

THURSDAY, 29 APRIL 2004

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

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE QUESTIONNAIRE; TOUR BOOKLET

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, a Parliamentary Service questionnaire will be distributed to each member this morning in the chamber. The questionnaire is an important performance management document for the Parliamentary Service, and I encourage all members to complete the questionnaire and return it to the Clerk. Members have also been provided with a new self-guide tour booklet that I trust they will find useful when showing their guests through the complex.

PETITIONS

The following honourable members have lodged paper petitions for presentation—

Speed Limit, Moggill State School

Mr Quinn from 81 petitioners requesting the House to immediately reduce the speed limit on the state-controlled section of Moggill Road in the vicinity of the Moggill State School to 40 km/h, the same speed as adjacent council school zones.

Dredging, Currumbin Creek

Ms Stuckey from 2,140 petitioners requesting the House to commit to dredging the bar at the mouth of Currumbin creek immediately and to continue to do so at regular intervals when the need arises in the future.

PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial paper was tabled by The Clerk—

Minister for Environment (Mr Mickel)

- Response from the Minister for Environment (Mr Mickel) to an E-Petition sponsored by Mr Choi from 54 petitioners regarding a development proposal for 46-68 Windemere Road, Alexandra Hills

MINISTERIAL PAPER

Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport (Mr Mackenroth)—

- Charter of Social and Fiscal Responsibility 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Shafston International College

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.33 a.m.): In light of recent media reports, the directors of Shafston college are reviewing their operations. Cameron and Bradley Lloyd, Directors, Shafston House College Ltd, said—

We will take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the integrity of our educational institution is upheld.

Accordingly, we have commenced discussions today with international business consultancy firm, Deloitte, with a view to engaging an independent consultancy team to assist with Shafston's day to day management.

Our family has been deeply distressed by this week's allegations. However, our primary concern is the welfare of our students and staff and the provision of a safe and supportive learning environment.

Officers of the departments of Education and Employment and Training met yesterday with the governing council of the Shafston Institute of Technology to discuss the implications of this week's revelations. The council confirmed the following: acceptance of the former president's resignation from all positions held with the institute and its associated entities; his ban from entering the campus grounds and his residence on the site and communication with the college community, staff and students; and the offer of independent counselling services to assist them with any distress or problems connected with the revelations. Government officers are satisfied that the immediate action taken by the council has been appropriate. They have found the council open

and cooperative. There are about 1,500 students enrolled in all of the college's programs, with a small number of students in the 14 to 18 years age group.

The government is undertaking a coordinated response to this matter from the two departments; namely, undertaking an audit of the institution's compliance with the Australian Quality Training Framework and Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 and, in parallel with this audit, reviewing the institution's policies, procedures and practices as they relate to the pastoral care and welfare of their students under section 12(3) of the Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 1993.

The government's actions in this matter are driven by a number of concerns, the most of which is the safety and welfare of students. We are also concerned to minimise any reputational damage caused to the reputation of the institute and other universities and colleges involved in the export of educational services. As everyone in this chamber knows, my government is strongly committed to exporting educational services. It is important that everybody understands that we are not prepared to allow any institution, educational or otherwise, to damage this state's international reputation in attracting students. Everyone is now clearly put on notice that we expect the highest possible standards of every educational institution. If anyone else is engaged in any similar activity or allegations, we will take similar action.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sugar Industry

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.36 a.m.): Today we get on with the job of delivering a future to Queensland's sugar industry. The House has passed historic reforms that have freed up the industry to innovation and value adding. This is in line with our election commitment. I congratulate the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, Henry Palaszczuk, on the success of the bill. Within minutes of its passage Mr Palaszczuk and State Development and Innovation Minister, Tony McGrady, signed off on the first grant from the government package which, with the addition of \$3 million from the Department of Primary Industries last week, is now worth \$33 million. The money is already starting to flow, as we promised it would.

I thank Ministers Palaszczuk and McGrady. I also thank the former minister, Tom Barton, for the work he did. As I said, the money, as promised, is now starting to flow. \$20,600 has been awarded to the Plane Creek Cane Protection and Productivity Board to develop options on how to increase harvesting productivity and efficiency in the Plane Creek mill area near Mackay. It has already been done. The board gets half its funding from CSR Plane Creek mill and half from the growers who supply cane to the mill. The board's aim is to enhance productivity in the Plane Creek mill area by providing agronomic advice and services. The funding builds on other assistance the government has given to the industry in the Mackay-Proserpine area.

We have also provided close to \$1 million throughout the industry in grants over the past few months for projects ranging from engineering design of the furfural project at the Proserpine mill to the development of airborne imagery and industry development tools at Mackay. I know that the member for Whitsunday and the member for Mackay will be particularly delighted. The member for Mackay is always delighted.

The industry and government continue to investigate several projects to reduce the industry's reliance on the vagaries of global raw sugar prices. Sugar resource officers have been on the ground for more than a year. We are working with industry to help make it globally competitive.

I also welcome the federal government's commitment to provide further support beyond the \$150 million package agreed to by our governments in our September 2002 agreement. The free trade agreement with the United States was the mother of all let-downs for the sugar industry, which had hoped to gain more than \$75 million in the last year rising to \$344 million in year 8 under the agreement. So this extra funding is the least Canberra can do. I note Mr Howard's comments on ABC Radio yesterday that this new package is in no way conditional on further contribution from the Queensland government, even though we have now provided an extra \$3 million.

The industry is now ready to move forward to embrace new practices, new ideas and new products. If it continues to work with government, the industry will have a future as a mainstay of regional communities and a great symbol of Queensland. Without the reforms passed by this parliament, money allocated by the federal government or even the state government would not

be effective. Our reforms were fundamentally important to make sure that not only was our \$33 million effective but so too was the money allocated by the Commonwealth.

Mr Mackenroth: They get all their money from the levy.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right. In fact, the money coming from the Commonwealth is largely coming from a levy which has been paid by all Australians.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Overseas Visit; Sugar Industry

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.39 a.m.): I do want to announce today, because it relates specifically to sugar, that I will visit Brazil and the United States between 26 May and 8 June 2004 and also very briefly visit Chile. The purpose of my visit will be to promote Queensland's biotechnology capabilities, lend high-level government support to the efforts of Australian exporters in those markets and attract new investments to Queensland. In the United States with my colleague the Minister for State Development and Innovation, Tony McGrady, I will lead a Queensland delegation to the largest and most prestigious biotechnology event in the world, BIO 2004 in San Francisco. Queensland's delegation to BIO has grown substantially over the years to now number approximately 100. The event is a unique opportunity to demonstrate Queensland's scientific achievements and capabilities in developing new biotech and pharmaceutical products for world markets.

Also attending BIO this year will be the Commonwealth Industry, Tourism and Resources Minister, Ian MacFarlane, New South Wales Premier, Bob Carr, and Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks. The Queensland government is committed to ensuring that this state is a major biotechnology centre in the Asia-Pacific region. In Chile I will be following up on Queensland's current participation in Expomin, one of the mining industry's most important trade exhibitions. Queenslanders represent almost half of the entire Australian contingent at Expomin. My government's South American mining strategy, implemented in partnership with the Ai Group over the past three years, has already helped secure \$29 million in exports of mining services and equipment. My visit to Chile will further raise the profile of Queensland with senior decision makers. I will be encouraging them to look to Queensland for more of their specialist equipment and expertise needs.

My visit to Brazil, the largest economy in South America, will be the first by a Queensland Premier. Queensland's 2002-03 exports of \$275 million, dominated by coal, already represent two-thirds of Australia's exports to Brazil. There is scope to increase coal technology sales, and I will be promoting this during my visit. My visit will mark the posting of an officer from the Environmental Protection Agency to Acominas to advise the company on a number of environmental management issues. I will also be supporting Queensland's education and agribusiness exports to Brazil.

But more important than any of that, I will be using this trip to Brazil to follow up on a trip that Tom Barton undertook last year to see what we can do to continue to value add to the sugar industry. I will be meeting with the Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Supply, Mr Roberto Rodrigues. He is the minister for agricultural development and is responsible for defining and implementing policies in relation to sugar and the sugar industry in Brazil. I will also be meeting with Unica, the Sao Paulo Sugar Cane Agroindustry Union. Unica represents the sugar cane, sugar and alcohol business areas in the state of Sao Paulo. It is the agency responsible for more than 60 per cent of Brazilian production. It has a leadership position in the country and gives us an opportunity to see what partnerships possibly exist. There will also be a reception for the agribusiness mission, including the mining sector, and there will also be meetings with major ethanol producers Dedeni and Copper Sugar.

The reason for that is that we need to develop the ethanol industry. Japan, for example, is keen to start importing ethanol, but it will not do it through one market. That means that we have the potential to develop an ethanol industry where we can be one of the suppliers to Japan. We need an outlet, and that is a possibility for us to pursue. So the visit to Brazil is timed specifically to do what we can to enhance the sugar industry with value adding in this state, and today I invite any representatives from the sugar industry who want to accompany me to come with me. They have already been informally invited. I formally invite them today. I would be grateful if representatives of the sugar industry would accompany me to ensure that we value add and give a significant future to this important industry.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Charter of Social and Fiscal Responsibility

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 a.m.): I want to advise the House that, following on from the Treasurer's tabling of the Charter of Social and Fiscal Responsibility, we have prepared a statement of government priorities to clearly articulate our focus for this term. For time reasons, I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

During our previous two terms in government, we outlined our priorities and we have recently revised the Queensland Government Priorities to reflect our agenda for the third term.

There are seven priorities for this term.

They represent areas where the Government is seeking to achieve significant improvements.

These priorities are a key element of the redrafted Charter of Social and Fiscal Responsibility and provide a framework for government activity.

The overall aim is to improve the lives of all Queenslanders.

By focusing on improvements in these priority areas, Queensland can continue to grow as a State of opportunity, of innovation, of prosperity, and of fairness and equity.

The Government Priorities for the third term are:

- Improving health care and strengthening services to the community;
- Realising the Smart State through education, skills and innovation;
- Protecting our children and enhancing community safety;
- Managing urban growth and building Queensland's regions;
- Protecting the environment for a sustainable future;
- Growing a diverse economy and creating jobs; and,
- Delivering responsive government.

Improving health and other services to the community is an area of ongoing importance.

We will work to improve the standard and accessibility of hospital and health services, and support increased quality of life through disease prevention and active participation.

We will support families and those with a disability, work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and improve access to affordable housing.

Over the past two terms, the Government has laid the foundation for establishing Queensland as a Smart State. This term will be about realising the Smart State vision through education, training and innovation.

Protecting our children and enhancing community safety will be a particular focus.

We will reform the child protection system, implement strategies which contribute to safe communities, and address the social and economic causes of crime.

An emerging issue which requires the concerted effort of the State Government this term is the management of urban growth. Accelerated growth in South East Queensland must be managed in an integrated and coordinated manner.

We must also continue to focus on building all of Queensland's regions through statewide infrastructure development, regional job creation and efficient and integrated transport.

Protecting the environment for a sustainable future is a priority this term.

We will protect Queensland's unique environmental and heritage assets, promote sustainable development and responsible use of our natural resources, encourage environmentally sustainable industries, and protect Queensland's diverse plants and animals.

The priority—'Growing a diverse economy and creating jobs'—will give Queensland a strong economic base on which to build its future.

The Government will work to expand export and trade opportunities, maintain a competitive tax environment, and encourage value adding, productivity growth, and the development of growth industries.

We will continue to create jobs and break the unemployment cycle for Queenslanders out of work, and ensure a fair industrial relations system.

Central to achieving all these objectives is having a government that is responsive to the community.

These priorities provide departments and agencies with a framework for planning and reporting, and guide policy development and resource allocation decisions.

The Government's progress against these priorities will be reported annually through the Priorities in Progress report.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Economy

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 a.m.): The Queensland economy is being transformed by emerging industries in information technology,

biotechnology, nanotechnology and new media generating new and well-paid jobs. The success of that is very clear. I have highlighted it in my ministerial statement, and I seek leave to incorporate my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Our traditional strengths of tourism, mining and agriculture are also embracing innovation to give them the edge over competitors.

The Government's investment of over \$2 billion in science, research and innovation since the dawn of the Smart State in 1998 is paying dividends.

56,000 Queenslanders are now employed in the information, communications and technology sector and there are the equivalent of 13,000 full-time employees in research and development.

Biotech is a vital R&D sector with terrific growth prospects.

The industry has grown significantly since 1999, when Ernst & Young estimated total employment at 1,225.

It has two key components—the commercial and research sectors—and our success in the commercial sector is highlighted by the Ernst & Young Queensland Biotechnology Report 2003.

The report shows:

1. The 54 responding organisations employed 1,835 people in scientific, technical support, management and production roles.
2. Over 70% of these jobs are in human therapies, with about 275 jobs in the next largest area, agricultural biotech.
3. Employment in private and public biotech companies is expected to increase by 78% between 2003-2005. Revenue growth of 100% is anticipated over the period.
4. The 2003 Bio-industry Review report found that the commercial biotech consists of 69 companies—an increase of 10 firms from 2001-2002.
5. The State's commercial biotech sector generates 22% of national biotechnology industry turnover. This is more than our per capita share—but there's room to improve.
6. Compared to the 12 major USA biotech States, and taking account of Gross State Product, Queensland is second only to Massachusetts in our ability to generate biotech companies.

Around 3,000 scientists and support staff are either already engaged in biotechnology research or will be shortly.

The Queensland Institute of Medical Research, the State's major provider of medical biotechnology R&D, has 700 scientists, students and support staff at Herston.

Construction has begun on the QUT Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation at Herston, which will employ 300 research and support staff.

The Queensland Bioscience Precinct at St Lucia employs 700 staff from the Institute for Molecular Bioscience, CSIRO and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.

The IMB has already generated 10 start-up companies.

The precinct will soon be complemented by the Queensland Brain Institute, which will employ a further 240 science and support staff, and the Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology, which will employ 300 science and support staff.

The scientific excellence to be created through the combined efforts of over 1000 scientists at IMB, AIBN and the new Queensland Brain Institute will place Queensland's biotechnology on a par with leading biotechnology clusters such as San Diego and Boston.

In regional Queensland, James Cook University, Southern Cross and Sunshine Coast universities each boast significant biotechnology research capabilities.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Premier's Export Awards

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.44 a.m.): Later today I will be officially launching the 2004 Premier of Queensland's Export Awards. As part of that ceremony, I will be launching a new initiative for the arts sector, the Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency. I seek leave to incorporate details of those awards in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Our Indigenous art is in great demand overseas, as the success of the recent exhibition in Dusseldorf revealed.

The Dusseldorf exhibition showcased 39 artworks by 11 artists, from far-north Queensland, south-east Queensland and the Torres Strait. A number of those pieces were sold during the exhibition, but some are on show here today.

Many of those artists are exhibiting work in a special Indigenous exhibition—*Out of Country*—which begins in Washington this Friday.

The Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency was instrumental in putting the exhibition together.

The Premier's Export Awards have been running for 15 years and have steadily grown in stature, with the 2003 event attracting a record 179 entries.

It was particularly pleasing that so many of the entries came from companies based in regional Queensland—143 in all.

Exports contribute more than \$30 billion a year to the state's gross domestic product, currently running at more than \$126 billion.

However, there is room for further expansion and there is a role for government in the development of our international markets, a role which I passionately believe in.

That's why I've assumed the portfolio of Minister for Trade and that's why I will continue to lead trade and investment missions to important and emerging Queensland markets.

We've set a target of increasing the number of Qld exporters by 20 per cent, from 3,000 in 2001 to 3,600 by 2006.

The strategy is working. Since July 1, 2001, we've helped 245 Queensland businesses achieve their first export sales.

Mr Speaker, I urge all Queensland businesses involved in exports to consider participating in the State awards, the winners of which will be announced in October. They will automatically qualify for the national awards, which will be presented on December 9.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Premier's Literary Awards

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.44 a.m.): Tomorrow I will have the pleasure of launching the 2004 Queensland Premier's Literary Awards. Last year, in terms of dollars, Queensland offered Australia's biggest literary awards by a small margin, just ahead of New South Wales. This year, in terms of dollars, we are Australia's biggest literary awards by a huge margin. We have increased our prize money from \$155,000 to \$225,000. The 2004 awards mark our biggest expansion in the six-year history of the awards, increasing the number of categories from nine to 14. I seek leave to incorporate further details in *Hansard* for the information of members.

Leave granted.

This will include incorporating three awards which previously were not included in this program as well as introducing two new categories.

In addition to recognising the Best Television Script, we will have a new category for the Best Film Script.

We have also created a new category which is very appropriate for the Smart State.

The new category is an award for Best Science Writing.

There is plenty for science writers to write about in Queensland. Take just one field of science as an example—medical research.

In previous Ministerial statements this term I have highlighted two excellent examples: researchers at the Mater Medical Research Institute are working on an alternative to conventional bone marrow transplants, and the Wesley Research Institute has a project which may allow heart patients to grow new arteries.

Entries for the 14 categories close on June 4 and I will announce the winners in September.

The 2004 Queensland Premier's Literary Award categories are:

- Science Writers Award (\$15,000)
- Best Film Script—Pacific Film and Television Commission Award (\$15,000)
- Arts Queensland Judith Wright Calanthe Award for Poetry (\$15,000)
- Arts Queensland Steele Rudd Australian Short Story Award (\$15,000)
- David Unaipon Award for an Unpublished Indigenous Writer (\$15,000)
- Best Fiction Book (\$25,000)
- Best Manuscript of an Emerging Queensland Author (\$20,000)
- Best Literary or Media Work Advancing Public Debate—the Harry Williams Award (\$15,000)
- Best History Book (\$15,000)
- Best Non-Fiction Book (\$15,000)
- Best Children's Book (\$15,000)
- Best Young Adult Book (\$15,000)
- Best Drama Script (Stage) (\$15,000)
- Best Television Script (\$15,000)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Suncorp Stadium

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (9.45 a.m.): On 1 June last year, the first game was held at the redeveloped Suncorp Stadium between the Brisbane Broncos and the Newcastle Knights. Next month, on 28 May, we expect the millionth customer to walk through the gates. One million people in less than 12 months! It is an amazing achievement. When the Beattie government decided to redevelop this facility, we had our fair share of knockers. However, I bet many of those same people have visited the stadium with their family and friends by now. It is a wonderful facility. Whether they are sitting in the front row or the back row, they have a great view of the ground. The facilities are first-class, with easy access to amenities and minimal queues for a pie or a beer. Getting to and leaving the game is a breeze with the public transport system. In fact, nearly every match played at the stadium has had 80 per cent to 90 per cent public transport usage.

Why, even the leader of our nation, John Howard, said—

I don't think I've been to a better-constructed rugby or rugby league ground anywhere in Australia.

To date, 24 matches have been held at the stadium, including 12 Broncos games, two State of Origin matches, a Rugby Union test and nine Rugby World Cup matches. To date, a total of 897,276 fans have passed through the turnstiles to watch these games. By the end of next month we expect that number to eclipse one million. Next week, on 8 May, we have the blockbuster Rugby match between the Reds and the Waratahs. Sales are already very strong for this game, and hopefully it will be the first of many Super 12 matches to be played at the ground. The following week, on 14 May, the Broncos take on the Newcastle Knights and two weeks after that they take on the Dragons on 28 May. The Broncos have had a great start to the season and are playing great, entertaining footy.

On Sunday, 37,745 people watched the Broncos wallop reigning premiers Penrith in one of the best matches of the season. After we beat the Bulldogs this week, I expect bumper crowds at the next two home matches. To add to the excitement, I spoke to Bruno Cullen from the Broncos yesterday and he has confirmed they will hold a special promotion to commemorate the one millionth person through the gate, and details of that will be released in coming weeks. If anyone here today has not visited the ground, I encourage them to get along to watch a game. It is the best stadium in the world.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Land Clearing

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (9.48 a.m.): The Beattie government gave a commitment to land-holders that Queensland's new tree clearing laws would provide them with greater certainty to manage vegetation on their property, and we are delivering on that commitment. The government is currently working with stakeholder groups to progress key elements of our new laws to phase out broadscale land clearing in Queensland by December 2006. We are working with Agforce and the Queensland Farmers Federation to finalise the best mechanisms to deliver the government's \$150 million financial adjustment package to affected land-holders. Incentives, structural adjustment and best management practice packages are currently being finalised and details should be available by mid-May.

Incentives will be delivered through regional processes and I expect the tender for the delivery process will be out shortly. Applications for structural adjustment will be able to be made from 1 July through the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority and we are also working with stakeholder groups to develop interim regionally based codes to help land-holders manage their land in a locally relevant and sustainable manner. These codes will provide guidance and ongoing necessary vegetation management activities like thinning, encroachment, fodder harvesting and weed control as well as forestry practices and provision for extractive industries.

These codes are being developed directly from the draft regional vegetation management plans with input from Agforce, QFF, the Queensland Conservation Council and the Wilderness Society. I have ordered a review to refine these interim codes to be initiated within six months of proclamation of the new laws.

The interim codes will also apply to all applications by land-holders wishing to participate in the ballot to clear between 200,000 to 250,000 hectares, which is the balance of the remaining

500,000 hectares of trees available to be cleared. New applications will be called for following proclamation of the new laws and will go into a ballot, which we plan to hold in September this year. An information kit for land-holders on how to apply to participate in the ballot will be available in the near future.

Every successful application will then be assessed against the new regional vegetation management codes—a process that may take up to a year to complete. Successful applicants will then have between 18 months and two years to use their permits with all clearing under the cap to be completed by December 2006.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Trade Mission

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Innovation) (9.50 a.m.): I can report to the House today that during my 10-day trade mission, which was part of a federal government-led delegation to China, I met with senior government officials and the leaders of major companies in China, Japan and Korea. On Tuesday, we met with Chinese Vice-Premier, Zeng Peiyan, who briefed us on China's economic growth.

There had been fears that rising coal production in China could adversely affect markets for Queensland coal in Japan and Korea. But China's enormous steel production, estimated to reach 260 million tonnes this year, is absorbing most of China's coal and this is not forgetting its demand for power. This has led to increased demand for Queensland coal and we fielded inquiries in Japan and Korea from companies eager to secure long-term coal contracts and to invest in Queensland coalmines. One such Korean company has just built four new power plants, creating an additional 2,000 megawatts of power.

There was also enormous interest in the so-called Pechiney lease covering the Aurukun mineral deposits, which contain an estimated 500 million tonnes of bauxite. I attended a meeting with the China National Development and Reform Commission, which was also attended by federal Trade Minister, Mark Vaile, and South Australian Trade Minister, Paul Holloway. At that meeting, Chairman Ma Kai said he had three major interests and No. 1 on that list was the Pechiney lease. There were also inquiries from Chalco, the sole domestic producer of alumina to the Chinese market and the second largest alumina refiner in the world. I stressed in these meetings that any company wanting to secure this lease would have to build a refinery in Queensland.

We took a small delegation of Gladstone engineering businesses, who got themselves together and called themselves the Gladstone Alliance, on the China leg of our trip and secured meetings for them with major Chinese organisations. In our one day in Tokyo we called on six major clients of Queensland and also visited Osaka. We met with the vice-governor and re-affirmed the importance of the friendship and economic exchange agreement between Queensland and Osaka. In Korea we visited the nation's largest dairy farm, which is taking sugar cane from the Sunshine Coast and trialling it as a feed for its herd. This so-called cow candy is another potential market for Queensland's sugar cane industry.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Health System

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.53 a.m.): The job of ensuring that Queensland's health system remains one of the best is not just the responsibility of one person, it is not just the job of health staff or management; it is also the responsibility of every member of this parliament on behalf of our constituents. I have been to more than 20 hospitals and community health centres right around this state in the last 10 weeks talking to thousands of staff, to management, to health councils and to patients about their care. I can say first-hand that there is no crisis in our health system.

But there is a crisis in public confidence and the public perception that is driven by stunts, by emotive and unsubstantiated statements that find their way to the media and in this parliament, and by attempts to ignore the very process that exists to help these people. One of the most frequent comments to me, particularly from elderly patients, has been that they were very nervous about going to hospital—and I quote from one person—'Because of all the bad things we'd

heard'. These same people told me that they did not know why they were worried and most of them wanted to talk to me about the great care that they had received by staff. Patients have stopped me in corridors to talk about how good the staff were. One man at the Princess Alexandra Hospital had been partially paralysed and he wanted me to know how the staff had helped him to walk again. Another elderly lady could not thank staff enough who help with her weekly dialysis.

So this morning I want to issue a challenge to every member of this parliament on both sides. I am asking every member to bring their patient issues or their questions about the health system to my department where we can try to address the issues. If every member is serious about helping to improve patient care, then they will help me on this matter. I intend to arrange for district health managers in all 38 districts around the state to have a quarterly meeting with all members of parliament to talk through the issues and to keep them up to date with matters relative to the health system in their areas.

Providing health care for 28,000 patients every day is not easy. Yes, like any industry, we do make mistakes. At the end of the day, invariably some people will not be happy with the service and we must strive to address the issues that are of importance. It is not just individuals; I am also talking about all the organisations who have a vested interest in health in Queensland. My challenge is to each and every one of us here today and during our term to participate in the drive to improve health care for the people of Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Primary Industries

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (9.57 a.m.): In September last year I released the projections on Queensland primary industries' performance for the 2003-04 financial year. At the time, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries' prospects report had forecast \$8.7 billion in gross value of primary industry production. This forecast was based on the presumption of an Australian dollar worth US64c.

As is its practice, the department has now updated its forecast. I am pleased to announce today that the department has revised its September estimates upwards to \$9 billion for this financial year based on an Australian dollar of US72c and a return—and a hopeful return—to normal seasonal conditions for the remainder of the forecast year. The revised outlook for this financial year is comparable to the figure for 2002-03. Indeed it is slightly higher than the 2002-03 result. That is despite the projected increase in the Australian dollar.

However, the improved outlook is not shared by all sectors. The horticulture sector, that is fruit, vegetables and lifestyle horticulture industries, is forecast to increase to \$2.9 billion and become the largest contributor to the gross value of primary industry production. Meanwhile, the cattle and calf industry is forecast to decrease by three per cent to approximately \$2.8 billion. The projection for the gross value of sugar cane production for the 2003 crush was wound back to \$790 million in September last year. The department has now revised that estimate down again to \$720 million due to combined low world sugar prices and the decrease in Queensland's production. This estimate is 20 per cent lower than the result for the 2002 crush. This highlights the need for the reforms that were passed by this parliament yesterday.

On the other side of the ledger, the department has forecast cotton to regain some of the very significant losses incurred during recent years with a massive 50 per cent improvement over the previous financial year to \$315 million. Similarly, the department has forecast an increase in gross value of cereal grain production by 41 per cent over the 2002-03 to \$505 million.

In terms of fisheries and forestry, returns are forecast to remain relatively stable at \$360 million and \$114 million respectively. Across other sectors milk, pork and wool are forecast to record falls, while gains are projected for chicken meat and eggs.

Prior to the Beattie government coming to office almost six years ago, Queensland's primary industries were described as a \$6 billion sector. Indeed, when the National Party went to the 2001 election it valued primary industries at \$5.5 billion. Now, despite droughts and other challenges out of the control of governments or industry, we can talk about Queensland primary industries being a \$9 billion sector. As minister I am determined to continue to work hard to improve the sector's bottom line and the profitability of our primary producers, large and small, who contribute to it.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Protection

Hon. M. F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.00 a.m.): At noon today my department and I will be launching a major nationwide campaign here at state parliament to recruit an additional 518 specialised child safety staff over the next three years. We hope to employ up to 318 of those people in the next financial year. The new employees will be deployed in various locations across Queensland, with many staffing the 46 child safety service centres that will replace the 36 area offices.

This is a significant part of the Beattie government's commitment to safeguarding Queensland children and reflects Peter Forster's blueprint to implement the CMC's 110 recommendations to reform child protection in Queensland. It is central to our efforts to create an entirely new department with a new positive workplace culture that has a very clear child protection focus.

We are looking for dedicated child protection professionals with a degree in social work or behavioural sciences, and people experienced in working with families who can help people in support roles. There will be an increased emphasis on local recruitment of paraprofessional staff, called child safety support officers, to assist degree-qualified child safety officers. A major focus will be on the recruitment of indigenous staff which will ensure that the work force is more responsive and representative of our diverse clients. Another key focus is the development of a diversity policy which ensures that staff of the Department of Child Safety represent the multicultural society which we serve, and I look forward to working with Karen Struthers, the parliamentary secretary to the Premier on multicultural affairs, with regard to that focus.

This recruitment campaign is unprecedented in the area of child protection in Queensland and is being brought about in part by the massive injection of more than \$200 million in additional recurrent funds by the 2006-07 financial year. The additional staff will result in more manageable caseloads, improved professional supervision and new practice standards to ensure a higher-quality service delivery to clients.

Child safety officers will have comprehensive entry-level preservice training, induction, workplace assessment, and, importantly, access to ongoing training and professional development at more advanced and refresher levels. There will be enhanced support for service delivery workers, including mentoring, stress management and emotional support, and enhanced conditions of employment, particularly in rural and remote areas. A range of incentives will encourage staff to remain in service delivery roles, particularly in rural and remote locations.

The new system we are building will not only give better protection to our most vulnerable children in Queensland; it will also give them better social development and educational opportunities and vocational outcomes. This is the future we are building, the vision we are turning into reality, and these changes for the better are largely dependent on the response and support we get to the recruitment campaign we are launching here at Parliament House today.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month

Hon. F. W. PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors) (10.04 a.m.): This weekend marks the start of Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month, when we aim to get the message across that there is no excuse for abuse. The campaign gives us a chance to spread the message that abuse of any type cannot be tolerated. It is the right of every person in our community to enjoy relationships free of abuse and free of violence.

The Beattie government's commitment to domestic and family violence prevention is clear. Last year, domestic and family violence laws were extended to protect Queenslanders in intimate personal relationships, family relationships and informal care relationships, in addition to spousal relationships. Those changes have been backed by a significant injection of resources and training. Since this government was elected, we have almost doubled funding for domestic and family violence prevention and support services to more than \$25 million.

Last month I announced funding of more than \$34,000 for 35 community groups right around Queensland to promote the message that there is no excuse for abuse. From Cape York to south-west Queensland, community groups will be holding events and awareness programs specifically suited to the needs of their local communities. These activities will help to ensure that

people affected by violence have access to appropriate and relevant information about the services that are available.

In addition to those local community activities the member for Mundingburra will represent me at the official launch of Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month in Townsville on Tuesday, while I will be attending a cabinet meeting, as Monday is a public holiday. The launch is a joint initiative of the Department of Communities, the Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Council and North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service.

On 28 May, I will be presenting the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Awards at a function at the Gold Coast. The Beattie government is working with communities right around Queensland to get the message across that domestic and family violence is unacceptable, that there is no excuse for abuse. I would urge all members here today to support Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT **Tourism Futures Conference**

Hon. M. M. KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development) (10.06 a.m.): Queensland is again proud to host the third annual national conference on tourism futures. This year the conference will be held in Townsville from August 4 to August 6. Organised by Tourism Queensland, the conference will bring together operators, industry representatives, policy makers, academics and researchers to guide the future of tourism in Australia.

This year's theme, 'Wealth Creating, Growth Sustaining', highlights the capacity of the tourism industry to create jobs throughout the regions and the importance of maintaining an economic, social and environmental focus to sustainability. This year's conference program will focus on the four broad subthemes of sustainable development, strategic partnerships and alliances, competitive advantage and marketing. Other issues on the program are trends and forecasts, aviation, risk management, protected areas, indigenous issues and inbound tourism.

Delegates will receive the latest information on industry performance, as well as a global perspective on future directions. I am glad to see that the conference will be outcomes focused. Issues presented and raised during the conference will be tracked and recorded to contribute to the production of a tourism futures communique for distribution to government and industry nationwide.

The Beattie government recognises the importance of tourism to our state's economy. The government's commitment to the industry is unprecedented and it is unwavering. Tourism contributes \$6.3 billion to Queensland's economy and accounts for almost 6.5 per cent of our gross state product. It is our second largest export earner and employs almost 10 per cent of Queensland's work force, or just over 150,000 jobs.

The Tourism Forecasting Council predicts that more than 10 million international tourists per year will be visiting Australia by 2012. Domestic tourism is also expected to grow substantially over the next decade. Strategies must be in place to meet this future demand and to ensure that all of Queensland enjoys the benefits that tourism brings to our state.

The Tourism Futures Conference brings together sectors that have a direct role in tourism so that they can share their knowledge and contribute to resolutions on future directions. Last year's conference, held at the Sunshine Coast, drew 450 delegates and was a stunning success. I know that the 2004 conference in Townsville will be just as successful and just as productive.

The selection of Townsville as a conference venue puts the city on a national conference map, and I know all delegates will enjoy the delights of Townsville which were highlighted this week by the member for Mundingburra and will enjoy a very friendly welcome from the residents of Townsville. I extend my very best wishes to all delegates.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT **Ambulance Service, Paramedics**

Hon. C. P. CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.09 a.m.): The Beattie government allocated additional funding for an extra 110 paramedics to join the Queensland Ambulance Service this financial year. The fourth and final intake of these 110 additional paramedics has started training in Brisbane. The group of 21 students commenced

their first block of training on 12 April. The theoretical clinical training is held at the Queensland University of Technology's Carseldine campus. They have 10 weeks of intensive training in Brisbane before they are based at an ambulance station to start their on-the-road training.

The student paramedics are sure to face the full gamut of paramedic work over the next 10 months. This will be the time to put theory into practice as the student paramedics further their advanced life support skills, including defibrillator use and medication administration. After this 10 months on the road, they will then return to the QUT for more classroom training before heading back to their station for more on-the-job experience as part of the three-year course.

Just gaining entry to the paramedic training course with the QAS is an achievement in itself. A lot of people are attracted to a career with the QAS and selection is highly competitive. One thing is certain: these student paramedics will have one of the most rewarding and most sought after careers on offer. As well as these 21 student paramedics, there are another six qualified paramedics who will join the QAS. These final 27 will make up the last group of the 110 extra paramedics for this financial year.

This last group of paramedics will be spread out and be based in every region of the state. The student paramedics usually find out which station they will be based at about one week before finishing their initial block of theoretical training. The fact that these 110 extra paramedics are out on the job so soon means that the QAS can get more new paramedics into their training program.

The Beattie government will spend another \$100 million over the next three years on 240 extra paramedics, 22 new or refurbished ambulance stations and 200 new or refurbished ambulance vehicles. Our paramedics are under unprecedented demand as a result of our growing and ageing population. Last year our paramedics responded to over 370,000 urgent cases. The Beattie government is proud of our paramedics. They are highly skilled and trained prehospital health care professionals who save lives.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Community Justice Forums

Hon. E. A. CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (10.12 a.m.): Last night I attended the south Queensland region justice group forum in Toowoomba in the electorate of that very fine member Kerry Shine.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is my final warning to the member for Gregory.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Do you mind? Get over it.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is also my final warning to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Last night I attended the south Queensland region justice group forum in Toowoomba in the electorate of Mr Kerry Shine to talk about the work of the community justice groups in this region. Not only was I impressed with the great work of these dedicated members; I was heartened, humbled and energised. Like all community justice groups, south Queensland's groups include respected representatives from each community—elders and young people—who are working with the Beattie government to come up with the best justice solutions for their area.

In Toowoomba alone the community justice group has developed a network of government and community agencies to work on four different projects. One of these is a foot patrol to target kids at risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system. In Cunnamulla, the community justice group has been working on establishing relationships with community, government agencies and the judiciary. The Balonne justice group at St George is working with the court and the police consultative committee to provide a point of contact for people in Goondiwindi and Dirranbandi. In Logan, the justice group is working through the District Court helping to provide advice on appropriate sentencing options and working with other groups to run youth camps and help youth at risk. Of course, Murri Watch here in Brisbane, their dedication to their work and to their people and the way they work is a model for new groups to aspire to.

I have enormous respect for the work each of these community justice groups is doing to help keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth out of the criminal justice system and safeguard the future of our indigenous communities. Justice Tony Fitzgerald recognised community justice groups as the way forward in his 2001 Cape York Justice Study. There are

currently 34 community justice groups funded through the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy's local justice initiatives program in both urban and remote communities and a total of 44 justice groups throughout the state.

One of the comments last evening from a representative from Cunnamulla was that it was terrific to be part of a workshop that is facilitated by indigenous people for indigenous people. So, to Wayne Dodson and Ros Kneebone from DATSIP and their staff, my congratulations. My visit to the south Queensland region justice group forum followed a visit to the west Queensland region justice group forum in Mount Isa earlier this month. To say I enjoyed both these visits would be an understatement. They gave me an opportunity to listen and have a yarn with the people in both south and west Queensland who are helping to make a difference to their communities. I applaud their dedication to the betterment of their people.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Racing Industry

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (10.16 a.m.): I rise to speak about the plight of country racing. I would like to read a paragraph from the 1998 strategic plan set down by the then Queensland Principal Club—what we now know as Queensland Racing. The strategic plan states that one of its major goals is to continue to support country racing by 'preserving and benefiting from the unique contribution it makes to the substance and character of the Queensland racing industry' and 'ensuring that racing remains a statewide sport for promotional and economic reasons'.

Six years later, the current state of country racing is very different. Far from preserving the significant contribution that country racing makes to our rural and regional communities, quite the opposite has happened. At its current pace, country racing will in five years be a thing of the past. Bit by bit country race clubs and country races are disappearing from our rural landscape. The effects on remote communities could not be any worse. For many of our remote towns, a day at the races is the only day out for the year but now we have had almost 200 country race dates cut from the calendar.

I do not think anyone in the racing industry wants every single race date reinstated. We know that there needs to be rationalisation. We have to take a more considered approach to our struggling clubs. Why can we not extend our nomination periods from Monday to Tuesday in special circumstances? This happened recently during the Easter weekend. We simply cannot get the nominations in our country clubs. This would simply allow a trainer to take a horse to a club, see what entries there are and maybe send them to another club. That will increase the nominations, which will be great for country racing.

Country racing is dying and what the government needs to realise is that it can listen all it likes but, while it moves around the state listening, jockeys, trainers, owners and small clubs are disappearing from the radar. When the government finally understands how much it has destroyed our rural and remote communities from stripping race dates and race funding, it will be too late. When it finally comes to its senses, there will not be horses, trainers, owners and, most importantly, volunteers—those people who devote their lives to the local race clubs. I know because I am one of them. I do the redcoat at the Bell race club and have done for a number of years.

Time expired.

Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (10.18 a.m.): A new era is about to dawn for the Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre thanks to Housing Minister, Robert Schwarten, and the work of a large number of committed volunteers for over a decade, including Father Chris Wright, Irene Colefax, Krishna Buhler and Dave Howe. The Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre, initially known as KISC, the Kuranda Information Support Centre, began in 1992 when a group of concerned local residents met in rooms under the Anglican Church in Kuranda to discuss how best to provide support for individuals in a community with few social services.

I have always been a strong supporter of KISC and the neighbourhood centre and I opened its first home—a brightly painted donated caravan. In subsequent years the service moved to the original Mareeba Shire Council branch office and then to the CWA hall in Thongon Street, where KISC became the Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre.

It was during this period in 2001 that the centre first received operational funding from the state and employed Cherry Ferrari as its inspirational and dedicated part-time coordinator. Under Cherry's stewardship and that of President Krishna Buhler the centre moved again in 2002, renting the small old timber cutters cottage next to the BP service station.

