stick by the last referendum and so far he has done so. While I might wish for similar clarity on many other issues relating to the members opposite, I do admit that on daylight saving there has been no shadow of doubt about the government's stand. However, we appear to yet again be faced with a concerted campaign by the south-east for the introduction of daylight saving.

Initially, there were arguments about making extra time available in the evenings for outdoor activities and so on. This time, however, the real reason behind the south-east's push is apparent. It is entirely about money. Supposedly because of the summer time difference with New South Wales this state is missing out on millions. Because of the summer time difference with southern states businesses cannot work, deals cannot be done, shops do not get customers and a whole litany of woe is the result.

By the same logic, this argument would leave us practically unable to conduct any business with much of Asia, the United States, Europe or indeed anywhere that is on a different time zone. Not even under the WTO and GATS is there a proposal that we all go onto American or European time.

However, if the south-east, which already greedily consumes so much of this state's resources, wants its own time zone, then I say let it have it. If what Queensland wants is not what they want, then I suggest a conversation be held with Mr Carr about bumping the border north. Who knows, perhaps the member for Robina could find his place in the sun alongside his southern counterparts.

Finally, I take this opportunity to urge the Premier to stick by the voice of Queenslanders as made clear at the last referendum and leave daylight saving where it belongs—south of the border.

Death of Val Carne

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (5.40 p.m.): Val Carne was one of the great ladies of Cairns. She passed away peacefully at her home on Thursday, 24 October. She was only 66 years old. Val was born in Chillagoe and grew up in Cairns. She was a high achiever at school and a fine athlete and sportswoman excelling particularly in hockey in which she represented north Queensland at the state championships. Val was a hard worker right from the start. Her early skills as a seamstress signalled what was to become her forte—fashion and style. After working for a time as a fashion buyer for David Jones, Val opened her own fashion business in Cairns in the early 1970s. Cairns was still a small town in those days and fashion choices for women were limited. Val Carne, it could be said, brought style to Cairns.

Val was there during the years when the Amateurs Racing Carnival was established and became a major event on the calendar, drawing leading business and social identities to Cairns from the cities of Sydney and Melbourne. Val was instrumental in making the Amateurs the major annual fashion event in Cairns. Val was there during the internationalisation of Cairns during the 1980s and the 1990s with the surge of tourists from Europe, the USA and Japan. Val was joined in business by her two daughters, Janine and Julie. Together they owned and operated two fashion stores and two hair salons.

Though it may sound otherwise, Val did not have an easy path to success. She raised her three children on her own during years when, as a single parent, she faced considerable social and financial difficulties. In the 1970s it was still a hard road for a woman to establish and make

her own way in the business community. But Val was a trailblazer. To the end she maintained her independence, her interest in life and her willingness to embrace change. Nevertheless, despite her family and business commitments, Val still made the time to be a generous and constant participant in community and charitable endeavours. She contributed to more events and fundraising efforts than could be counted. However, Val's contributions were not widely known or recognised. She was not a lady to expect public praise or seek awards. It seems to me now that we in Cairns have missed the chance to honour her and let her know that her efforts were significant and appreciated.

Val and I were friends through business and community activities. I liked her and I respected her. I am sorry indeed that she has gone. However, Val was fortunate in the way that matters most. She was surrounded by family who loved her—her two daughters, Julie and Janine, and her son, Russell, and his wife, Karleen. Val very much loved her eight grandchildren, Chris, Adrian, Liam, Dean, Nicharla, Caresse, Marcus and James.

Val, I hope your name goes on in Cairns. I hope it remains above the door of your fine fashion store. You will be long and well remembered by many of us in Cairns who join with me in passing on our sincere condolences to your family. We thank you for your contributions to the life and style of Cairns. Rest in peace.

Sugar Industry

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (5.43 p.m.): In recent weeks and months much has been said about the sugar industry—some reasonably informed, some less so. Australia is the only country in the world where sugar is sold to domestic consumers at the same price as the world market. For example, with very few exceptions all Australian sugar is sold at the world market price. Indeed, our commercial consumers, namely soft drink and confectionary manufacturers, are at a huge advantage as they currently access the cheapest sugar in the western world. Over recent times when the raw sugar price dropped by more than $100 per tonne prices of soft drinks and refined sugar did not reduce by one cent. Yet, when there is a minimal increase in the raw sugar price there is a collective cry from all these manufacturers that they need to pass on the costs when in fact these increases, when they do happen, will only increase the shelf price of a can of Coke by less than a cent.

Under the recently announced sugar package there is provision for a levy on all domestic sugar sales—manufacturing, food service and retail uses—at, as I understand it, 3c a kilogram for approximately five years. However, this levy will not increase the net return to sugar farmers by even 1c. I believe that consumers have no problem paying a levy on consumer goods if they feel that the extra money will go back to producers.

However, on the positive side, support for innovation and regional based projects—diversification, alternative uses for cane, such as ethanol and biofuels, co-generation and plastics—can be instigated through regional guidance groups to the overarching industry guidance group. This will lead, hopefully, to a smarter and more prosperous sugar industry over time.

However, the worst outcome that could be imposed on farmers is that they would continue to supply sugar to by-products—for example, ethanol or plastics—at the world market price. There needs to be provision for farmers to be paid for products from the sugar plant such as bagasse, trash and molasses. To enable this to happen there need to be some changes to the act. However, all these changes can be accommodated without changes to the single desk selling arrangements for the domestic market, which would include sugar used for by-products.

The worst scenario is where the single desk selling of sugar is lost to the industries and the growers are at the mercy of large milling corporations and organisations for the negotiation of the price for their cane. This cannot be allowed to happen and will be opposed vigorously as these changes have to be passed through the Queensland parliament.

The industry is going through a very difficult time which is not entirely due to price fluctuations but mostly to adverse weather, disease and poor crops over the last five years. Of recent times the world price has increased slightly and the currency has remained reasonably stable, which has given the industry a remarkably better outcome for this harvest season than was originally predicted. There is no doubt that there is going to be a long haul back but I believe that there is a slightly increasing mood of optimism for the future of the industry.

Death of Lloyd Fourmile

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (5.47 p.m.): On Friday, 25 October, I attended the funeral of Lloyd Fourmile, a great champion for the Yarrabah community and a tireless advocate for indigenous people everywhere. Lloyd had died suddenly from a cardiac arrest in the early hours of Sunday, 13 October. His funeral, held at St Albans Church, was attended by over 1,000 mourners who gathered to pay their last respects to a man admired for his sense of decency as much as for his commitment to advance the lot of his people.

I had the privilege of delivering a short message of condolence on behalf of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, the Hon. Judy Spence. I know that the sentiments expressed were shared by the member for Gregory and opposition spokesman, Vaughan Johnson, who was also in attendance. I am sure Lloyd's wife, Melita, their children and members of the family were comforted in some way by the messages of sympathy and personal support provided by Lloyd's friends, colleagues and admirers.

Representatives of the Yarrabah Community Council, ATSIC, the Aboriginal Coordinating Council and various state and federal government departments joined with the citizens of Yarrabah to celebrate the life of a remarkable man. A moving eulogy was delivered by Darren Miller and I seek leave of the House to have those words of tribute incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Lloyd Colin FOURMILE (Jnr) was born on the 25th October 1959 at the old Yarrabah Hospital.

He was the eldest son of Lloyd Snr (Dec) and Joyce Fourmile (Nee Richards). At just 2 months old, Lloyd Snr and Joyce returned to Richmond to seek employment opportunities, taking baby Lloyd with them. They spent twelve months in Richmond before returning home to Yarrabah.

The family took up residency at Mourigan in an old wooden house. It was there that Lloyd spent most of his childhood. Whilst living at Mourigan three more children were added to the family clan, Neil, Ainsley and Francelle.

Bush life was an integral part of the family's lifestyle, moving to the mission for a short period of time and returning to 'OOMBUNGHI' where the whole family lived to this very day. Other additions to the family clan included Monica, Oswald, Anthony and Jason.