The neighbourhood centre is now preparing for its next, and hopefully last, move, this time into a home of its own at 19 Thongon Street—a three-bedroom brick house specifically purchased for them by the Department of Housing following my representations to Minister Schwarten. While work needs to be carried out to prepare their new home for its role as the Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre, there will be great community celebrations when it opens later this year. I look forward to expressing my personal thanks to Minister Schwarten and congratulating Cherry and the management committee on this very special occasion.

The centre now provides a wide range of community services, including the venue for monthly interagency meetings and the auspicing of the Kuranda Child Protection Service. It is anticipated that the demands for services will increase further with the new larger premises. I hope that my representations to Minister Pitt for additional operational funding for a full-time coordinator will be successful.

Brisbane Housing Company

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.20 a.m.): I thank the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing for bringing to my attention the Brisbane Housing Company which, I understand, is playing a very important role in resolving housing problems. The Nicklin electorate and the entire Sunshine Coast region are not coping with the calls for housing assistance—let alone the constant calls for crisis accommodation. Each month, the Lions Emergency Accommodation Centre in Nambour redirects between 250 and 380 callers who they are unable to assist. We understand that the Sunshine Coast Department of Housing office is also overwhelmed with calls for public housing assistance. Our population growth is one of the strongest in the state, so these figures are only going to increase.

On Tuesday, the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing spoke on the success of the Brisbane Housing Company, a not-for-profit company which provides a range of accommodation units from boarding houses to units and houses for low-income individuals and families seeking affordable housing. I understand the company currently manages more than 120 dwellings in the inner-city area and 235 dwellings at various stages of planning approval are under construction.

In light of the reported success of this company and the desperate situation many Sunshine Coast residents are finding themselves in, I use this opportunity to publicly call on the minister to investigate the possibility of expanding the company services to the Sunshine Coast region. I realise that one of the successes of this company is the strong partnership between the state government and the Brisbane City Council. As the member for Nicklin, I am keen to see if we can follow this lead with a similar partnership involving the Sunshine Coast councils and the state government.

I have requested a meeting with the Maroochy Shire Council to discuss this and a range of other matters and I hope to be able to report to that meeting that the minister is keen to support the expansion of the company's services to the Sunshine Coast if like support exists from the council and the community. With the current growth rate on the Sunshine Coast, and taking into consideration the long waiting lists for residents seeking housing assistance, the extension of the company's services to the Sunshine Coast should benefit many residents currently unable to find suitable accommodation in the region.

ICT Industry

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (10.22 a.m.): This morning I want to talk about the growth in the ICT industry in Queensland and emphasise the Beattie government's commitment to the information and communication technology industry. There is no doubt the ICT industry is flourishing, creating new businesses, more jobs and more wealth for Queenslanders. Even a brief look at this industry paints a picture of growth and prosperity.

I congratulate the ICT industry on its remarkable achievements and its experience in vibrant export growth, particularly in regard to Queensland produced ICT equipment. These exports have grown at a whopping 18 per cent per annum since 1992-93 compared with only a five per cent increase across the rest of Australia. This is fantastic growth and proof that the ICT industry is

enhancing the Smart State's international reputation as a producer for high-technology, high-quality goods.

In dollar terms, Smart State produced ICT equipment exports totalled \$87 million in 2003—a gigantic increase on the \$17 million recorded a decade earlier. This is an increase of more than 400 per cent in 10 years. The Smart State is powering ahead in the high-tech export stakes. In the 2001-02 we exported \$850 million in ICT products and services—an increase of 16 per cent in the past two years. Total sales for 2001-02 were valued at more than \$14.5 billion—an increase of nine per cent since 1999-2000.

Growth like this translates into more jobs for Queenslanders. Our flourishing ICT industry now comprises nearly 4,000 businesses, employing the full-time equivalent of 56,200 people. Things are only going to get better.

Time expired.

Flying Surgeon Service

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (10.24 a.m.): I draw the attention of the House to a very contentious issue that is confronting the people of western Queensland—that is, the Flying Surgeon service based in Mount Isa. Former Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, said at a Rural Doctors Association of Queensland conference that there would be no reduction in services with the relocation of this service from Longreach to Mount Isa.

The service now is purely an elective surgery service and there is no emergency service. With the death of one doctor and the resignation of the other the service is very much threatened. Mount Isa services the areas of Longreach, Winton, Blackall and Barcaldine along with Mount Isa, Hughenden, Julia Creek, Karumba and Normanton.

Western Queensland was told by the former minister that this service would be kept in place and would be secure at all times. I call on the current minister, the Hon. Gordon Nuttall, to make absolutely certain that this service is secure. The situation currently is that Longreach had the service earlier this month. There was no service last Wednesday. It looks that at this point in time we are going to lose that service totally. I call on the minister to clear up the innuendo that is floating around that this service is going to be relocated to Townsville. The situation is critical. It is one part of our essential services in western Queensland that I believe should be given high priority and needs addressing.

I believe this minister is doing a very able job—a bit different from the job being done by the Minister for Emergency Services. He seems to be stumbling in that portfolio. Perhaps he should change his name from 'Cummin' to 'Goin'. That is another point. I call on the Minister for Health to look at this. I draw the member for Mount Isa's attention to this. He is no doubt aware of the serious situation. This service needs to be retained in Mount Isa and retained fully operational to service the medical needs of the people of western Queensland.

Griffith University

Ms STRUTHERS (Alger—ALP) (10.26 a.m.): The alleged behaviour of the head of Shafston college has caused distress and damage to the young women at the centre of the scandal. It has also damaged the image of Queensland as a safe and secure destination for young international students. This could also jeopardise the fortune of the Smart State, particularly our reputation as a welcoming multicultural community.

I am a member of the Griffith University Council and know how valuable the contribution of international students is to our community and our economy generally. Griffith University hosts 5,400 international students every year from diverse countries such as Japan, Scandinavia, the People's Republic of China, Canada, the United States, Korea, Brazil and Germany.

Mechanisms to assist international students include excellent predeparture seminars. Before students arrive at the university, Griffith works with parents, students and university representatives to ensure international visitors are well prepared. Students also get advice on issues they will face, not just at the university but in the wider community, to allow them to integrate more easily into the Australian way of life.

Representatives from Griffith meet them at the airport, take them to accommodation on and off campus and provide ongoing support through trained councillors and specialist international councillors. Parents of students and students themselves need this sort of service. They need the confidence that this kind of service provides.

Griffith International through its international office has specialist international councillors specifically for overseas students. The multicampus nature of the university allows flexibility and freedom. Students have an enormous choice and they can feel safe in the knowledge that they are being looked after.

We have a very diverse cultural base in Queensland. We must strengthen and build on this. I welcome the audits announced by the Premier of Shafston college and I call on all educational institutions to provide high-quality pastoral care, education services and support to international students in Queensland.

Synergy Park

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (10.28 a.m.): The Synergy Park debacle demonstrates yet again how financially inept the Beattie Labor government really is. In scenes reminiscent of the AMC collapse, the government has yet again proved it is incapable of financially managing a significant project in conjunction with the private sector.

The government has poured \$16 million into the Synergy Park project. Now we hear \$16 million of taxpayers' investment in this project has been frittered away, just like the AMC fiasco. At least in this instance the government did not rope in mum and dad investors.

The history of Synergy Park takes us back to 1999 when, with much fanfare, the Beattie government officially launched it as the State Development's brainchild and a so-called high-tech cluster of low-impact industries. We were told Synergy Park would generate \$300 million in investment and provide 3,000 full-time jobs. In fact, Minister Barton then outdid himself by getting really carried away and saying it would be a magnet for manufacturers and a jobs bonanza. Well, of course nothing has happened. Indeed, today the 43-hectare development stands empty and the private sector has walked away. So much for the business credentials of this government.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Billing

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.30 a.m.): My question is addressed to the Minister for Emergency Services. Is it usual practice for a Fire and Rescue Service vehicle to be despatched to road accident calls, together with the Ambulance Service? The Ambulance Service is covered by the \$88 ambulance tax, but accident victims are being charged up to \$600 for the Fire and Rescue Service to attend, even though this service was previously part of the Ambulance Service. Why is this service not covered by the \$88 levy or by the \$40 hospital and emergency services levy motorists pay with their compulsory third party premium, or is this just another revenue raising measure from the Beattie Labor government?

Mr CUMMINS: I thank the member for the question. People who ring 000 will be put through and asked what service they require. If they ask for an ambulance, the people at the QAS comms centre, where the call is put through to, talk through the issues with them. Officers have a list that they go through of the various questions relating to location and how the parties are injured. They try to keep the people, who are quite often traumatised, on the line to discuss with them what issues they face. In the case of a road accident rescue, the fire service may also be required to go out and remove people from the accident. That is done by the road accident rescue people. We are pouring hundreds of thousands of dollars into fire appliances and we are upgrading road accident rescue equipment. Two different services may be dispatched, that is, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the QAS.

The member touched on how billing is worked out. Earlier this week in the House the Treasurer ably spoke about CTP. The community ambulance cover is kept at \$88, at this point in time, because we have the CTP levy. That is how we calculated it. It will go up with increases in the CPI. Most fees and charges go up with increases in the CPI. If the CTP levy had been removed, the ambulance levy would have been higher than \$88. That is why we retained it.

John Tonge Centre

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. Given the minister's concession in this place yesterday that the number of samples at the John Tonge Centre awaiting further analysis is greater than it was earlier this year, and in

relation to other issues she has presided over, I table documents that clearly establish that between 2001-02 and 2002-03 the Beattie government stripped more than \$1 million from State Crime Operations Command and a number of specialist squads including the organised and major crime squad, the security intelligence branch and the covert squad, amongst others. Will the minister now explain to the people of Queensland why, when there are major community concerns about these matters, the government has been destroying the capacity of our Police Service to respond appropriately?

Ms SPENCE: There are many dedicated and very professional forensic scientists, police and support staff working at the John Tonge Centre. I think it would be very unfortunate and inappropriate if the frustrations of one police officer, outlined in the report that the Leader of the Opposition tabled in parliament last week, were taken to reflect the opinions of all of those people who work there and reflect on the good work that is performed there.

When the Leader of the Opposition last week tabled the document obtained under FOI, he also tabled a covering letter from a senior police officer discrediting that report and much of the information that was in it. I would ask all members, particularly those members opposite, to get hold of the information that the Leader of the Opposition tabled and read it and judge for themselves.

Frankly, I think the Queensland Police Service is tired of being discredited by the Leader of the Opposition and those opposite. I firmly believe that here in this state we have one of the best police services in the world. I am not going to be standing here criticising their work.

With respect to the John Tonge Centre, it is very clear that this government has recognised that there has been a problem there, that there has been a backlog. I have talked about that in the parliament. We have talked about it previously. The government acknowledged that when it allocated \$11 million in the election campaign to clear that backlog. The Leader of the Opposition is talking about ancient history. What we are interested in is getting this problem solved. That is why we are going to fix it with \$11 million.

Road Safety Initiatives

Mrs REILLY: My question is addressed to the Premier. I am sure everyone in this House was pleased that the Easter road toll this year was one of the lowest in recent years, although one fatality is one fatality too many. Can the Premier tell the House whether any new initiatives have been adopted to further reduce the number of fatal road crashes in Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for her question. I know that she has a particular interest in this area and is a member of the Travelsafe Committee. We can never do too much to reduce the horrific rate of young drivers being killed and maimed on our roads through accidents. I am sure that the overrepresentation of young drivers in the road toll is deeply concerning to all of us in this place. If not, it certainly should be. The likelihood of 17- to 20-year-olds being killed on the road is about two and a half times greater than the average across all age groups. Between January 1998 and December 2003, 140 17- to 20-year-olds died on Queensland roads. That is a very sickening statistic. Heather and I have three children who fit within that age group. I know that parents of teenage children are quite rightly concerned.

The government already has a range of strategies for reducing the toll. They include public education campaigns, a graduated driver licensing system and a students mentoring program. But we must keep striving to combat that carnage I referred to. Our newest initiative will be putting L-plates on trial, in pursuit of a recommendation by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Travelsafe in its 2003 report *Reducing the road toll for young Queenslanders: Is education enough?*

L-plates identify young and novice drivers and may assist in increasing the patience and understanding of other drivers. They have not been compulsory in Queensland since 1976. While the timing of the trial is yet to be finalised, it is likely to cover several years and begin by next year. The learners licence will have a life of 12 months. The trial is likely to cost around \$300,000. We will consult with road safety stakeholders about the best way to go forward with the details of the program. In conjunction with the trial, the government will launch a campaign urging experienced drivers to be considerate of learners and give them a fair go.

I know that the honourable member knows the difficulty and problem we confront here, but unfortunately a lot of young people in this age group believe they are unbreakable. Tragically, they are not. That is why we need to go through this trial, to do everything we can to save young

people on the road. I would urge all sections of the community and all sides of politics to support us in this trial. Hopefully it will contribute significantly to reducing the loss of life generally on the road, but particularly in this age group.

Police Resources; Task Force Argos

Mr SEENEY: I refer the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to the documents tabled by the Leader of the Opposition earlier and in particular the reduction in funding allocated to Task Force Argos which, as the minister would know, is charged with the task of chasing down sex offenders. Given this systemic failure of the child protection system that the minister presided over during the same period, which included the endemic sexual abuse of children, will she please explain why her government has reduced the capacity of the Police Service under her administration to fight this insidious problem?

Ms SPENCE: I have not had the opportunity of examining the documents that were tabled this morning by the Leader of the Opposition, but I will do so. With respect to police capacity to investigate child protection matters, it is true that our juvenile aid officers are spending more time on child protection matters than other juvenile aid issues. I have talked to the commissioner about that. I have talked to juvenile aid officers around the state about this issue, and I have talked to the Police Union about it. Juvenile aid officers tell me that they are now spending perhaps up to 80 per cent of their time on child protection issues. Certainly, their workload is growing. Obviously the increasing notifications that we have seen over the last few years in child protection are also being reflected—

Mr Springborg interjected.

Ms SPENCE: Yesterday the member complained about not getting answers to his questions, yet ministers stand up here to answer his questions and all he can do is interrupt every day. I am very happy to talk about this issue. It is a serious issue. As I said, I have been around the state and talked to officers about this issue. They are telling me that up to 80 per cent of their time is spent on child protection issues. I have talked to the commissioner, I have talked to the union and I have talked to the officers themselves. Importantly, I have talked to the Premier and the Deputy Premier and my colleagues about this issue. We acknowledge the need for more juvenile aid officers in this state. I will be putting a submission up to the government with that request from the Police Service. I do not see this problem diminishing as we receive more child protection notifications and more cases come to our attention. It is an issue, and it is an issue that this government will address.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Southport, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Villanova College in the electorate of South Brisbane.

Labour Day

Mr LAWLOR: My question is to the Premier. Premier, on Sunday the six Gold Coast Labor members, including me, are to lead a very important gathering. Can the Premier detail to the House the significance of similar gatherings across the state over the forthcoming long weekend?

Mr BEATTIE: The answer is yes and you bet. I know that the member for Southport shares my enthusiasm, because on Monday the state will again pause to reflect on a very significant event. Queensland properly celebrates Labour Day with large participation from trade unions and the union movement generally, and this year's theme is 'Union Rights are Human Rights'. Such a theme reminds us that many workers around the world are being denied their basic human rights—rights such as the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. Since the early part of last century, Labour Day has continued to grow in significance in Queensland. It is a day when those in unions, industrial alliances, community groups, ethnic organisations and many others gather in celebration. It is a day to reflect on more than 100 years of enhancing working conditions.

Labour Day also recognises and acknowledges employees' rights and also the importance of trade unions as the working men and women's representative. I want to also recognise the efforts of Labour Day organisers on the Gold Coast, as they will have a march for the first time in more than 20 years. The six local members, including of course the member for Southport, will lead the march, and I wish them well. The march starts at Sundale Bridge Park at 9 a.m.

For the first time in three years, in Brisbane the Labour Day march will once again weave through city streets. The Brisbane march starts at 10 a.m. assembling in Mary Street and then

turns right into George Street, right into Ann Street, left into Albert Street and then it will enter the Roma Street Parklands from Albert Street. I have to say that that is one of the great benefits of the redevelopment of Roma Street, as the Minister for Public Works would agree—that is, that on grand occasions like this, it is a very important gathering place. As members would expect, Heather and I will be amongst the leaders of the march, as will many of my ministerial and parliamentary colleagues. I look forward to seeing them on Labour Day. As we march on Monday, let us all share in celebrating the gains made by workers in Queensland.

While we are talking about workers, recently in a number of meetings convened by the relevant ministers and me, we had discussions with the sugar industry about the reform package which has gone through this House. Of course we invited the Australian Workers Union and the Metal Workers Union to be present at those discussions, because as we greet the challenges that are faced by this industry there will be pressure on everybody. That is why value adding and reforms are the only way ahead.

If the federal government had delivered on the free trade agreement, the sugar industry could have expected to gain at least \$2 billion over the next decade or so. That is not going to happen, and that information comes from the Centre for International Economics December 2003 report. So now that we are faced with this challenge, we should not forget that one of the groups who will be forced to deal with these changes are the people who work in the mills—the people who are members of the AWU, the Metal Workers Union and people like that. That is why these reforms are absolutely essential.

Daniel Morcombe, Police Investigation

Mr JOHNSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. Minister, I refer to the media reports that a vehicle answering the description of a vehicle being sought in association with the disappearance of Daniel Morcombe was located in the vicinity of police headquarters and that, although this vehicle was reported to police some weeks ago, it was only investigated yesterday. Minister, what was the reason for the delay in inspecting this vehicle? Is it because our Police Service is overstretched and lacks sufficient resources, or is there some other reason?

Ms SPENCE: I have been briefed on this issue by the commissioner over the last 24 hours. There are good reasons why police ministers do not get up in this House and talk about operational issues of the Police Service. It is about respecting the integrity of police investigations, so I am not going to answer the first part of the member's question. I do find it appalling that the opposition is again weighing in and criticising the police. I would have thought that it would have learnt its lesson last week when the Leader of the Opposition criticised the police investigation into the Singh case and he was wrong and he embarrassed himself. Yet again this week we have the opposition criticising another police investigation.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am going to hear the answer to this question.

Mr Johnson: We want the answer, too, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: If the member would like to hear the answer outside, I will oblige him.

Ms SPENCE: I am happy to answer the second part of the member's question, which related to the budget of the Police Service. Last year, for the first time, the Police Service had over a \$1 billion budget. If my memory serves me correctly, it was an \$84 million increase last year. This service has a better budget than it has ever had in the history of this state. We are proud of the fact that we have found the money to properly resource our Police Service. We are also proud of the fact that we are committed to increasing the numbers in our Police Service by 300 each year, with a 9,100 target by the year 2005. I am also proud of the fact that we went to the election with a commitment to keep the police to population ratio above the national average. I spoke last week, and the Premier did as well, about—

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. Whilst the minister is telling us about the budget, she is not answering the question. We want the answer to the second part of the question.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Johnson: You told me to shut up—

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Johnson: We want the answer.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Johnson: There is a point of order. There are two rules here—one for them and one for us.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is a reflection on the chair which the member will withdraw.

Mr JOHNSON: I withdraw.

Ms SPENCE: I am very happy to provide the member for Gregory with a briefing on why it is inappropriate for police ministers to stand in this chamber and talk about operational issues of the Police Service. We learnt about that in the Fitzgerald inquiry. There are good reasons for it, and I am happy to offer that briefing to the member. But let us remember that we all heard last week that the police have had thousands and thousands of pieces of information given to them in the Daniel Morcombe case, and they are doing a fine job of investigating that information.

WorkCover

Mr LIVINGSTONE: My question is to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. Minister, the Victorian government has made much of its new workers compensation premiums for employers dropping below two per cent. Can the minister inform the House how this compares with Queensland's acclaimed WorkCover scheme?

Mr BARTON: I would love to answer that question from the member for Ipswich West, who always takes great interest in issues that affect the work force and businesses in this state. We have heard many times in this state about WorkCover Queensland, our workers compensation scheme, which indeed is the best in the nation. There is yet more good news for Queensland workers and Queensland businesses. I am able to announce that the average premiums for employers in Queensland will remain for the next financial year—2004-05—at the lowest of any state in Australia for that entire financial year. Under the Beattie government, this is the fifth consecutive year that employers will enjoy the lowest premiums anywhere in Australia. They will remain at the rate of 1.55 per cent.

Queensland's rate is significantly lower than the New South Wales rate, which is 2.8 per cent, and the new Victorian rate of 1.99 per cent, of which that state is so proud. But Queensland's rate has been at 1.55 per cent for five years in a row—I repeat, for five years in a row—falling from what was left to us by the previous coalition government under Minister Santoro, who left us at a rate of 2.145 per cent. So this great achievement by the Beattie government is continuing.

The savings to employers in premium payments represented \$270 million in 2003-04 and have totalled more than \$1.1 billion since the Beattie government came to office—a real win-win for the Smart State. Employers are reaping the benefits and so, too, are workers, because we have been able to consistently improve the benefits for injured workers in this state during this six-year period.

WorkCover continues to have the best workers compensation scheme in Australia and we intend to improve it even further. I would like to remind the parliament that, in fact, WorkCover Queensland was Australia's first publicly owned workers compensation scheme 88 years ago. Today, it is still Australia's only publicly owned, operated and underwritten scheme and is also the only fully solvent state scheme in the country. At a time when other schemes have suffered because of downturns in markets, we have been able to maintain those very low premiums while maintaining higher benefits.

I want to thank and congratulate the WorkCover team, particularly the chairman, Ian Brusasco, and CEO Tony Hawkins, because their work has ensured that we have the best benefits for injured workers in the country and the lowest rates for employers. That is going to continue for a long period.

Fire Appliances, Smart State Numberplates

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Minister for Emergency Services. I refer the minister to his answer to my question yesterday, and in particular to his statement that they—the Smart State numberplate surrounds—will be fitted when the appliance goes in for normal servicing or maintenance. Given that the state secretary of the United Firefighters Union has stated on the union's web site, a copy of which I table, that he is 'personally aware of mechanics being tasked to drive to stations, city and country, specifically to fit the "smart" number plate

surrounds', I ask: who should we believe, the minister or the state secretary of the United Firefighters Union?

Mr CUMMINS: I thank the member for the question. Obviously, I hope that I would be believed. I have not been advised of what the man from the union said. I do not know what position the member said he holds in the union. But as I said, there are approximately 460 fire appliances throughout Queensland. The plastic surrounds cost \$2 each. So we are talking about, I believe, \$2,100. We got quite a bit of good media coverage out of it, so it is probably \$2,100 well spent. We are very proud of the Smart State and I think that it is money well spent.

I will confirm what I stated yesterday and fully answer the Leader of the Liberal Party's question. I do believe that I was advised that the numberplates will go on when normal maintenance or service or repairs are done. I disagree with the other statement.

Sugar Industry; Cow Candy

Ms MOLLOY: My question is to the Minister for State Development and Innovation. Earlier the minister said that he visited Korea's largest dairy farm and that it was using a new type of stock feed called cow candy. Could the minister provide more detail on this project?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question and also, in fairness, I thank the Independent member Peter Wellington. Some weeks ago I was invited by the two members to attend a small function on the Sunshine Coast. As a result of their mill closing down, a group of canegrowers, rather than standing by and complaining, actually got together and tried to find some way of using the sugar cane as a stock feed. They set up a company with the help of the Queensland government. In fact, the reason I was at that function was to present a cheque for \$65,000. Those canegrowers explained to me that they had secured a deal with a company in Korea.

I would have to say that I was greatly impressed by the initiative that these growers had shown. So when I was in Korea last week, I made arrangements to meet the people who had signed a contract. I travelled about 50 kilometres to a property where they were milking cows. The first bale of the Queensland sugar cane had arrived. I would have to say that there is a photograph in one of our local papers—

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr McGRADY: There is the photograph.

Mr Schwarten: That's not much of a photo.

Mr McGRADY: I was actually feeding the cows.

Mr Mackenroth: I think you were making a play to be the farmer's friend.

Mr McGRADY: I am trying to be the farmer's friend. We have a situation where the sugar industry is in strife. These growers on the Sunshine Coast were saying, 'What we do is grow sugar cane. The mill has closed down, so we need to find some alternative way of utilising the sugar cane'. They found this company in Korea which is now using this sugar cane as feed for its herd of cows.

The important point to make is that the people who are involved in this company that we visited are the largest group of farmers in the whole of Korea. I believe that our sugar industry stands to be able to sell millions of tonnes of sugar cane to the Korean market. It is a great move. I congratulate the member, I congratulate Peter Wellington and I congratulate the farmers on the Sunshine Coast, because I think that, from this small project, we could see a major export facility right here in our state going to help feed the cows to produce more milk to make the young kids of Korea healthier—all because 20 farmers on the Sunshine Coast got together and came forward with this brilliant idea.

Grandparents, Full-Time Carers

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: My question is to the Premier. Two grandmothers who provide full-time care to grandchildren were interviewed yesterday morning on TV. One lady from Queensland stated that she had contacted the Premier's office a number of times without response to discuss financial support for grandparents similar to that provided to foster carers. Will the Premier review state funding for grandparents who provide full-time care and follow up on Judy's request for a meeting?

Mr BEATTIE: There were a number of people who contacted the *Today* program, which I presume are the people to whom the member refers. In fact, the federal minister, Larry Anthony, and I were both on the *Today* program this morning. I indicated to Steve Liebmann, the compere, that I would be happy to follow up any of the emails that he had received from Queensland grandparents and I think that they include the woman to whom the member referred. My office did check and we cannot find in my office any records of her communicating with my office. If that communication has gone astray—at whatever level; I do not know—I am happy to follow up that matter. If the member has a copy of that communication, I invite her to present it to me as well. If not, if the member communicates with the grandparents, I will arrange for either myself or the relevant minister—who in this case would be Warren Pitt—to have a meeting with her.

I want to talk about the issue, because Larry Anthony made a number of points this morning. I intend to write to the Prime Minister to suggest that this is an appropriate matter that should be discussed at COAG. If we cannot get agreement to do that, then I think that there needs to be a joint approach between the states and the Commonwealth. The position is very simply this—and I have a personal interest in this, as I said this morning on the *Today* program, as someone who was brought up by my grandmother—I believe that grandparents, particularly where their children have died, have a very important role to play.

The point is that at a state level we provide foster care support, depending on the age of the child, of somewhere around about \$200 a fortnight for children under one, and we increased this by \$40 per fortnight back in January to just over \$300 for children over 16—around about \$313 a fortnight. There is one condition, however, to our support for children: they have to be the subject of a care and protection order; they have to be subject to some legal arrangement which enables the state to protect their wellbeing.

Everyone in this parliament knows that there have been significant cases—appalling cases—of child abuse. The view of the Queensland government is that we need to ensure that when we are paying an allowance up to, as I said, \$313 a fortnight, we have a role to play in ensuring the wellbeing of that child.

In my own personal circumstances, I know that my grandmother received financial assistance to support me; small and meagre as it may have been, it was significant. The Department of Families that existed at the time did take a particular interest in my wellbeing.

There are some grandparents—and I respect their right—who do not want there to be a care and protection order in relation to the child. The difficulty we have is that if we do not have a care and protection order in relation to the child, it does not give us an opportunity to legally ensure the protection of the child, as well as their funding, outside the general responsibilities we have. So although I respect grandparents in this role and I understand that they do not want to see orders involved, that they do not want to have the department having some legal involvement with the child, unfortunately we have a responsibility to do that if financial support is to be provided.

The only way that funding can be provided outside that legal framework is if the Commonwealth does it. I think the Commonwealth has a role to do that. We cannot afford to do it on our own. That is the legal position.

Queensland Police Service, Railway Squad

Ms NOLAN: My question is to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. Minister, many Ipswich residents and school students utilise the Citytrain network to travel to and from Brisbane each day. Could the minister inform the House of how the Queensland Police Service is ensuring public safety on this service?

Ms SPENCE: It is good to get a question from a member of parliament who supports the Police Service, unlike those opposite. Recently I visited the Ipswich Police Station with the member for Ipswich who has, it is obvious to me, a good working relationship with the police in her local area. That good partnership has meant that a lot of community safety issues in the Ipswich area are being resolved.

Today I would like to talk about the police who work on our Citytrain network, and that is the Railway Squad. This month I visited the Railway Squad at their headquarters in Roma Street. They really are the quiet achievers in the Queensland Police Service.

With a budget of over \$2 million, 55 officers patrol our trains 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They operate lines from Gympie to Cleveland to Robina to Rosewood. They improve the safety of over 1.5 million commuters each year. They target hot spots, in particular issues of

vandalism like graffiti, and they are really making enormous inroads into a lot of these problem areas.

I would like to mention that while I was there visiting the squad they acknowledged their close collaboration and great partnership with Queensland Rail, and that partnership is producing some real results. Today I have pleasure in informing the House and the member for Ipswich that we are going to develop a new outpost at Redbank where six officers will patrol the Ipswich line. That development is well under way. It is going to open in the next two months. The refurbishment, costing \$200,000, is expected to be finalised by the end of May and the six police officers will move into this new outpost in June this year.

Some 20,000 offences were detected by the Railway Squad in the last 12 months. These offences included assaults, stealing and simple ticketable offences. In addition, warning notices have been issued. It is good to promote this squad because we often hear about people's fears on trains and community safety on trains. It is good for the general public to know that there are 55 officers dedicated to protecting their safety on our Citytrain service.

Ambulance Service, Collinsville

Mrs MENKENS: My question without notice this morning is for the Minister for Emergency Services. Will the minister advise the people of Collinsville why, in return for paying their \$88 ambulance tax, he has now reduced the number of ambulance officers at Collinsville from three to two?

I note also that the intention is to retain two vehicles at the station; but as these officers work a seven days on and seven days off roster, how is one officer going to drive both vehicles?

Mr CUMMINS: I thank the member for her question. The Collinsville—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The House will come to order.

Mr CUMMINS: As I was saying, the Collinsville Ambulance Station currently has three staff: an officer in charge, a paramedic and a patient transport officer. Based on Collinsville's caseload requirements we see an average of one non-urgent clinic transport to Townsville or to Mackay each week. The QAS has suggested that the patient transport officer position be relocated from Collinsville to Bowen next month. This relocation would allow the patient transport officer to manage the larger clinic transport requirements of Bowen in addition to servicing the non-urgent clinic transport needs of the Collinsville area.

Racing Industry

Mr SHINE: While the racing industry is important to Queensland, particularly Toowoomba, its contribution to the state's economy is often exaggerated. I draw members' attention to claims by the member for Toowoomba South that it is the third biggest industry and employer of the state. Can the minister please set the record straight?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I said in this House last week that the industry thrives a lot on gossip. It also thrives on a couple of big myths. One of those was brought to my attention when I was in Townsville recently when one of the deputation handed me a copy of the *Townsville Bulletin* from Tuesday, 9 December last year. It states—

Horan said the Coalition viewed racing as the third biggest employer in Queensland and felt it was important to the community—

I did a bit of research into this subject, and I thank my colleague the Treasurer and the Office of Economic and Statistical Research for providing these statistics to me. The retail and trade industries employ 16.2 per cent of people in Queensland; manufacturing employs 10.2 per cent of people; tourism and hospitality, 14.5 per cent; building and construction, 7.84 per cent; agriculture and fishing, 5.4 per cent, more than 100,000 employees—more than 135,000 in the building industry too, I might add—wholesale trade, 4.5 per cent; 35,000 registered teachers in Queensland—that is about two per cent; mining is 1.2 per cent; 8,500 police officers in Queensland, 0.49 per cent; and 31,000 nurses, 1.8 per cent. So what is the real figure employed in racing in Queensland? Does anybody know? It is 0.28 per cent. I think their maths are out a little bit. The fact of the matter is that out of the 1.72 million people working in Queensland there are 4,783 people employed in the racing industry. The number of licensees is 4,592. I just heard

a member opposite say that he has been involved in the industry, presumably part-time, so he may be one of those statistics.

The reality is it is a myth; it is an absolute myth. If we are going to talk about racing's importance in this state, and no doubt people have a great deal of interest in racing—I have owned a horse myself in the past—the fact of the matter is it is not the employer that people say it is. The other myth is that we are groaning under the weight of revenue that comes from the racing industry. How much money do members think comes into Queensland out of the racing industry?

Mr Mackenroth: I bet the Gold Coast pulls millions of dollars.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes. In the *Gold Coast Bulletin* this week Peter Gleeson wrote a very good article, until he got to the bottom bit where he said the Beattie government has hundreds of millions dollars. Nonsense! The figure is—

Mr Mackenroth: Thirty.

Mr SCHWARTEN: \$30 million comes into the state's coffers out of racing. So, again, it is not the cash cow that people suggest that it is. I say this to end once and for all this nonsense that this industry is a huge employer in this state and that this state government benefits greatly from it. It does not happen.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Surfers Paradise, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Lowood State School in the electorate of Ipswich West.

Electricity Industry

Mr LANGBROEK: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Mines and Energy. I refer the minister to the *Energex Network Story for Regulatory Submission 2004*, which states that there is an urgent need to replace all Krone epoxy insulated distributed switchgear in transformers because of failures that can result in the ejection of high-speed projectiles as well as fire from these transformers. Since almost all of these transformers are in publicly accessible areas, what is Energex doing to replace these potentially lethal components as quickly as possible?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. As the honourable member would know, early this year the Treasurer and I established an independent inquiry into the performance of both Energex and Ergon, particularly with respect to their maintenance and capital programs. That is an open inquiry which has been receiving submissions from the public over the last number of weeks. This is a question that is very much in the province of that independent inquiry, and we expect by mid-year that that independent inquiry would be reporting to us their views as to the adequacy or otherwise of the capex and opex expenditure in any one particular year and going forward to meet the growing demands on the electricity network in fast-growing areas such as south-east Queensland.

In addition, the honourable member may be aware—and I hope he is aware—that both Energex and Ergon have recently announced significant increases in their expenditure on maintenance. From memory, in Energex's case I think it is an additional \$30 million on top of the hundreds of millions that it currently spends on operational expenditure or maintenance and capital expenditure in upgrading the network in south-east Queensland. I would expect that expenditure would address issues such as those which the member has outlined.

In terms of targeting priorities, it is not for me as minister to be determining what Energex should be doing. I would prefer to leave to the experts the running of a 21st century network, but I can assure the member that we are committed as a government and on behalf of both Energex and Ergon to meet the challenges of providing a 21st century network to a growing community or a growing state such as ours.

The member may be aware, for example, that in comparison to other states south-east Queensland's energy demand is increasing at around about six per cent while other states are increasing at three per cent. That just highlights what a boom state we live in. But that provides significant challenges in ensuring that we have appropriate expenditure being invested in the network to ensure, one, continuity of supply and, two, meeting the growth demands of a growing population and a very healthy economy. They are challenges that are worth having in the Smart State, but I am sure the honourable member will be interested, as we all will be, in the outcome of the independent review—that is, their recommendations as to appropriate levels of expenditure and performance by both Energex and Ergon.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Hervey Bay, I welcome to the public gallery school leaders and teachers from Burleigh Heads State School in the electorate of Burleigh.

Legal Profession Reforms

Mr McNAMARA: My question is directed to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. I refer to the government's reform of the legal profession, and I ask: what role will non-lawyers have in judging complaints against lawyers?

Mr WELFORD: I thank the honourable member for his question. As members know, over recent years one of the most important aspects of the reforms that I have been developing and steering for the legal profession has been to put in place arrangements for the regulation of the profession which rebuild public confidence in the profession and public confidence in the complaints system.

Under these reforms, anyone who has a concern about actions or behaviour of a lawyer will be able to take a complaint to an independent umpire. This will be the new Legal Services Commissioner who will manage complaints and decide not only how they should be handled but also whether they result in prosecution action for breach of ethical standards.

Serious matters, which could involve a lawyer being struck off or suspended, will be heard by a legal practice tribunal chaired by a Supreme Court judge. The Legal Service Commissioner will be able to refer minor charges, however, of unsatisfactory professional conduct to a legal practice committee.

Non-lawyers will have an integral role to play on both the legal practice committee and the tribunal chaired by the Supreme Court judge. This weekend in Saturday's *Courier-Mail* and the *Weekend Australian* members will note an advertisement calling for non-lawyer lay members of the legal practice tribunal and the legal practice committee. These two new panels will have a balance of people with technical legal skills supported by a non-lawyer with knowledge of consumer protection issues, business or public administration—in other words, someone who represents the community in setting standards of fair and ethical behaviour by professional legal practitioners.

The legal practice tribunal will hear and decide serious complaints of unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct by legal practitioners. A lay member and a lawyer will sit with the tribunal chair and Supreme Court judge to hear and determine each case. All of the appointments to the tribunal will be on a part-time basis and for a period not longer than five years.

The legal practice committee will consist of a chairperson, two solicitors, two barristers and two lay members. It will have two roles: firstly, providing advice to me as minister about legal professional rules and, secondly, hearing and deciding complaints against legal practitioners for unsatisfactory professional conduct and complaints also against the employees of law firms for misconduct in relation to the legal services provided to clients. Appointment to the legal practice committee will also be on a part-time basis.

Our reforms to the legal profession will bring greater independence, accountability and transparency to the complaints and disciplinary system. They will ensure there are controls on the conduct and competence of lawyers that respond to the concerns of Queenslanders.

Wind Farm, Bunya Mountains National Park

Mrs PRATT: My question is directed to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. It has been brought to the attention of the Nanango shire that there is a proposal for a wind power generating farm to be sited adjacent to the Bunya Mountains National Park. Will the minister confirm if this proposal is to go ahead and when the construction is expected to commence?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am aware in general terms about the project to which the honourable member refers. As to the actual dates of construction and as to whether a final decision has been made, I cannot assist the member at this point in time. I would be happy to provide that information to the member for Nanango. I invite her to contact my office and we will provide her with a full briefing.

Gold Coast City Council

Mr POOLE: My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women. I refer the minister to a range of recent articles in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* about the workings of the Gold Coast City Council since the last election and allegations of misleading comments by some councillors prior to the election, and I ask: can the minister please advise the House where to from here?

Ms BOYLE: I thank the honourable member for the question. He and other members representing Gold Coast electorates have expressed their concern to me about the progress, or lack thereof, since the council elections of business in the Gold Coast City Council. Additionally, they have expressed their concerns about allegations of misleading statements by some councillors, now elected, during the election period.

It is really important to remember that the people of the Gold Coast voted for this council just one month ago this week. The immediate task, accordingly, of all Gold Coast city councillors is to get down to the business of making good decisions for the Gold Coast and ensuring that proper and efficient administration of this major city in Australia is taking place. That is their task.

Nonetheless, I do acknowledge the very grave concern that some councillors have expressed about the alleged actions of some of their colleagues. I have received a letter from some Gold Coast councillors asking me to investigate two issues. The first is developer donations to councillors. The second is the denial of some of those councillors of those donations prior to the election. Quite properly these allegations have been referred to the CMC. It is right and proper that the CMC is investigating and that I await its report.

In the meantime, however, there is talk within the Gold Coast City Council, and reported widely in the media, that the council should be sacked and that an administrator should be appointed. This is not an option. Just one month after the election and while this matter is being investigated by the CMC, I have a message for all Gold Coast councillors—particularly those who are taking up meeting time by backbiting each other, sniping each other and not attending to the proper business of council—'Take a cold shower and get on with the job that you have been elected to do by the people of Gold Coast.'

The Gold Coast City Council is under very serious pressure. The tremendous growth in the area means that the number of development applications to be considered is rising by the week. They have much to do that is not political and that is the proper business that they should be putting their minds to. Councillors need to reassure all those who voted for them that their vote has been properly cast and that they are doing the proper business of a Gold Coast city councillor in this important region of Queensland.

Sugar Industry

Mr ROWELL: My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. As a result of the problems faced by the sugar industry, banks are refusing some growers carry-on finance to plant next year's crop. As this window of opportunity for planting is critical over the next three months, will the minister guarantee that these farmers will be able to access the government's \$10 million in loans in time for planting to ensure that the certainty of their cane farming operations is maintained?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I thank the honourable member for the question. Let me say how pleased I was that our historic legislation passed through parliament yesterday. It basically means that the \$30 million—plus the additional \$3 million that the state government has put in—will flow through to the industry. It will also unlock the \$120 million that the federal government has arranged to provide assistance to the industry through a 3c a litre levy.

Mr Rowell: Not 3c a litre.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Three cents a kilogram. I get back to the honourable member's question. There is a \$10 million package available to be accessed by our canegrowers. As the honourable member would know, this money comes through QRAA, which is a statutory authority. As minister, I am not in a position to influence what the authority does. I am quite sure that each individual application that comes forward to the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority will be treated sympathetically and with dignity.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I cannot say yes and I cannot say no. But what I can say is that the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority will treat those applications, especially those hardship cases, with sympathy and a deal of decorum.

Let us just take this one step further. Even now we do not know what the federal government is proposing in its package. Who knows what is going to be in that package? We are receiving selective leaks about this package from the daily newspapers. We have people such as the ones those opposite represent not being consulted and not being told what is in the federal government's package. I understand that it was decided 10 days ago and there has been no word about it to our growers—the ones the member is referring to.

This announcement is a publicity stunt and in a very marginal seat in Queensland. Canegrowers have had to wait at least 10 days to find out the contents of the package. That is why they are coming to those opposite with their complaints. They do not have the certainty that they need in the industry. QRAA will look sympathetically at all those applications.

Queensland Government Agent Program

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Communities. I refer the minister to the highly successful Queensland Government Agent Program. Can the minister inform the House about the types of services this program is providing for rural and regional Queenslanders? What plans are there for the program in the future?

Mr PITT: I am pleased to do so. I thank the member for Bundaberg for her question. I think most of us in the House would recognise that, for a long time, the member has been a very vocal and strong advocate for rural and regional Queensland and we appreciate that.

The Queensland Government Agent Program has a very proud history. It dates back in this state to 1992. I remember when Tom Burns, the then Deputy Premier, introduced that program having returned from a trip to Canada where they were concerned about delivering government services to remote and rural areas. It has grown to the extent that it has become nationally recognised. It is a highly successful program. The network for QGAP offices stretches the length and breadth of Queensland.

Mr Mickel: Up and down the length of Queensland.

Mr PITT: The minister is right; up and down the length and breadth of Queensland. There are 68 QGAP offices throughout Queensland. Last year, I was pleased to see the first one established in an indigenous community—that is, at Yarrabah in my electorate. These offices have proven to be highly successful—so successful that the federal government is now thinking of piggybacking on that program because it did not have the foresight to establish agencies like that.

The QGAP program does remain a groundbreaking concept. It is cross-departmental. It is an Australian first. It has been so successful that other states have introduced programs similar to it. New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia all now have programs that reach out into rural and remote communities.

Some of the services provided by QGAP offices include seeing a justice of the peace, attending to rental matters, performing business name activities, giving instructions for and the signing of wills, making a freedom of information request, submitting a Seniors Card application, assistance with insurance inquiries to Suncorp and NRMA, and paying fines or various taxes, stamp duty and payroll matters. Without those agencies across Queensland people who live in those areas would be disadvantaged severely. It is a whole-of-government approach. The agents who operate those services have to be across a whole range of issues. They provide an excellent service. I give due credit to them.

The extent of services provided is such that last year 206,000 transactions occurred in QGAP offices across Queensland. They receipted more than \$26 million of government revenue. QGAP offices are centrally coordinated by Smart Service Queensland, under franchising agreements with various organisations. Seven state government departments use QGAP offices to get their messages out there or to receive information or requests from constituents, and 13 local government and seven commercial or community based organisations operate QGAP agencies under these franchising agreements.

Public Housing

Mr HOPPER: My question is directed to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. I refer to my comments in the House on Tuesday with regard to difficulties experienced by the Mudge family in Maryborough. What steps are the minister and his department taking to protect this decent Australian family from the actions of other tenants from hell? What will the minister do to ensure that other families like the Mudges are given the protection of the quiet enjoyment of their property?

Mr SCHWARTEN: The rules for public housing are very clear. I have been through them in this place many times, but, unfortunately, the honourable member does not have the intellectual capacity to grasp them. I will go through them again. I have gone through them many times for him.

Mr Hopper: You're a bully.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Here he is complaining about bullying. How embarrassing.

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The member is pathetic. I will go through the rules again: pay your rent, be a good tenant—that means look after the house—and be a good neighbour.

Opposition members interjected.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am unable to hear the minister because of interjections from both sides of the House. The next person who yells across the chamber will be warned under standing order 123A.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Mr Speaker, they are still at it, I hear. They take no notice of what you have to say and obviously have no respect for the House.

The rules are very clear in that regard and people are invited to contact the police. What I will not tolerate is this continued undermining of public housing tenants. That is what those opposite love talking about. They love talking about public housing tenants. They love to stare down their snouts at them.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Gregory under standing order 123A.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The truth is, I do not tolerate bad behaviour in public housing. Those people will be evicted if the proper channels have been gone through. I do not judge people simply because they are poorer than me, unlike the member for the Darling Downs.

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

LEGAL PROFESSION BILL

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (11.30 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to provide for admission to, and the regulation of, the legal profession, and for entities involving members of the legal profession, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER read a message from Her Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (11.32 a.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Legal Profession Bill 2004 is the second stage of the government's reforms of the Queensland legal profession. It follows on from the historic reforms our government introduced in

the Legal Profession Act 2003, dealing with the complaints and disciplinary processes for lawyers and facilitating Queensland's participation in the national legal profession scheme. Those reforms represented the first steps in what is a sea change for the legal profession. This bill incorporates and updates the Legal Profession Act 2003. It includes changes for the latest version of the national model law, developed under the auspices of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General.

The Legal Profession Act 2003 established the new independent office of the Legal Services Commissioner. Over the past several months a comprehensive selection process has been conducted for this important new role. I anticipate being in a position to make an appointment within the next month.

The Legal Services Commissioner will receive and manage the investigation of complaints against lawyers. The position has full investigative powers with staff to assist. In addition, the commissioner can call on the investigative capacity of the Queensland Law Society and Bar Association of Queensland. The commissioner is responsible for prosecuting professional conduct charges in appropriate cases. Minor professional conduct breaches can be heard by the Legal Practice Committee (appointed by the Governor in Council). More serious matters will be heard by the Legal Practice Tribunal, chaired by a Supreme Court judge. There will be a public register of the findings of professional misconduct so that consumers can check the track record of lawyers they are considering engaging to act for them.

Consistent with the Legal Profession Act 2003, for the first time barristers will be required to hold practising certificates and have professional indemnity insurance in order to engage in private practice. The Bar Association will administer this regime.

The arrangements for the setting of professional standards will be more accountable under the new scheme. Legal profession rules will be brought to this parliament by the Attorney-General as subordinate legislation. The Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association of Queensland will be able to make recommendations for these rules. The Legal Practice Committee will have a standing authority to advise on the adequacy of the rules.

There are also more accountable arrangements for the management and allocation of interest on solicitors' trust accounts. These are to be managed through a government held fund rather than by the Queensland Law Society. This fund will continue to be allocated in the public interest only for purposes set out in the bill, including the Legal Services Commission and Legal Aid.

In addition to the reform of complaints and discipline, the bill transforms the admission and legal practice arrangements to facilitate Queensland's participation in the national legal profession scheme. These include provisions relating to enhanced mutual recognition of lawyers, a national practising certificate scheme and incorporated legal practices.

The 2003 act was based in part on the then available draft of the national model laws for the regulation of the legal profession being developed through the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. As part of the national scheme, lawyers admitted in other jurisdictions will be able to apply for local practising certificates without having to be first admitted in Queensland. Interstate legal practitioners will be allowed to practise in Queensland without a local practising certificate. Legal practitioner directors of incorporated legal practices will have a high degree of accountability for the management of legal services provided by the incorporated practice and the conduct of other directors of the practice and those providing legal services.

This bill incorporates and updates provisions of the Legal Profession Act 2003. By including changes for the latest version of the national model laws, the bill will avoid the need for extensive future amendments for consistency with the nationally agreed model. It also includes further parts from the national model laws not included in the 2003 act.

In particular, the bill provides for multidisciplinary partnerships. This will facilitate lawyers entering into partnerships with other service providers, such as accountants. The provisions governing multidisciplinary partnerships are similar in many respects to those regulating incorporated legal practices. Legal practitioner partners will be held accountable in relation to the legal services provided by the multidisciplinary practice. The bill allows for regulations to prohibit classes of activities from being carried on in association with legal practice in a multidisciplinary partnership.

The multi-disciplinary partnership and incorporated legal practice provisions give the scope for lawyers and other professionals to provide a one-stop shop approach to legal and related

professional services. They also provide an opportunity for cost sharing by small operators, particularly in rural and regional centres.

The bill provides significant safeguards for consumers through onerous ethical obligations and disclosure requirements upon legal practitioners in multi-disciplinary practices, including:

- legal practitioner members will be responsible for the standards of all legal services provided by the practice;
- the legal practitioner members will be ethically responsible for the conduct and suitability of all other non-legal partners; and
- consumers engaging these multi-disciplinary services must be given full disclosure of all the services being provided and the persons providing those services, clearly distinguishing between non-legal services and those services the consumer may regard as legal services.

Further regulations governing the professional and ethical rules for lawyers will be developed before this part of the legislation is commenced.

The bill also provides for Queensland's participation in the national scheme for the registration of foreign lawyers. Registered foreign lawyers will be subject to similar requirements to local lawyers in relation to their professional obligations, complaints and disciplinary processes, professional indemnity insurance and trust account requirements. The scheme also provides for foreign lawyers to be recognised on the basis of their registration in other states and territories, avoiding the need for multiple registration.

The scheme is consistent with Australia's obligations under trade agreements aimed at freeing up the provision of cross-border professional services. It can be expected with increasing internationalisation of Queensland trade and business interests that the registration scheme will be of increasing benefit to the Queensland economy. The Queensland Law Society Act 1952 currently allows for the appointment of a trustee of a solicitor's trust account in a number of circumstances. It also provides for the appointment of receivers. In place of these provisions, the bill includes the external administration provisions adopted by the national model laws. These provisions clearly set out the respective roles and powers of a supervisor of trust accounts, a manager of the practice with operational responsibility in respect of the legal practice, and the receiver where the practice is to be wound up. Receivers have prescribed processes, including court processes, to establish and secure money and property to which the receivership applies. There are appropriate appeal mechanisms for persons to object to the relevant appointments.

The current provisions in the Queensland Law Society Act 1952 relating to the fidelity fund only apply to local practising certificate holders from the Queensland Law Society. The bill now adopts the fidelity fund provisions from the national model laws and, in doing so, the bill addresses:

- the jurisdiction to cover liability in the event of a claim in the context of interstate legal practitioners who will be permitted to practise and may operate trust accounts in Queensland;
- issues relating to claims with multijurisdictional elements; and
- a consistent basis for the treatment of claims and excluded claims.

These provisions are broadly consistent with our current provisions in Queensland. They maintain the existing exclusions from claim for moneys placed with solicitors for investment purposes.

The remaining parts of the national model laws in relation to trust accounts, client legal cost agreements and consumers' cost review rights will be progressed in separate specific legislation later in the year. The bill moves provisions providing the statutory basis for the existence of the Queensland Law Society to the new act, thus repealing the Queensland Law Society Act 1952, and provides for some changes requested by the society in relation to its council. These include:

- reducing the size of the council from 17 to no more than 12 and not less than seven; and
- extending the term of the current council for an extra year to facilitate a smooth transition to the new regulatory arrangements.

The passage of the Legal Profession Act last year has allowed preparation for the necessary structural arrangements to be put in place to enable this new package to be commenced from 1 July 2004. The commencement for some provisions, such as incorporated legal practices, multidisciplinary practices and registration of foreign lawyers, will be announced after the supporting regulations and administrative arrangements are in place. The changes introduced in

this bill represent an important step in the Beattie government's overhaul of legal profession regulation. It forms part of a national scheme which will protect consumers of legal services and provide a system of regulation in which the broader community can have confidence. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Order! Before we proceed, I advise honourable members that in the gallery we have students from St Bernard's Mount Gravatt Primary School in the electorate of Mount Gravatt. Welcome to the parliament, students.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Committee

Resumed from 28 April (p. 664).

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr ROBERTSON (11.44 a.m.): I move amendment No. 1—

1 After clause 1—

At page 6, after line 5—

insert—

' 1A Commencement

'Part 3A is taken to have commenced on 11 September 2003.'

Amendment No. 1 inserts after clause 1 of the bill a new clause 1A that provides for part 3A of the bill to be taken to have commenced on 11 September 2003. This is to make the operation of the new part 3A retrospective to the date of assent to the Irvinebank State Treatment Works Repeal Act 2003. The principal purpose of the retrospectivity is to remove any crude right Mr Hilla has to be granted a permit to occupy.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—

Mr SEENEY (11.45 a.m.): Clause 3 amends the definition of 'constructing authority' within the Acquisition of Land Act 1967. It amends the definition of a constructing authority in section 2. Minister, the query I have is: what particular incident prompted this amendment to be included in this bill which, as the second reading debate has clearly illustrated, has been all about establishing a profit a prendre for leasehold land? Obviously this amendment has been included for some reason. I inquire as to what particular incident or instance prompted its inclusion in this bill.

Mr ROBERTSON: Clause 3 amends the definition of 'constructing authority' in section 2. The current wording of the definition of 'constructing authority' in section 2 could be interpreted to mean that a local government can be a constructing authority only if it is authorised by the act to take land. This is not the intent. The amendment makes it clear that a local government or a person authorised by an act to take land for any purpose can be a constructing authority. So it is clarifying the original intent of the legislation.

Mr SEENEY: I thank the minister for reading to me the paragraph out of the explanatory notes, but that was not the question. The question I asked—and I had read the paragraph out of the explanatory notes—

Mr Robertson: I'm pleased you had.

Mr SEENEY: The question was: what prompted the inclusion of this amendment in this particular bill? It would seem to me that there has been an instance where the definition of 'constructing authority' has been challenged and been found to be wanting. There must have been an instance somewhere or an incident somewhere that prompted the inclusion of this particular amendment. As the minister would appreciate, the whole situation with the Acquisition of Land Act is one of particular sensitivity. It is one of particular sensitivity in my electorate. I will just keep talking for a while to give the minister time to get some advice, because obviously the

minister does not know. The situation with the Acquisition of Land Act is one of some sensitivity, and it has been for some time. It is currently one of particular sensitivity for a number of projects within my electorate and within a number of other areas that I am aware of.

I currently have before the House a private member's bill seeking to amend the Acquisition of Land Act to fix up a lot of glaring anomalies that exist within that act and to bring about some long overdue justice, I believe, in terms of the way the government handles the acquisition of land from private land-holders. There are always going to be instances—and I concede that—where the government is required to acquire land on behalf of the community. At the risk of transgressing on the debate that we will have when we do debate that private member's bill, there are some long overdue changes needed to bring about some fairness and justice in that process. Therefore, it is curious that this bill before the House today includes this amendment which seeks to make this small change to the Acquisition of Land Act to redefine the definition of a constructing authority to include local authorities. I am very keen to know what prompted the minister to include this amendment within this particular bill at this particular time rather than address the whole question of the Acquisition of Land Act, which glaringly needs amendment. There needs to be much more extensive amendments made to that act than the one that we are considering today.

Mr ROBERTSON: I assume that the honourable member has consulted the Acquisition of Land Act.

Mr Seeney: Absolutely.

Mr ROBERTSON: So the member would know that in that existing section, local government is already mentioned. Let me help the member. Section 2 of the Acquisition of Land Act, which deals with definitions, states—

'constructing authority' means

(a) the State; or

(b) a local government or other person authorised by an Act to take land for any purpose.

All we have done is clarify that. There is no specific case that I am informed about that has driven this, but over time it has been necessary to break the existing subsection (b) into (b) and (c) to separate local government from what follows in the existing act and put that into a (c) section. So there is no great intent; it is purely a matter of clarification based on experience and practice over a number of years.

Clause 3, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 4 and 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—

Mr ROBERTSON (11.51 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

2 After clause 5—

At page 7, after line 26—

insert—

' PART 3A—AMENDMENT OF IRVINEBANK STATE TREATMENT WORKS REPEAL ACT 2003

5A Act amended in pt 3A

This part amends the *Irvinebank State Treatment Works Repeal Act 2003*.

5B Amendment of s 2 (Definitions)

(1) Section 2, definition "relevant authority", ', but does not include the permit mentioned in section 4'—
omit.

(2) Section 2, definition "site", '19'—

omit, insert—

'18, 19'.

(3) Section 2, definition "the land"—

omit.

5C Omission of s 4 (Permit to occupy the land to be issued to purchaser)

Section 4—

omit.

5D Amendment of s 7 (Purchaser's liability for actions etc. relating to works)

Section 7, from 'relating to'—

omit, insert—

'relating to the occupation or operation of the works by the purchaser.'

5E Omission of schedule
Schedule—
omit.

This amendment removes the statutory requirement for the former purchaser of the Irvinebank State Treatment Works to be issued with a permit to occupy over part of the site of the Queensland National Bank building. Under section 2 of the Irvinebank State Treatment Works Repeal Act, which was passed by this parliament last year, the chief executive of my Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy was required to issue as soon as practicable a permit to occupy to Mr Hilla over lot 999 on AP 11308, the site of the bank building.

The offer of a permit to occupy was made to Mr Hilla on 23 October 2003. The permit includes conditions that are normally included in such permits and did not contain any unusual, onerous or special conditions. Mr Hilla was encouraged to accept the offer of the permit and was given several extensions of time in which to do so. However, Mr Hilla has not anticipated the offer, has moved into his own house and has announced his intention to leave Irvinebank.

As the chief executive is still obliged to issue the permit to occupy to Mr Hilla, the state is fettered in its ability to appropriately deal with the bank building. This amendment will remove the obligation on the chief executive to issue a permit to occupy.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr SEENEY (11.52 a.m.): A whole range of clauses from clause 7 through to clause 40 seek to make amendments to the Land Act 1994. One small paragraph at the bottom of page 2 of the explanatory notes refers quite curiously to those 33 amendments. It states—

The miscellaneous changes to the Land Act 1994, Acquisition of Land Act 1967 and Valuation of Land Act 1944 provide for minor amendments to administrative provisions to tidy up inconsistencies and to ensure improved efficiency in processing associated dealings.

The concern I have is that we have some 33 amendments to the Land Act which once again have been included in this bill, which is primarily about establishing that profit a prendre facility, which certainly has been the whole focus of this legislation.

Some of these amendments to the Land Act are minor and technical, do not have a lot of impact and are about tidying up inconsistencies. Some of them are related to the main thrust of the bill. But a range of others, from my examination of them, have very little to do with the main direction of the bill and very little to do with achieving the purpose of the bill. There are one or two of them that I wanted to ask about in the consideration of them, because I am not sure that they should be taken as being minor amendments to administrative provisions. I think that they raise a number of issues.

Clause 7 is the first one and I seek the minister's clarification as to why clause 7 is included in this bill at this point. To save the minister doing it, I will read the paragraph from the explanatory notes that relates to clause 7. It states—

Clause 7 amends section 5. In apparent contradiction of the statement made in section 5 (2), the footnote to that sub-section indicated that the Governor in Council could not grant, in fee simple, layers and strata above and below the surface of the land. The amendment draws attention to section 14(3) in the footnote, thereby making it clear that the Governor in Council may grant in fee simple layers and strata above and below the surface of land, provided such land is above high-water mark.

For the information of members—

The CHAIRMAN: I really must intercede here. I know that the member for Callide was noting that the minister read an explanatory note before, but I do not think it helps the consideration of this committee for the member to be reading the explanatory notes. So can I suggest that we do not do that. Actually, the member should ask what he wants to pertaining to that rather than going through that exercise. I think that Mr Latham would like the member reading to his children, but not to me.

Mr SEENEY: I was going to attempt to explain it in simpler words than those. I was drawing attention to the complex paragraph in the explanatory notes.

The CHAIRMAN: I see.

Mr SEENEY: I was anticipating the minister's response, given his response to my last question when he read a similarly complex paragraph as an explanation to the question that I asked. For the benefit of the members in the chamber, this issue has some relevance to a

number of current situations whereby titles exist in horizontal strata and where one title exists under another in particular circumstances, especially in regard to mining leases. I do not think it has any relevance at all to the establishment of profit a prendre for allowing value to be accumulated in trees, because to my knowledge trees cannot be grown in horizontal strata.

Mr Robertson: Novel thought.

Mr SEENEY: Even though I suspect that there are some who would like to be able to do that. I seek clarification about what the minister is trying to achieve with the inclusion of this clause in this bill. Why is it being included in this bill today?

Mr ROBERTSON: This clause simply clarifies existing practice. Take, for example, the classic case of the Queensland Rail building on Turbot Street that goes over the roadway. In that case, the building actually occupies a strata above the surface of the land that the road goes under—which, of course, we would hope is above the high-water mark. Later on in the legislation, it actually allows for such strata titling, which is the full term. It was deemed necessary simply to make sure that the clarity in terms of clause 7 accorded with section 14 of the Land Act. So it is just a question of clarity. Nothing has changed of any great moment.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

Mr SEENEY (12.00 p.m.): Clause 9 refers to the reasons the minister may use to revoke a reserve. This is a particular issue that a number of smaller communities especially have to face at different times because there are certainly a lot of these types of reserves within those communities that are no longer being used for the purpose for which the reserve was first established.

There have been a number of instances where those reserves are needed for community services, be it to build a new hospital or retirement facilities as in the case of a couple of instances I have had to deal with. I know the difficulty involved in ensuring that those reserves are able to be accessed for an emerging public purpose as a result of the changing needs of that particular community.

The example that is used here in the explanatory notes refers to police paddocks. Just about every community that I represent has an area of land, usually pretty close to the middle of town, which was set aside or reserved as a police paddock in the days when the Police Service needed somewhere to keep their horses, which were an essential part of the Police Service at that time. Obviously the purpose for that reserve has long since disappeared. As the needs of the community change, so will the use of a particular area of land for emerging community purposes.

This amendment allows the minister to change the purpose of that reserve and, I would hope, make that process easier. I am a bit concerned about the wording of the particular clause and the fact that it somehow seems to be indicating that there is a tendency to make those reserves more able to be set aside as environmental areas rather than being used for those emerging community purposes that I spoke about that I have had to pursue on behalf of the communities that I represent. Perhaps to begin the discussion on this particular clause the minister could give us an outline of what the government's intent is in making the amendment outlined in clause 9 and then if there is a difference we can talk about that.

Mr ROBERTSON: As the member for Callide has quoted extensively from the explanatory notes, he has provided the clarity that is needed in relation to this particular clause.

Mr SEENEY: I did not.

Mr ROBERTSON: The example there that he mentioned which relates to police can be extended to other operational purposes, such as fire stations, hospitals, et cetera, as distinct from community purpose which is parkland, et cetera. That new subclause (c) is about providing greater clarity and flexibility for the purposes of facilitating the building of facilities for operational purposes as distinct from community purposes.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN: Before calling the next clause I would like to welcome students from St Bernard's, Upper Mount Gravatt, in the electorate of Mount Gravatt. I have been advised that the member for Mansfield actually did grade one at that school.

Clause 10—

Mr SEENEY (12.05 p.m.): Very briefly, because I am not overly concerned about clause 10, it deals with the cancelling of a deed of grant in trust and sets out the persons who are to be advised of the proposed cancelling of the deed of grant and the requirement on the minister to notify people. The deed of grant in trust title is one that is used for a range of community purposes, but it is primarily used, from my understanding at least, in the northern areas. Aboriginal communities often hold quite extensive deeds of grant in trust. Is there a reason for this clause to be in this bill? Has the government had to deal with a situation where cancellation of a deed of agreement in trust has been considered by you as a minister?

Mr ROBERTSON: The simple answer would be yes. DOGITs, or deeds of grant in trust, are actually more common than perhaps you realise. For example, in my own electorate of Sunnybank—and as you know I represent an urban Brisbane electorate—until the redistribution I had a deed of grant in trust which was an area set aside many years ago when Sunnybank was just a small suburb for community purposes. Today we see on that deed of grant in trust the local Lions club, Meals on Wheels, a soccer club and I think there is an athletics oval and Brisbane City Council subleases part of it as well. In an urban context they are actually quite common.

Again using a local example, the trustees of that deed of grant in trust up until a number of years ago were elderly gentlemen. These gentlemen were some of the original settlers in Sunnybank, people of fine community standing. But they had got old, as we all do. They were not keeping up with contemporary standards about the range of community facilities that could be used on a DOGIT. In fact, those trustees had to be changed.

That is an example arising from a deed of grant in trust where time has moved on, where the original purposes of that deed of grant in trust are no longer relevant to the community, and we may have to take appropriate action.

These amendments are about a fair and transparent way of handling circumstances as they arise from time to time. We need to be proactive in a way that protects the broader community's interests from issues that arise from time to time.

I understand where you are coming from with respect to Aboriginal communities, but the incidences of DOGITs are far more common not just in Brisbane but right throughout cities and townships throughout Queensland.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—

Mr SEENEY (12.08 p.m.): Clause 17 deals with road licences. There is quite a complex paragraph in the explanatory notes, too, which I will not quote but I will refer to.

The CHAIRMAN: That is the idea.

Mr SEENEY: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I am always open to advice and suggestions to improve the performance in this place.

The CHAIRMAN: It has been a long week. I am just suggesting that we have a few smiles on the way, that is all.

Mr SEENEY: What the government is trying to achieve with the inclusion of this clause 17 in relation to road licences is somewhat puzzling. Of concern is not actually the clause itself, but the wording that is used. The impression that can be taken from the way that the clause is worded and the explanatory notes are written is that there is an intent by the government to turn road reserves into environmental reserves or to take back permits to occupy that currently exist for the purposes of establishing some sort of environmental reserve. The reason for this impression is the example that is given in the explanatory notes. At the risk of transgressing I will quote one sentence out of the explanatory notes—

If the minister is satisfied the land should be used for more appropriate purposes (for example, as a Reserve for Environmental purposes), the present wording of section 105(1)(a) limits the Minister's discretion to cancel a road licence.

Once again, I am curious as to why this clause is included in the bill at this stage. Why is it felt that the government needs to have this power to cancel these road licences? I presume it would include things like permits to occupy road reserves which land-holders hold. There is a range of circumstances, as I understand it, that would be encompassed by this particular clause. I seek clarification as to the government's intent. I also seek assurances on behalf of constituents on

mine and people in regional Queensland who hold road licences and permits to occupy road reserves that are adjacent or part of the properties that they operate.

Mr ROBERTSON: I think a separation needs to be put in place between road reserves and road licences. They are different things. Road reserves have a significant degree of permanency. Road licences are temporary permits to occupy for a land-holder. For example, on a reserve a cane farmer might be provided with the opportunity to grow cane, but that ability to grow cane on that reserve is not a permanent right to occupy and grow cane.

The concern that the member has is the example that he has given. There are a range of examples that are available. For example, the reserve itself may be required to be a road. This provides, again, a degree of certainty and transparency similar to what we were talking about with respect to DOGITs about appropriate notification to the person who has the licence and how they should go about removing whatever it is they are using that land for. I appreciate what the member is saying. The example given for environmental purposes is one of many examples of what can be used.

Mr HOBBS: I understand that, with most road reserves or road permits, a permit to occupy would be provided to those people. For example, I presume a cane farmer would have to have a permit to occupy. They are reviewed every 12 months. If the government required a block of land for a certain purpose—an environment purpose or whatever—why would the licence just not be renewed on the basis that the government wanted it for some other purpose? It seems as if the government wants to try to break into an agreement within that 12-month period. Is that correct?

Mr ROBERTSON: I am informed that the licences are not 12-month renewables. They have a degree of perpetuity. The example that the member used does not occur because we are not looking at 12-month cycles of renewal, as the member has said.

Clause 17, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 18 to 27, as read, agreed to.

Clause 28—

Mr HOBBS (12.14 p.m.): The explanatory notes on this clause state that it amends section 211 to make it clear that the condition of a lease may be reviewed every 15 years after the 'start' of the lease, which is easily identifiable, rather than the 'issue' of a lease—that is, the date the Governor in Council granted the lease—which is not easily identified. Is the minister saying that, irrespective of what lease and what term—it may be a 30-year or a 40-year lease—the conditions of all leases will be reviewed every 15 years from that start point?

Mr ROBERTSON: I understand that this pertains only to leases issued under the most recent act, the 1994 act, which put in place the following provision—

Conditions must be reviewed

- (1) The Minister must consider whether to carry out a review on the conditions of a lease once every 15 years after the issue of a lease.
- (2) A review must not be made within 10 years of a lease issuing or the last review.
- (3) A review must be performed in consultation with the lessee.
- (4) This section applies only to leases issued on or after the commencement.

So that is the existing provision in the 1994 act. The amendments being put in place are technical in nature in terms of changing the terminology as the member outlined in the explanatory notes. Again, it is more about putting in place clarity based on the experience that the department has had over a number of years now. We are taking the opportunity to make these clarifications through this omnibus bill. Again, it is not of any great moment and does not change the existing rights of leaseholders.

Mr HOBBS: So the minister is saying that this provision does not impact on any lease issued before 1994. It impacts only on leases issued since 1994.

Mr Robertson: That is right.

Clause 28, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 29 to 53, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr ROBERTSON (12.17 p.m.): I should have done this earlier—although the opposition spokesman has a copy of this—but I table the explanatory notes to the amendments that I am moving in committee. I move the following amendment—

3 After clause 53—

At page 25, after line 18—

insert—

' PART 6A—AMENDMENT OF MINERAL RESOURCES ACT 1989

53A Act amended in pt 6A

This part amends the *Mineral Resources Act 1989*.

53B Insertion of new s 418D

Part 11, after section 418C—

insert—

' 418D Particular mineral development licences and mining leases

'(1) A mineral development licence or a mining lease granted before the commencement of this section wholly or partly in respect of relevant land for an exploration permit is taken to have been validly granted.

'(2) An application for a mineral development licence or a mining lease to the extent the application is in respect of relevant land for an exploration permit is taken to have been validly made if the application—

(a) was lodged before the commencement of this section; and

(b) would have complied with the Act in all respects if the relevant land had not been excluded from the exploration permit.

'(3) In this section—

"relevant land", for an exploration permit, means land that was excluded under a condition of the permit to the effect that land subject to native title is excluded from the permit.'

53C Amendment of s 722A (Definitions for pt 18A)

Section 722A, definition "prescribed day", '1 July 2004'—

omit, insert—

'31 December 2004'.

' PART 6B—AMENDMENT OF PETROLEUM ACT 1923

53D Act amended in pt 6B

This part amends the *Petroleum Act 1923*.

53E Amendment of s 151 (Definitions for pt 10)

Section 151, definition "prescribed day", '1 July 2004'—

omit, insert—

'31 December 2004'.

There are two amendments proposed under this amendment to the Mineral Resources Act 1989. The first validates applications and the grant of applications for mineral development licences and mining leases deriving from shell or Swiss cheese exploration permits. These permits were issued with the condition that it excluded land subject to native title. At the time the permits were granted, the assumption was that native title did not exist on pastoral lease land and therefore these leases would not be affected by the condition.

However, the 1996 Wik decision that native title could coexist with pastoral leases had the effect of, one, rendering these permits merely an external boundary with all the land within the permit excluded because of native title—that is the shell term that we use—or, two, creating holes of excluded land within the boundary of the permit, which we call Swiss cheese.

It is important that these applications and grants based on these permits are validated while at the same time ensuring that native title rights are not harmed. This amendment validates the affected applications for and grants of mineral development licences and mining leases. Given the relevant provisions of the Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993, they must be complied with prior to any grant of a mineral development licence or mining lease irrespective of whether the permit used for application excluded native title. This amendment is technical in nature and does not compromise native title rights.

The second amendment covered by amendment No. 3 is to the Mineral Resources Act 1989. It seeks to extend the current restriction on the grant of certain overlapping mining leases until a longer term coal seam gas regime is introduced in the new gas and petroleum legislation that I will be bringing to this House later this year. The proposed amendment seeks to extend our interim regime from 1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004.

This proposed amendment complements the earlier amendment to the Mineral Resources Act 1989 and will extend the restriction on the grant of certain overlapping petroleum leases until a longer term coal seam gas regime is introduced in the new gas and petroleum legislation later

this year. Currently the interim restriction expires on 1 July. We are seeking to extend it to 31 December.

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 54 to 56, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr ROBERTSON (12.20 p.m.): I move amendment No. 4—

4 After clause 56—

At page 26, after line 13—

insert—

' 56A Replacement of s 37 (Chief executive to make annual valuation)

Section 37—

omit, insert—

' 37 Chief executive to make annual valuation

'(1) The chief executive must make annually a valuation of all land in an area unless—

(a) subsection (2) applies; or

(b) the chief executive makes a decision under subsection (3).

'(2) The chief executive is not required to make an annual valuation of land in an area if the chief executive considers it is not possible to make the valuation because of unusual circumstances.

Examples of unusual circumstances—

civil disturbance, extreme climatic conditions, industrial action, changes in the way valuations are made, computer failure

'(3) The chief executive may decide not to make an annual valuation of land in an area after considering the following—

(a) a market survey report for the area;

(b) the results of consultation with the local government for the area and appropriate local groups and industry groups;

Example of local group—

the local Chamber of Commerce

Examples of industry groups—

AgForce, Queensland Industrial Union of Employers, Queensland Canegrowers Organisation Limited

(c) the impact that not making an annual valuation may have on valuations used for land tax or rental purposes;

(d) the length of time since a valuation was carried out;

(e) the relativity of valuations of land in the area with valuations for land in adjacent local government areas;

(f) the overall program for annual valuations over the next 5 year period.

'(4) However, the chief executive must not decide, under subsection (3), not to make an annual valuation of land in an area if the most recent valuation of the land was made more than 4 years ago.

'(5) In this section—

"market survey report", for an area, means a report to the chief executive giving—

(a) details of sales of land in the area since the last annual valuation was made; and

(b) the probable impact of the sales on the unimproved value of land in the area, if an annual valuation were to be made.'

56B Replacement of pt 9, hdg (Transitional provision for Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2001)

Part 9, heading—

omit, insert—

' PART 9—TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

' *Division 1—Transitional provision for Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2001*'.

56C Replacement of pt 10, hdg (Transitional provision for Valuation of Land Amendment Act 2003)

Part 10, heading—

omit, insert—

' *Division 2—Transitional provision for Valuation of Land Amendment Act 2003*'.

56D Insertion of new pt 9, div 3

After section 101—

insert—

' *Division 3—Transitional provision for Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004*

' 102 Valuations affected by unusual circumstances

'(1) Section 37(2), as in force immediately after the commencement of section 56A of the amending Act, is taken to have applied to the making of annual valuations having force and effect for the period of 12 months commencing on 30 June 2004.

'(2) If, because of unusual circumstances, the chief executive did not, before 1 April 2004, make an annual valuation of land in an area having force and effect for the period of 12 months commencing on 30 June 2004, the chief executive is not stopped from making the valuation, to be used only for land tax purposes, if the unusual circumstances no longer exist.

'(3) For making the valuation—

- (a) sections 40 and 41(1)(b) do not apply;
- (b) section 41A(1) does not apply, to the extent it requires notice to be given no later than 31 March 2004;
- (c) section 41A(1)(a) requires notice to be given only to an owner whose land in the area has been valued for land tax purposes;
- (d) section 73(1) does not apply, to the extent it requires a copy of the valuation roll to be given not less than 3 months before 30 June 2004.

'(4) The valuation is taken to have force and effect, for land tax purposes only, for the period of 12 months commencing on 30 June 2004.

'(5) However, the last preceding valuation of the land continues to have force and effect for rating and rental purposes until—

- (a) an annual valuation having force and effect for the period commencing on 30 June 2005 is made; or
- (b) the valuation is sooner altered under this Act.

'(6) Subsection (1) does not otherwise affect the operation of section 37 as in force before the commencement of section 56A of the amending Act.

'(7) In this section—

"amending Act" means the *Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004*.'.

This amendment relates to amendments to the Valuation of Land Act which will allow the chief executive to not make an annual valuation where unusual circumstances compromise the department's ability to make a valuation.

During the debate on the second reading, the member for Greenslopes spoke about the unusual circumstances that can compromise my department's ability to make an annual valuation within the required time frame. However, at present there is no existing legislative provision that allows the chief executive to not provide annual valuations in these circumstances. The amendment also removes a potential inconsistency by excluding the requirement for regulation to extend the period for not making an annual valuation from three years to five years.

Transitional provisions have also been included that will allow for the unusual circumstance provision to be applied retrospectively to the annual valuation due to be effective from 30 June 2004. The transitional provisions also allow the chief executive to make a late annual valuation if the unusual circumstances cease. Where this late annual valuation is made, it will be effective from 30 June 2004. However, the last preceding valuation will remain in force and effect for rating and rental purposes.

Mr SEENEY: The opposition will be opposing this amendment. I do not think that comes as any surprise to the minister or anybody who understands what it is that the government is trying to do here. Basically, the government is legislating itself out of a problem. The minister spoke about the circumstances that have compromised his department's ability to deliver its valuation services.

The circumstance that has compromised his department's ability to deliver its valuation services has been the ongoing underfunding of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy that I have spoken about in this parliament for the last four years. Every year at estimates we go through this charade where the real budget available to the department, the real level of resources available to the department, is consistently reduced in line with the Beattie government's priority of cutting departments like the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Primary Industries to the bone.

What we have before the parliament today is the result of that underfunding. We have the result of a consistent underfunding of that department to a level where the department can no longer provide the services that it has a responsibility to provide. The capacity of the department has fallen to such an extent that they now have to come in here and try to change the rules to ensure that the department and the government are not in breach of their own laws.

The amendment is basically the government legislating its way out of trouble. It is only being introduced because the government has failed to resolve an industrial dispute that has been

raging since September last year which subsequently prevented annual valuations being carried out this year. The only solution the government has been able to come up with to solve this industrial dispute is to come into parliament and try to legislate the problem away. What an indication this is of this government's approach to the whole issue of industrial relations and its approach to people who work in these departments that are consistently underfunded. The minister has known for more than a year that there have been serious understaffing and underresourcing issues for the State Valuation Service in particular.

A valuers' survey was conducted in April 2002 to gauge staff views on the staffing levels and working in the State Valuation Service. In November 2002, the director-general was advised of the outcome of the survey. The minister was told in a July 2003 briefing note from his department that the State Valuation Service has for some time experienced an increasing shortage of suitably qualified valuation staff and experienced an inability to recruit qualified staff, particularly at senior levels. The briefing note went on to say—

The inability to successfully recruit qualified staff and manage the impacts of resignations is now affecting the timely completion of valuation related activities.

That was July 2003—almost 12 months ago. On 11 September last year the Queensland Public Sector Union wrote to the minister raising its concerns. The union noted—

Over the last two years there has been approximately a 45 per cent reduction in staff numbers. This reduction in staff has led to low morale, high stress and a massive increase in workloads for remaining staff.

In terms of numbers, I understand that there are now less than 100 state valuers to carry out valuations for 125 local governments. In September 2003, the union wrote—

The crisis in staffing levels has also undermined the department's ability to carry out 2003-04 valuations in the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast regions. They will also have a massive impact on the revenue the government will receive through land tax.