As a child, Lloyd was fond of horse riding, swimming, clowning around and of course getting up to mischief. He would convince and encourage his brothers and cousins to go along with him to take a few (STEAL) pineapples from the plantation which was not far from where they lived.

Lloyd attended Yarrabah Primary School up to Grade 8 and later went on to Cairns High School where he successfully completed years nine (9) and ten (10). It was noted that Lloyd was a very bright and intelligent student, having the potential to excel in whatever career path he chose. Also, it was during this time that he fell in love with his high school sweetheart 'Melita Keyes' and in 1975 Melita gave birth to their first child 'Natasha'.

Upon leaving school in 1975, he took up his first employment opportunity as a labourer in the banana plantation in Djendji. Lloyd worked alongside his school mates, Peter Yeatman, Arthur Harris (Dec.) and Maurice Cedric.

Keeping up with family traditions, Lloyd would spend time with all his families. He would move from home to home to be with relatives from both his dad and mum's families.

In the late seventies he developed a close friendship with the Deemal brothers Francis and Robert and also the late Jeffery Maclean of Hopevale Community.

During these early years, Lloyd exploited what was to be one of the many talents that he possessed (playing the guitar) and helped to form one of the most popular bands to emanate from Yarrabah, 'COLD SWEAT' along with his brother Neil, Noel Barlow, Maurice, Cedric, Lloyd Singleton and Stephen Canendo. Their popularity was so immense they were invited to perform throughout North Queensland with the highlight being invited to perform at the opening of Cairns first ever Shopping Complex—'Raintrees' now known as 'FESTIVAL FAIRE'. Cold Sweat was enjoying their rise to fame, but it became an even sweeter time for Lloyd, for it was then that Melita gave birth to their second child and first son, Gerald.

The band eventually dissolved in the late seventies and Lloyd, true to protocol acknowledged that he had to fulfil his biggest and most important obligation by taking his beloved childhood sweetheart's hand in marriage. On the 29th November 1980, he and Melita tied the knot at St. Albans Anglican Church, Yarrabah and as always he never wanted to be far from his brother Neil, for he too married his childhood sweetheart Eileen on the very same day.

Now married and realising the importance of raising a family, Lloyd took up various jobs within the Community including, sawmill benchman, Health Worker and plumbing before landing himself a stable position with the Community Police Force. He worked on the police for seven years, working side by side with fellow police officers, Robert Patterson Jnr, Alf Ludwick Snr and Clance Harris with whom he developed a very good working relationship.

Officer-in-charge of the Yarrabah Police at the time, Sergeant 'John Peterson' saw that he had a most unique person within his midst. Sgt. Peterson unearthed yet another gift from within this most outstanding person and nominated him for the 'Jaycees' Young Australian of the Year Award in 1983. Nominating Lloyd eventually paid off as he was soon to be recognised as one of the top five Young Australians of 1983.

Lloyd took out this award with honour and dignity and was a very proud recipient, but in typical Lloyd Fourmile style, he dedicated the award not only to his family, but to his beloved people.

He received the award at a function in Brisbane and a further honour was to be bestowed upon him as the major prize included a trip to Montreal, Canada.

This was to be the beginning and a turning point to a different career path.

Besides having the responsibility of taking care of his small family which now included James, Ismerril and Joanne, Lloyd now possessed a strong desire to serve his people and his Community. The time was now at hand for him to step into the political arena. In 1984 Lloyd was elected as a Councillor, which was his first term, serving for three years.

During this term as Councillor, Lloyd had come to another turning point in his life. Lloyd felt a strong spiritual calling upon him by the true and living God. Obedient to God's call he was ordained into Deaconhood in the Anglican Church in 1986. The following year he was ordained into the Priesthood.

Deciding not to nominate for the next Council elections, Lloyd committed himself to doing God's work by being handed the role of priest in charge at St. Albans Anglican Church. Politics took a back seat for the next two years.