The director-general made similar comments to the minister in September last year. He stated in a briefing note—

Valuation staffing issues this year will make it very difficult to comply fully in terms of the requirements of the Valuation of Land Act.

That is why we are here. The advice that was given to the minister by the director-general last year has proven to be correct. They have not been able to comply with the requirements of the Valuation of Land Act 1944 and that is why we are in this parliament this afternoon debating this amendment to a bill that was not urgent by any means. There was a whole range of other bills on the *Notice Paper*. It was something of a surprise when this bill was elevated to take precedence, even over the completion of the address-in-reply.

It was not until we found out the details of this amendment that the reason for the rush became clear. The reason for the rush was that the director-general's advice to the minister had proven to be correct. The government was unable to comply with the requirements of the Valuation of Land Act. So what do the government members do? They come into this place and try to change the act. Rather than meet their obligations to comply with the requirements of that act, they come in here and try to change the act.

The minister was well aware of these problems but did nothing to resolve them, and industrial action began in late September as a result of the government's inaction. I understand that the director of the State Valuation Service even stood down staff participating in protected industrial action on 22 September last year, although their pay was never docked. I understand also that an initial government offer was presented and accepted by valuers but the minister could not get it through cabinet and came back with a far lower offer that was rejected again by the valuers. Once again this reflected the very low priority that this government has allocated to the Department of Natural Resources for years now.

What we see today is but one symptom of the loss of the capacity within that department that is the inevitable result of that continuing underfunding. As a result of the industrial action and the Beattie government's inability to resolve the dispute, the director-general—not the minister, interestingly enough, as he has washed his hands of this dispute—issued a media statement on 29 March 2004 revealing that annual valuations would not be released. This has meant that valuations for 2004 will be based on the 2003 valuations and councils, predominantly those in south-east Queensland, will be unable to rely on current valuations to set their rates this year.

With the massive changes in property prices we have seen in the last 12 months, there was likely to be a huge difference in valuations between 2003 and 2004. This situation could not arise at a worse time in terms of the change in valuations that have happened in those particular

areas. The Gold Coast City Council finance committee told the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 30 March this year—

Ratepayers along the coastal strip slugged with massive rate hikes over the past few years had been hoping for a reduction this year. Obviously that is not likely to happen now.

Then the minister had the hide to say to councils that the government would still charge them for the property valuations, with the weak excuse that councils' payments to the state government are for more than just valuations. The minister repeated that in his reply to the second reading debate in response to some of the concern that was raised by members on this side of the chamber. This excuse has certainly not been good enough for the Local Government Association of Queensland, which has stated quite simply that councils should not have to pay \$10 million for a service they are not getting. In a media release on 13 April 2004 Councillor Paul Bell, the acting president of the LGAQ said—

I know of no other arrangement where the client has to pay for a product they do not receive. No matter how it is dressed up, councils do not have the new valuations on which to base their next financial year's rates.

Councillor Bell went on to say—

The problem is an internal one for government. It has nothing to do with councils. Councils are the innocent victims who will have to pay.

That is the bottom line. That is the effect of this amendment to the bill. It passes off a cost that should be borne by the state government in ensuring it can deliver its responsibilities under the Valuation of Land Act. It ensures that the state government does not have to meet its responsibilities and incur that cost. In so doing, it ensures that local governments throughout the state will be financially impacted upon.

If the Beattie government is not prepared to properly fund the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, then these unusual circumstances are likely to become the norm and we will see more and more of this type of legislation come before this parliament. It is designed to shift the goal posts so that the chronic underfunding this department has suffered for the last four years will not bring the government to be in breach of its own legislation. That is what is happening today. That is what this amendment is about. It is here because the government has fallen into a situation where it is in breach of its own legislation. Instead of resolving the industrial action and solving this problem, it tries to legislate the problem away.

Mr HOBBS: As I said last night, this is the \$10 million amendment. There has been no consultation with the LGAQ. The government consulted on the bill, but there was no consultation at all on this amendment. Why can the minister not pick up the phone and ring the LGAQ? Why does this government have to sneak around the back? Why do you have to hide and fib and so on all the time?

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Chairman, I find those comments—

The CHAIRMAN: That word is unparliamentary.

Mr HOBBS: I withdraw. Why can the minister not be up front with industry groups? He has not been able to do it. This is basically a composite bill which contains significant changes. This highlights a breach of statutory duty. The government has not fulfilled the statutory obligations it has to provide valuations. The valuation system has collapsed, as has been mentioned by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I will not go into that. It is a long story. It can be fixed, but the government does not have the interest, the funding or the inspiration to do it properly.

Under section 37(2) of the Valuation of Land Act, the chief executive can determine that a valuation not be done. As the minister would know from the legal advice he would have received, the Local Government Association was likely to challenge that. The government is asking for \$10 million for a product that was not delivered. The government would be well aware that the LGAQ was looking at challenging that.

One way the government can get out of this is to change the act retrospectively to protect its backside. That is what it is doing. It has completely stuffed up the industrial relations arrangement within the valuation section. There are about 17 valuers at most. These annual valuations are provided under section 73(1) of the Valuation of Land Act. They have to be provided on 31 March each year—three months before the valuation actually takes effect. The effect of this amendment is a bit like going into a shop, buying a loaf of bread, finding that the bread is no good but being forced to pay for the dough and the yeast. That is what the government is doing.

When will the valuations be carried out? There is currently a deferral, and the government has instituted a retrospective deferral to protect its backside. Will the government provide a

valuation next year? There are also a number of issues relating to the extension of time in relation to valuations.

A number of examples of unusual circumstances have been included in the bill. They are civil disturbances, extreme climatic conditions, industrial action, changes in the way valuations are made or computer failure. Isn't there a requirement for the government to at least try to provide a service to the people who are paying for it? This amendment virtually completely protects the government from any breach of its statutory obligations in the future.

The CHAIRMAN: The member is labouring the point. I call the member for Gladstone.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I spoke about this clause during the second reading debate last night. My comments related to paying a fee for a service that was not received and the appropriateness of that. The minister responded by saying that councils access services of Natural Resources through the year, not only with the bulk valuation once each year. The reality is that there have been a number of years in which valuations have not been made, at least on site. They have been desktop revaluations or a carry-over from previous valuations.

I appreciated the minister's answer. I thought it was very valid. However, on checking further I find that, if in a period of 12 months an individual valuation is amended or a new valuation is provided, the council, on top of the full annual valuation fee, is charged approximately \$20 for each one. So they are paying the overall valuation cost plus they pay a fee for service. That in great measure invalidates some of the answer the minister gave last night.

The fees charged to councils are not small. For what would be regarded as a large rural council—it is not a regional town but a large rural council—its annual valuation budget vote is \$48,000. That includes around \$32,000 for the annual valuation. The additional money is set aside for things like the \$20 fee for an amended or new valuation on an individual property. So we are not talking about small amounts of money.

I hear what the minister says—that of the \$20 million full valuation cost per year to the department local authorities provide \$7.5 million, I believe he said. That probably is appropriate, because the Department of Natural Resources uses those valuations for land tax and other state charges. So it is appropriate that they carry a significant proportion of that cost.

However, on the basis of the additional information, I would question the minister about the appropriateness of charging local authorities the full amount and why the LGAQ, as the overarching representative group for councils, was not consulted in this matter. I think it was the member for Callide who complained that the amendments were circulated recently and the minister said that, no, they were circulated a week ago. So there has been time for officers of the minister's office to have discussions with the LGAQ.

I also ask what consideration the minister's office has given to pro rata payments of these valuation costs by councils where valuations are not done for a period of up to four or five years. That at least would give recognition to the fact that the service is not being provided. In any other circumstance under the fair trading regime, a service provider would not be able to charge for a service that was not actually provided within that 12-month period. I would seek the minister's response.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will deal with the issues raised by the member for Gladstone first before turning my attention to the terrible twins. First of all, member for Gladstone, I point out that there has been consultation with the Local Government Association. In fact, at a meeting on 7 April with Greg Hallam, attended by my director-general and other departmental officers—a meeting which I admit I was a bit late for, but nevertheless attended halfway through—we had a full discussion about the issues covered by this particular amendment. I have in fact met with the LGAQ this morning.

I do not know what has happened within the LGAQ, but I know that I am not imagining the meeting I had with my director-general and Mr Graham Rush, who is on my left, on 7 April with Greg Hallam when we went through all of these issues. I cannot comment any further, but I know that meeting occurred. I know what was spoken about. I also know that when we talked about the issue of whether local governments should have to pay the annual fee, when I indicated that that was our intention, Greg Hallam said words to the effect of, 'Well, we're probably going to have a dispute over that.' We said that we recognised that that may well be his response.

This morning, however, I am told that maybe that information has not been passed on. Maybe there are incorrect recollections, but I am working on the basis of my memory. I am working on the basis of confirmation by the director-general and other senior officers in my

department as to what was discussed at that meeting. So I will just leave it at that. There is no point getting into a 'he said, she said' kind of dispute. But that meeting did occur.

Secondly, in relation to councils' responsibilities to pay this annual fee, that has always been the case since at least 1985 when amendments to the Valuation of Land Act were put in place—interestingly enough, by a coalition government—that actually required local governments to pay their contribution to the valuation service whether or not a valuation was conducted in a particular year. That is the existing provision of the act. That is what it says currently. Nothing we are doing changes that current provision.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: No, the opposition's act says that local governments have to pay their contribution on an annual basis whether or not a valuation is conducted. That is an existing provision. Let me turn my attention to a couple of the members opposite. When they talk about dishonesty—and I think they used the word 'lies' which they had to withdraw—what a whole range of untruths were spoken by the two members opposite. They would not have a clue. First of all, we do not levy local governments \$10 million a year.

Mr Hobbs: How much?

Mr ROBERTSON: We levy them \$7.2 million a year. How much does it cost the Queensland government to provide the service to local governments? It costs around about \$14.4 million. As I indicated—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: I am trying to help the member.

Mr Seeney: Tell the truth!

Mr ROBERTSON: I am happy to, because the overall cost is actually \$20 million. Once we take away the cost of running valuations for land tax, et cetera, we are left with a \$14.4 million bill. That is what it costs.

Mr Seeney: How much do you recover?

Mr ROBERTSON: That is a separate issue. As I indicated to the LGAQ this morning, if it wants to continue with this argument of not paying annually, the logic says that we go fee for service, and the real losers out of that will be mostly rural and regional councils, because the cost of doing valuations in rural and regional councils per valuation is obviously higher than it is to do a valuation down my street in suburban Brisbane. That is the option.

I actually noticed that in today's *Daily Mercury* the mayor of Mackay gave us a bit of a touch-up on the fact that they will have to pay their annual fee. But in this article the mayor actually acknowledges that they did not have a valuation last year but they still paid the fee. They did not have a valuation the year before but they still paid the fee. But because we have not done a valuation this year, it suddenly becomes an issue, despite the fact that we will actually do their valuations now next year.

Can I come to another issue—another fallacy—that we are understaffed because the service is underfunded. That is nonsense. I am happy to debate industrial relations policy with you guys any day of the week, because if what the members opposite are suggesting is their IR policy, then they are just about to bankrupt the state.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will direct my comments to the member for Gladstone rather than those who are trying to interrupt me. The simple problem is this: what we are faced with, and have been faced with over the last couple of years, is a property boom. We all know that. What has happened is that the private sector has been, if you like, plundering the State Valuation Service for valuers because there has been a significant increase in demand for valuers out in the private sector in response to the property boom. In order to attract valuers away from the State Valuation Service, they have been offering the filthy lucre. They have been offering packages which are significantly better than existing salary rates in the State Valuation Service. Understandably, what the union then did was turn around and say in terms of the enterprise bargaining arrangement, 'We want a degree of parity with the private sector that's going through boom times.' As we all know, there is a big difference between how wage rates are set in the private sector and how they are set in the public sector. In the private sector, there is a much greater degree of flexibility—that is, wages and salaries go up and down in professions such as this according to whether times are good or not.

For us to agree to some sort of parity with valuers in the private sector during the good times where we would not have the flexibility that the private sector has of bringing them down in the bad times of course is not appropriate. It is not just valuers. There are a whole range of professions right across government that are faced with exactly the same issue. So we have had an ongoing dispute with the union. I am not critical of the union. It of course has a responsibility to try to get the best for its members. That is understood. But we also have a responsibility to run a statewide industrial relations policy with defined barriers for enterprise bargaining outcomes. That has fundamentally been the dispute. There has been no lack of money. There has been no starving of funds for the State Valuation Service. That is not the issue. The issue is that we are going through boom times in the property market where the private sector is plundering the public sector. As I said, I could give members half a dozen examples of that across government.

So where did we get to? The member for Callide talked about a number of briefings that I received. Absolutely. I do not have any dispute with much of what the member for Callide said, but it does not represent a lack of interest on my part. This has been a difficult issue with hearings before the Industrial Relations Commission and what have you.

But it became apparent to us that we were not going to complete the statewide valuations for them by the end of March this year. So in talking to the LGAQ, we gave them a couple of options. We said, 'Look, we think that we can solve this dispute, but we are going to go over time in terms of the 31 March deadline. But we think that we can do it by the end of this financial year'. The resounding response from local governments individually and the LGAQ was, 'Please, Minister, don't do that. We would rather you not do a valuation this year than try to complete one by mid-year'. Why? Because of the budget cycle of councils. To get the data out later than 31 March puts a real spanner in the works in local governments in how they then calculate rates and the overall budget for the next financial year. So they said as one—and this is backed up by newspaper articles, radio interviews, and correspondence with me—'Minister, don't do a valuation. If you can't do it by 31 March, don't do it at all this financial year. We would rather you not do it.' So what did we do? We said, 'Okay, we won't do it.' The option still exists for us to do it before the end of the financial year—and this is an issue that I put before the LGAQ this morning—but I have to tell the member that I do not think that they are keen on our doing that. But there will be a valuation next year.

For the purposes of this amendment, the story is that we charge local governments \$7.2 million. It costs us \$14.4 million to actually run that service for local governments after you take the cost of running the service for land tax, \$7.2 million, et cetera, et cetera, out of the total \$20 million pool. How did that come about? The member for Darling Downs might be wondering that. It came about because in 1985 these changes were put in place, but without any corresponding increase in budget or fee infrastructure for local governments. So we have inherited these problems. It has become custom and practice, but on this occasion, because of circumstances out of our control, we cannot complete a valuation this year.

I have to say that a whole range of Queenslanders are probably cheering at this point, because they know that local governments cannot use a continuing booming property market to justify increases in rates. That is why we have people like Eddy Sarroff from the Gold Coast City Council pointing the finger at us. Those people are very good at that. They blame our valuations—and I am not too sure that they are actually our valuations; they are reflective of the property market—and they blame us for increasing rates, despite our providing them with the legislative tools to decouple their rating system from the valuations system. Of course, it suits some councils to retain that relationship, because they get the benefit of higher rates as a result of increases in valuations, but without the responsibility. They have all care, but no responsibility.

Both Nita Cunningham when she was the Minister for Local Government and I have been at pains to get out there and tell the people the truth, that is, that local governments have powers under the Local Government Act to determine rates other than by using the valuation system. We now have a couple of councillors such as Eddy Sarroff complaining that, as we will not be doing a valuation for the Gold Coast, somehow this has impacted on the Gold Coast budget. All I can say to Eddy Sarroff is that he has plenty of tools at his disposal if he wants to determine his budget to meet the needs of the Gold Coast people. But this year he will not be able to screw those good people, particularly those who live at the lower end of the Gold Coast whom I met—around Palm Beach and areas such as that. They are good pensioners, good people who have lived there for 30, 40, 50 years and still live there in their fibro shack. Sure, it is next to a high-rise, but they will not be screwed this year through an increase in valuations on their properties being reflected in an increase in rates.

It is about time that the Gold Coast City Council in particular came up with a much better rating system than the one that they have currently. Frankly, I am sick of them using our valuations system to screw good, honest, working-class people and pensioners down on the southern Gold Coast who do not want to be forced to move from their marital home in which they have lived for 50 or 60 years just because of a booming property market.

That is the whole story as to why we have to bring in this amendment—simply because the chief executive has not been able to deliver a valuation this year for the reasons outlined. We are taking the opportunity to obviously expand that to contemplate a range of circumstances where a valuation may not occur. But for the reasons that I have outlined—and I think that it is justifiable and I will get back to this—\$7.2 million in levies from local governments annually, \$14.4 million it costs us to provide local government with those services after we have taken away the cost of delivering services for the purposes of land tax, et cetera, it is fair and it is reasonable. As I have outlined before, the Local Government Association of Queensland was advised of this in a meeting, which I attended, which the director-general attended and which other senior officers of my department attended.

Mr HOBBS: For heaven's sake, councils do not get more money because they have higher valuations. People might cheer now, but they are going to snarl later on when they get the next valuation. This issue is important. Years ago there were seven-year cycles of valuations. The government went away from that because of the huge peaks and troughs that that created. Now the minister is going from three-year valuations and he is going to spread them out to five years. The minister says, 'Yes, if there are no significant change in values'. But the minister is doing it now and there are significant changes in values.

With this amendment, the minister is covering everything—including almost a terrorist attack. Basically, the minister can go for five years without giving valuations and he is going to end up with enormous ups and downs in those valuations. So when the valuations on the Gold Coast go down, those pensioners on the Gold Coast that the minister talked about will be locked into high valuations when they should be paying less. Although valuations might be going up now, they should be going down in the future.

This is an important issue. The minister is going back to a past era. Those members who do not understand history are bound to make the same mistakes. If the minister keeps extending the time, he will make mistakes. He has to do valuations. I am not in favour of the valuation system as a method for determining taxes, but it is what we have. Until we get a better solution, that is what we have. It is the minister's responsibility to provide a valuation service to the people of Queensland to ensure that we have the best system. Even though it is faulty, it is the best that we have. The minister has failed to do that.

Question—That the minister's amendment be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 52—Attwood, Barry, Barton, Boyle, Briskey, Choi, E. Clark, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, J. Cunningham, English, Fenlon, Finn, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Male, McNamara, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, O'Brien, Pearce, Pitt, Poole, Purcell, Reilly, Reynolds, N. Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, D. Scott, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, C. Sullivan, T. Sullivan, Wallace, Welford, Wells, Wilson Tellers: Reeves, Nolan

NOES, 21—Copeland, E. Cunningham, Flegg, C. Foley, Hobbs, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, McArdle, Menkens, Pratt, Quinn, Rickuss, E. Roberts, Rowell, Seeney, Stuckey Tellers: Hopper, Malone

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clause 57, as read, agreed to.

Schedule—

Mr ROBERTSON (1.03 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

5 Schedule—

At page 32, lines 2 to 4—

omit.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

Sitting suspended from 1.04 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Resumed from 18 March 2004 (see p. 119).

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (2.00 p.m.): It is with a profound sense of gratitude that I rise to make my second address-in-reply in this place. Madam Deputy Speaker, at the outset I would like to take this opportunity to ask you to pass on to the Speaker my congratulations to him on his election to the high office of Speaker.

I am very grateful to the people of Hervey Bay for the great honour which they have done me in returning me to this place for a second term as the member for Hervey Bay. I am mindful of the fact that Hervey Bay had returned three different people to this House after the 1995, 1998 and 2001 elections, so winning two in a row is a significant vote of faith by the people of Hervey Bay, and I thank them for it.

To the people of my electorate I want to say that I will continue to work with them to keep our home growing into the modern, vibrant and beautiful city which it should be. I have a profound sense of duty to Hervey Bay, which is blooming into one of Queensland's premier coastal cities. Today, Hervey Bay has the second highest percentage population growth of any local government area in Australia. It is uniquely poised to grow very strongly and attract many more people and services in the years ahead. But with that growth there is the attendant risk of losing its beauty—the very beauty with which we fell in love in the first place.

I promise the people of Hervey Bay that, while I am deeply committed to growing jobs and opportunities and improving services, I will fight to protect our clean air and water, our beaches and wildlife, and our trees. Many people have told me just how important to them is the protection of Hervey Bay's lifestyle. I will work tirelessly with them to keep Hervey Bay the safe, happy, relaxed place it is in which to raise a family, work, play and retire.

I am honoured that I will have a further opportunity to contribute to the good government of Queensland and I do not intend to waste it. I will be involved in passing laws in this place which confront difficult issues and implement strong foundations of ALP policies. When I first made a contribution during the 6 o'clock debate very early in the last term, the member for Callide made the rather unflattering observation that I was a oncer.

Mr Reeves: He did that to me, too.

Mr McNAMARA: It is something that he has done to many people here. Putting aside for the moment the fact that as in virtually everything else he was completely wrong—nevertheless, like many people here in their first term, I was concerned as to whether I was doing what was necessary to secure the trust of the people to earn a second term. Although I am grateful for that trust, I am also acutely aware that my seat remains, as ever, very marginal. With a high turnover of voters, we are only as good as our next win. So today I propose to look at the next three years rather than rake over the achievements of my first term. With a three per cent swing to me on primary votes over the 2001 election, I will take that as a pass and move on and commit to working even harder during the next three years.

Many people have told me that they want more from our public health system, and I share their concerns. It will be the focus of my efforts in Hervey Bay over the next three years. Access to quality health care in the next 20 years will come to be the test which determines whether or not a city is a desirable place in which to live. Hervey Bay must have the very best regional health services if it is to attract and retain residents and businesses.

One of my first actions after the election was to visit the Hervey Bay Hospital again, to speak with staff and management and to look first-hand at those areas which are under pressure. Only two weeks ago I again visited the hospital, this time with Health Minister Gordon Nuttall. I thank him for coming so promptly to familiarise himself with our health needs. Let me say clearly that District Health Manager Mike Allsop and Director of Nursing Merryn Pease have both done a great job in getting the budget under control while implementing new industrial arrangements and significantly expanding services in key areas of need like mental health.

However, regardless of that good work, some areas such as clinical services, for example, are seriously overcrowded. A new building will be necessary to ease congestion in the clinics area as well as housing the proposed stroke and post-operative rehab unit. It is a matter that I raised directly with the Health Minister during his recent visit. It is something that must be addressed in this term of government. It can and should be paid for with the balance of the proceeds of the Bayhaven Nursing Home, and I await the minister's decision on that.

Further, although nursing numbers have grown from 143 to 150 over the last three years, I am firmly of the view that we have current needs for more nurses in accident and emergency, in the maternity unit and simply to deal with this season's influenza cases. We need to open at least eight extra beds at the Hervey Bay Hospital over the next three years to keep up with population growth. Hervey Bay's population is growing by 1,500 people per year. We have an undeniable case for a share of the 1,500 new nurses which the Beattie government has promised to hire over the next three years. I will be working with the Health Minister on this and other Hervey Bay specific issues very closely.

The three new chairs in the renal unit which were promised during the election campaign are now in. I look forward to the opening of that stroke and post-operative rehabilitation unit this year as it was an election commitment and is urgently needed. That unit will be a direct, tangible consequence of the sale of Bayhaven and demonstrates the wisdom of letting the private sector, which does aged care well, provide the service there. Blue Care has come in and put 60 extra beds into the Bayhaven precinct while freeing up millions of dollars for acute care in my public hospital. I am delighted that the government took the decision in Hervey Bay to sell Bayhaven to a not-for-profit provider, freeing up those millions of dollars for acute health care.

My constituents have been chosen and favoured over sectional interests and historical models of service delivery that have passed their use-by date. On the broader issue of waiting lists, I suggest that we require major changes in the way the practice of medicine is run in this nation. We have so many areas of specialty where, with the best will in the world and millions of dollars in overtime, we will struggle to meet patients' needs because there simply are not enough doctors to perform the necessary surgery. Voltaire once observed that 'the art of medicine consists of amusing the patient while nature cures the disease.' But it is not that easy. We need more doctors and in particular we need more specialists.

In my part of the world the longest waiting lists are for ophthalmology. I hope that the pressure in this area may be eased a little this year by St Stephens building a new private hospital in Hervey Bay and targeting as their first priority the recruitment of an ophthalmologist who can then work in the public sector as well to reduce public waiting lists. The reality is that if we are to get on top of the problem, we need many more people able to perform eye surgery than is currently the case.

I was, frankly, appalled at the campaign that the College of Ophthalmologists and other sections of the medical industry ran last year against the modest, sensible and well considered reforms which Wendy Edmond introduced in relation to eye disease. These reforms will allow optometrists who undertake two more years of study among other things to prescribe drugs for particular conditions to save people from waiting years potentially to receive the same treatment from an eye specialist. Despite these reforms having worked without any problems in Victoria for six years, the College of Ophthalmologists and others behaved like Chicken Little, claiming the sky would fall in and that patient care would be compromised. It is hard to compromise patient care when none is able to be had, because the waiting list for cataract surgery has blown out to five years. I look at what Fred Hollows did in Eritrea, Nepal and Vietnam in combating eye diseases, particularly cataract blindness, and ask: why does our medical profession not similarly think outside the square?

It was reported in my local newspaper this week that GPs with previous experience in anaesthetics may be able to assist in providing those services again, filling in a significant specialty services gap and allowing many more operations to be performed. That is great, but I ask: are there not procedures for problems such as cataracts which could not also be undertaken by appropriately specifically skilled, trained practitioners? People are going blind while the specialist colleges and the AMA defend their patch with a vigour that would make any old-time union closed shop boss green with envy.

It is time to significantly increase the number and scope of procedures that nurse practitioners can undertake to free up and encourage GPs to do more minor surgery and anaesthetics, to in turn allow specialists to really concentrate on cases that actually require their specialist skills. It is time to double the number of places in medical schools and end the medical closed shop mentality.

I do not want to give the House the impression that all of our society's health problems are the fault of the medical profession. We have a responsibility to engage in preventative medicine by looking after ourselves. This is particularly so for us blokes who, frankly, as a group are hopeless. We men need to take a good hard look at ourselves and ask: do we want to live or not? That is what it comes down to.

Three years ago I had one of the best days of my life when I walked for the first time into this room and basked in the warm praise of my family and friends upon being elected to this parliament. Just over two years ago I had the worst day of my life when my brother John died of a heart attack. John was only 40 when he died, and it was an unbelievable and shocking tragedy for all of us who knew him and loved him. He has gone forever. As Yeats said, he has hidden 'his face amid a crowd of stars'. But the sadness of his unnecessary death haunts me daily. John was a star athlete. He represented Queensland as a schoolboy in swimming and track and field. He represented Australia in two sports at open level—shotput and weightlifting; an extremely rare achievement.

John was a civil engineer by profession. He understood the workings of the human body in obsessive detail. He lived and trained at the Institute of Sport in Canberra for two years and yet he died of a completely treatable condition—blockage of the coronary arteries, without ever seeking medical attention despite having a stack of obvious risk factors. He was male, he was 40, he was a McNamara. Our parents and I have taken blood pressure and cholesterol medication for many years and yet he never went to a GP for, as far as I can tell, at least seven years before he died. He ignored his sex, his age, his family history and his weight. He was a brilliant guy and he had everything to live for. He was a successful property developer with a beautiful wife, Joanne. He loved his son Jack. His second son, Ryan, was born two months after he died. His death is as tragic as it was unnecessary. He had no fear of hoisting 150 kilos over his head and yet, with all those reasons to live, he was still too scared to visit a GP once a year for the most rudimentary health check which would have saved his life and avoided the tragedy which his death brought.

We have an epidemic of coronary heart disease in Australia. Four out of 10 adult Australians have two or more modifiable risk factors for coronary heart disease. Every year in Australia there are around 50,000 major coronary events, about 150 a day, and 50 per cent of these events are fatal. Coronary heart disease accounted for 21 per cent of all deaths in Australia in 2000. Men are twice as likely as women to have coronary heart disease and to die from it.

We are currently seeing a rapid increase since 1980 in the prevalence of being overweight and a rise in obesity and diabetes. High blood cholesterol levels persist and physical inactivity is on the rise. Regretfully, across the spectrum men simply do not seek help and disaster ensues. As with coronary heart disease, men fail to seek treatment for other treatable conditions like depression. We equate our masculinity with being strong, competitive, powerful and successful. We think going to the doctor is of itself a sign of weakness; an admission of failure. It is not, and this attitude has to change.

I have committed myself to raising the issue of men's health publicly wherever possible. I will strongly support additional educational measures to get this message out to men and boys so that the thousands of avoidable tragedies which families currently suffer every year can be reduced. Health issues will be the focus of my efforts in this term and I propose to speak on a myriad of health issues over the next three years. I hope to be able to look back on this term in the parliament as one in which I was involved in confronting longstanding, difficult and important issues with goodwill and honesty for the benefit of all Queenslanders, particularly men, women and doctors in regional areas.

Before concluding, I would like to offer some personal thanks. First and foremost, I must thank my wife, Judith. Politics is at best a hard life for our partners due to the amount of time we are necessarily away from home. Judith and I knew before I nominated the first time that an enormous burden would fall on her to raise our two children, Caitlin and Brandon, and to run the house alone while I am down here for some 13 weeks a year. So today I want to offer Judith my apology for the completely undeserved stress and loneliness which she endures. I thank her from the bottom of my heart for her support of me in this endeavour.

My beautiful children, Caitlin and Brandon, also receive my thanks for their patience in putting up with a father who misses far too many of their important events. Caitlin pointed out to me this year on her 10th birthday that I had been away in Brisbane for her previous two birthdays. I was away for two of Brandon's birthdays during the last term. Our children grow up so quickly, and my sincere hope is that one day they will forgive me all the special moments that I have missed and I will miss because I am doing my best for other people.

I want to thank particularly my electorate office staff over the last three years—Melodye Oliaro, Jenny Slater, Wendy Bennett and Viola Gavan. They have been and they are in the front line of everything I do and everything the Beattie government does in Hervey Bay. They have been unstintingly committed to helping the huge numbers of people who come through my door every day with the most diverse range of complicated problems and issues. They remain calm in

the face of all manner of outrageous demands and impossible time frames—and they are just the ones I set. At least I go away every three weeks and give them some measure of respite. The public, on the other hand, are always there and they serve them with courtesy, diligence and integrity. I thank them for that. I know that I could not be here if they were not there for me.

Some 190 volunteers worked on my campaign this time round and I cannot possibly thank them all today, though the member for Indooroopilly was indicating he might like to move that I be given more time. I would, however, like to thank in particular Greg McGarvie, my campaign manager, as well as Gerry Lloyd, John Tracey, Graham Schostakowski, Gordon Campbell and Mary Murray, who all put in particularly long hours in ensuring that everything which needed to be done was done. I would also like to thank Sam Dastyari, whose energy, ideas and enthusiasm were, at my estimate, responsible for about four per cent of my 3.9 per cent margin.

I am honoured and humbled to be back here as part of the third Beattie government. The last three years were a wonderful time for me on a personal level because I made so many great friends in this place, and I am delighted that so many of them are back here. I do, however, mourn the loss of my good friends Trevor Strong, Steve Rodgers and Christine Scott who were not returned. I wish them all the best and thank them for their friendship and support in the last term. I was delighted to see Trevor Strong top the poll in the Burnett council elections last month, which is fitting recognition of what a genuine and decent bloke he is.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr McNAMARA: That is exactly right. I look forward to working with Premier Peter Beattie, our ministers and my colleagues to implement Labor policy and to deliver good, stable and progressive government for the people of Queensland and particularly for my part of this great state. I also commit to making sure that the particular needs of Hervey Bay are heard and met. Hervey Bay is a fast growing city of 50,000 people, and it needs responsive and prompt support from government. I will be Hervey Bay's voice in this place and in the government in the next three years, and I thank the people of Hervey Bay once again for their support and trust.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Croft): Order! Before calling the next speaker, I wish to acknowledge and welcome to the gallery the teachers and students from Merrimac State High School in the electorate of Robina.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (2.18 p.m.): I am delighted to rise in the House today and speak in this address-in-reply debate. Madam Deputy Speaker, can you pass on to the Speaker my congratulations on his re-election to that fine office.

I am pleased to be here again to represent the electorate of Indooroopilly. As I said in my first speech in this place three years ago, my determination was always to put my local community first and I feel that even in the few weeks since the last state election this great Labor government has done that for the people of Indooroopilly. Just three weeks ago, I think it was, we opened Sherwood's new 24-hour police station—a police station that just six years ago was slated for closure under the previous Borbidge government. I am very proud to have been there on that occasion. I am very pleased that our community has been looked after in the way that it is. I want to thank the good folk of the Indooroopilly electorate for the faith they have placed in me once again. I am determined to work even harder than ever to make my community an even better place to live.

I want to speak primarily about one issue today that disturbs me deeply. I noticed that the High Court has overruled the Family Court decision which said that children should not be kept in Australia's refugee detention centres. I am not a lawyer so I do not know what the High Court's decision standing is in law, but whatever its standing in law, its standing in morality is absolutely abysmal and appalling. Frankly, the federal government should be ashamed that it signed off on an appeal to that court.

In this day and age, having children in detention centres in this country is an absolute disgrace. I have visited Port Augusta. I have seen the former World War II Army barracks that pass as home for these people. It is an absolutely shocking and terrible place. It appears to be—I would not say in the middle of nowhere because Port Augusta is quite a nice part of the world—a long way from any facilities. It is a long way from any major population base. It is a long way from any support that these folk might need.

I do not believe that we have a refugee crisis in this country. Over the last couple of years Australia has not managed to fulfil its refugee quota. To suggest that we need to house children in a prison purely because they have left their homeland and are seeking a better life somewhere else strikes me as absolutely stupid, ignorant and dumb.

Last night I had the pleasure of representing the state government at a citizenship ceremony at City Hall. Some 600 people who left their homelands and, like I did, sought a better life in Australia became Australian citizens. I am told that currently one in five Queenslanders was born overseas. I am told that, aside from English, 150 languages are spoken in Queensland. I am told that Queensland is home to people from about 150 nationalities from 50 religions.

I have schools in my electorate where, on any given day, the children speak up to 42 different languages. One can hear them in the playground—those wonderful places, marvellous places. We would do well to acknowledge that multiculturalism has done nothing but enrich this country. We are not, in any way, doing ourselves a service by housing children in detention. The hand of welcome that we extend to them should be, 'You have left fairly terrible circumstances, but we do things differently in Australia. We are a democratic country. We are a country that values principles like social justice and democracy, giving people a fair go and giving people a chance.' The welcome we should give them is telling them, 'Things are different in this country to places in other parts of the world. We are unique and wonderful.'

I was very disturbed earlier this year when I heard what happened to the Chief Minister of ACT who, I must say, given the way we treat refugees in this country, gave a very tame and reasonable speech. But following a speech he made at a citizenship ceremony he received a letter from the federal Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Gary Hardgrave, threatening to withdraw his delegation as a presiding officer in relation to citizenship ceremonies unless he signed an agreement confirming he would not speak about—wait for it—'reconciliation, refugees or the war'.

I am delighted that Mr Stanhope has said that he has not to date, and will never, sign any letter censoring his ability to speak at any public event, especially a citizenship ceremony. In closing, I will read into *Hansard* what the federal government found so offensive about Mr Stanhope's speech. He said—

I have always been, and always will be, proud to be Australian. It is because of that pride and the depth of my love for my country, of what it has been and what it might yet become that I also feel it important to acknowledge those occasions when that pride may be tinged with, for example, a sense of shame. Shame at say our government's cold hearted and unforgiving policies towards the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. The incarceration of children in concentration camps in the desert, the abandonment of the rule of law and the detention of Australians in Cuba without charge and without free access to legal representation. My pride too has been shadowed by a sense of deep sadness at Australia's role in the unjustified, bloody and illegal invasion of Iraq.

Those words were so offensive to this federal government that it sought to censor the Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory. I agree with everything that he said. I hope he keeps saying things like that in the future. I think that we need to continue the fight to get kids out of detention and we need to continue the fight against this terrible and abysmal federal government to change Australia's refugee policies.

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (2.24 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in the address-in-reply debate and to be in this House today. There are a number of issues that I wish to address. The past three years were no doubt a great learning curve for each and every one of the members elected in the 2001 election. Some of those members are not with us this term and a number of them are. All the sitting members of the National Party were returned and, no doubt, we have all realised some massive swings were received. There is no doubt that we are still alive and well.

Having said that, I would personally like to thank all who were involved in my election, from my campaign manager to the very last person who gave out how-to-vote cards. I am very thankful to anyone who helped out in any way. I would also like to recognise my wife, Jo-Anne, for the effort she has made and congratulate her on her election at the local council level recently. I thank my daughters, Jodi and Amy, and my son, Ben, for looking after the farm. As the member for Hervey Bay said, to be away from the family all the time is hard. It is wonderful to have such a wonderful family. I could never have done it without them all.

I am very proud to serve on the front bench as a fully endorsed National Party member. I look forward with enthusiasm to being the shadow minister for public works and housing and the shadow minister for racing. I note that the minister has put in place a listening tour for his parliamentary secretary, the member for Bulimba, Pat Purcell. He has visited well over 40 country race clubs.

I had the pleasure of attending the meeting at Bell Race Club with Pat. I personally congratulate Pat on how he sat and listened to the devastating stories told to him about the demise of country racing. Bell is one of the many country race clubs that has had the strength to

continue when everything seems to be going against it. This club used to have four race meetings a year. Under the new proposals put forward by Queensland Racing, it has now been cut back to two meetings a year. Jandowae has been cut from three to one, Warra has been cut from two to one and Dalby has lost its TAB status.

This is nothing short of absolute abuse of a group of volunteers who have so generously given of their time, money and sweat. This club has been built by people whom this government in the past has shown complete contempt towards. Please do not get me wrong, but the new minister has the opportunity to do something about this.

Recently we met with a number of country race clubs. Most of the issues they presented to me related to having extra country race days. I met with a member from a country race club just north of here that used to have a massive profit. It has a \$12,000 loss for the first time in history. Not a lot of money is involved to rebuild country racing. I eagerly await the report that the parliamentary secretary will bring forth. I know Pat was touched by some of the stories he heard in his travels. As a matter of fact, I worked a horse for his uncle, who I had a bit to do with, and who at the time was in cahoots with the brother-in-law.

Recently, I took the initiative to go out and about and visit some of these clubs and industry leaders in and around Brisbane. This proved to be very worth while. I was extremely delighted to have met with the chairman and CEO of Doomben Race Club, otherwise known as the Brisbane Turf Club, Sean Kelk, and the chairman, Brian Cannon. They informed me that they were very willing to sponsor a couple of country clubs. This is a wonderful gesture. I look forward to attending these race meetings.

They intend to bring a number of their members to these clubs and they will no doubt make it a great day for the clubs involved. This is extremely positive for country racing at this time. We all know about the impact of the restructure of this industry. I take time today to congratulate these people. One of those meetings will be Burrandowan to be held next Saturday. I will be attending. Let us hope that the minister takes a positive view towards what has happened.

Let me touch a bit on public works and housing. The last three years have, as we all know, been quite interesting in the building industry. I note with interest the attitude the minister has already shown towards the building boom. It always amazes me how so often we see such major announcements so soon after an election. Surely a minister who was so in touch with his department must have had an inkling of the major price hikes within the construction industry over the last 12 months.

It does not surprise me that the minister missed this, as he missed the recent fence painting competition at Inala. And what about 'let's find the pergola'? Whatever the case is, the minister has assured this House that, if there is a fence around, his director-general will be competent enough to negotiate a choko vine over it. I am pleased to hear that. Let us hope the fence is also painted, and only once. The question one has to ask is: when did the minister realise that there was going to be a problem? Even better, did his department know and maybe just happen to forget to let the minister know? After all, a 19 per cent rise in the cost of building materials does have an easy way of hiding itself within a budget that involves hundreds of millions of dollars! I think not.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I can answer that question for the honourable member.

Mr HOPPER: There is no point of order.

Mr SCHWARTEN: He asked a question; I will answer the question for him. The point of order is that he asked a question about when I became aware of increases in costs to housing and construction. I became aware of them over a period of time, and I have reported as much in this House. I have talked about how costs have been pushed up over a period of time. I hope that clarifies the matter.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Croft): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr HOPPER: The thing I as shadow minister for public works, housing and racing would like to see is the minister come clean with a list to present to the House of the jobs not finished and the jobs that will not happen due to the inability to predict within his department. It all looked good before the election, but 'let's keep it quiet until the 11th hour—the election will be behind us then—and we will expose our failures and hopefully we will get away with it.'

The housing industry in Queensland certainly is a can of worms for anyone to look after. However, this is simply no excuse for anyone. The government has a duty of care towards the

31,760 people on public housing waiting lists in Queensland. This has risen from 24,242 since 1999. The value of homes and land sold by this government since 1998-99 is \$229 million. Honourable members should not get me wrong: I am the first to acknowledge the provision of any new housing in Queensland, but I will say, as I have said quite often before—I make no apologies for this—that this government must stop the fire sale of Queensland Housing stock and property immediately. The federal government is a very easy out for the minister, as is the case with so many other departments. It is quite easy to blame someone else, but there are a lot of measures that could be taken to address the problem within his own Housing Department.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr HOPPER: I hear the minister squawking over there in the corner. Let us continue on a better note. Recently the Wambo shire in my electorate applied to the Department of Housing for some elderly housing in the town of Bell. It is absolutely brilliant. It is exceptional. Pat Purcell came out and turned the first sod. Those homes are now built.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr HOPPER: If the minister would sit and listen, I might just finish talking about it. In all my life I never thought my mother would leave the farm. We lost Dad last year and Mum has moved into one of those buildings. It is an excellent provision. I thank the minister for that provision.

Last year the member for Nicklin introduced the Parliament of Queensland (Change of Political Status) Bill. In his second reading speech he mentioned the member for Darling Downs at least three times. Some may say I was singled out on this occasion, because other members in this House, whom I will not name due to my respect for them, did the same thing. Yet were they singled out? The answer is no. The question I ask is why. The member for Nicklin also questioned what some of my voters would say when they let their views be made known at the election. All I can say to the member is that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Maybe the member for Nicklin should seriously consider making the very same move.

The Premier allowed a listening tour and a committee to be set up. I know that the meeting held in Toowoomba was an absolute disaster, to say the least. The number of people who showed up who were not sitting members or on the committee or who were not candidates was no more than two or three. How much did this little stunt to try to get a bit of media or even unseat a member who actually does have some input into the running of Queensland cost this government? Maybe the member for Nicklin can do a costing and present it to the House.

I would like to bring the attention of the House to the condition of the state roads in my electorate. The National Party allowed over \$20 million for the electorate of Darling Downs. We inspected the Bell road heading towards Kingaroy from Bell to the Wambo shire boundary. We allowed \$7 million to widen this stretch of road. I have followed B-doubles on this road. The movement these trucks get up is unbelievable.

There is one other place in the electorate that I believe is worse than this, that is, the Bowenville-Norwin road. Recently we inspected this with some local people and reps from Main Roads and the Jondaryan Shire Council. I am happy to say that it looks as though something may be going to happen to this section of road in the near future.

This is an exceptional piece of road due to the movement in the soils, as is usually the problem with most road maintenance that has to deal with heavy black soils. A couple of farmers pointed out to me problems facing them after the heavy rainfall. This piece of road in certain places actually acts like a dam wall. The water backs up and spreads across valuable farming land, causing many thousands of dollars in lost production. I think this is pretty tough for our producers to have to put up with due to the poor maintenance of a state road. Some of the farmers have requested I arrange a meeting between them and the minister. However, I would rather wait to see what sorts of improvements are made in the near future and see if they have any effect on their properties.

Another subject I would like to mention is the state of the power supply in the Bowenville, Oakey Creek and Peranga area. On a number of occasions I have spent time speaking about this with a power user on this line, Mr Kim Bremner. Kim has recorded every outage and kindly sent the results to me. Last year there were 64 outages. In the year before there were 53 outages. The users understand when there are storms. No-one is complaining about that. Some people have suggested that the Oakey Creek line becomes overloaded when pumps are switched on due to the increase in the number of pumps in recent times. It also has been suggested to me that the substation at Jondaryan needs to be upgraded. The number of

complaints my office has received in the past few years is enormous. I would like the minister to look seriously at this situation.

Another situation that has been brought to my attention is a bill a constituent has shown to me after he was involved in a car accident. The ambulance showed up, as did Fire and Rescue. There was no problem with the ambulance. However, Fire and Rescue sent a bill for its efforts, and it was for simply showing up. When he made inquiries about this, it said, 'You're lucky we never sent the other truck.' The bill was \$128. It would have been \$1,500 had they sent the other truck. From what I see of this, you now get a lift in an ambulance for an \$88 a year fee. But never mind, there is another way to raise revenue: just send Fire and Rescue! Having said this, I think Fire and Rescue does a magnificent job in this state. It is just the way the department is charging the people, who are no doubt put in a very disturbing situation.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (2.36 p.m.): It is a pleasure to speak in this address-in-reply debate. This is the debate which responds to the address by the Governor in the first sittings of this the 51st Parliament of Queensland and, indeed, the third Labor government under the very competent stewardship of Peter Beattie.

Mr Wallace: More to come.

Mr FENLON: We hope there are more to come, because these are good governments for Queensland. As my constituents continue to tell me, there is no alternative in Queensland.

It has been a great pleasure to represent the constituents of Greenslopes in this parliament particularly over these last two terms of the Beattie government—to represent those people in the suburbs of Camp Hill, Carina, Coorparoo, Greenslopes, Holland Park, Holland Park West, Norman Park and Tarragindi, who total about 28,000 voters.

I would like to briefly cover some of the achievements of our government in the past term as they relate to my electorate and to canvass some of the general matters of policy that were outlined by Her Excellency in her speech and how these undertakings will start to affect some aspects of service delivery in the electorate of Greenslopes.

I am extremely proud of the achievements of the Beattie government over the past term, especially in the area of education. I can confidently say that the level of spending on capital works and maintenance and the attention to the delivery of good education service in my electorate have not been seen for generations. We have seen major redevelopment upgrades of local high schools—\$5.3 million at Cavendish Road High School, \$3 million of secondary school renewal at Coorparoo Secondary College and \$700,000 for upgrades at Whites Hill College and Holland Park High School, also through the Secondary Schools Renewal Program.

These are great achievements and some of those facilities such as the one at Coorparoo Secondary College are still to be opened. We have seen state primary school upgrades totalling \$6.779 million compared to \$9 million in total for high schools. Some \$428,000 of that was for the reconstruction of C block at Marshall Road State School, \$440,000 at Wellers Hill State School for the resource centre, \$200,000 for a special education unit, \$128,000 towards a new assembly hall at Wellers Hill State School, \$48,000 for Seville Road State School for a car park, \$300,000 to replace the toilet block at Marshall Road State School, \$4.5 million for the redevelopment of the Coorparoo State School, \$343,000 at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic School and \$392,000 at St Joachim's Catholic School.

We have seen safety improved in our local school environments through new safe drop-off and pick-up zones at a cost of \$160,000 at Coorparoo State School, Camp Hill and Wellers Hill state schools, and extra funding for IT grants totalling \$287,000. There is also \$150,000 for the Holland Park Police Station upgrade and \$1.1 million for the Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre to address homelessness. Indeed, adjacent to the Greenslopes electorate is the best hospital facilities imaginable with the \$353 million spent recently on the redevelopment of the Princess Alexandra Hospital and indeed the great services provided by the Greenslopes Private Hospital, which works very closely with the veterans community and this government through Health Department regulations.

The Governor's speech alluded to the major areas that this government will address in this term. One of those matters at the forefront of this government's decision to call an election at the time it did was that of child safety, and there is nothing more important to every member of this parliament and to all decent Queenslanders. This government will improve the child protection system by implementing the recommendations delivered by the recent Crime and Misconduct Commission inquiry into child abuse in foster care. This is to be undertaken through the auspices of a new Child Safety portfolio to address this issue. I am grateful to the minister for the recent

briefing that he provided to myself and other members in relation to the implementation process. That briefing gives me great confidence that we are on the right track and that this minister is completely focused on a whole-of-government approach to dealing with child safety.

So many departments deal with child safety in one way or another. As the inquiry I mentioned has shown, it has been easy for some of those children to fall between the cracks, as it were, between the different portfolios under the previous system. I am sure that we would all agree with the minister in our hope that that will be something of the past—something that belongs in the past—and we will have a far better and comprehensive system to look after our children in the future.

Over the next three years there is a \$468 million package of additional initiatives to further our health services. As I have mentioned, many of these have already been established at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. Some 18,000 extra new elective patients will be treated, reducing waiting lists for surgery, and 242 new public hospital beds will also be established at the Mater Hospital, affecting the south side suburbs such as those in the Greenslopes electorate, as well as the Prince Charles Hospital and Caloundra Hospital. This will be boosted by 1,500 new nurse graduates.

As I have already mentioned, education is something that this government should be extremely proud of in terms of its past performance. Indeed, this will be driven further in the future with some of the most revolutionary changes that we have seen in the Queensland education system in generations. This is demonstrated in particular by the introduction of a universally available voluntary preparatory year of schooling in 2007, putting Queensland children on the same footing as their interstate peers. There will also be a move to target class sizes in years 4 to 10 from 30 to 28 by the start of 2007. This will give Queensland the smallest class sizes in Australia in these particularly important middle years, and we will see this occur in the context of the move to a comprehensive P-12 system of schooling in Queensland. There will also be significant initiatives in dealing with matters affecting everybody in our school communities in terms of violent and aggressive behaviour from intruders in school grounds, and the legislation passed in 2003 will back up this initiative.

This government is still focused very much on jobs, and jobs and training will be a key foundation to our work in this government. With 230,000 students being educated through our TAFE system in Queensland, \$2.4 billion is to be spent on vocational education and training to provide skilled workers. In conjunction with this, this government will be pursuing development in a balanced way between the exigencies of achieving commercial expansion and maintaining sound treatment of our environment. With this balance, we will be pursuing a number of programs. These include the advanced manufacturing plan of \$8 million, the creative industry strategy of \$8.9 million and \$5.1 million for the smart small business strategy. This will also be backed up by the creative industries strategy to assist the area of arts and entertainment, an area which is certainly dear to myself and many of my constituents who work in these fields.

A new portfolio of Communities has been established under this government. During this term, additional funding of \$65 million will be provided particularly to the disability services sector to increase support for adults, children and families and for the disability support sector in general. One area that is of very great significance to many of our community organisations, and those in my electorate are no exception, is the area of liability insurance. That is something that can cripple small organisations that have an important role in terms of looking after particular pockets of welfare and community enhancement. I am glad to see that negotiations will continue regarding the underwriting of liability insurance for the not-for-profit sector.

Multicultural affairs will also be well supported under this government with \$10 million for improving community relations. Emergency services are also fundamental to our suburbs on the south side. As we saw recently during the election campaign, our comfortable and stable life can be upset very quickly by events such as major storms sweeping through our suburbs. It is heartening to see that the 85,000 emergency volunteers in Queensland will receive additional equipment and training to improve standards and capacity throughout the state. It was a pleasure to attend the recent opening of the new emergency services building at Morningside which is in the electorate of my colleague Pat Purcell, the member for Bulimba. I am sure that the government's initiative will provide those people with the support that they deserve. This initiative will also be backed by an \$8.6 million multiservice special operations unit, which will be able to deal with major events such as terrorism and natural disasters.

We are all very pleased with the policing in the Greenslopes area. To be able to attend Neighbourhood Watch meetings time after time throughout my electorate, over the past year in

particular, and to hear reports from officers indicating that there has been no crime in a particular sector for the previous period, or very negligible crime, certainly puts a smile on my face and certainly puts a smile on the faces of my constituents. The police have been doing a tremendous job right across the state. I am extremely happy with the activities of the police in the Greenslopes electorate in the way in which they are delivering a service in very close conjunction with our communities, particularly the Neighbourhood Watch groups. This will be backed up by innovative policing strategies over the term of this government, which will include police beats, school based police officers, DNA profiling, crime scene sample analysis, digital fingerprinting and other operational equipment and support. Recently, it was very helpful to attend the state police headquarters and to be guided through the operations, especially in areas such as the scenes of crime investigation and to see first-hand the latest technology and the levels of great competence displayed by those officers.

We will all come under pressure in the coming years through the sheer level of growth that we are experiencing in Queensland. This will be dealt with very ably under the Office of Urban Management. This office will ultimately oversee the completion of the SEQ 2021 regional plan. This plan is going to be of fundamental importance in terms of making decisions about our transport corridors—rail, roads, et cetera. The efficiency of this transport system will indeed be backed up by the culmination of a great deal of work that has been undertaken over the years to provide a world-class TransLink operation—a \$1.5 billion integrated transport network to ease public transport congestion—and also \$400 million to upgrade the Citytrain network for new services and trains to be established throughout that network.

The arts are also going to be well supported under this government. The nation's largest gallery of modern art will be part of the major redevelopment of the State Library of Queensland area. Indeed, arts initiatives include 16 other projects in regional areas.

As I have already mentioned, the environment will be well cared for under this government in a balanced way, along with development in the state. An amount of \$2.5 million will be provided over this term to establish and run an open space secretariat and an amount of \$5 million will be provided to start the Queensland Trust for Nature to help protect Queensland's open space. Indeed, in the suburbs adjacent to my area, the battle goes on in relation to fire ants and also there is the tremendous work undertaken by the Bushcare groups in revegetating local forests and remnant areas.

This government has great ambitions, and they will translate into significant achievements in my area of Greenslopes. In terms of health, a further \$1.5 million a year will be provided to establish a new cardiac team at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and \$110 million over the next three and a half years will be provided to further reduce elective surgery waiting times. We will also certainly receive our share of the 1,500 graduate nurses and 18,000 extra free dental treatments to pensioners, children, students and families over the next three years.

The roads in my area will receive \$144,000 to install median barriers at Deshon Street and Gaza Road; \$2.7 million for road safety programs across Brisbane; and \$2.4 million towards traffic improvement on my local sections of the Pacific Motorway and improvements to the Captain Cook Bridge. Again, education will be at the forefront of our activities with upgrades of the resource centre at the Wellers Hill State School to be finalised. There will also be upgrades of classrooms at Marshall Road State School, an upgrade of the telephone system at Seville Road State School and the wiring of schools for future upgrades to be undertaken at Holland Park, Marshall Road and Wellers Hill state schools.

Public housing will also receive a great boost with \$251,000 from the Smart State Building Fund and \$14.2 million for the refurbishment of the public housing interiors on the Brisbane south side. Funding allocations to Emergency Services also will have some impact in my local suburbs, with a further provision of \$480,000 to redevelop the Camp Hill Fire Station, which services the area.

Finally, the environment that we in this state all share is going to be enhanced by the very significant legislation that has already been passed—the first legislation passed under this parliament—with \$150 million devoted to preserving 20 million hectares of land through the new land clearing legislation. This will not only save trees but also deal with the problems of erosion, salinity and water quality. This is a great program for this government. I am very proud to be part of this government and to be able to support each of these initiatives in whatever way I can. I commend Her Excellency's speech.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (2.57 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in the address-in-reply debate of the 51st Parliament and to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land. I join with other members on congratulating the Speaker and Deputy Speaker on their re-election to this high position. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the people of the Springwood electorate for electing me for the second time to represent their issues in state parliament. I assure them that their confidence in me will not be misplaced and that I will continue to work hard to listen and respond to their concerns. It is a great honour to be elected as their voice in government and I am strongly committed to putting Springwood first and ensuring that our local issues are at the forefront of government decision making and policy development.

Recently, at the opening of the 51st Parliament we heard Her Excellency outline a number of initiatives of the Beattie Labor government that will certainly benefit the electorate of Springwood. It is without doubt that the federal government's socioeconomic status funding scheme strips much-needed funding from Queensland schools and places at risk a fair and well resourced education system for our children. It is refreshing to see strong leadership through the provision of funding by the Beattie government, ensuring the right of any child to access a world-class education.

That leadership has been demonstrated consistently by the Beattie government, and nowhere more so than in the electorate of Springwood. In the past three years over \$800,000 has been allocated to schools in the area for repainting, roofing works, ICT resources, new classrooms, toilets and an activities hall. That is not to mention around \$200,000 for P&Cs, P&Fs, PCYCs, kindergartens and other out-of-school hours care organisations for playground equipment, shade covers, landscaping and other projects that have improved and enhanced facilities.

There is much more to look forward to. We will wire the schools for the future with electrical infrastructure upgrades at Chatswood Hills, Kimberley Park, Slacks Creek and Springwood Road state schools. This will enable schools to plug into the information superhighway. Telephone systems will be upgraded at Chatswood Hills and Springwood Central state schools.

There is no doubt that school maintenance is an important and ongoing issue for many of the schools in the Springwood electorate. The schools in my electorate are at an age where maintenance is a high priority for them. I look forward to the schools in the Springwood electorate receiving their fair share of the funding under the Triple R program, and I note that nearly \$5 million of that money is for private schools.

I also note the high priority school maintenance fund. While all schools receive an annual budget to cover maintenance work, some maintenance projects, such as recarpeting, are too large to be funded by that budget. So I am pleased that Springwood State High School will receive new carpet from this new funding program. An investment of more than half a billion dollars in school maintenance and renewal over the next three years is what schools in this state can look forward to from the Beattie government.

Students in the Springwood electorate are certainly smart. When I visit schools I think the work that students are doing on computers and in other subject areas is mind boggling. They are geniuses when dealing with the challenges that technology poses to most of us. I tell parents in the electorate that, if they do not know how to do something on a computer, mobile phone or any other piece of technology, they should just ask their kids because they will certainly show them.

The Smart Schools Renewal Program enables primary, special and secondary schools to upgrade their facilities to cope with the latest subjects. It focuses on creating teaching areas suitable for the use of ICTs and includes major and minor improvements. I am very pleased to inform the House that Shailer Park State School and Shailer Park State High School will receive significant construction of new classrooms to support middle schooling, totalling approximately \$1.49 million. Upper primary and lower secondary schooling are an important time for our young people. It is imperative that their enthusiasm for learning and getting ready for senior schooling is maintained, and this funding will certainly assist in achieving this outcome. We all know that students need to use the tools of their time in their daily learning. ICTs are a part of everyday modern life. So it is important that we equip schools so students can achieve the skills needed for their future.

There has been a lot of debate in the local community regarding the P-12 campus through combining Shailer Park State School and Shailer Park State High School. I would like to take this opportunity to assure both school communities that I will be listening to their thoughts on this issue and assisting them to achieve their chosen outcome. A new preparatory year, reduction in

class sizes and Smart State building funds are policies that aim to adapt our young people to new economies and new technology and to provide the skills needed for the jobs of the 21st century. That is what the Beattie Labor government's education and training reforms for the future are all about.

In my maiden speech I said—

I note with anticipation the creation of the Springwood south-east busway interchange ... This will improve public transport opportunities for the people of Springwood, and will also drastically reduce the travelling time into the city.

This indeed did happen. An additional 248 bus services throughout Logan per week were introduced, and there is no doubt that travel times into the city have decreased. The response from talking with people at the hyperdome bus interchange and the Springwood bus station was very positive. Residents of Logandale have told me that they are extremely happy with the increased bus services as are Rochedale South residents. But there is more to be done.

If we ask the residents, workers, students and visitors to the area for their thoughts on public transport, they will tell us that fares are too high, concessions do not go far enough and there are not enough direct services throughout the suburbs to places such as Logan Hospital and Logan TAFE. These are just some of the concerns people raise with me, all of which I have raised with the new minister.

In July the benefits of the \$1.4 billion integrated public transport ticketing initiative TransLink will emerge. From July this year passengers will be able to use a single ticket to travel on trains, buses and Brisbane ferries. This will indeed make life easier for commuters and should make bus fares cheaper for the people of the Springwood electorate. TransLink will coordinate transport services between Noosa, Coolangatta and Helidon. In other words, there will be a coordinated approach to transport services to meet passenger demands. The success of TransLink is vital to the people in the Springwood electorate, so I will be watching the emergence of TransLink very carefully to ensure that it provides a service that meets community expectation.

I want to put on record that there is still more to be done in the Springwood electorate in respect of suburban local bus routes, and I intend to keep fighting for these services. At Loganholme there is an industrial estate that needs a bus service to ensure that businesses can get employees and to ensure that unemployed people can have the opportunity to work in these areas and are not penalised because they do not have their own transport.

Secondly, there is no direct bus service from Springwood to Logan Hospital or Logan TAFE. Currently, passengers need to catch a couple of buses to reach these destinations. Relatives of patients in Logan Hospital and staff of the hospital have all told me of their frustration about having to catch several buses and the amount of time spent travelling over what would normally be a short distance. They also inform me that the current timetable does not meet the demands of their rosters. It is also the same story for students and workers at Logan TAFE.

I thank the Clark family of Logan City Buses for always listening and acting on my concerns over the past three years. I know they, too, want better outcomes for public transport in Logan. For students there is good news. The Beattie government will provide concessions for tertiary students on all contracted passenger transport services across Queensland. This is a huge benefit to the families in the Springwood electorate. On top of HECS, textbooks and other fees and services, full bus fares are an added burden to students and their families. I am pleased that this will no longer be the case.

The Springwood bus station was just the first stage of improved bus services. The second stage will be the emergence of TransLink. When fares are more affordable, that is when the bus station will start to be used more than it already is. That is why I kept lobbying the previous Minister for Transport, Steve Bredhauer, about the need for more parking in the near future. I am extremely pleased to say that he listened. An amount of \$1 million was allocated to build more car parking for the bus station. This announcement was extremely well received by all the community at the Springwood community cabinet. I take this opportunity to say to the Premier that the people of the Springwood electorate are ready to have another community cabinet. I extend an invitation to the Premier to favourably consider this request in the near future. I know that the planning and tender process is under way for the new car parks. I am sure it will not be long before the first of many cars will be parking there.

If we do not have affordable and accessible public transport, we do not have workers able to get to work, we do not have employers able to get employees, we do not have seniors getting out and being active and we do not have families reaching the services they need. We must get

public transport right. I believe the initiatives being adopted by the Beattie government will see improved public transport services in Logan. I hope that in the future I will be reporting to the House that there are not enough buses in the Springwood electorate to meet public demand. I think that would be a really good problem to have.

I said in my maiden speech that the regions such as Logan are having basic services and resources slashed at the hands of a mean-spirited federal government. A fine example of this is the lack of doctors bulk-billing in the Springwood electorate and, of course, the Howard government's non-commitment to the dental health of Australians. Against this slash and burn mentality of the current federal government, it is uplifting to see the Beattie Labor government investing more money in providing dental health services for Queensland.

Queensland is the only state that funds full fee public dental services, which the Howard government stopped funding. An amount of \$3 million has been allocated to provide 10,000 extra dental treatments in target areas. I am extremely pleased to see that Logan will be receiving some of this funding.

The issue of patients waiting too long for elective surgery is often heard in the community. I am proud to belong to a government that gave a commitment during the election campaign to address this issue, and the process for that commitment has started. In the first stage more than 1,300 patients are to be treated at the Princess Alexandra, QE II, Redlands, Royal Women's, Royal Children's and Mater hospitals. Logan Hospital will treat more than 130 extra patients, including knee and hip replacements and general surgical procedures, on top of its normal number of procedures.

Too many people are attending emergency rooms in public hospitals around the state because we do not have bulk-billing doctors. In Logan we certainly do not have enough after-hours doctors who are accessible and affordable. I ask the people of the Springwood electorate to send a message to the Howard government to stop fooling around with their health; tell the current federal government that it needs to start funding health services adequately in this country. The health of my constituents is too important to be ignored, and I will continue to lobby the federal government on behalf of the electorate.

The people of the Springwood electorate not only want a good education system, improved public transport and a better health service; they also want a caring and safe living environment. Putting police back on the streets is what people want. They want a police force that is highly visible. The new police beats at Rochedale South and Springwood and the new Loganholme Police Station are doing just that. The police beat officers are part of the local community. The people in their areas have been able to get to know them and respect them. Like their fellow police officers at Slacks Creek and Loganholme police stations, they are dedicated and committed officers who do a fantastic job in keeping our community safe.

Funding is at its highest and there is almost 1,700 more police in Queensland now than when the Beattie Labor government was elected in 1998. I know the government will build on this record over the next three years to better equip police to fight crime. At this point I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Neighbourhood Watch coordinators and members in the Springwood electorate for the great work they do in making our community safe. I look forward to continuing to work with them over the next three years.

I look forward with anticipation to the new Springwood Ambulance Station. The station is to be built on the existing ambulance site, and this is due to Centro shopping centre allowing the QAS to use its land. Without this extra land, the new building could never have been built on that site. Our paramedics have never been in greater demand. The Springwood electorate is growing with more businesses, the expansion of our retail centres and more and more families choosing our area for a better lifestyle. Therefore, more and more pressure is being put on the Ambulance Service.

The community ambulance cover will give the Ambulance Service a solid, predictable funding base for the first time in its 112-year history. Queensland paramedics are highly skilled and dedicated professionals, and we never know when we or our loved ones will need them. In common with many in the Springwood electorate, I am comforted in knowing that they are there for all of my family and that the costs are covered no matter where they are in Australia. Over the next three years \$100 million will be committed to these professionals and the facilities, support and training they need to ensure this state maintains its world-class Ambulance Service.

I welcome the Beattie plan to establish a range of programs to help grow small businesses. The \$5.1 million recurrent package of initiatives, including \$3 million in new funding, will help boost

small businesses throughout Queensland, including those in the Springwood electorate. Over the past few years, in my role as the state member for Springwood, I have been fortunate to work with many businesses in our community, and I have been pleased to see these businesses prosper and enjoy success.

Some \$2.4 million will be spent to increase the Smart Small Business Agenda grants program for small business. This means an extra 480 grants for small business. Therefore, a total of 1,400 grants are up for grabs. It is important that I continue to communicate with these businesses and inform them of the state government opportunities that exist for them so Springwood businesses get their fair share. A thriving business community will lead to jobs in our local area.

One program that is achieving jobs for participants is the Community Jobs Plan. I thank Springwood State High School, which has always in the past coordinated this program for the Logan East area. It does an outstanding job, as always. The Community Jobs Plan is an important part of the Beattie Labor government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle. The program is certainly a winner for the participants and for our local community. I believe because of its success we need to keep it going, and I have already relayed this important message to the new minister.

It is without doubt that one of the biggest challenges we face as a government is managing the growth coming into south-east Queensland. The growing population is an issue for all levels of government. All governments must work together to ensure we have communities that represent the high quality of lifestyle that we all enjoy. If you ask the people in the Springwood electorate what makes our area so special, they will tell you that one of the reasons is the clean environment with ample open space and many maintained recreational areas to enjoy.

I am extremely pleased that the government will establish the new Office of Urban Management. This office will have a direct link to the Treasurer and will inform the budget process of the future infrastructure requirements that need to be budgeted and planned for. I believe this growth will bring enormous opportunities to lead the way with environmentally sustainable developments, and I want Logan to be the leaders in this process. One of the most important challenges for Logan City Council and this office is to work together to identify and protect significant quality environmental green space and natural resources.

William Blake said, 'No bird soars too high if he soars with his own wings.' Winning an election is a team effort. I have many people to thank, but due to the time available to me I will not be able to mention everyone. To my friend and campaign organiser, Mark Ward: thank you once again for making the campaign a success. Mark is a very dedicated and committed young man with Labor values. Having people like Mark in the Labor Party means we have a great future ahead of us. I also want to thank his partner, Fiona, for her assistance and patience.

To my campaign manager, Jenny Atkinson: thank you for the long hours and hard work not only during the campaign but also throughout the past term. To the Springwood ALP branch members: we did it! Thank you for your support and assistance. To Clare Gillic, my electorate officer: thanks for a fantastic effort and fantastic support. She is a fantastic woman and I really wish her well in her new role.

To Graham Murrphy, who spent his holidays working very hard for me, I say one big thank you. People who assisted me regularly were Barry Ramsay, Terry Gobert, Col Myers, Robin Bailey, Marion Young, Cindy McKay, Eileen Horsburgh, Mike McArthur and Rita Rozis—and the list is far too big for me to mention at this time. To those I have not mentioned, I sincerely thank you.

Thank you to the supporters who attended mobile offices, handed out how-to-vote cards, put signs in their yards, letterboxed, folded and enveloped letters. I have many volunteers in the community who have assisted and supported me throughout the three years and during the campaign. They come from sports organisations, community organisations such as Lions, P&Cs, P&Fs, local businesses, clubs, pubs and residents. To all of you I say: my victory is your victory.

To my grandmother Gwen Dahl and my mother, Gloria Bartlam, who once again did my housework, letterboxed, folded, enveloped letters, fed the troops on election day and so much more: I love you very much and thank you. Thank you to Uncle Keith, my brother Colin, Llew and other family members and friends who have also assisted during my two campaigns. My best friend, Melanie Piccini, since grade 1 has given me a lifetime of support and friendship. Since becoming elected, she has also worked very hard for me and I appreciate it very much.

Mr Wilson interjected.

Ms STONE: I thank her husband, Tony, and their family for their patience and assistance.

Thanks of course to the ALP organisers who have assisted me—Andrew Fraser, who is now sitting alongside us, Melissa Thomas, Milton Dick and Sam Orr. To Greg Simcoe, Dave Hannah, the BLF team and the CEPU plumbers division: I give a really big thanks for all your support and assistance.

Once again, I have to thank my inspirational mentor, Judy Spence, who is always finding time to listen to me and support me. How she does that as well as carrying out her ministerial role I will never know. The Mackenroth family has been a part of my life for many years. I am very proud to once again sit alongside the Deputy Premier, Terry Mackenroth, in this 51st Parliament.

I look forward to sending this speech to my nephew Steven Stone and to our family in the UK. To the people of the Springwood electorate, I say: the most important role I have is to listen. Throughout my last term and before that, during my first campaign, I got to meet many of you through doorknocking, attending meetings and functions and at my mobile offices. These activities will continue along with flexible office hours to ensure that I continue to actively listen and represent your needs strongly in government.

I will continue to regularly send government information and the Barbara Stone Springwood Update. I now look forward to the next three years and continuing to work with all levels of government to ensure that our local community always gets put first—a community that promotes individual, family and community vitality that respects diversity.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (3.16 p.m.): At the outset, I would like to thank the people of Bundamba for re-electing me as their member of parliament. I would also like to thank the SEC of the ALP, all my ALP branches and members. I would like to thank my family, especially my husband, Neil, my daughters Stephanie and Brianna, my mother and father, and especially my Aunty Kay, who was stoic during this period. I would like to thank Steve Axe and Michael Bertram, my long-suffering electorate officers, who do a wonderful job. I would also like to thank Don Wilson, who was my policy adviser, and Felicity Higgins, my personal assistant. I also look forward to working with Rosalie Devenish, my new policy adviser in health.

I would like to thank the community organisations who stood with me shoulder to shoulder throughout the election campaign. I would especially like to thank my union, the Missos, and Ron Monaghan. I would also like to thank Andrew Vickers, the CFMEU miners division and Linda Holliday. They all supported me throughout the campaign. As members of this House are aware, it was very difficult for me as I lost a close family member during that time.

I am committed to always representing Bundamba in an honest and accountable way, to fighting for resources to help our community grow, to looking after the poor, the sick, the disadvantaged, seniors and children. I am absolutely committed to social justice and equity for all.

In the last parliament I was very proud to have served as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education during a time when significant reforms were instituted in the education system, including the preparatory year trials, education and training reforms, and the learning or earning agenda. This term, however, I have been appointed as parliamentary secretary to my good friend the Minister for Health, the Hon. Gordon Nuttall, and I look forward to great challenges ahead.

There are, however, some challenges within the Bundamba electorate. We have huge growth occurring in the housing market in Springfield, Springfield Lakes, Brookwater and Collingwood Park. How we as a community manage that growth, including tree clearing and environmental management, remains a challenge, although I have suggested urban development committees to the Ipswich City Council as a mechanism in dealing with this issue.

Another challenge is the fact that this growth places pressure on services, including police, education, health, and road and transport facilities. A third challenge is the aged population, and I have substantial numbers of elderly residents living particularly in two suburbs, which are Ebbw Vale and Redbank.

The final challenge I see in this term is ensuring that our reform agenda as a government leaves no-one out—that is, that no-one is left behind or left out and that the whole community is involved. What are we going to do in the Bundamba electorate over the next few years?

Education

In the Ipswich and West Moreton districts we are going to be employing up to 33 extra teachers, some of whom will be appointed to schools within the Bundamba electorate.

We are going to be spending \$250,000 on additional toilets at Kruger State School. A new principal will be appointed soon. We are going to replace the phone system at Dinmore State School. We will also be upgrading the electrical capacity of Collingwood Park Primary School, Goodna Primary School, Kruger Primary School, Redbank Plains State High School, Redbank Plains Primary School and Riverview Primary School. I know that all of these schools are very grateful for this.

We are also going to be building a new science and technology block at Redbank Plains Primary School, costing \$634,000. The P&C and the school were very grateful that the Premier came to Redbank Plains Primary School to personally announce this initiative.

We are going to upgrade a classroom at the Riverview State School to support ICT initiatives, costing some \$100,000. Our government will also allocate approximately \$17 million to build a new school somewhere in the Ipswich region in order to meet demand due to population growth.

I will continue to support the arts in our schools. I am very pleased to announce that Andrew Vickers and the CFMEU miners division will be supporting my high schools in a program remembering the coalminers of Ipswich and their contribution to Ipswich socially, economically and through their trade union activities. Rachel Ingham, an inspirational art teacher at Redbank Plains State High School, will be coordinating this particular project at her school. At the end of next week I will be taking some coal miners to the school so that they can explain what coalmining meant to our city. I thank all the teachers, registrars and administrative staff of our schools because they do a wonderful job. They are very capably led by Mike Ludwig, the executive director of our schools.

Transport

Transport is a very big issue in our local area. As a government \$120 million has been allocated for stage 1 construction of the Centenary Highway from Springfield to the Ripley Valley. Two million dollars for community consultation has been allocated to find a solution to the River Road B-double issue and to link the Warrego and Cunningham highways. This will be a genuine consultation exercise.

We will, jointly with the Ipswich City Council, allocate \$80,000 to provide bus set down facilities at Westside Christian College. This is a great Christian college led by the principal Mr Chris Meadows.

We completed only last week a \$1.8 million ring road around Woodcrest College. I officially opened it with Councillor David Morrison. This road was jointly funded by Education Queensland and the Ipswich City Council. We have named the road after the founding principal of the school—Nev Smith Drive.

Additional early morning and late night services on the buses to link with Queensland Rail services will be trialled. There will also be trials of services that allow passengers to be dropped off closer to home. That is a great boon for our shiftworkers. We will replace the timber rail bridge at Bundamba. This work started almost immediately after I was re-elected.

One thing that we do need is the Ipswich Motorway upgraded. This is Queensland government's No. 1 National Highway priority. This motorway starts in my electorate. I place on record that it is an absolute and utter disgrace. It is like a car park. It is absolutely hindering the growth of Ipswich. My message to my people is to vote Labor at the next federal election because if we do not have a Labor government in power we will never get through that motorway. We will all sit in that car park for the next few years. Bernie Ripoll and Mark Latham are on record that they will provide the funding to fix it and that is what we need.

Our government will also allocate \$200,000 to reconstruct the boat ramp at Richardson Park at Goodna. Some \$100,000 has been allocated to complete the intersection improvements at Ipswich Road and the Warrego Highway connector road.

Housing

Community renewal has nearly ended in Goodna-Gailes and Dinmore-Riverview. Millions of dollars have been poured into community development projects. It is my belief that this is the single most effective community development program that we as a government run. It means that we have increased community cohesion and self-esteem. I thank both of my community reference groups who have worked so hard to allocate this money. I also thank Jenny Jarman and her team in the Department of Housing for their real commitment to the people in my area.

I also place on record how wonderful the urban renewal scheme is in my electorate. We are currently working in the Cross Street, Goodna area and Bundamba to do up the homes. Harvey

Khabander and his team in the Department of Housing deserve many accolades for the way in which they communicate with our people and the workmanship in our houses.

We also have a number of private housing estates which are growing at an amazing rate. Springfield, Springfield Lakes, Brookwater and Collingwood Park are moving ahead. I would like to see an increased use of architects in designing this housing. I would also like to see more lightweight designs being used.

We welcome new people into our community of Ipswich. I hope that, in the future, our Ipswich City Council urban development committees will work very well in making our city a better place in which to live and in which to work and where environmental considerations are of high importance.

Police

We have delivered on the new police beat at Springfield. I only opened it a couple of weeks ago. Senior Constable Glen Lamont, the other police officers and the administrative officers will do a great job in looking after the communities of Springfield, Springfield Lakes and Brookwater. In February we also delivered on the new police beat at Redbank Plains. This particular police beat will have wonderful support from the Redbank Plains neighbourhood watch group. I place on record my thanks to the Goodna police for always, and in a very professional way, looking after our local people. I thank Inspector Cliff Dieckmann, Sergeant Adrian Lewin, Sergeant Chris Booth, Sergeant Rodney Ward and the team of police officers who really work very hard in our local area looking after our local people.

Emergency Services

I notice that the Minister for Emergency Services is in the chamber. He is an old Ipswich boy. You are welcome in my electorate any time, Chris. We have a new ambulance station currently under construction at Redbank, as the minister is aware. The construction will cost a little over \$1 million. We look forward to the minister coming to our electorate some time in June and officially opening it.

Mr Cummins interjected.

Mrs MILLER: That is right. Chris did work at the Redbank railway workshops. He is very familiar with the Redbank community. We look forward to the employment of increased paramedics in our local area as well. I know that the Redbank ambulance officers are looking forward to their new station. Redbank Plains State High School is providing the artwork for the new station, which will be absolutely fantastic. It is a complete community involvement in our area.

Employment and Training

Over \$400,000 investment will be made on information and communication technology at the Bremer Institute of TAFE. There will also be \$50,000 for arts training which will be delivered to youth, especially those at risk of not engaging in education and training. It is very important to re-engage our young people at risk.

We will continue the highly successful Breaking the Unemployment Cycle Initiative. The Goodna Neighbourhood House has delivered a couple of these. I believe it is one of the best delivery agencies in Queensland because it has engaged, to a great degree, our multicultural community. They are now learning and earning.

Over \$12 million will be spent in the Ipswich region creating 1,750 jobs in this program. Local community groups will be applying for this funding to help our local people. We will also continue delivery of training through the Bremer Institute of TAFE. Roughly \$27 million is the budget for the Bremer TAFE. This institute employs some 300 full-time staff. The major Bremer Institute of TAFE campus is in my electorate of Bundamba. However, we have this very innovative Goodna TAFE House. This is a Queensland Housing Department house that has been converted into a training house for the Bremer Institute of TAFE. It is a great success story in our local area. It delivers literacy programs and programs that teach people how to drive. It is a great innovation.

I also place on record my thanks to the Dinmore Murri Baptist Church for delivering training programs to our indigenous people. This has been one of the greatest successes in our Ipswich area. I will always support Pastor Nick Bennett, Narella Simpson and our team there for being innovative in relation to the delivery of training programs.

Health

In 2003-04 the West Moreton Health Service District budget is greater than \$146 million. Much of this funding has been allocated, obviously, to Ipswich General Hospital, regional

hospitals and health centres, including my very own Goodna Health Centre. We continue to provide good quality health services to our local people. However, there are some issues, mainly involving the federal government, that I would like to address.