In 1989, Lloyd responded to God's calling yet again by taking up the challenge in moving to Dubbo, NSW. He took his young family with him and was proud of watching Gerald play and excel in Rugby League. It was in stark contrast to what he was used to in Yarrabah, but nothing would deter him from doing God's work. With the spirit of God and still possessing that now familiar desire, Lloyd continued on and met and made a lot of friends whilst ministering not only to the wider community but the Koori people as well. He was instrumental in encouraging people to worship the Lord. One of the family's friends Gloria Shipp who is still priest in charge of the Koori Ministry in Dubbo, always kept in close contact with Lloyd and Melita. In 1991 the family returned home to Yarrabah and Lloyd continued to assist in the ministry at St. Albans.

Upon settling back into the Community lifestyle, again he was encumbered once again with the role of Priest in Charge at St. Albans, and while Rector at St. Albans Parish where he served for six years he was once again elected Councillor with the Yarrabah Community Council.

Lloyd still had the passion for politics and did not relinquish it in any way, but such was Lloyd's uniqueness, he somehow devised a way of combining both politics and serving God at the same time.

Even though politics called on a lot of Lloyd's time he never forgot his family as they were his highest priority.

Being a keen Rugby League player and supporter, Lloyd helped in the establishment of the Yarrabah Seahawks Junior and Senior Rugby League Football Clubs. He enjoyed watching his sons Gerald and James and was even prouder when they excelled at their chosen sport.

He was a father figure to the many children of his brother's, sister's and cousin's children including Melita's nieces and nephews. Whereby strangers were openly welcomed and invited to take up residency in his house. Kind heartedly Lloyd and Melita's house was often used as a guest house to help accommodate those in need of comfort and love. They certainly found it there.

During the early hours of Sunday morning, on the 13th day of October 2002, the final chapter of this wonderful story concluded. Failing to warn or worry his family about his health, Lloyd in his own usual self, visited the Yarrabah Hospital seeking medical attention. It was then in an instant that members of his family were left shocked, shattered and brokenhearted of his rapid departure from this Earth.

Lloyd will be sorely missed for his inspirational leadership and his loving care. He was a strong family man, dedicating his love to his precious wife, children and his precious grandchildren.

We know that he is now in the garden of rest and one day as he always preached—'WE WILL MEET ON THAT BEAUTIFUL SHORE.'

Mr PITT: In recognition of Lloyd's role as an ordained Anglican priest it was fitting that the service was conducted under the guidance of no fewer than three bishops as well as a dozen other clergy. Aboriginal Bishops Arthur Malcolm and James Leftwich were joined by Bishop George Tung Yep in acknowledging a lifetime of administering to the spiritual needs of the people of Yarrabah. Indigenous Christian choirs made a moving contribution in what was a powerful tribute to a man who had provided such strong leadership tempered by genuine humility and great compassion for those in need. Lloyd will be remembered for many things, not the least of which will be his determination to encourage indigenous Australians to take charge of their own destiny. He was willing to take up the challenges life delivered, having served as a community councillor, as chairman of the Yarrabah Community Council, as an ATSIC councillor and as chairman of the Aboriginal Coordinating Council. He fulfilled those roles with passion and good grace, providing a magnificent example to others of what can be achieved through advocacy, negotiation and persistence. I am confident that he has left a powerful legacy that will inspire others to make in their turn a valuable contribution to indigenous affairs.

My good friend Peter Yeatman, the Chairman of the Yarrabah Community Council, and I will miss the wise counsel and the mischievous sense of humour of a man whom we both respected and relied upon to give unique insight into many difficult and sometimes challenging issues. It is not easy to sum up the life of a friend taken away at so young an age whom you believe had even more to contribute. I will remember him as a man of God, as a dedicated family man, as a fearless advocate for his people, as a champion of his community, as a fighter for all those in need and, above all, as a genuine, good bloke.

Good Shepherd Trading Circle

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Lib) (5.49 p.m.): Tonight I rise to speak about the Good Shepherd Trading Circle which is part of a worldwide network of Good Shepherd Sisters committed to work for economic justice with and for women, particularly those who live in urban slums and impoverished rural areas of the world. In Australia the trading circle plays its part in the network of support by marketing products made by women in microenterprises and by making grants to assist the various projects to access equipment, training and materials. This includes assistance for projects with a local market focus, such as agriculture and animal husbandry projects, bakeries, jam making and fishing. The Good Shepherd Sisters working with the women in the projects respect the religious beliefs of the women, whether they be Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu or followers of indigenous religions. They do this so that these women and their families will be able to live with dignity.