There is a massive shortage of GPs in my electorate. I point out the dedication of one particular GP who is an absolute hero. Dr Harry Ratnam looks after two to three suburbs in my electorate. He looks after Dinmore, Riverview and a lot of the residents in Collingwood Park. I thank him for his dedication to our local people, because he works six to seven days a week and does a fantastic job. Our new suburbs also need GPs. I was recently able to talk to two GPs into setting up at Springfield Lakes. I am sure these two doctors will do a marvellous job working in our new community there.

Medicare, as every member in this chamber knows, has collapsed. My people often think twice about going to a doctor because of the gap fee that is now being charged. They often end up at the accident and emergency area of Ipswich Hospital. Some are even now going to the QE II Hospital and the PA Hospital. I think it is a disgrace that, if someone is sick and they do not have \$10 or greater to cover the gap, they find it very difficult to get the medical attention they need. That is, of course, if they can get an appointment to see a doctor anyway. Some of my local families are telling me that it can take up to a week to get an appointment to see a local doctor.

The cost of prescription medication is also an issue in my electorate. Some people are getting a prescription from their doctors and choosing to get that prescription only partially filled. In fact, my local chemists are telling me that people get the antibiotics first and then go down the prescription to see what else they can afford. Some people are in fact cutting down on their medication, which is a major worry to me because they may end up in our hospital system because they are not being treated properly.

In relation to dental matters, even working people find it difficult to afford a dentist. In my electorate you can often determine the difference between the well-off and the poor by the number of teeth in their head. This is disgraceful. I think the federal government should be ashamed of itself.

Seniors Issues

I know that seniors worry about retirement and their superannuation incomes. I know that they worry about their sons and their daughters and their families moving back home. Many seniors are also looking after grandchildren due to limited child care places. Seniors also worry about who will look after them if they are falling sick, because most of their sons and daughters are at work. They also worry about who is going to look after them and their grandchildren if they all get sick.

There is a shortage of seniors housing in my electorate, including seniors private housing. Many people in my area own old Queenslander houses that cost an awful lot of money to maintain. Some of my seniors are telling me that they would like to sell them and go into low-set brick houses, but they are very few and far between. My electorate also has a shortage of aged care beds. Unfortunately, there is an increase in elder abuse, particularly physical and financial abuse.

Energy and Science Infrastructure

There will be a \$7.2 million investment by Energex to upgrade the Redbank and Springfield network. Also, \$419,000 has been allocated to construct laboratories and a fireworks safety testing facility at SIMTARS, the safety in mines testing station at Redbank. This will be the first such facility in Australia. SIMTARS is an absolutely fantastic research station in my area. We hope to connect SIMTARS with Redbank Plains primary school in the negotiations to build a new science centre at that school.

In conclusion, when I was first elected to this parliament I gave a commitment to the people of my electorate that whilst I am their member they would never, ever walk alone. I meant it then and I mean it now. I will continue to work hard for our people on matters, no matter whether they are big or small. I will fight for every dollar of government money that will help my people. I will work with our community, including the private sector and all of our community organisations, to make our electorate a great place to live and work. If it is happening in the Ipswich region then it is happening in the electorate of Bundamba, an electorate on the move.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (3.35 p.m.): I am pleased to speak in the address-in-reply debate. I would like to cover a lot of issues particularly in relation to the electorate of Warrego.

Warrego is one of the five largest electorates in Queensland. It is about the same size as the state of Victoria. This poses many challenges for me and for people who live in those areas.

I suppose the biggest impediment we have had in recent times is the drought. That has certainly turned around and there is a much better season out there for us now. A lot of irrigators have faced some serious problems in relation to the fact that the river systems just have not run and they really have not been able to get a crop. This year quite a few will at least get something. It might not be a full crop, but it is a start. I spoke to quite a few just recently. Even those who were not doing too badly were saying that, because of the impact, it will take them at least three years to get back to where they were before. That is provided the seasons go well for them. That is the sort of challenge some of them face. Out in the far west, out past Thargomindah, they have had no rain at all. They had a good flood in the Bulloo, but really nothing at all. They really have had no significant rain for nearly a year and a half. They certainly do have some problems.

The one good thing about it is that the beef market has been very solid over the last few years. That has certainly been a great support for a lot of those towns out there and the community. The sheepmeat market has been improving and wool, which has been down for probably 13 years, is probably just a whisker above break-even.

I mention a great young fellow who won the *Queensland Country Life* Young Farmer of the Year last Saturday—Kevin Brennan from Chinchilla. I congratulate Kevin and his family, who come from that Chinchilla-Goombi area. They are a wonderful family. It is great to see that he has done so well there. He will go on to the Australian finals in due course.

There are many challenges out there for primary industry, which is the main industry in my area. We have oil and gas in the far south-west, but certainly there are plenty of challenges out there. Vegetation management has been one of the biggest issues people have had to confront, along with water management plans. It has been a difficult time, because a lot of producers have had to spend an enormous amount of time trying to fight to keep ownership and fight for survival rather than look towards making better use of the resources that they have. Finding efficiencies and looking to increase productivity have in many instances had to be put on the backburner while we fight simply to hold on to what we have got. That has been very disappointing.

It is a shame that the environment now is almost like a religion. Trees in Queensland are a bit like cows in India. It is unfortunate that the environmentalists appeal to science for authority with little foundation when one looks at the hard data, but that is the way it is. I will be fighting very hard, very long and very strongly for good science, for practical understanding and a good outcome for everybody so that the broader community can be confident that rural producers are looking after their land and are members of viable communities so that their communities and the state of Queensland can progress.

There are a number of other issues that are very important, such as the public liability issue that is still biting in the community. Much work has been done by this government and other governments around Australia on this issue with limited success in relation to the cost of public liability, particularly in relation to not-for-profit groups. There is one issue that I want to raise, and that is that the community care underwriting scheme which is operating in other states does not seem, as far as I am aware at this stage, to be able to operate in Queensland. That scheme apparently offers some pretty competitive rates, and I do not know why it cannot operate here in Queensland. We have made some inquiries, but I urge the government to carefully consider that scheme and provide some communicate as to whether it can or cannot operate here, and if not, why not.

Council elections were held in all areas of Queensland this March. I want to congratulate all the new councillors and those who have retired for all of the years they put into councils throughout my electorate, and for that matter all of Queensland. For those defeated councillors, I want to thank them so much for the great effort that they put into the community. Their efforts were certainly well rewarded in relation to the work that they have done. I wish them all the very best for the future.

Electricity supply is a major component and one of the backbones of our industry in this state. One only has to see what happens when there are large scale power fluctuations and their impacts on communities. What we are finding now is that many power facilities such as powerlines are starting to deteriorate simply because they need more maintenance, and that is really impacting on communities. I hope that the inquiry under way at the present moment which was instigated by the government will identify all of those areas where a serious concern exists. We are finding that in some towns blackouts are continually happening and there are power

surges. We are finding that smaller towns such as Glenmorgan, for instance, have been having serious problems for a long time which have not been able to be fixed. In many areas the problems have been able to be fixed, and I take my hat off to the wonderful work done by the maintenance staff who are working beyond the call of duty to maintain some of these lines. It does not matter whether there are floods or it is raining and the roads are boggy; they seem to be able to get there the best they can. So that is really good.

Housing is an issue everywhere, as most members would be aware. There is certainly a need in my electorate in that we find that many people tend to congregate into the bigger towns for various reasons. In a town like Roma, which is probably the biggest town in my electorate, we find that many people come in from outlying areas looking for crisis housing, whether it is housing for youth or to escape domestic violence. There is an option for same house, different landlord homes. There is certainly a need for additional housing in that area.

Roads are the main backbone of our state. Just as roads are important for members in urban areas, roads are very important in the regions. The Roads to Recovery funding from the federal government is very welcome. That is a wonderful program that goes to councils for local roads. There was \$1.2 billion in the last program and something similar in the next one. That has been very well accepted and has been a great program. I want to see funding increased for maintenance on roads so that we can increase the speed limit to 110 kilometres an hour as soon as possible. There are still roads that are not in that category but which I believe should be. There is no reason why they cannot. Quite frankly, even though I see the adds on TV which are hard to believe, that is the way it is. In many instances, on those roads where one can travel 110 kilometres an hour they should be able to do it because people travel those roads hour after hour. There does not seem to be many problems with locals on the roads but rather with those people who are travelling through the area.

Police and justice is an important area, and we desperately need a 24-hour police station at St George. There is a need for it, and there has been for quite a long time. It seems to be one of those towns where problems flare up for a while and then they go away, but they are there. There are always underlying problems. They have been contained within reason for the last few months, but they are there. I had a call from a business operator just last week saying that people were out in the street breaking windows and carrying on. The police cannot be there all of the time if they do not have a 24-hour station. So there is certainly a need in that area. I also want to thank the police for the effort that they put in, because quite frankly they are the first person people call whenever there is trouble.

I mentioned in the House the other day the issue of undertaker services after the change in boundaries. I hope that the Attorney-General is looking at this; he said that he would. We need to try to reduce the area that person has to cover, because it is quite unacceptable that deceased people have to stay beside the road in many instances for at least a minimum of two hours if an accident happens, particularly on the northern end of the National Highway. It might even be a lot longer than that before they get to them. That is pretty unsatisfactory and I hope that that issue is looked at.

I turn now to fire services, and I note that the minister is in the House. Minister, there is a serious problem in that the department is changing from an advisory role and proactive role to a policing role in relation to budget accommodation. It is interesting to note that budget accommodation owners are now forced to seek advice from private certifiers—and there are not many in, say, the south-west—or local fire service business providers. Owners can face prosecution if they simply ring up the department and ask for advice on matters in relation to their budget accommodation. If the department officer suspects a breach of the legislation has occurred due to the inquiry, they can ask that an infringement notice be issued to the owner.

We had a particular case of one such owner who had upgraded the fire security in his building. There was some discussion about the accommodation block—whether there should be a unit in it or whether it had access to another part of it. Because he went overdue on the date, he was issued with a notice. We tried and tried and tried—

Mr Cummins: They gave him a period of time to have the fault rectified as such.

Mr HOBBS: There is a standard time.

Mr Cummins: If he hadn't done it in that time and he had the infringement notice at the end of that time, he should have rectified it.

Mr HOBBS: That is correct but, as far as he was aware, he was right. He thought he was right. He thought it had been done. He rang up beforehand virtually and he could not find anybody to do the job.

Mr Cummins: Is that Cunnamulla?

Mr HOBBS: Yes, that is the one.

Mr Cummins interjected.

Mr HOBBS: That would be good, if the minister does not mind, because that is a good case where I really believe that that person could have been helped a bit more. That is great. I will talk to the minister later about that.

The people in the health sector do a great job. There is no doubt about that. However, there are problems. We could have a big hole out there for health and pour money into it all the time, yet there will still be demands for more. We all accept that the management of health issues is very hard, that there are continuing issues, and that it will be harder to provide all of the health services that people want in the future. But we have to try. We have to provide the best service that we can.

I notice that the other day the member for Charters Towers spoke about the patient transit scheme. There are still some problems with that scheme. There are inconsistencies between the various health districts. It is important that we fix that matter and make sure that there is a consistent patient transit service and it is at a reasonable rate. I think that the rate was put in place many, many years ago and it has not changed.

There is a huge problem with dentists. I just do not know what we are going to do. There just does not seem to be enough dentists. At a recent meeting of the Western Subregional Organisation of Councils—WESROC—this issue was discussed. Towns such as Tara and Taroom and the Murilla shire have been without a permanent dental service for a number of years while Chinchilla lost its public dentist in June this year. Two vacancies exist for dentists in Miles and the Chinchilla-Dalby area, but there are no dentists who can come out to take up those positions. I understand that there were no graduates this year, because the course was extended by one year. Therefore, there is a lack of graduates. So we need to tap into that pool of people who are already qualified. St George experienced the same problem recently. The dentist for that area left and there has been a slight delay in relation to advertising again for another dentist. It is very, very hard to find people. So there is very serious concern in relation to dental services. We just have to try harder to find the right people and to make sure that they can get out there and provide that dental service. I want to thank all the health staff who do a wonderful job trying to provide health services to everybody.

The airconditioning of schools is the single biggest issue that I have in my area. I notice that the other day the Premier talked about the Cool Schools program. He said that the government was actually airconditioning the schools that are in the hottest parts of the state first. They are not. The schools that are in the hottest part of the state are located in my area and they are not in the program. In fact, we have between 25 and 50 days critical discomfort a year. That is the same number of days as Townsville. The schools in the Townsville area have been airconditioned. Basically, the program has moved down to airconditioning schools in Bundaberg, where that area's critical discomfort days are down to about 10 to 25 days a year. Basically, what the Premier is saying is not quite true. This is another problem that occurs when there are two Queenslands. I do not like to see this happen, but it is quite clear that there is discrimination between one part of Queensland compared with another. That issue needs to be fixed, because the discrimination is quite blatant and it is getting quite serious.

The provision of funding for the swimming pool at Dirranbandi is an ongoing, serious issue. I hope that something can be done before next year's swimming season. The pool at the school is basically not worth repairing. I understand that Education Queensland is finding some money for it now. The Balonne Shire Council, which is based at St George, is also considering the matter. So let us hope that we can get something going there sooner rather than later. I want to thank all the teachers for the great work that they do. They have a huge role to play. In many instances they rear a lot of our children, which quite frankly is an unfair burden to place upon them. But they do that job and I certainly congratulate them on their efforts.

Drugs in schools is a scourge. It is probably not as bad in some areas than it is in others, but it is there. It is such a shame to allow those beautiful kids to be offered these dreadful things that is likely to affect them later in life. But we see them out there. In fact, when there is a bit of pressure on them down in the city areas, some of the lesser enthusiastic drug dealer type tend to

head out west where there are easier pickings. They are there for a while, but eventually the police have a few raids and catch them or, if they do not catch them, those drug dealers move away for a while. We need to do more. We need to put in a bigger effort. I know that a huge effort is being put in now, but we need to do more.

Another issue that is vitally important to all of us is telecommunications. In the past few year, probably the biggest single boost to telecommunications has been in relation to mobile phone towers. About 90 towers have been put into the federal Maranoa electorate, which is Bruce Scott's area, but which covers all of my area. Of course, that electorate is bigger than Warrego. Also, the rolling out of the ADSL and satellite communications has certainly been absolutely wonderful. There is more to come. But we have to do more. We reach a certain standard, but then we have to keep ongoing. But that has certainly made life a lot easier out there. There are fewer breakdowns and the level of maintenance is good. The Telstra guys do a wonderful job in terms of repairs and service delivery. So I thank them for their wonderful effort. Telecommunications facilities are certainly on the improve in the west.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (3.55 p.m.): First, I want to congratulate all members on their re-election, or election to this place. I also thank the electors of the Nudgee electorate for once again entrusting me with the responsibility of being their member. I look forward to the next three years and undertake to represent their interests to the best of my ability.

I also thank my campaign director, Peter Marks, and all of my campaign volunteers, including my wife and children and branch members. I also say a sincere thankyou to my electorate officers, Judi, Leanne, Cathy, and Julie, for their continued support and assistance before, during and after the campaign. I also congratulate the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, government ministers, and other office holders and shadow ministers on their appointments.

I want to make special mention of the election of my good friend the member for Mount Coot-tha, Andrew Fraser, who coincidentally is sitting in the chair during this debate. Whereas I can take no credit for Andrew's considerable talents, I am pleased and proud to have played a role in his journey to this place. I employed Andrew in my electorate office in 1996 as a young and enthusiastic student following our association through a university internship program. He subsequently joined the Labor Party and became an active member, which led him to working full time for the party at both state and national levels and also for the Premier and former Treasurer. Andrew Fraser will make a significant impact on this parliament and I look forward to watching his progress and the contributions that he will make in the coming years.

I have been honoured this term with an appointment as parliamentary secretary to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport, Terry Mackenroth. I am particularly pleased that the Deputy Premier has asked me to take a special interest in some key areas of his portfolio. My main focus will be in assisting the Treasurer with his oversight of 21 government owned corporations.

The Deputy Premier has also asked me to take a special interest in the public liability insurance issue. In that regard, recently I represented the government at a ministerial council meeting on insurance matters held in Hobart. Graeme Samuel, Chairman of the ACCC, representatives of the major insurance companies and the Insurance Council of Australia addressed the meeting and responded to issues raised by ministers. The ACCC, which has a monitoring role over prices in the insurance industry, tabled its second monitoring report at this meeting. The ACCC report indicated that, in the first six months of 2003, average premiums for public liability had risen marginally by only four per cent. That is clearly out of touch with what most community organisations are experiencing. I took the opportunity to point this out to both the ACCC and the insurance industry representatives present at that meeting. I specifically raised the experience of a number of community organisations in my own electorate where premium increases between 2002-03 and 2003-04 were in the order of 50 to 150 per cent.

State and federal governments have introduced a range of reforms to assist the community sector during the recent public liability insurance difficulties. These include the establishment of a broker based insurance scheme for not-for-profit organisations, stamp duty exemptions on liability insurance premiums for eligible organisations and the creation of an interactive educational risk management web site.

Governments at both the state and federal level have also passed a raft of legislation which has helped create a very favourable underwriting environment for insurance companies. Of concern is the fact that, despite the recent reporting of increased profits for insurance companies across Australia, they are not passing on the benefits of a significantly improved underwriting

environment to consumers, particularly not-for-profit community groups. Premier Peter Beattie has recently written to the federal government urging it to give the ACCC investigative and enforcement powers with regard to the pricing of public liability insurance. Some other state and territory ministers have also supported this proposal. Head of the ACCC, Graeme Samuel, indicated that, if it becomes clear that the insurance industry is not passing on the benefits arising from the insurance reforms, then the ACCC would consider asking the Commonwealth for increased powers. The Queensland government believes that such justification exists now.

There is no doubt that legislative reforms passed by the Queensland parliament and similar reforms passed by other states and territories have directly assisted in creating a more favourable insurance climate. It is time now that insurance companies reflected this in lower insurance premiums, particularly for communities, sporting and other not-for-profit organisations.

In May last year I gave a speech in this parliament which called for community debate about lowering the voting age in Queensland elections. The voting age was lowered to 18 in Queensland and Australia in 1973, and I expressed the view that it was time to review this matter again. I still hold that view and want to take the opportunity at the commencement of this new parliament to put the issue back on the agenda. I do so in the full knowledge that a recent report by the United Kingdom Electoral Commission recommended that the minimum age for all levels of voting in UK public elections remain at 18.

Important aspects of the UK analysis of this issue need to be understood in making any judgment on whether its findings are directly relevant to the situation in Queensland or, indeed, Australia. The first distinction is that the issue analysed by the UK commission was whether the voting age should be lowered to 16 in the first instance. My submission is that it should be lowered to 17, with consideration given to lowering it to 16. I also believe that should this occur, whereas voting would be compulsory, the choice of enrolment at these lower levels should be at the discretion of the individual, as it is now for 17-year-olds under the Electoral Act. Whereas I support voluntary enrolment for 17-year-olds, I am still a strong supporter of the concept of compulsory voting.

Another factor which distinguishes Queensland and Australia from the UK is that voting in the UK is not compulsory. The age at which a person can stand for public office is also 21, albeit the commission has now recommended that this be lowered to 18. Additionally, the UK commission notes in its report that the majority of the 7,500 responses to its consultation were of the view that the voting age should be lowered to 16.

Young people today are better educated. They deal with a more complex and changing world and, through my observations, they are generally more articulate and understanding of complex community and national affairs than earlier generations. Many are actively involved in their local community's affairs, in my mind, demonstrating that they are ready to directly participate in our electoral processes. For more detail on my arguments in support of this initiative, I invite members to refer to my speech to this parliament on 27 May last year.

In addition, however, there is another basis for supporting the lowering of the voting age and that is the rapid increase in the rate of the ageing of our population. In 1981 the median age of Queenslanders was 28.9. In 2001 it was 34.8 and in 2021 it is predicted to be 40.3. As the age profile of the voting population rises, it is important that the views of younger Queenslanders be directly acknowledged in our electoral system. One way of facilitating this is by increasing the proportion of young people who participate in our electoral processes. Lowering the voting age will support the objective of ensuring that decisions of this parliament reflect the needs of as many Queenslanders as possible.

As I said in my speech to this parliament last year, one of the most common arguments against extending the vote to younger people is that they may be susceptible to the pressures of their parents or others when they cast their vote. This was one of the main arguments used by men to deny women the vote in the early 20th century. That argument was wrong then and it is wrong now. It is also argued that many young people are not fully aware of or familiar enough with the political processes or the broad range of political issues for them to make an informed judgment of the worth of a particular candidate or political party. In the first instance I reject this proposition and, secondly, if that was a criterion for allowing people the right to vote, it would exclude many adults who are currently over the age of 18. A healthy democracy is one in which as many people as are able directly participate in its democratic processes. Accordingly, I commend to the House once again the idea of lowering the voting age in Queensland elections.

I want to take a short time to highlight some key initiatives in my electorate in the areas of health and education. The government's education and training reforms were a priority in the last term of government and will deliver more opportunities for young Queenslanders to complete their education. A preparatory year of schooling will be introduced from 2007. I am pleased that Geebung State School in my electorate is participating in the trial of this initiative. In addition to significant policy changes in education, my electorate will also benefit from some current and planned capital works projects.

The creation of Earnshaw State College at Banyo is well under way with the completion of the middle and junior schools. This \$8.8 million investment complements the \$6 million the government made in support of the relocation of the Australian Catholic University to Banyo, situated just across the road from Earnshaw State College. Other significant capital works planned in my electorate include a \$1.7 million upgrade at Boondall State School. Works include a \$1 million upgrade of the administration block and \$0.6 million for a new music facility.

Virginia State School will soon have a completely refurbished administration block and Zillmere State School will receive a \$100,000 technology centre for its students. I am particularly pleased with the commitment to Zillmere State School. It is a small school which has performed above its weight in recent years. It does not have the fundraising capacity of larger schools, but with determination, strong community support and the professionalism and dedication of its staff it has provided a supportive and secure learning environment for its students.

Health is another significant issue for state governments. Recent announcements about capital works and service enhancements will deliver major benefits and improvements for my constituents. The government is committed to constructing a \$5.6 million community health centre in the Nundah area. During the election campaign the Premier announced that a new emergency department and an additional 120 beds were to be established at the Prince Charles Hospital at Chermside. This will complement the existing emergency service already available at the Royal Brisbane Hospital.

These commitments in both education and health will ensure my constituents and their children will have access to first-class health and education services within their neighbourhood. I am pleased that a re-elected Labor government will commence delivering these significant improvements over the next term. I extend my congratulations again to all members on their election to this place and I look forward to another three years of positive reform by a rejuvenated Labor government.

Ms STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (4.08 p.m.): I am proud to rise to respond to our government's agenda for this, the 51st Parliament of Queensland. This role is a great privilege for all of us, and I personally take my responsibilities very seriously. The public of Queensland want to see our government deliver a good balance in meeting the economic and social needs within our communities. I am proud about that because, as a Labor government, we do that very well. The public also want the little things attended to—the things that do not cost a lot but mean a lot to them—as well as the major facilities and infrastructure projects. Again, I think we do that reasonably well.

Our commitments will achieve a good balance in all of these areas. So, for instance, on the economic front, we are running ahead with the Smart State strategy, and that is across a whole range of government areas and portfolio areas. In my area, which is, in my view, one of the economic hubs of south-east Queensland, the advanced manufacturing plan, with an additional \$8 million, is an important initiative that will benefit our local area. Our jobs strategies and education initiatives are all part of that big macro-economic development, Smart State agenda that benefits an area like mine, and my area participates in those sorts of projects and initiatives extremely well.

The new Office of Urban Management headed by the Deputy Premier is an important initiative for areas like mine which are part of the rapid growth areas of south-east Queensland. We are considered part of the outer urban area, and it is often those areas—those fringe urban areas—that get neglected in terms of transport and other infrastructure. I am very heartened by the fact that this Office of Urban Management will move along some of those south-east Queensland planning processes in a way that the 20-20 plan and other processes have not been able to do to date.

The little things that matter are things that do not necessarily cost a lot of money but do mean a lot—things like the toilet block at Algester State School. That school community has been pushing for that for quite a while. I have been in there and had a look myself, and it is disgraceful.

The school has lobbied hard, and that is a very important thing to the school. It feels very pleased about that. The electricity upgrade at that school and others is very important to them. It does not cost a lot of money but it really helps them. They are all very important initiatives. The whole attention to maintenance, improved maintenance and increased funding for maintenance at our public schools is a very important initiative that this government has given due attention to.

Another initiative which is not little but in terms of money and relativity across some of the big projects is little is the million dollars or so we will see through the community renewal project in Acacia Ridge. I have said in this House on many occasions that probably one-third of people in Acacia Ridge live on a little over \$200 a week. They are struggling and they are doing it pretty well but it is pretty tough for them. Those people are very heartened by our commitment to community renewal and the knowledge that their area will get special attention across a range of government areas. They are really looking forward to that process getting under way over the next few months.

Turning to education, I think the way the federal government continues its funding bias towards elite private schools at the expense of public schools is disgraceful. As I said earlier, to the public schools and the independent schools it is often little amounts of money that can make a significant difference. The federal government is skewing large amounts of money towards elite private schools—those that are already resourceful. It is disgraceful that at a meeting of national and state ministers in Canberra last Friday Brendan Nelson was not able to shift in his policy.

Mr Wilson: You mean he chose not to shift.

Ms STRUTHERS: He chose not to shift. I share the view of many members on this side of the House who are looking forward to a Latham-led Labor government at the federal level so that we will start getting some fair funding in education, some fair dinkum funding in Medicare and some realistic university fees so that all people have opportunities regardless of their income.

Mrs Lavarch interjected.

Ms STRUTHERS: The issue that the member for Kurwongbah has raised is a very important issue, and that is housing. We have seen some really good housing projects in my local area such as seniors units in Acacia Ridge and other areas, and we need more of those. Again, we have had about \$90 million or so cut out of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement to Queensland. It makes it extremely difficult to instigate the capital works that we need. My commitment to my local area is that I will continue to push hard for a national affordable housing action plan that takes housing seriously.

As I have said in this House on many occasions, the children of this generation will not be able to afford home ownership. They will be flat out affording to rent. We will have a huge problem on our hands if we do not take national action now and get the cooperation we need between the state and federal governments. One of the great things our government is doing in the area of education is the education and training reform process. My local area is participating in one of the trials of ETRF. It has been very successful in bringing schools, TAFEs and other stakeholders together to have a good look at what we can do to ensure that the 15- to 17-year-old age group is earning or learning. That is a very important initiative, and I look forward to continuing to play my part in my area to make that successful. We have had some prep trials in my local area. Forest Lake State School and Watson Road State School are powering ahead with that and really valuing the opportunity to have that extra year of schooling and preparation for young kids.

Into the future, the big areas that require attention in my electorate are road and transport improvements. I have been working hard since I have been elected, and in fact before I was elected, to ensure that projects like the grade separation of the national rail crossing at Elizabeth Street in Acacia Ridge are constructed. Leonard Ardill, my predecessor, worked hard to try to achieve that. I know he had Vaughan Johnson out there when he was the former transport minister giving a commitment to that project. It does not seem to have got on the agenda or back on the radar in the way that it ought to have.

I am certainly hopeful that the federal government will meet its responsibilities under the AusLink project and fund a much needed grade separation at that crossing. There are other issues concerning heavy vehicles using local roads. Not only is my area the economic hub of south-east Queensland; it is a transport hub. I have a lot of big transport companies operating in my area as well as the national freight yard, which means a lot of trucks are coming into places like Acacia Ridge. We need to have a look at what sorts of recommendations are going to be implemented with state and federal cooperation through the Brisbane urban corridor study.

One of the issues I raised was the need to have a look at the toll booth at Stapylton on the Logan Motorway. That seems to be a booth that trucks try to avoid so they do not pay that extra toll. That has been a problem. I have raised that with the former transport minister and I have raised it with our new minister, and I urge him to continue those negotiations with the federal government to make some sense of that road funding and ensure that those heavy vehicles get off local roads and use the Logan Motorway, which is a very efficient, well-built road.

Jobs continue to be an issue locally in my area. We have some high unemployment patches around suburbs like Acacia Ridge and even Algester, and people in Forest Lake are telling me that they are struggling to find work, particularly in the age group of the over 45s. I am pleased that we are continuing with our \$600-plus million Breaking the Unemployment Cycle package, because it is a very determined effort through those programs to give people opportunities they may not otherwise have.

The other thing that is a new challenge for me this term is my new role as parliamentary secretary to the Premier on multicultural affairs. When a great job! What a great time I am having in that role! I am learning a lot about different cultures and I am certainly seeing some of the issues being faced by people who have migrated to Australia, both newly arriving people and others who have been here for a long time.

Some of the common issues and concerns appear to be getting recognition of their skills. Others are having difficulty finding jobs. I have met a number of people who want to get into areas like nursing, where we have skills shortages. I have met some Sudanese women who are desperately trying to get trained in those areas, but issues around child care and affordability of courses are making those goals very difficult. There are a lot of issues to deal with, and I am looking forward to the challenge that that new role brings.

In general, as I said at the outset, this role is a great privilege. It is a wonderful opportunity to progress issues of interest not only to me personally as a former social worker and someone who has had an interest in the quality of life people have for many years and improving that quality of life but also to many people in my area who are working hard in many areas of social and community life to make things better for people.

My local industries and local businesses are all genuinely trying to make life better for themselves but also generate work and activity in our local area, and they all play their part in making life a lot better for all of us. I commend all of those people in my local area who have contributed. I also commend my family, friends and supporters who once again have worked very hard to have me re-elected. I am very, very grateful to them for that.

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (4.18 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to rise to speak in the address-in-reply debate this afternoon. It is a very humbling experience to be elected for a third term in this parliament. I am sure others who have greater seniority in this place than me would acknowledge that. Everyone, I am sure, is humbled by the fact that they have been presented with the trust and confidence of their electorate such that they have been re-elected into this very special place.

It is also a very humbling experience for the Beattie government. Before the election there was a lot of talk about how difficult it is for any incumbent government to be elected for a third term. I know from the behaviour of my colleagues in the Beattie government since the election that we accept very sincerely the weighty responsibility of governing for a third term.

The Governor set out in her speech some weeks ago the key priorities of the third term Beattie Labor government. There is range of them. In particular, she addressed the issues of education, health, police and community safety. Those issues are very important to my electorate, as I am sure they are to many others.

I mention a number of issues of concern to my electorate which I have been campaigning around. I have had some success, but not complete success. In terms of a number of these matters I will continue to lobby the government, campaign and work with various agencies of government to produce a result locally.

The Samford Road passing lane to Samford Village is nearing completion. That has cost about \$2 million. I am pleased that that has been a successful project. The Samford Road upgrade stage one has just about been completed. That cost was \$3 million. This is designed to overcome a very serious bottleneck at the Samford Road, Arbor Street, Ferry Way intersection.

A project where I am having some success, but still hope to have more, is the upgrade of Ferry Grove Railway Station car park to significantly increase its capacity. In the meantime, about

\$400,000 has been spent on the redesign of the car park to facilitate better capacity for its existing size and to coordinate with the upgraded intersection on Samford Road. I was pleased that the government announced the \$10 million private funding and \$5 million public funding proposal for an enlarged car park at the railway station. That will continue to progress. The \$4 million North West Community Health Centre will be built in Keperra. These are important local projects.

My electorate comprises principally young families like my family. I have a 21-year-old, a 15-year-old and a 11-year-old. There are issues beyond the local that concern young families. It was indicated in the Governor's speech that the government has a key priority of child protection. Obviously, setting up the new Department of Child Protection and the strategy for the prevention of crime are part of that. The approach to these two areas will be of a whole of government nature.

This government, not just in this term but in the two previous terms, has a longstanding concern to protect children, especially in the age of computer technology, Internet and chat rooms. That brings me to a key point of concern to the families in my electorate. There is conduct called grooming. Members of this parliament may not be aware of this conduct. It is adults who adopt a false identity and pretend to be young people and enter the chat rooms on the Internet and seek to lure or entice young people, particularly young girls, into having a relationship with them on the Internet and ultimately meeting for the purpose of sexual or indecent conduct. That is what grooming is about.

There was a report produced recently by the Federal Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission. The report on cybercrime was tabled in the federal parliament in March 2004. Recommendation 4 of that report states—

The committee recommends that as part of its legislative package to detect and prosecute those who use information technology for the trade of child pornography, the Government introduce a new offence relating to luring and grooming children for sexual purposes.

I think the conduct of grooming would have to be one of the most reprehensible things that an adult could engage in.

Mrs Lavarch: Incomprehensible.

Mr WILSON: It is incomprehensible. Regrettably we live in a society where there are predators out there that behave in such a way. I endorse that recommendation 100 per cent.

I want to tell members the good news. We did not have to wait for the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Australian Crime Commission to make that recommendation for Queenslanders. In May 2003 this government passed the sexual offences legislation which amended the Queensland Criminal Code to create section 218A, which provides for the offence of grooming. I want to put on the public record a correction to what was said in an article in the *Courier-Mail* on 26 March 2004 relating to the federal parliamentary committee's report. I should moderate what I said. It is not so much a correction because the *Courier-Mail* was correct in what it said.

There may be a recommendation from the federal parliamentary committee but in Queensland that offence has been already created by the Queensland government. We are extremely concerned about the way in which the Internet and information technology can be used by adults to lure and entice young children into indecent and sexual relationships. We have been on the ball there. This is worrying when we think that 41 per cent of families across Queensland have access to the Internet and that in the Brisbane local government area there are about 163,000 young people under the age of 14. In the Pine Rivers local government area there are 31,000 young people under the age of 14. That is a significant number as well. As of 30 June 2001, in Australia there were nearly four million young children under the age of 14.

Through the innovative, leading-the-way step we took in Queensland in May 2003 we created the offence that any adult who uses electronic communication to procure any person under the age of 16 to engage in a sexual act or to be exposed to any indecent matter commits a crime for which the maximum penalty is five years imprisonment. But, further, if that adult seeks to engage a person who is actually under the age of 12 years for either of those two purposes, they are liable to 10 years imprisonment.

I want to give members some further information. The section provides that an offence is committed even if the person that the adult is engaging with through the chat room is a fictitious person represented to them as a real person. In other words, the law enforcement authorities

can, in effect, engage in using false identities in the chat room to detect adults who are seeking to engage in this reprehensible conduct called grooming.

As chair of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee, I, along with my colleagues, had the benefit of an inspection of the Crime and Misconduct Commission's premises in Terrica Place. They have a special paedophile unit set up. They showed us how QPS officers, seconded to the CMC, enter these chat rooms for the purpose of detecting adults engaged in this offence of grooming. They are very much on the front foot. They are seeking to detect this sort of reprehensible conduct and to bring those offenders to justice.

Not only are reduction of crime strategies and child protection strategies a key feature of this government's third term of office; I want to reinforce the fact that these are not new points of focus. This Beattie Labor government in its second term, and indeed in its first, gave proper attention to those areas. I am pleased to say that back in May 2003 we attacked the area of Internet crime to the benefit of all Queenslanders.

Queenslanders are entitled not to be anxious after reading that newspaper article, which might have left them thinking that the offence did not exist in Queensland simply because a federal committee had recommended that the federal government, in respect of its jurisdictional responsibilities, create a similar offence for federal law. Indeed, Queensland law already makes provision for this offence. I say well done. We should have done so. I commend the Beattie Labor government for that. I look forward to a third term of progressive legislation not only in the policing area but also in child protection generally and across the whole gamut of government responsibilities in Queensland. I commend the Governor's speech to the House.

Mr CHRIS FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (4.30 p.m.): It certainly was an honour to be a member of the 50th Parliament of Queensland but, in musical parlance, it is wonderful not to be a one-hit wonder and to come back for the 51st Parliament. It is a tremendous honour to represent my electorate, which is a medium size electorate. It goes from Curragh in the south up to the Burrum district and out along the coast to about Brooweena. It is certainly enough to keep a man busy.

One of the major projects on the cooker in Maryborough is the Fraser Coast marine industry precinct development. It is a 200-hectare freehold site approximately five kilometres downstream from the town of Maryborough on the Mary River. This site will include a designated marine industry park incorporating boat and shipbuilding, marine equipment manufacture, marine repairs and maintenance provisions as well as a marine industry training facility, which will probably be operated in conjunction with TAFE.

The state development centre in Maryborough and the Maryborough council have jointly developed the project to a point where it is now ready to sell to the marine industry. They have been very progressive in that they have already sought all of the necessary approvals ahead of time so that a developer can simply walk in and take on the project. Hervey Bay City Council is also a strong supporter of the project, which complements its own planning for the consolidation and growth of the marine industry on the Fraser Coast. The Fraser Coast marine industry precinct will have broad regional economic benefits for the Wide Bay region. I note the support of my colleague from Hervey Bay in that regard.

Anything that is good for the region is a good win in general. It will see the creation of hundreds of jobs. I have even heard a figure as high as 2,000 jobs. I think that might be a very enthusiastic version of the story; nonetheless, I would be simply delighted if that were the case. It also gives our region an opportunity to develop a whole new set of skills whilst at the same time using some of the existing surplus of engineering skills and capacity which is so readily available in our region. Of course, this is particularly critical at this time due to the restructure of the engineering base in the region, including the EDI Rail facility in Maryborough. Our region obviously needs a more stable employment base which can be supported by the Fraser Coast marine industry precinct project.

This exciting project also complements the Queensland government world-class manufacturing strategy. I am now seeking a commitment from the Queensland government to continue and expand its in-kind support and provide Maryborough City Council with significant financial assistance to achieve the completion of this major project, the Fraser Coast marine industry precinct.

The Tiaro district is quickly gaining a reputation as a land based seafood district. It would seek to promote itself as the on-land seafood capital of Queensland. There are a number of projects happening out there, such as the Mary River Eco World. Since being elected I have had

the opportunity to get out and see some of these tremendous aquaculture projects. In fact, there is one guy out there who is pretty much a world first in terms of his technology of on-land prawn farming, even though there have been lots of aquaculture projects of other types.

Maryborough is also the birthplace of P. L. Travers, the creator of Mary Poppins. A local group called the Proud Marys was recently unsuccessful in obtaining funding in the sum of \$50,000 from Arts Queensland to construct a statue of Mary Poppins on the corner of Kent and Richmond streets, which is the location of P. L. Travers's birth. The Proud Marys committee was hoping to have the statue completed by 2005, because next year is actually the 100th anniversary of the declaration of Maryborough as a city. There was also a suggestion from a local artist and craftsman named Pat Grinter to incorporate a laser light show to make the statue appear to fly off into the sky. That would be pretty interesting.

Lamington Bridge was talked about a lot during the Maryborough by-election. That has been pushed out to 2005. I ask when the funding will be available and when work is likely to commence on that project.

The subject of the administrative detention centre is very interesting. Premier Beattie and Labor do not want it at Pinkenba. We could not be more delighted. We in Maryborough do want it, because we recognise the jobs potential and also the potential for this particular project to dovetail very nicely with the Maryborough Correctional Centre. Simply, we want jobs, jobs and more jobs for Maryborough.

The Reddacliff plan is a very innovative plan that has linked the river back to our inner city. We see the capacity of Brisbane to become known as the river city. Maryborough is pretty much on the same track. Mr Reddacliff has statewide and worldwide credentials in this whole area of urban renewal.