The trading circle buys the products from the women at their prices, adds on importing costs and sells the products through a permanent outlet in Brisbane at 52 Enoggera Road, Newmarket and in parishes, community groups, schools, at conferences and other venues in Brisbane and Sydney. A house has recently been purchased in Melbourne to be used as a permanent base for the development of the project. The concept has developed under different names in other industrialised countries where the Good Shepherd Sisters have embraced it—Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, the UK, the USA and Spain. Through this project, women are assured of a fair price for their work and they can also count on being paid properly. In most cases, child care is provided or the children are able to be with their mothers while they work, making these projects very different from most factory situations.

The Good Shepherd Trading Circle is not a charity but is about love and justice. It is about bringing to very poor people good news that they and their work are respected and valued and that at least some of the things which they and their families need for a life which is more than just survival can be theirs. I have purchased some embroidery from these outlets which is of an excellent quality.

Mr Terry Sullivan: They do a great service, don't they?

Mrs SHELDON: Yes, they do indeed. They provide a great service. It is something that we should all support, because by buying these products we can help women who are not as fortunate as ourselves and who live in Third World countries, sometimes without even drinking water. We need to look after them and their children. Finally, I congratulate Sister Ann Manning and Sister Pamela Maloney, who run the centre in Newmarket. I would ask people who are thinking of buying something for Christmas to consider going there.

Orana Youth Shelter

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (5.52 p.m.): In my other life—or, should I say, my real life—I am the mother of four children aged 11 to 17 years who live in Strathpine. Like many members here today, I am grateful every single day that my kids arrive home safe, appear happy in their lives and enjoy what my husband and I hope is a fulfilling and supportive way of family life. I do not kid myself, however; I know that raising young people is one of life's greatest challenges. Public position, sufficient income, worldly possessions or good intentions are not necessarily the answer to happy children and young people. Homes can be tough places to live—battlegrounds for many families, unfortunately. The demons of domestic violence, poverty, unemployment and drugs affect our families most of all.

For many of our young people, living at home is no longer an option and they can be faced with the prospect of homelessness at the tender ages of 14 or 15 years. That is where the Orana Youth Shelter at Bald Hills makes its mark in the electorate of Aspley. It is a little piece of space, rest and understanding for homeless and at-risk youth aged 14 to 18 years, a home that gives young people a chance to seek the shelter and assistance that can save them from a life of despair and hopelessness that homelessness can bring. I am pleased to tell the House that Orana has been providing a service for young people in our community for over 20 years. Under the auspices of Queensland Baptist Care and with significant state government funding, the shelter provides emergency accommodation to young people who are either already homeless or at risk of being so. Residents can stay one day, several weeks or up to three months. There are places for up to six young people, but unfortunately the shelter turns away many more than it can help. But thankfully each year 200 young people have a chance to recover and survive just by the fact that Orana and its fantastic staff and volunteers are there for them.

I first became involved with Orana Youth Shelter after I met Sergeant Kev Phillips of Boondall Police Station. Kev came to tell me about his involvement with Orana and the Sponsor a Bed program. His discussions about how important it is for our police to be involved with not just the punishment of young people but also the solutions was one that made me jump on board and sponsor a bed at Orana for $500 a year, money that goes towards the extras that make a difference to the kids who are there. Recently I was the MC at a function for businesspeople in the electorate which was attended by my good friend the member for Stafford, and over 60 businesses attended. Orana has 80 Sponsor a Bed places and I understand that it is halfway there. I thank the businesses which helped Orana. I particularly want to say thank you to Orana Youth Shelter, its staff, volunteers, and the Bald Hills community, who for the past 20 years have shown great commitment towards our youth. To the young people who have survived and thrived following their time at Orana, I say my biggest thanks.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 5.56 p.m.