As I said, Maryborough as a city is 100 years old next year. We will have a party and we will be looking for some party stuff. We are asking for funding to continue Maryborough Urban Renewal Inc. The project manager's position needs funding so we can continue along the road of implementation with the Reddacliff plan.

We also need funding from State Development to expand the Moonaboola industrial estate, which has certainly been a tremendous boost to our area. Obviously we need ongoing rail contracts to shore up EDI Rail. Maryborough has proved itself time and time again as the rail construction capital of Queensland. We are also looking towards a \$50,000 subsidy for the Maryborough district arts centre, which is an important project for our city.

Obviously, roads in and out of Maryborough continue to be an ongoing issue and need funding as well. I refer to the Fraser Coast health district. I could have made myself the patron saint of Maryborough by hopping in and kicking the Maryborough Hospital in the collective nether regions, but I resisted, instead taking a positive approach to our health district as we need to lure good quality specialists and staff to our region. Continuing to be negative about it will not be helpful to that cause at all. I call on the Minister for Health to make sure Maryborough, just as we have taken a district approach to it, sees its fair share of new infrastructure and new and existing services for the Fraser Coast health district.

Maryborough is also the train and railway capital of Queensland in terms of manufacture and enthusiasm for rail in general. On any given weekend that there is a function in our town park you can see the Maryborough steam train, which is a miniature steam train which takes kids on rides around the park and provides all sorts of fun and games for families.

Maryborough needs to secure a full size steam train from Queensland Rail, including the cost of getting it up to Maryborough, for the Heritage Week festivities, the World Town Criers Championships, which we are holding, and also Steam Week. Steam Week will see steam cars and steam engines come from all over Australia and as far away as New Zealand. The organisers need the government's assistance in getting the full size steam train up there, as they believe it costs around \$27,000 for the use of the train. Queensland Rail is very reluctant to release it from Brisbane. We wanted to organise it so that paying customers are on it when they bring it up from Brisbane to Maryborough and back, and that might help to offset the costs of having it there for Steam Week.

Finally, I want to thank my wife Glenys for her patience and understanding and also my children—Chelsea, Jessica, Jared, Caitlyn and Brittany—for putting up with a dad who is often away. I also want to thank my electorate officers Barbara Morris and Sarah St Paul for their faithful service and working well beyond the call of duty on a very regular basis. On a personal

note, I also want to thank Dr Bill Gunn and his wife Jenny for their medical and pastoral care to the Foley family.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (4.39 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker Poole, I would ask that you convey my congratulations to the Speaker on his reappointment. During the election campaign I urged voters in Mackay to remember that only Labor can offer stable government for Queensland and that I was the only candidate who had developed a sensible and costed local plan for Mackay. I am delighted that I now have an opportunity to deliver that plan as part of an even stronger Beattie team. I firstly want to express my gratitude to the people of Mackay, who have put their faith in me and in the Labor Party for another three years. This will be my ninth year representing Mackay in state parliament, and it continues to be an honour and a privilege to stand before this House with the support of the Mackay electorate behind me. I enjoy working with the community to achieve results and have lost none of my passion for my job since first being elected.

The Beattie plan for Mackay over the next three years is based on a number of significant investments and commitments that will help our region to build a stronger future as an integral part of the Smart State. At the core of these commitments is an understanding that jobs and education for young people and the health and safety of our families are the most important issues confronting people in Mackay. I am dedicated to ensuring residents have access to vital services and facilities and the development of projects that will broaden our economic base to cater for the future growth of our city. I will build on the past achievements of the Beattie government in Mackay, which include 1,400 jobs created under the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle; \$2.16 million for airconditioning in schools; \$41 million for public housing; an additional 31 police officers recruited since 2001; \$2.8 million for the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens; and \$11.4 million for the Mackay courthouse redevelopment.

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mr MULHERIN: We have delivered that, member for Southport. Employment in the Mackay and Whitsunday region continues to grow strongly. Since 2001, the number of unemployed people in the Mackay-Whitsunday region has fallen by 41 per cent, or 3,020 people. But, unfortunately, there are still many people desperate to work who cannot break into the work force. The government's flagship Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative has been responsible for the creation of 2,164 new jobs in Mackay and the Whitsundays since 1998. Participants gain valuable skills and experience and, importantly, the initiative helps to improve their self-esteem and give them an edge over other job seekers. The initiative also gives participants the opportunity to contribute to the community through their involvement in important beautification and development projects, and I have seen first-hand the satisfaction and motivation that job seekers receive from their efforts. The continuation of the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative in the Mackay-Whitsunday region will see our government create a further 1,221 jobs over three years at a cost of \$9.5 million.

We all know that education and learning lay the foundation for success, and our government is committed to ensuring young people in the Smart State have access to high-quality education. The Beattie government's innovative education reforms will be implemented for students who enter year 10 in 2006 to ensure that they are either learning or earning. The reforms make it compulsory for young people to stay at school until they finish year 10 or turn 16. After finishing year 10 or turning 16, young people will still be obligated to enter some form of study or training until they turn 17. Young people who enter full-time work after they have either completed year 10 or turned 16 are exempted.

These reforms are long overdue. The minimum school leaving age was made in 1964, so in effect there has been no change made in school age requirements for 40 years. The transition from school to work is not always an easy one, and our government recognises that it has a responsibility to provide young people with flexible options and support to help them achieve their goals. The reforms will give young people greater flexibility to achieve qualifications beyond year 10. This could be in school or in TAFE or through other forms of training. They will better prepare young people in the Mackay region for life and work in the 21st century.

Children in their early years of schooling will also have improved opportunities with the introduction of a prep year for all children from 2007 and the raising of the compulsory school starting age by six months from 2008. Along with local non-state schools, Andergrove, Beaconsfield, Fitzgerald, Mackay Central, Mackay North, Mackay West, Slade Point and Victoria Park state schools and Mackay District Special School will offer prep in 2007 under the Beattie government. To support the introduction of the prep year, the government will invest \$395 million

in refurbishing existing classrooms and building new classrooms where needed in state and non-state schools. An extra 106 teachers will be employed in 2007 to implement the prep year and there will also be over 800 preschool teachers who will teach prep year. While the prep year is voluntary, interstate experience shows us that around 98 per cent of children do enrol in the extra year of schooling. I have received only positive feedback from parents of preparatory year students at Andergrove State School, which was one of the first schools to participate in the state government's preparing for school trial.

Students in the all-important middle years of schooling have not been forgotten under the Beattie Labor government. We will reduce class sizes from 30 to 28 in years 4 to 10 by 2007, giving Queensland children in these middle years the smallest class sizes in the country. These initiatives are great news for families and also the general community in Mackay, who I know value education highly. There is also plenty of good news for schools and students regarding capital works funding for schools. The government is now in a position to deliver on its election commitments under the Cooler Schools Program and Smart State Building Fund. Up to nine classrooms in Mackay will be airconditioned under the extended Cooler Schools Program, which will bring welcome relief to many staff and students in Mackay's tropical climate.

We will invest significant funding into new and upgraded facilities in the Mackay region, including approximately \$700,000 to upgrade special education facilities at Mackay District Special School; \$123,000 for Slade Point State School towards the upgrade of three classrooms for practical learning activities; \$650,000 for Andergrove State School to complete major classrooms for practical learning activities; and \$757,200 to Mackay West State School to construct a multipurpose covered area for assemblies and other school activities and functions.

Access to public health services is another major issue of great importance to the Mackay electorate and for all Queenslanders. Our government recognises that there is considerable work to be done to improve health services in Queensland. The Beattie government will build on its record health budgets this term and dedicate enormous resources to the Health portfolio. I have pledged to the people of Mackay that I will work to ensure Mackay gets its fair share of these additional resources, which include \$125 million for extra elective surgery and cardiac care services; \$31.5 million to bring cancer services closer to where people live; \$10 million on top of the \$120 million it currently costs to operate Queensland's free dental scheme; \$100 million for Queensland ambulance services as a result of secure funding through community ambulance cover; \$35 million for 240 new ambulance paramedics; and 1,500 new graduate nurses.

The Beattie government has committed to spending \$18 million over the next three years to target Australia's largest killer—stroke. Statistics show that each year about 8,000 Queenslanders suffer from stroke, with over a quarter of all stroke victims not surviving.

Mr COPELAND: I rise to a point of order. Madam Deputy Speaker Male, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Quorum formed.

Mr MULHERIN: Some \$9 million has been allocated to the establishment of five community based stroke rehabilitation teams, and I am proud to say that one of the teams will be based in Mackay. The rehabilitation teams will be comprised of three physiotherapists, two occupational therapists, a speech pathologist and two therapy assistants. I continue to be contacted by constituents in Mackay who are being forced to wait unreasonable amounts of time to see doctors and specialists. It is critical that we improve our waiting list performance, and that is why the Beattie government will put \$110 million in additional funds towards reducing waiting lists. While the Productivity Commission has said that our waiting list times are the best in Australia, we are not content to rest on our laurels because we know that the problem is immense and needs a proactive approach with a commitment to keep striving for better results.

The provision of community infrastructure in Mackay is another area I feel strongly about and I will work very hard over the next three years to progress a number of key projects in Mackay that will bring long-term benefits to our community. The Mackay community has recently seen the official opening of the new Mackay Court House with the refurbishment of the existing courthouse building also being undertaken. Another key project that is coming to fruition is the Mackay multipurpose centre, or convention centre. Expressions of interest for this project will shortly be called with completion expected in 2006.

I will also work with the Mackay City Council to advance the Mackay water reuse scheme. Premier Peter Beattie was in Mackay during the election campaign to pledge a \$28.7 million state government contribution to this important scheme. This time three years ago, I spoke of plans to

investigate such a scheme and the result is a well-developed and sustainable plan for a water reuse scheme based at Bakers Creek that will have significant environmental, social and economic benefits for the residents of Mackay. The scheme will be a major boost for farmers in the vicinity, as water reuse from the sewage plant will be used to irrigate agricultural land, much of which has been damaged due to salinity. The reuse of water in this way is a win for both farmers and for the environment. The reuse of water and the treatment and reuse of effluent from nearby Borthwicks meatworks will ensure that there is less environmental impact on the surrounding waterways and catchments and the Great Barrier Reef. The Beattie government's massive commitment of \$28.7 million for this project reflects our government's strong commitment to meet our social and environmental responsibilities to the people of Queensland.

Of the funds provided, \$19.8 million will be used to decommission the Mount Bassett sewage treatment plant and divert sewage to the upgraded facility at Bakers Creek. The balance of funding will be used to construct reuse infrastructure to enable sugar cane irrigation. Unfortunately, this proposal could be in jeopardy due to the federal government's intransigence. The submission that the Mackay City Council brought to the state government for the development of this scheme proposed equal funding contributions from the state and federal governments and the council. The council has put forward its share, the Beattie government has put forward its share, but the federal government has yet to come to the party and commit funding for this project, which is of national significance.

If the federal government does not play ball and assist the Mackay City Council to develop this important scheme, the council may have to go back to the drawing board and look at other options such as the establishment of a new sewage treatment plant at Mount Bassett. However, this option is not favoured and was discarded during the original discussions for the more environmentally sustainable water reuse scheme at Bakers Creek. If the council was forced to revisit its sewerage plans, it would certainly not meet the target of a new plant by 2006. One source of funding from the federal government could be provided through the Natural Heritage Trust. The deadline for the Mackay City Council to secure funding is rapidly approaching and it is time for the federal government to stop hindering this vital project. I know that the Minister for Environment, the Hon. John Mickel, has met with the Mackay City Council Mayor, Julie Boyd, to discuss the scheme and the minister has asked his department to work with their federal counterparts to try and get things moving. I can only hope that the federal government does not drag its heels for much longer because the benefits of this scheme are obvious.

I have a wonderful opportunity over the next three years to repay the trust that the people of Mackay have placed in me. I know that Mackay voters have high expectations of me and I do not plan on letting them down. I will represent the interests of all of my constituents, regardless of how they voted or who they supported at the election.

I congratulate all members of parliament who have been elected to represent their community. While Labor has a strong majority, we are not complacent and are committed to delivering sensible, stable government. I congratulate my good friend and neighbour the member for Whitsunday, Jan Jarratt, on her successful re-election. Jan has worked extremely hard over the last three years and has more than justified her election as the member for Whitsunday. I am delighted that she has been returned and that we will be able to continue our strong working relationship as part of the Beattie Labor team for the benefit of constituents in the Mackay-Whitsunday region.

I also thank the many booth workers who took time out of their busy lives and from their families to show their support in a most visible way by working for me on election day. I also thank my campaign team for its hard work, dedication and long hours in the months leading up to the election campaign and the campaign proper. I especially mention my campaign manager, Mr John Pollitt, Greg Thompson, Lofty Cathcart, Tanya Gibbons, Christina Bailey, George Hasanakos, Eric Eastman, Gary Highland, Julie-Anne Gilbert, Julie-Anne's family and the Waters family for all the assistance they have given me. I appreciate the effort they put into getting me re-elected as part of the Beattie Labor government. I also thank my electorate officers, Pam Jaenke and Kerry Bonaventura, and my assistant electorate officer, Jody McDonald, for all the hard work and effort that they have put in over the last three years.

Last but not least, I thank my mum and dad, my brothers and sister and their partners, Erin's mum and her brother and partner, for the support they have given to Erin and me. More importantly, I thank Erin, Declan, Liam and Rory for the love, patience and support they showed towards me both throughout the campaign period and just in general. I know it cannot be easy to be the partner or child of a politician whose time is always in demand. I try to be as accessible as

possible to my constituency and that places an enormous pressure on my family life. But my wife and children remain my No. 1 priority and I will strive to achieve the right balance between my family, my electorate and my role as a legislator.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (4.55 p.m.): May I first of all offer to Mr Speaker and his deputy my congratulations. I am sure that all members wish them well during this 51st Parliament. To all members of this House, I extend my congratulations on their election to what is a very challenging and responsible position, but it is one that offers such tremendous opportunities for service to our community and brings with it great personal satisfaction.

Our Premier and those commissioned with ministerial responsibility will very much set the agenda for this third term. We look forward to a future of sustainable growth with protections to ensure our Queensland lifestyle is protected and enhanced and our infrastructure will serve our population into the future. We wish to see continued improvement in employment opportunities with an education and training regime which promotes lifelong learning and flexibility to meet the needs of a fast-changing world. Our housing, health and other services must be constantly looking to the needs of the future to give a high level of care and to ensure that there are safeguards to protect the vulnerable and a hand-up for those who need it.

It has been a great privilege to represent the electorate of Woodridge during these past three years. My three office staff of Sandy, Colleen and Stewart are all amazing people with a high degree of empathy and understanding and the ability to respond to the needs of constituents. They are my friends, my confidantes and my three right hands. I owe them so much and the people of Woodridge have a great appreciation for their care and support.

In winning the seat of Woodridge, I once again wish to pay tribute to many. As members, we are reliant on many people and many factors. First of all, we need a visionary leader who is able to both inspire his team as well as the voters. Premier Beattie was able to accomplish that in an admirable fashion to return our government with a complement of 63 hardworking members. I was impressed to hear the Premier announce that he would govern as if it was his first term. Voters are highly discerning and it is testament to the huge effort put in by all returning members over the past three years.

The downside of our position is the time spent away from family. My heartfelt thanks go to my supportive family and particularly to my husband, Lee, who during these past three years has endured an often absent partner and taken over much of the essential running of our home. He has made many sacrifices, so I want to record my special thanks.

I find it a very humbling experience to be involved in an election campaign where so many of our loyal Labor stalwarts and community members rise to the challenge and assist in so many ways. The planning and execution of my campaign was a smooth, professional operation. My campaign director, Stewart Dalley, has extensive experience and a very consultative approach. I want to thank Stewart for his cool head and always being a step ahead of me. Michael Eborn has been associated with the Woodridge SEC since the electorate was first formed and has organised our booths with great efficiency over the years. He is legendary. When it comes to financial matters, Colleen Callaghan has her eye on every cent and keeps meticulous records. Nothing escapes her. Our finances were in very safe hands.

My thanks also go to our many branch members and friends in the community—volunteers such as Barry Ramsay, Don Wilkie, Ted and Ditas Warren, Paddy Jerome, Donna Van Druten, Julie Wishart, Louis Noronha, Leif Bremermann and Adam and Heather Lamb who performed a multitude of tasks such as putting up election signs, helping with brochures and manning the prepolling booth each day.

Our booth captains ensured that election day ran smoothly, and I thank Geoff McGregor, Teresa Lane, Mike Kaiser, Adam Lamb, Paul Wincen, Geoff Greenfield, Hazel Hubbard, Julie Wishart, Barry Ramsay and Michael Eborn for what was a well-run effort. Beneath that team are myriad great loyal supporters who come out each campaign to support the cause.

I would like to pay special tribute to Garnett Kelley, who has given a whole lifetime of support to members. Garnett was there at his local booth with daughter Leanne with how-to-vote cards in hand even though he has been ill for quite some time. He announced that this would probably be his last campaign. Garnett, on behalf of many members and candidates I thank you for your loyal support over the years.

It is essential to ensure that the troops are well catered for and the food is all part of the culture of the day. Led by Colleen and Doug Callaghan and ably supported by Teresa Lane and daughter Crystal and John and Judy Wilson, our booth workers were treated to professional

quality catering services throughout the day. I am also grateful to my federal member, Craig Emerson, who shared many mobile offices with me along with Stewart and Don. My thanks go to all of them.

In recent weeks on a number of occasions I have heard the phrase 'a healthy community is not necessarily a wealthy community'. We saw the example of Heidelberg in Melbourne solving their issues and building a caring and empowered community. Such is the story of the electorate of Woodridge. May I emphasise to members of this House and to government workers that the people of Woodridge do not like to be referred to as poor and disadvantaged for they are not. Yes, there may be members of our community who need assistance with issues of housing, health, employment and other services, but the fabric of the community is one of pride and self-sufficiency. Many are long-term residents who have watched the suburbs grow up around them with the addition of more and more services and infrastructure. There have been times when the area has struggled with a high crime rate, less than ideal services and a negative image. Those days are not entirely gone, but the Woodridge of today is a far cry from that.

There are many reasons for that turnaround. However, the real strength of the electorate, which includes all or part of Woodridge, Slacks Creek, Kingston, Marsden and Crestmead, is the quality, strength and commitment of the people who live and work in the area. I feel passionately about the area because I love the people. Every day is a new and interesting experience.

It was in the 1960s that the conservative government decided to purchase vast tracts of land and build row upon row of public housing. Services were sourced by train to Beenleigh or Brisbane and a narrow strip of bitumen covered the dusty roads. Some of those residents are still in the area along with their younger generation. As unemployment grew and single-parent families became more prevalent, areas such as Inala and Woodridge offered families a secure roof over their heads. However, the legacy remains, with the electorate of Woodridge taking the dubious front running for the highest unemployment level in the state. I am pleased to say that both the people of the Woodridge electorate and this Labor government have refused to accept that and there is much being done to address all of these issues.

We cannot speak about the Woodridge electorate without firstly acknowledging the effect of community renewal. It is to the great credit of the former Minister for Housing, the Hon. Terry Mackenroth, that the forerunner of what today is the Community Renewal Program was first commenced. Our present minister, the Hon. Robert Swarten, has become a champion of the cause and has increased the funding substantially as well as the areas to benefit from this fantastic program. He is a passionate minister with a big heart, and I am very glad to see him retain his portfolio.

What has happened in the Woodridge electorate has been, to a great degree, the result of the Community Renewal Program and alongside it the upgrade of our public housing under urban renewal. It is amazing what can happen if we give a community considerable funding and the reins to drive the program. Community renewal has fostered high community participation, effective partnerships between various levels of government, government departments and community organisations. I have seen remarkable things take place. New community leaders have emerged and grown in confidence and ability. Neighbourhood Watch groups have mushroomed across the area, forming a wonderful network of neighbours connecting with neighbours. Projects as widely diverse as the Community Access School at Kingston College, our award winning Fax-Back Domestic Violence Program, a new aquatic centre and community space, a mobile stage with sound equipment, a school participation officer, the upgrade of the Station Road shopping precinct with practical artwork by Woodridge High School students, additional youth activity programs, new parks and streetscapes, and many more diverse projects have given momentum and empowered this community which will have lasting and long-term effects. I know that many people in the Marsden/Crestmead area are looking forward with great anticipation to the commencement of the Community Renewal Program in their area.

Nowhere is the vibrancy of the area more apparent than in our schools. I am delighted to see the advances in education and look forward to the implementation of the prep year and the education and training reforms. I have two schools trialling the prep year—Marsden and Woodridge North State Schools—and the area is part of the education and training reform trial. However, it is the culture within the teaching fraternity that is of most importance in this electorate. The teachers have a caring attitude and are constantly refining their teaching practice as well as sharing information through learning hubs such as the Logan Learning Alliance, which includes a number of primary and high schools, our TAFE college and Griffith University as well as another hub over at the Harris Fields State School.

Many of our principals are passionate about the area and the challenges ahead. So I find our schools very inspirational. Because there are many youngsters who come to school with personal or family issues, I often witness a pastoral role taken on by staff. Unfortunately, the Logan area has a high number of young people who are part of the 10,000 not in work and not in training or education. There are many and varied programs working to engage those young people.

Our Kingston College Community Access School attracts between 600 and 700 students each year completing year 10 and 12, with many moving on to further study or training or entering the work force. It is very heartening to see so many students who may have been excluded from school or dropped out before completion returning and making important decisions about their goals in life. Other students attend Centre Education run by the Christian Brothers and a lot of mentoring and training also takes place at BoysTown LinkUp and Youth and Family Services. I would like to mention a new service which is being set up at present to reach at risk young people.

Late in 2003 the YMCA was searching for a large industrial shed to work on a number of levels with young people who had virtually dropped out of society. As is often the case, many of them may be living rough with drug issues and may not have had any positive interaction with adults in their life. In consultation with the mayor and a number of councillors in Logan and along with community renewal members, we sought a commitment from the YMCA to locate in Logan and were soon able to locate a suitable shed in an industrial commercial precinct. A lease has now been signed and activity is under way to prepare the shed for what promises to be a very diverse and exciting project.

Our Woodridge and Kingston Community Renewal group fast-tracked the allocation of \$160,000 to cover the first year's lease, and some of the members are very involved in the project. The plan is to have a varied number of training activities to try to introduce young people to something which may be an avenue to re-engage them. There will be many adults there who will act as mentors and we will try to meet whatever needs they have for counselling, intensive literacy skills, et cetera.

At this time such skills as aluminium boat building, automotive skills, Help Enterprises basic courses in engineering and horticulture, arts and crafts, and woodcrafts are offered by our MAD—make and do—enthusiasts who have now shifted into the facility to become a vital part of our program. This is indeed community in action. Thank you to Michele Venables from the YMCA for her leadership and great enthusiasm for the project.

Alongside this project, the area will be involved in the volatile substance abuse trial, which is being offered to five locations around the state. A time out centre is planned and a number of organisations will be involved. This project is designed to intercept young people involved in this destructive behaviour, and through mentoring and counselling understand their issues and try to guide them into more meaningful pursuits. It will be a partnership between our Logan City Council, the Police Service, health professionals, Drug-Arm, BoysTown LinkUp, Youth and Family Services, Youth Justice Centre and many of our community members such as our indigenous and Torres Strait Islander elders, our Samoan elders and other interested community members.

Our children and young people are very precious and have tremendous potential, but there are many influences drawing young people into dangerous practices. We need as communities to face these issues and deal with them in a positive way. Members of this House are all aware of the crisis in housing at the present time. It impacts greatly on my community because historically the Woodridge electorate has been one of the areas which has been able to offer a house or a unit within just a few short weeks of application. Those days are long gone, and the federal government is to be condemned for its failure to support the states in the continuing building program.

Money in the pockets of investors by way of rental subsidy does nothing for struggling families. All they see is their rent increasing as properties exchange hands and values increase. It is a constant source of frustration to me and my staff that, when a constituent walks through the door in dire circumstances requiring a roof over their heads, it is difficult to offer assistance within a reasonable time frame. As I have stated before in this place, I am glad families are now coming to stay and much of the transient nature of the population in the Woodridge electorate has gone. Nonetheless, secure housing is the absolute basic requirement in a society such as ours.

The incidence of youth homelessness is also on the increase. However, I am heartened at a number of local initiatives which I know will make a difference. The member for Logan recently

called for a committee to be formed to think a little outside the square on housing options for the Logan area. This group, the Logan Emergency Accommodation Network, has met regularly and is now involved in some initiatives which I hope will assist some of these families and young people. Eagle House at Waterford in the Hon. Tom Barton's electorate is offering supported accommodation to young mothers, and Interlink Housing is involved with emergency housing and the community rental scheme. Other organisations such as Kingston East Neighbourhood Centre, BoysTown LinkUp and Youth and Family Services also assist with accommodation.

Discussions are currently under way involving the Spot Youth Services and Living Waters Church in Browns Plains and BoysTown LinkUp to tackle youth homelessness and help young people who are sleeping rough. There also seems to be a mood coming from the private sector to build more affordable accommodation in the Logan area. In addition to all of this, preliminary talks point to the possibility of an approach to our government by the Logan City Council to set up a mini version of the Brisbane Housing Company, which is proving so successful. These are such times that we as a government need to be seeking flexible, diverse solutions to many of the social issues we deal with today.

As I conclude, may I simply state that, due to the positive policies of this government over this past term, the people of the Woodridge electorate are in a far better position than they have ever enjoyed at any time in the past. Facilities and infrastructure continue to improve. The crime rate is dropping. Our diverse cultural mix brings colour and diversity to our lives. A positive community spirit pervades the area. Many of our suburban streets attest to growing pride in our neighbours. Good partnerships have been formed between local councils and the state government, and many government departments and local organisations now work together on a multitude of projects.

Solutions to issues requiring more attention such as unemployment, housing, access to dental and health services, family relationships and domestic violence are works in progress. I am pleased to see our after-hours GP clinic now in operation to reduce the waiting time in the emergency department of Logan Hospital. This, along with the funds allocated to reduce surgery waiting time, will do much to improve health services in the area, and we will soon see our new community health building completed. During this term I wish to devote a great deal of time to issues affecting our young people, ensuring greater help and education to young mothers and being active on the regional council.

Many of my constituents will benefit by the restructuring of the departments of communities and child safety, and I am very heartened to see the plans that have been put in place at this stage. There is more to be done, but this is now an empowered community. I am proud and very privileged to represent the people of the Woodridge electorate and look forward to this next term with great anticipation.

Interruption.

PRIVILEGE

Correction to Answer to Question

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (5.15 p.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. I rise to correct the parliamentary record. In parliament yesterday, in response to a question from the member for Nanango, I inadvertently misled the House in relation to whether my department was conducting a review into good quality agricultural land. I said—

It is not my intention at this point of time to review that policy.

I have subsequently checked and have been advised that a review is in fact under way. Please apologise to Mr Speaker and the honourable members for inadvertently misleading the House on this question.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Resumed.

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (5.16 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise to participate in this address-in-reply debate in the 51st Parliament. I have congratulated the Speaker personally on his re-election to that position, but could I do so formally and to all of those who are filling positions within this parliament. I congratulate all of those members who have been elected,

whether returned or elected for a first time. It is a great honour to take part in this parliament and to be a member of parliament. It brings with it a great responsibility that I think we all should keep in mind when we are carrying out the duties that we are expected to both inside the House and outside, whether it is in our electorate or in other parts of the state.

It is a great honour to be back as the representative for the electorate of Cunningham for a second term. I have tried over the last three years to do my best to represent my electorate, first and foremost, and I will continue to do that in this term of parliament. I was returned with an increased margin from the 2001 election.

Mr Livingstone: You can fool the people for a bit longer.

Mr COPELAND: To be employed for another three years is a good feeling. The result in the Cunningham electorate showed that the electors in my part of Queensland rejected the Labor Party wholeheartedly in what it had to offer and the policies it was implementing which in their eyes have been to the detriment in a lot of cases to our area.

I would like to thank the other two candidates who stood in the electorate for Cunningham—a One Nation candidate and a Labor candidate—both of whom conducted the campaign in the very best of spirit, as indeed was the case with the 2001 election. I hope that continues. To be able to conduct a campaign with good spirits, with good cooperation and with no nastiness I think is a good thing. It is a good thing for our democracy and it is a good thing for our area. The residents of the electorate can be proud of whoever it is that wins and goes forward.

Mr Shine: The Labor vote increased.

Mr COPELAND: I will take that interjection from the member for Toowoomba North. I note that in Dr Reynolds's paper that was circulated yesterday it noted that the Labor Party's vote did increase by three per cent. I also note it omitted that the National Party vote increased by 37.5 per cent. It would have been nice to have that in there as well.

Mr Shine: I think it was more significant for the Labor Party.

Mr COPELAND: I can see how that would be more significant to the member. It did show that, with the decrease in the One Nation vote, some of that One Nation vote came from the Labor Party as much as it did from the National Party. With the demise of the One Nation vote in my electorate, as in others, those voters have gone back in many cases to the Labor Party or the National Party, and that is seen right across the state.

I am honoured to be the representative for Cunningham because it is a wonderful area. I look at many other places around the state and I hear many other members of parliament say what great areas they represent, but I have to say that I am very happy being the member for Cunningham. It is a wonderful electorate. It is a wonderful part of the state. It is populated by a lot of wonderful people.

I said in my first speech in this parliament three years ago—and I cannot believe that in a couple of months it will be three years since I made that speech—that it was terrific to work with so many people brought together by a political goal but stay friends for long after that goal has been achieved. It is fair to say that that is even more so the case having worked in an electorate and worked with constituents that I have come in contact with for varying reasons. I can now say that, in many cases, those people have become very good friends. Obviously, I knew a lot of people in the electorate before I was a member of the parliament. But, given the nature of the work we do, we come into contact with many people in our electorates. I can honestly say that a lot of those have become very good friends. I hope that that will continue regardless of whether or not I am a member of parliament.

It is very difficult to believe that it is three years since I made my first speech, as did you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have been on a very steep learning curve during those three years. I doubt that the learning curve will finish now. I had to go straight into the shadow ministry on my election. That was an interesting experience for me. I have held the shadow portfolios of families, disabilities, youth and the arts. I was then moved into the education portfolio and picked up youth and multicultural policy as well. It has meant that I have been able to make a contribution in policy terms as well. It is a role that I have enjoyed, if somewhat hesitantly at times. I look forward to the challenge of now being responsible for the health portfolio in the shadow ministry. That is a big responsibility. Health is of great concern to many people right across the state.

As with all members there are a lot of people who have contributed to my re-election to the parliament. I would like to go through those because I think it is appropriate to recognise the numbers of people behind all of us when we actually run for election. None of us can do it by

ourselves. We are the ones who get the recognition. There are many people working behind us to assist us to get here and who do it because we have a common goal—a common political goal in many cases—and they work hard to achieve that goal.

I would like to start with the federal member for Groom, the federal Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources and fellow beagle owner Ian Macfarlane. Ian launched my campaign this election. He and his wife Karen helped me on election day. That was of great assistance to me. Rae and I both appreciate the personal and professional relationship that we have with Ian and Karen. I know that will continue.

I would also like to thank the very loyal and dedicated members of the Nationals in my electorate. All members of political parties have many members of branches of the party in our areas. We know just how much work they put in to making sure that we do get elected. It is a big commitment. It is a voluntary commitment in the overwhelming majority of cases. I really do appreciate the assistance of the National Party members in my area.

Laurie Black, the Cunningham electorate council chairman and my campaign manager, and his wife, Helen, are a fantastic couple. They have been of great assistance to me for the three years that I have been the member. I thank the entire campaign team behind us. There a lot people involved in our campaign and on the campaign committee. I thank every single one of those. I thank the National Party secretariat staff and the opposition office staff who put in a lot of hours during a campaign and have provided a lot of support to all candidates right across the state.

The other thing that often goes unmentioned are the many friends who come out and help a candidate when running for election, many of whom may not actually agree with their political stance but because of their personal relationship they are actually willing to come out and help out, which is appreciated. That is probably true of family, I have to say. They make a lot of sacrifices to help candidates during election campaigns, and my family is certainly no different.

Mr Lawlor: Did they wear masks?

Mr COPELAND: No, they did not. My mother and father were actually on holidays for the election. They were on a couple of weeks holiday. I did not think they would be able to manage to stay away. They were in New South Wales so they could not get any election night coverage. I do not know how big the phone bill was to find out exactly what the result was.

I would also like to thank my electorate staff. As a member of the parliament they are absolutely invaluable. Being a shadow minister I have been away more than I probably would have liked in the first term. I really have relied very heavily on my two staff, Mary Anderson and Ben Hindmarsh. They are wonderful people. They have been with me for the entire term. They are capable and dedicated and, most importantly, they are always cheerful. It does not matter what sort of stresses they are under, I can always rely on them to have a joke and raise our spirits. More importantly, they are very good friends.

Ben has moved on from my office. He has moved on to bigger and brighter things. He has a very bright future in front of him.

Mr Wallace interjected.

Mr COPELAND: It will be with the government. He is actually with the federal government at the moment. He will do very well in his career. I will miss the assistance and expertise that I have enjoyed for the last three years.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Rae, who many members know. We all rely on our spouses. Most members have spoken about the support that they get from their partner. I am certainly no different. Rae really does go beyond what should realistically be expected of a spouse. I know that the member for Toowoomba North would agree because he sees just how much work she does for me in the Toowoomba area when I am not able to or sometimes it is when I am able to but they would prefer to have Rae instead.

Her political experience and expertise is invaluable. During this campaign she really went beyond the call of duty when she manned my campaign office in K-Mart plaza for the entire campaign period. That was a big ask. I would have to agree with one minister of the parliament who said to me once that he is sure the only reason his electorate votes for him is so that they can get his wife. I think that that might be true in my case as well. I will not nominate the minister. I know he will know who it is.

Ms Nolan: It could be any one of them.

Mr COPELAND: That is true. More so in some cases than others. Some might not be game to admit the fact but this particular minister is quite open to admit it.

We are not the only ones who have had an election recently. The local government elections were held shortly after the state election. All the councillors in my area put in so much hard work to achieve for their own areas and achieve their aims. I am a very big believer in the three tiers of government working closely together in cooperation to make sure that what we achieve in our regions really is the best possible outcome for those regions.

I have already mentioned the federal member for Groom, Ian Macfarlane. My electorate is also covered by the federal seat of Maranoa. Bruce and Joan Scott have been longstanding friends of mine and my family. They have been a very great support to us. I do appreciate that.

The mayors and councillors of the shires of Cambooya, Clifton, Pittsworth, Millmerran, Warwick and Toowoomba City are in my electorate. I pass on my best wishes and thanks to Ann Collins and her husband, Mike, and John Savage and his wife, Jean, who are former mayors of Clifton and Cambooya defeated at the election. I had a good working relationship with both mayors. I wish them well in their future endeavours.

I look forward to working with Paul Antonio from Millmerran and Ros Scotney from Pittsworth, who were returned unopposed. Could we not all imagine what it would be like to be returned unopposed in an election. I think that really speaks volumes for the regard that those two mayors are held in within their communities. Di Thorley in Toowoomba and Ron Bellingham in Warwick were returned at this election. Carol Taylor in Cambooya and Ian Jones from Clifton were elected as mayors of their councils. I look forward to working with all of those mayors and indeed all of the councillors who serve on those councils to make sure we do continue to have a good relationship. I think it is a productive way to work. I think we have seen the results of that in our area.

I also take note of my state colleagues in the area. By necessity, we do have to work closely together. I mention the member for Toowoomba South, who is my neighbour and who has been a great support to me. He is a longstanding member in Toowoomba. I also mention the member for Toowoomba North, who is in the chamber and who has been returned despite my best efforts. It is nothing personal, but I would have really liked to see the other fellow get up. I mention all of those other members who border my electorate—the members for Lockyer, Southern Downs, Warrego and Darling Downs. I am surrounded by National Party electorates. I think that is probably an achievement in itself.

Mr Lawlor: Not many can say that.

Mr COPELAND: But I can say it. I am very happy to be able to say it, because it shows that in our area the policies that the National Party puts up are the ones that our area actually wants implemented.

I welcome the new members for the Nationals to the parliament—Rosemary, Rob, Ian and Shane. They are good, hardworking members. They are going to be great additions. Like I did, they have gone straight into the shadow ministry, so they will learn what it is all about. I also welcome all of the new members for both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party.

As I said earlier, I was the shadow education minister during the election campaign. There are a lot of issues going on in education. The ETRF and prep trials are major issues. They will be very difficult issues to implement. I know that there will be a lot of focus on them. We as an opposition will be making sure that the focus is put correctly on them and that the implementation is effective.

As the shadow health minister I will obviously have lots to do and lots to say. I will be saying a lot during this term to make sure the government does actually do the right thing for the health system. The former minister used to stand in this parliament and say that the health system is fine, that we had the best in the country. Then suddenly during the campaign we saw all sorts of admissions and money being promised to fix things that only a few months before we were told were hunky-dory.

The Health Minister made a statement this morning pleading with everyone in this parliament to work with him to make sure we fix the health system. We will be working cooperatively with the minister. I have done that in all of my portfolios. I can also assure the minister that if something is wrong and we see that it is wrong we will point it out, because that is what the opposition is expected to do. We will work cooperatively, but if there is something that is going unfixed then we will make sure it is brought to the attention of the people of Queensland and this parliament.

There are a lot of issues that are relevant to my electorate—far too many to go into. I note that there will be opportunities for me to do that in debate on different bills that come before the House and at other times.

My electorate is not just a rural electorate. A lot of people think it is a rural electorate, but approximately 60 per cent of the residents of my electorate live within metropolitan Toowoomba. It is a very diverse electorate. It is split almost in half between major city and purely rural areas. It is an area of rapid growth and a lot of development, particularly residential development on the southern side of Toowoomba. It deals with all of the issues that rapidly growing areas have to face. There are a lot of rapidly developing areas in Queensland. Mine just happens to be one of the fastest. That brings a lot of issues to the fore.

We face a lot of major infrastructure challenges in Toowoomba and on the Darling Downs. I will not go into detail on them, but I mention the renewed water pipeline. The Premier gave a commitment during the election campaign that he would have another look at it. From comments made by the Minister for the Environment, it looks like that has been thrown out and it was only said to get the Toowoomba media off the back of the government. I think that was a very cynical statement by the Premier. I think the member for Toowoomba North, who was at that media conference, would have been quite happy for him to say it so there were no more questions about it.

The second range crossing is a major infrastructure development that we need to focus on. I know that all of the members on the downs are pushing for that. I mention the Charlton-Wellcamp industrial area. There is a major problem with the Gore Highway. It has a lot of very blind passing areas. Unfortunately there was a death at a turn-off to go into Southbrook a number of months ago. We need to make sure that area, particularly between Toowoomba and Pittsworth, is addressed.

Quarry Gardens is a major proposal by the Toowoomba City Council. The coalition made a promise that we would be making a funding contribution to that to see it happen. It is a natural development to increase the garden city status of Toowoomba, but it will not happen without a significant contribution from the state government. Given that the project is in the electorate of Toowoomba North, I hope that the Labor government actually sees fit to fund that project, because I think it is great.

School buses and school transport continue to be a problem. I think that area needs a complete overhaul. The school transport assistance scheme has been in place for many years and really needs to be taken down and rebuilt from the ground up. School transport is the most common complaint I get to my office and one that just will not go away.

There are major issues with school maintenance. A lot of promises have been made on funding. We will be making sure those funding promises are carried through. We have already seen some back-peddling about what will be available, from when the promises were made with the borrowed funds before Christmas to post election. We will be making sure that the promises made will be honoured.

Health services are a problem everywhere. Power supply with Ergon is a real issue. We have been able to address some of those problems, but there are a lot more problems that need to be addressed.

The agricultural outlook is slightly better. That will do great things for the economic status of the area. There is a lot of negativity about agriculture and rural pursuits in various parts of the state, but there are a lot of good news stories out there as well. We have had a good summer season. After a very long, difficult climatic period, let us hope that actually continues because the entire city of Toowoomba relies upon it, as do all of those small towns and, directly, the primary producers.

I welcome the new Vice-Chancellor, Bill Lovegrove, to the University of Southern Queensland. I look forward to the next three years and will continue to work hard to represent my electorate.

Mrs CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (5.36 p.m.): It certainly is great to be back. Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask that you pass on to Mr Speaker my congratulations on his re-election to such high office—an office to which he adds great dignity and wisdom. I am certainly looking forward to fulfilling the role of temporary chair, sharing the responsibility with seven other members. I have no doubt that we will work together to ensure the proper administration of the parliament.

When I was first elected in 2001 I was acutely aware that for many Broadwater residents it was the first time they had voted for Labor. I was determined to represent and deliver on issues for all of the residents in my electorate. In Broadwater everyone and every issue, no matter how big or small, is important to me.

To the residents of the Broadwater electorate I say thank you. Thank you for bestowing upon me the greatest of honours—that of trust and confidence in my ability to represent you in this wonderful place. Representing one of the most dynamic, diverse and rapidly developing electorates in the state is a privilege and an honour.

It is also a privilege to be one of the 24 women members of this Labor government team. The support of those around me in this House, the residents of my electorate and those I work with is a true indication that, no matter what age one is, as long as one is determined to work hard results and good outcomes can be achieved. I encourage all young people to develop their knowledge and understanding of politics, but even more importantly to recognise that their contribution in the workplace, the community and other arenas is critically important and highly valued.

The opportunity to serve the residents of the Broadwater electorate is a responsibility I am honoured to have been elected to bear. No election campaign is possible without the support of many people, and I wish to take this opportunity to thank them. Firstly to my mum, Elaine, my dad, Owen, and my husband, Adam: thank you for always being so understanding during the times when I am so busy. To my closest friends: thank you for your constant support and encouragement. I apologise for my notable absences at gatherings in recent times.

I wish to thank Cynthia Pugh and Tim Shipstone, who were my electorate officers during the last term. Tim has now taken up a post at Minister Cummins's office, and I wish him well. Tim was a valuable staff member and campaign manager and will be greatly missed. Incidentally, I give hearty congratulations to Tim and Lois on the recent arrival of Charlotte Grace, who by now is making herself well heard at the Shipstone household.

My campaign team was unrelenting, hardworking, dedicated and great to work with. I say a huge thankyou to Terry Wood, Luke Edwards and Matt Rocks for the knowledge and experience they brought to the Broadwater campaign. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank Rod Welford and the member for Gaven, Robert Poole, for their constant support.

To the members of the ALP Broadwater branch, I thank them not only for their great campaign work for this election but also for their ongoing support and assistance provided to me since day one. To all the volunteers who helped on the campaign and on election day, I certainly could not have done it without you. Your time and effort was an invaluable contribution. I welcome to my office Charles and Luke. I look forward to working with them both and to delivering a responsive, helpful and efficient service to the residents of Broadwater.

I wish to congratulate the Premier. The Premier carried out a positive campaign that highlighted key initiatives to continue to place Queensland as the Smart State—key initiatives that will improve the lives of all Queenslanders. In the last term, the Beattie government demonstrated its ability to respond to the responsibilities of government with innovative and effective initiatives. It is this government's leadership, progressive reform and commitment to effectively addressing the tough issues which I believe has returned a Beattie Labor government to office for the 51st Parliament. The Beattie government has moved swiftly to implement our agenda of reform outlined by Her Excellency and during the campaign. We have already seen the passing of a bill to end broadscale land clearing. We have in this state one of the fastest rates of biodiversity loss in the world. We see thousands of hectares being clear-felled for marginal agricultural production. I congratulate the government on taking this initiative.

Over the next three years the government will implement a \$468 million package of initiatives to improve the state's health services that will include our commitment of treating up to 18,000 extra elective surgery patients and continuing our efforts to reduce waiting lists. Also, 1,500 new graduate nurses will be employed throughout the state. As part of this significant upgrading of nursing positions across the state, the Beattie government will fund 97 new nurses over the next three years at the Robina Hospital to work in the new emergency department, coronary care and intensive care unit facility. The total cost is more than \$16 million. The Beattie government will also establish a \$7 million cardiac catheter service at Gold Coast Hospital, which will also become the teaching hospital for the new Griffith University Medical and Dental School.

Health is a major issue on the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast is Australia's sixth largest city and Queensland's second largest. I can assure members that the Beattie government and every

single one of our six Gold Coast members know that. We also know that we have a shared responsibility to dig deep in terms of our own time and effort to help the Gold Coast continue to grow and prosper. The Gold Coast is changing, and the major issues for the Gold Coast remain, in my view, health and the need for transport infrastructure to keep pace with the growth.

In the area of health, we are well funded on the Gold Coast, although we can always do better in terms of funding and services, and I know from discussions with my fellow MPs that we will continue to collectively lobby for more. However, we will be watching closely the impact of the federal government's effective dismantling of Medicare, which is forcing more patients away from their GPs and into our public hospital emergency sections. After discussions with a number of locally based GPs, I am also aware that finding a GP in the local area is becoming increasingly difficult. For many reasons, including retirement, there are few GPs working in our area. Despite the cries of GPs who are overworked and residents who are forced to wait, in some cases two weeks to see a GP, the federal government is refusing to class the Runaway Bay district as an area of workplace shortage. I will not let the federal government think that the Broadwater residents will let this issue disappear quietly. I am currently conducting an 'Is your GP extinct?' petition calling on the federal Minister for Health to acknowledge this dire problem and for the incentives offered to areas of workplace shortage be considered for the Gold Coast.

Oral health is a major issue on the northern Gold Coast. In fact, oral health has been shown to be a major issue impacting upon the general health of individuals, particularly the elderly. It is an astounding indictment upon health funding by a federal government that refuses to include dental health funding as part of Medicare. It has been of particular benefit that the previous Health Minister, in response to some very vocal lobbying by me and other Labor Gold Coast members last year, announced a significant increase in dental health funding for this financial year. This will be of enormous benefit to the Runaway Bay Dental Clinic. The Gold Coast health service district will receive an extra \$474,855 in funding, which will be used to provide 1,820 additional visits for those who have been waiting the longest for public oral health care services. To enable additional visits to be provided, the Gold Coast health service district will use the allocation to recruit new staff, fund overtime and outsourcing. Eligible clients are pensioners and health care cardholders who access the free service.

Last year, Queenslanders made over one million visits to our clinics. This year, an extra 17,250 visits will be provided for through the adult service as part of the Beattie government's record funding to dental health in the 2003-04 state budget. With the extra \$5 million allocated, Queensland's total oral health budget this year is \$120 million. That, by the way, is more funding than New South Wales, which has nearly twice our population. It is not good enough that we must continue to lobby the federal government for health care reform so that states such as Queensland can adequately fund health services.

The government has committed to a \$577 million investment to ensure the continuing development of the great city of the Gold Coast. Bus transport initiatives will be part of this funding. The previous Gold Coast City Council lamented the dearth of funding provided to the Gold Coast city. It compared funding provided to Surfside Buslines with that received by the Brisbane City Council. The Gold Coast City Council demanded the same per capita subsidy as that provided to Brisbane. Yes, bus services do need funding on the Gold Coast. I lobby for and support any additional funding that can be provided. However, the Gold Coast City Council misrepresents the basis for funding and funding received. The Gold Coast City Council needs to tell residents the whole story. Funding for the Brisbane City Council and the Gold Coast is based upon the level of service provided and the number of passengers carried. It is not based upon per capita issues.

There are a number of funding elements under the contracts held by each operator, including accessible bus funding, interest subsidy, reimbursement of concession and discount fares, base level of funding and school transport funding. The Brisbane City Council operates about four times as many service kilometres as Surfside Buslines and carries 3.5 times as many passengers. This is the reason the level of subsidy per capita may appear to be somewhat higher. In addition, the Brisbane City Council contributes about \$30 million each year for bus services. The Gold Coast City Council makes no contribution to bus services to the Gold Coast, yet every day continues to approve urban development that stretches the level of bus services that can be physically and financially provided by the private operator. Notwithstanding this, the Beattie government will provide \$6.84 million a year towards urban bus services on the Gold Coast. A further \$1.5 million over three years was recently announced by the Premier for a new service linking Griffith University with Ashmore, Benowa, Bundall and Broadbeach. I will continue

to work with my Gold Coast colleagues to bring to the attention of relevant ministers in the House issues facing the Gold Coast city.

I turn now to the Broadwater electorate. Lined by the Broadwater in the east, the Coomera River in the north and the Coombabah wetlands in the west, this electorate is sprinkled with some well-known and not so well-known fishing spots, foreshore parklands, canal estates and a high level of water access for boaties and water activity lovers. Many of the long-time senior residents residing in Broadwater often mention to me that they wonder why it took so long for the rest of the world to discover that the northern end of the Gold Coast offers a lifestyle and community that is just so attractive. Small business is an important component of this electorate, and as a member of the Gold Coast North Chamber of Commerce I am keen to support small businesses as much as I can.

As is the case with many issues, funding is the key to finding a solution and to the delivery of improved services. I am pleased that significant funding has been allocated to a variety of projects in the Broadwater electorate over the past three years. This funding includes \$240,000 to plan and restore Coombabah State High School's home economics block; \$570,000 for a new Gold Coast Water Police boat; the funding of five new ambulance officers at Runaway Bay station; and \$280,000 to build a new child health centre at Labrador. Several organisations providing support to senior residents also received additional funding, such as the Paradise Point Meals on Wheels, Labrador Memorial Senior Citizens and Moncrieff U3A.

Bringing the community together and keeping residents informed is another aspect of my job to which I am dedicated. In 2001 I hosted an event called the Emergency Services Day in the Park. I initially coordinated the one-off event to showcase the skill and dedication of state and volunteer emergency service workers to interested residents. The event also provided an opportunity for residents to ask questions directly to representatives from each organisation. Now every year in September at Paradise Point Park state and volunteer emergency service organisations converge for an action-packed day of displays and public relations. Almost 3,000 local residents visit the park to show their support for these dedicated workers. Each and every representative of our emergency service organisations have been fantastic to work with in organising this event, and I cannot let this opportunity pass without thanking them for the work that they do.

Other events that I have hosted around my electorate have included the now infamous seniors morning teas where invited residents are treated to a variety of guest speakers from the departments of Fair Trading, Seniors and the Public Trustee. It is also a great opportunity for locals to make some new friends. On Queensland Day in the Broadwater electorate, we honour our own by acknowledging the quiet achievers in our community—those who go out of their way to help out in a volunteer capacity for various organisations. This day is very special with recipients bringing family and friends to share the accolades. Nomination forms for this year's awards have already been made available in my office, with the closing date being 14 May and with the presentation of the awards taking place on Sunday, 6 June, at the Paradise Point Community Hall.

In 2002 the Runaway Bay RSL sub-branch was established. From originally meeting at the Runaway Bay Junior Leagues Club premises, the club has gone from strength to strength, increasing its membership from 40 to over 120 this year. The development of this RSL club has added a new dimension in the community, with Anzac Day memorial services now being held at the cenotaph near the Runaway Bay Library.

The Broadwater electorate is no longer regarded as the sleepy hollow of the Gold Coast. There is something always happening in every corner of this beautiful electorate. Suburbs such as Labrador, Biggera Waters and Paradise Point are hot spots for redevelopment, with many old homes making way for duplexes and apartment buildings. Hope Island continues to attract the interest of many as existing resorts announce further land releases and developers see the potential of developing in a location that is only 40 minutes from Brisbane and 15 minutes from the Broadwater. Of course, this change brings many new challenges and issues that I am determined to continue to highlight to this House.

As I talk with residents, the matter of development is always a topical issue. Regardless of where one lives in the Broadwater electorate, there is a development of some type proposed or taking place. It is well understood that, although the council approves development applications, it is important for all levels of government to be aware of the implications of that growth, such as increased traffic capacity, increased demand on essential services such as water supply and usage, and the impact that construction can have on residents in nearby dwellings. The new

Office of Urban Management, to be headed by the Deputy Premier, is an election commitment developed to bring together all the work being done across government departments, agencies and local government to ensure a more coordinated approach to planning for growth and development in regions, particularly the south-east. I understand that the office will work with councils, the development industry and the community to finalise planning schemes that reflect a much-needed balance of flexible, modern and environmentally friendly planning.

I am passionate about social and environmental issues and will work in the next three years to promote a clean and green approach to balanced urban planning where the community is No. 1 and profits are maintained but relegated to second place. As vacant land becomes increasingly scarce along the coastal strip and older dwellings are bulldozed to make way for the new, the issue facing many on the Gold Coast is the frightening lack of affordable housing. In many instances that have been brought to my attention, residents—some pensioners, some families, some young people—are living in rental accommodation on short-term leases, paying way above what they can afford and living in after-housing poverty. Finding a suitable rental property is becoming harder and harder. For many people on fixed incomes, such as pensioners and single parents, the inevitable situation of looking for alternative accommodation is stressful and depressing.

I find inexplicable the Commonwealth government's arrogant and naive response to these people's plight, and that is that housing is a state matter and that the rental assistance scheme is its answer to making this problem go away. I stand here today to give the Gold Coast federal members of parliament a wake-up call. The rental assistance scheme is not helping Gold Coast residents manage paying rent. This disturbing situation is putting increased pressure on the public housing demands with an increase in the number of bond loan applications made to the department. I have spoken with the Minister for Housing about this matter and I will continue to pursue it at all levels, including council level. The Gold Coast City Council needs to open its eyes if it thinks that this problem is just a matter for the state. Homelessness is a matter for all governments.

Roads in the Broadwater electorate have been and will continue to be one of my major focuses. I am pleased that work has started on the Broad Street-Marine Parade intersection lights as I agree with residents that the lack of foresight regarding Frank Street has been poor. However, it was this government that put it on the agenda, bringing forward funding allocations of \$1.2 million. This project includes the removal of existing pedestrian lights, making way for a new four-way fully signalised intersection complete with designated right-turning lanes and four-way pedestrian accesses. Furthermore, the Central Street and Loders Creek intersections are also to be upgraded as part of further commitments to improving traffic flow and safety on Frank Street.

The Oxley Drive project has also started. Wide consultation occurred last year for this projected \$11 million road duplication. So far the project has demonstrated what can be achieved by working with stakeholder groups and parties. As the duplication will use the section of the Pine Ridge Conservation Park acquired by Main Roads nearly 10 years ago, the project officers identified the interest and sensitivity of the local community towards the reserve. Over the past year two green corps groups have been working in this section of the park to collect seeds of native plants to propagate and transplant suitable vegetation in the remaining area of the park. Extensive consultation has taken place prior to the project starting, including numerous meetings with the Coombabah Primary School P&C, local resident associations and nearby nursing homes. I know that the residents are pleased that the government is going ahead with this project and that despite expected changed traffic conditions and inconvenience during the construction phase, any problems will be solved by working with residents, keeping them informed and working with the department.

It is a sad fact that as development and growth takes place before our very eyes the open space—the green that remained for so long—is stripped. Some members may recall the song by Joni Mitchell—for younger members I refer to the Counting Crows' song—*Big Yellow Taxi*. As the song goes—

You don't know what you've got till it's gone.

Such scenarios are becoming increasingly the case on the Gold Coast. Keeping open space for now and for future generations is essential. Wave Break Island, Jabiru Island, South Stradbroke Island and the Pine Ridge Conservation Park are just some of the areas in the Broadwater electorate that I am committed to maintaining and keeping for the benefit of the whole community. It was the member for Southport, Peter Lawlor, who joined protesters and no doubt

led the crowds against development along the Broadwater back in the 1970s. I admire and appreciate those efforts to protect and preserve the Gold Coast's broadwater and foreshores.

I would like to take this opportunity to let the community of the Broadwater know that my commitment to the electorate remains and that I will persist in using every ounce of energy and every waking moment to deliver honest, caring and committed representation.

Debate, on motion of Ms Barry, adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State Crime Operations Command

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (5.57 p.m.): In this House this morning the Leader of the Opposition claimed that between 2001-02 and 2002-03 the Beattie government had stripped more than \$1 million from State Crime Operations Command, which includes a number of specialist squads. Mr Springborg misled parliament.

The Queensland Police Service has advised me that in fact the State Crime Operations Command's budget increased by \$2.7 million, which was contained in the figures that the Leader of the Opposition received last week and tabled this morning. But he ignored this fact and plucked figures out of the document, quite selectively, to paint a distorted picture. Either the Opposition Leader did this deliberately or he does not understand the structure of our Police Service, the nature of the State Crime Operations Command and its various responsibilities and functions. More than \$330,000 has been shifted from administration to operations—out of a budget that increased by \$2.7 million to \$45.5 million.

In relation to the specialist groups within that command, staff are moved between the various work units depending on the workload and priorities determined by the commissioner. Therefore, it is foolish to compare spending on each task force or operation from one year to the next. Mr Springborg seized on a \$55,000 decrease in spending on Task Force Argos. But he did not mention that the child and sexual assault unit's expenditure increased by more than \$340,000 in that period. What is important is the overall spending on the state crime operations. As I just said, that increased by \$2.7 million from 2001-02 to 2002-03.

I am proud that the Beattie government is spending more on police than has any other government in this state's history. In this current financial year, the total Police budget has passed the \$1 billion mark for the first time—an increase of \$84 million on the previous year. This is one fact that Mr Springborg seems unwilling to acknowledge.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (5.59 p.m.): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 11 May 2004.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (5.59 p.m.): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Trail Bike Riders

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (5.59 p.m.): I would like to highlight the problem of motorbike riders in the Greenbank-Jimboomba area. This problem has been raised with me by some very concerned constituents. These motorbike riders have little regard for the law and, worse still, they have no regard for the people who live in the Greenbank-Jimboomba area. The local residents have moved to live in this area because of the open space, quiet, tranquillity, native birds and animals, and vegetation. Unfortunately, they have this lifestyle disturbed, especially on the weekends, by the ratbag elements of trail bike riders. The local police have between 16 and 24

calls per weekend. It becomes a very time-consuming and onerous task for the police to investigate these complaints.

Unfortunately, the local police are understaffed and underresourced to cope with the workload that arises from the issue of trail bikes. The promise of two trail bikes and some six staff to ride them has turned out to be a hollow promise. The Hon. Kev Lingard, my neighbour in the electorate of Beaudesert, raised in the parliament on two occasions that the state government has let the Greenbank-Jimboomba area down by not funding the police trail bike force for this area. The police, who have eight to 12 calls per day on the weekends about trail bikes, do not have the resources to fully investigate these incidents. If the bikes are off the roads or off beaten tracks, the police in their cars are virtually unable to do anything to stop the problem.

I urge the Police Minister to fully resource the trail bike squad. This is not just a publicity issue. Unfortunately, the trail bike riders are affecting the quality of life of the majority of local residents who enjoy the lovely rural atmosphere where they live. I would suggest that it would be more appropriate for the trail bike riders to visit the appropriate areas to ride their bikes. One such area would be the Black Duck four-wheel drive park on the western side of the Lockyer electorate, set in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range via Gatton. This area offers a much more sensible area in which to ride and enjoy their motorbikes.

Another area where motorbikes can be ridden safely and within the law would be Willowbank Motor Sports Complex on the Cunningham Highway. This complex is also in the Lockyer electorate and should be put to more use by the motorcycle riders. Unfortunately, the contempt that the motorcycle riders show for other residents in the area is disgraceful. I think we should do something about it.

Bruce Highway Upgrade

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (6.02 p.m.): Tonight I rise in this adjournment debate to outline the progress of the upgrade of the Bruce Highway in my electorate. Firstly, I would like to raise the matter of the six-laning of the Bruce Highway to Boundary Road, Dakabin. Every day, residents in my electorate who use the Bruce Highway are faced with delays as construction proceeds on this section of that road. I have previously spoken in this House about the need for patience while the road is progressing and to be prepared for some delays. The ultimate outcome is very important to not only the electorate of Kallangur but also the adjoining electorates of Murrumba, Pumicestone and Glass House as well as electorates on the Sunshine Coast. The answer, of course—and my problem is that I do not even follow my own advice—is to set out for the journey earlier.

Work commenced on the site on the evening of 26 May 2003 over seven kilometres of the Bruce Highway. That work has been carried out for nearly 12 months. I informed that the job is expected to be completed in September 2004. Naturally, that will depend on weather conditions.

The current estimated final cost is \$40 million. It would be churlish of me if I did not acknowledge in this House the funding support for that which comes from the Commonwealth government. It is a project which is administered by the state Department of Main Roads. Given that amount of money, the project is a major construction. As I have said before, it involves the six-laning between Dohles Rocks Road to Burpengary Road. I also involves the widening of associated structures and drainage and the lowering of the highway under the Brays Road and Anzac Avenue overpasses to achieve increased height clearances for oversized vehicles.

Secondly, I would like to talk about the progress from Boundary Road to Caboolture. At this stage the federal government has committed \$13 million for the planning, the design, the resumption of property and the relocation of public utility plant for Boundary Road to Uhlmann Road, which is near my electorate office in Burpengary. Preliminary planning for the balance of the six-laning upgrade is under way for the Bruce Highway through to Caboolture. That will occur in three stages. The first stage, of course, is Boundary Road to Uhlmann Road at Burpengary; secondly, from Uhlmann Road to the Caboolture River at Morayfield; and, finally, the part to the Caboolture River North.

Fraser Coast Equestrian Centre

Mr CHRIS FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (6.05 p.m.): I rise to inform the House about the excellent facility in Maryborough called the Fraser Coast Equestrian Centre. This centre was established in January 2000 with a steering committee formed by Maryborough-Hervey Bay Show

Society to upgrade equestrian facilities at Maryborough Showgrounds. In August 2001 \$128,150 was approved by the federal government under the Regional Solutions Program. March 2002 saw the opening ceremony and phase 1 with the covered arena.

Since its opening the centre has become a focal point for regional equestrian activities, drawing competitors from Gladstone, Calliope, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg, Gympie and other regional areas. Facilities now include a 70 metre by 40 metre covered riding arena; a campdraft arena; harness dressage arena; upgraded centre ring for hacking, dressage and jumping; a pony club cross-country course; and an EFA two-star cross-country course.

The facilities, which were designed to be multifunctional, are now attracting other users such as dog obedience clubs, cross-country runners and youth groups conducting adventure training. The estimated value of completed projects to date is \$600,000. Federal, state and local government input is \$238,000, with the remainder coming from community based donations, fundraising and work in kind.

Two new jobs have been created at the showgrounds and at least one more is expected. The management group has no debts and has currently retained earnings of approximately \$20,500. There are currently over 6,000 horse days of activities booked for this year. It is estimated that approximately \$1 million will be injected into the Maryborough economy through equestrian related activities this year.

Use of the showgrounds is now expanding as other community groups recognise its potential, and further plans for development could see the grounds earning an income of around \$200,000 per annum compared with the \$225,000 that it currently costs Maryborough ratepayers in maintenance and operating costs. We can see this going from a significant net loss to a significant net profit, which is a tremendous turnaround in both accounting terms and in normal everyday person terms.

I would like to also pay tribute to Don Cante, who spent almost \$100,000 of his own time and money in retirement building a first-class cross-country course in our region. It will be opened this weekend and we in the Maryborough community are all very excited about that. The Fraser Coast Equestrian Centre deserves statewide recognition and support.

Annerley Literacy Centre

Mr FINN (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (6.08 p.m.): I start by welcoming to the public gallery Mr Nikolai Lusan, a friend and colleague. I say to him: stick with the fight, brother.

Yesterday I was pleased to announce in conjunction with the Minister for Education some essential funding for the Annerley Literacy Centre, a facility managed by Anglicare's Refugee and Migrant Services. The Annerley Literacy Centre operates on shoestring funds with minimal staff and relies heavily on volunteers. The centre provides a range of support services to refugees and newly arrived migrants.

Unfortunately, the centre's activities are on the brink of closure due to the lack of a secure funding base to enable the employment of a base staff component to manage the centre. Yesterday's announcement provides \$20,000 to ensure key services continue to be offered. The key program of the centre which these funds are targeted at is the after school homework and literacy tuition. This program is aimed at assisting refugee and migrant students with their transition to school based learning in the Australian environment.

Mr Mickel: Hear, hear!

Mr FINN: I thank the member for Logan for his support for that program.

One of the main groups the centre currently provides services to is African refugees. A large number of refugees from African communities are arriving and settling in the suburbs of Annerley, Moorooka and Yeronga. These refugees have a number of special needs and the literacy centre targets its services at the need to understand English and to participate in school based learning.

The importance of these services can best be understood with an appreciation of the life experience of many of these people. One day a family might be living in a refugee camp in Kenya, Uganda or Sudan along with 100,000 other people. This camp will not be in the family's own country, as refugees are people who have fled, usually many having walked hundreds or thousands of miles to escape war or persecution in their homelands. This camp may be the only place that children of the family and even adult children have lived. Born into a refugee camp,

living in basic conditions, struggling for food and having little or no schooling, this is the life of the children of African refugee camps.

One week later, following selection by an international aid program to provide access to a limited refugee intake, this family arrives in Annerley-Moorooka and the children find themselves at a local school, with no understanding of English and no experience of formal learning. Whilst obviously these people have a range of support needs, the ability to understand language is critical to an ability to survive in an unfamiliar country or culture. The ability to participate and succeed in formal learning is critical to experiencing the opportunities of our country and the way of life we provide.

Anglicare's refugee and migrant services through the Annerley Literacy Centre provide the opportunity for language and learning skills to develop in people experiencing great need.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr FINN: That is good. I am pleased that, together with the Minister for Education, I have been able to provide essential support for this organisation. I pay tribute to the work of Anglicare and look forward to working together on future projects. Finally, I thank the refugees and migrants in my local suburbs for the remarkable contribution that they make to the cultural enrichment of the Australian way of life.

Drug Rehabilitation Programs

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (6.12 p.m.): One of the very real problems that face our society and all of our communities in modern times is the problem of drugs and drug addiction. It is a very disturbing fact, whether you speak to families who are torn apart by drug addiction or whether you speak to someone who themselves are addicted to drugs and the awful struggle it is to try to break that habit. I have a personal issue with the glorification of all drugs, particularly with marijuana, and some of the popular media portrayals of marijuana as being a risk-free drug. That is simply not the case. There are huge problems associated with marijuana but all drugs, particularly addictive drugs, can wreak havoc with people's lives.

With that in mind, I visited the Teen Challenge New Life Centre in Toowoomba. It is located in what was formerly a Queensland Health facility in Bedford Street in Toowoomba. On Friday I visited that centre, and I was very impressed with the results it has been able to achieve in helping young men get off drugs. It is a program that takes 12 months. It is a live-in residential program and it is a very extensive program. There are lectures and discussion groups, personal growth study times, personal counselling, recreational and social activities, spiritual growth and church participation, and household and property duties—all of those essential skills that people need to be able to get their lives back on track when they have been living in a group or an environment that may not have equipped them with the skills to cope with society's needs.

I was also very lucky to be able to sit down and talk with one of the young men who was in that facility. This young fellow had been addicted to drugs and had moved in the drug world for over 12 years. He had been through a number of different rehabilitation programs, none of which had been successful for him. Most of those were quite short-term rehabilitation programs—anything up to three months—and this one has worked for him. He is an impressive young man. I know he will be able to re-enter society and make a valuable contribution.

I congratulate everyone involved with Teen Challenge. They have big plans for the facility to develop it even further. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Minister for Natural Resources and his office for the assistance they have given to me in trying to address some of the issues that Teen Challenge is facing. I know it is going to continue to do great work. It wants to expand the program that it is providing. It is one of the most essential things we need.

Rehabilitation and detoxification places are absolutely essential for young people to get off drugs, to get their lives back in order and, more importantly, to get back into our communities, back into society and become useful, contributing members. I know from the young man I met that Teen Challenge is providing those facilities.

Time expired.

BreastScreen Queensland Program

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (6.15 p.m.): As parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Health, yesterday I had the pleasure of officially launching the new BreastScreen Queensland

Toowoomba mobile bus. The cost of the new bus was about \$484,000. The provision of this bus reinforces and highlights the importance that the Queensland government places on health, and particularly women's health. As a working woman and a client of the BreastScreen Queensland Ipswich service, I am aware of the importance of providing quality breast cancer screening and assessment services for all women, regardless of where they live in the state.

The BreastScreen Queensland Program aims to provide dedicated high-quality breast cancer screening and assessment services that are accessible to all eligible Queensland women. The Toowoomba service is integral in ensuring that access for women is achieved. The Toowoomba service was established in 1992 and the mobile screening service has been a great component of this service for more than 10 years. The Toowoomba service provides screening and assessment services to an area of more than 414,000 square kilometres. Included within this is the city of Toowoomba and the towns of Dalby, Goondiwindi and Roma, and 28 shires. It extends from the New South Wales border in the south to the shires of Taroom and Kingaroy in the north and from the Lockyer Valley in the east to the South Australian and Northern Territory borders in the west.

Of the more than 58,000 women eligible to join the BreastScreen Queensland Program in the catchment, 87 per cent live in rural areas, with the remaining 13 per cent residing in remote areas. The success of the BreastScreen Queensland Program has been seen in the number of women accessing its Toowoomba facilities, growing from 9,400 in its first 12 months of operation to a target of 15,000 this financial year. The BreastScreen Queensland Program aims to achieve a participation rate of some 70 per cent of women in the target group 50 to 69 years every two years. Currently the participation rate across the state stands at 58.8 per cent. There are variations in the participation rate across different regions of the state, with participation ranging from 52 to 68 per cent. In Toowoomba the participation rate for women living in this catchment is over 60 per cent, and I would like to commend these women for finding the time to care for their health.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed amongst Queensland women and the most common cause of cancer death among women. During 2001 there were 2,182 cases of breast cancer diagnosed amongst females in Queensland and 471 Queensland women died from breast cancer. Being female and increasing age are the biggest risk factors in developing the disease. Over 75 per cent of breast cancers occur in women over 50, and nine out of 10 of these women who get breast cancer do not have a family history of the disease.

The most effective proven method of intervention is screening mammography. If cancer is found at an early age, there is a greater chance of successful treatment. The message is clear: BreastScreen Queensland provides free breast cancer screening services to women aged 50 to 69 years in close proximity to their home. A doctor's referral is not required to access the program and appointments can be made by calling 13 20 50. Do not put it off: ring 13 20 50 today.

Anzac Day

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (6.18 p.m.): On Friday, 23 April I was very privileged to attend the Anzac Day ceremonies at the Ashmore State Primary School and on Anzac Day itself at the Surfers Paradise RSL. I would like to thank P&F president Paula Dover, principal Carmel Ryan and deputy principal Amanda Fry for inviting me to the Ashmore State School ceremony—a fantastic ceremony. It was a wonderful day and the Ashmore State School choir was in fine voice singing the national anthem and a host of other typically Australian songs. It was a very moving celebration.

To see the young children there celebrating the day was truly inspiring. To see the faces of the old diggers listening to the pride with which the children spoke of their forefathers is humbling and thought provoking. I must commend the teachers at Ashmore State School for the wonderful work they do with their students. The knowledge that the students had of the events of Anzac Day was matched only by their eagerness to hear from the guest speakers who were there to address them, including Chris Sweeny, a Harley-riding Vietnam veteran. Mr Sweeny gave a practical insight into the futility of war and its effects on all who are involved in such a situation.

For those worried that the Anzac spirit is dying, this Anzac Day surely proved that the spirit is alive and well in our young children. Many of the students from our local schools were involved in parades on Anzac Day itself. I must make special mention of the naval cadets from training ship *Tyalgum*, situated in the Surfers Paradise electorate, who participated in the Anzac Day ceremony

at Cavill Park. The ceremony was conducted by the Surfers Paradise RSL and led by president Arch McDonald, and Surfers Paradise RSL secretary Alan Whelan. School captains from Benora High participated, as did the Merrimac High School choir.

The cadets were a credit to the program and their discipline and observance of the Anzac ideals was more than evident in this great display. I will also assure this fine unit that I will support them in upcoming decisions that may affect the location of their naval base. It has been mooted that the unit will have to move from their present location due to the value of the land that they occupy on Seaworld Drive. If this is the case I will work hard with concerned parties to ensure that they find an equally suitable place to the one they have at present.

Anzac Day

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): Anzac Day in Australia is a day growing in national recognition. In attending an Anzac ceremony we take time to remember our loved ones who may have died in war, but mostly we gather to remember the enormous personal sacrifices men and women in Australia have made to ensure our freedom from domination by another nation. No doubt many of us have shared treasured moments with older friends and relatives as they have recalled the sadness and the tales of war.

We have entered an era of uncertain security as the world community is experiencing a new age in warfare, low intensity conflict or unconventional war or terrorism. To attend an Anzac Day ceremony is a way of coming together in this new era and valuing what it is to be Australian.

I especially want to mention here today the ceremonies I attended in my electorate on Anzac Day 2004. The dawn service at Coolum was a beautiful ceremony attended by record numbers from our Coolum Beach community with representation from Coolum Primary School students, Coolum High School students and the Peregian Beach Community School. I particularly wish to congratulate the small band of men and women from the Coolum and Peregian Beach RSL who spent months organising the event. The veterans turned out a wonderful parade and followed the march with a get-together at the Coolum Beach Bowls Club.

My husband, Ivan, and I followed this event by attending the Tewantin RSL Service at the Tewantin Cenotaph. Again the community did our returned service men and women proud. The children from surrounding schools complemented the occasion. The youngsters from Tewantin Primary School again showed us that their talented musicians are among the best in the state and it would not be an Anzac Day parade without them.

A delightful young lady, Shannon Sweeney, a year 12 student from Sunshine Beach State School, commanded the hearts and minds of the attendees as she teased out in her speech her own considerations of the meaning of Anzac Day and the reasons it is remembered. Shannon captivated the audience with her natural and eloquent speech giving each one of us an uplifting experience and a memory of her Anzac Day address to be treasured forever.

I would like to note that none of the guest speakers at these ceremonies politicised the ceremonies in their addresses. If anything, I think all speakers were mindful of the growing concern Australians share about Australia's role in the coalition of the willing and our involvement in Iraq. Anzac Day should never be politicised. That makes me question the trip taken by John Howard—a very cynical trip to spend six hours with a handful of troops at the airport in Iraq, bearing in mind the enormous expense to the Australian taxpayers. If John Howard was serious about the welfare of our troops, he would bring them home.

I believe it is immoral to use Anzac Day as a political ploy so John Howard can be seen as strutting around as a man of steel in an effort to appear the strongman at home to win votes. If Howard was serious about Australian security and the Anzac tradition he would bring our troops home to focus on our shores, our seaways and what is going on in our region. The reality is that 200 troops in Iraq play a relatively little or minuscule role in the US occupation. Howard retains them for political point scoring at home and Bush wants them there purely to pretend to the international community that many countries support the US position.

At all our ceremonies there was a wonderful tribute to our war veterans. I look forward to continuing my good working relationship with the Vietnam veterans and my local RSLs. They are a highly valued group in our community and I wish them well.

Sugar Industry

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (6.23 p.m.): I have had enough time to shake the red dirt of Burnett off my shoes. I am pleased to relay to members that I met with the Hon. Prime Minister, John Howard, today and witnessed history in the making, for today was the launch of the federal sugar reform package. Cane farmers from all over the district have been doing it tough for a number of years. They came together today as one, all eagerly anticipating the announcement that would inevitably change their lives and the lives of future generations in the Burnett and all over Queensland.

There has been much speculation leading up to the rescue package. Some said the package was going to be worth \$250 million others \$300 million. There was even speculation of \$350 million. This was not the case. Rather, the Prime Minister and the federal government generously brought in a package above many expectations—the sum being \$444.4 million.

I welcome this initiative and strongly believe it is a sensational package. This package gives our farmers, millers and the 38,000 workers and their families hope. It ensures the survival of a vital industry that has been at the heart of our community for almost 120 years in the Burnett. This package is giving something back to canegrowers—giving them real money—without middle men getting their hands on it. For the first time it is delivering money where it should go.

I am pleased to report that the canegrowers and millers I spoke with throughout the day thought the rescue package was significant and well above expectations. They do believe it will go a long way towards getting the industry on the road to recovery. One cane farmer went as far as to say that it was the best deal that had ever hit Bundaberg and the Burnett.

I foreshadowed in parliament that it would be a sensation package and many growers I spoke to agreed with me. There is one significant federal politician who championed the sugar cause who especially deserves recognition, and that is, of course, the federal member for Hinkler, Paul Neville. It is because of Paul and his influence with the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister that my growers will be able to enjoy the fruits of this generous package.

The package includes a number of key elements. There is a sustainability grant of \$146 million, income support and planning assistance of \$21 million, regional and community projects of \$75 million, and re-establishment of one-off grants which will be made available for growers over three years on a sliding scale up to \$100,000 in the first year if they choose to take up those options. The federal government has done its job by introducing this remarkable sugar industry reform package, but now it is time for the state government to do its bit.

Road Funding

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (6.26 p.m.): We have heard about money getting thrown around by the federal government. There must be an election in the air. The federal government has been making some statements—I do not know whether it has actually put its money where its mouth is—about roads. These announcements were reported in the *Courier-Mail* and the even the *Southern Star* today. They stated that the federal government would take over the Logan Motorway and remove the tolls.

This is another con by Mr Hardgrave, the federal member for Moreton. He is once again trying to con the people of the Mansfield electorate and the south side of Brisbane. He surely must be learning his tricks of conning from the John Howard school of conning the electorate. He has made a number of big cons over a number of years.

The first con is that he has been trying to blame the state government for the Brisbane urban corridor which includes Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road and Kessels Road. The Brisbane urban corridor is part of the federal government's National Highway. It is a federal government road.

The second con is that he believes the state government says that the best route for interstate trucks is Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road. Mr Hardgrave knows that 75 per cent of the trucks that use this route need to be because that is how that get where they are going and back from where they are coming from. Study after study has proven this. This of course is not the best route for interstate transporters. They should be using the Logan Motorway. It is the state government that pursued this. We have removed the dangerous goods route.

The third con is that the removing of the toll on the Logan Motorway will solve all the problems of the Brisbane urban corridor. If this were not so serious it would be laughable. Take away the 25 per cent of the trucks that could use the Logan Motorway and we would still have major problems in the Brisbane urban corridor such as at the corner of Mains Road and Kessels

Road and the corner of Logan Road and Kessels Road, to name a couple. Take every single truck off the Brisbane urban corridor and we would still have a major problem. Trying to get out of Garden City Shopping Centre tomorrow afternoon there will not be a truck but there will still be major traffic problems. It is a con.

The fourth con is that the federal government did a study and has failed to release this report nearly four or five months after they received it. Let them release the report. Mr Hardgrave has two weeks to prove me wrong—that he is not just a conning self-promoter who promises heaps and blames everyone else and delivers nothing. The federal budget gets delivered in two weeks.

I have a final test for him before the next federal election. Let us see the money in the budget to implement the Brisbane urban corridor recommendations. He states that the federal government will take over the Logan Motorway and remove the toll. His test is in two weeks. If he fails that test, he will be failing the people of the south side of Brisbane and they will know that he is a con. People like Graham Perrett, the Labor candidate for Moreton, and Con Sciacca, the Labor candidate for the seat of Bonner, will be elected. It is about time Mr Hardgrave stopped conning the people.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 6.29 p.m.