



# WEEKLY HANSARD

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## 51ST PARLIAMENT

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## TUESDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2005

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Mr SPEAKER (Hon. T McGrady, Mount Isa) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 am.

### REGIONAL SITTINGS OF PARLIAMENT, ROCKHAMPTON

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I commence this historic occasion by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which this parliament meets. I ask honourable members to acknowledge a number of special guests in the public gallery: Olive Donald, representing the Durrumbul people; Councillor Margaret Strelow, Mayor, Rockhampton City Council; Councillor Bill Trevor, Mayor, Isis Shire Council; Councillor John Hopkins, Mayor, Fitzroy Shire Council; Councillor Bill Ludwig, Mayor, Livingstone Shire Council; and Councillor Bill Mellor, Mayor, Gayndah Shire Council. I also acknowledge my colleagues from other parliaments: the Hon. Fred Reibling, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Western Australia; the Hon. Robert Such, the Speaker of the House of Assembly, South Australia; and the Hon. Ron Roberts, President of the Legislative Council, South Australia. I also acknowledge the Clerks of the Western Australian Legislative Assembly and the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome the people of central Queensland to this sitting of parliament. For more than 145 years central Queensland has been represented by members at Parliament House in Brisbane. Honourable members, today the parliament has come to the people of central Queensland. This is only the second time that the parliament has sat outside of Brisbane since its first sitting in 1860. In parallel with the proceedings of parliament, the Walter Reid Cultural Centre will host historical displays and theatrical performances. Honourable members, this is an opportunity for central Queensland to engage with their parliament and, of course, with its history.

### FILMING IN CHAMBER

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise that I have given permission for a number of media organisations to take photographs and wide-angle television footage of the proceedings.

### OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise that tomorrow morning at 10.35 there will be an official photograph taken of members in the chamber. It would be appreciated if all members could ensure that they are in the chamber at that time.

### DRESS STANDARDS

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, given the current temperatures and the fact that we are sitting under stage lights, I have relaxed dress standards for the occasion. Gentlemen may remove their coats from 11.30 am to the close of question time.

### SEATING ARRANGEMENTS IN CHAMBER

**Mr SPEAKER:** I inform members that seating arrangements in the chamber are different from those in Brisbane. The opposition have cooperated in that prior to the re-arrangement of their frontbench the order of proceedings was already printed and I thank them for their cooperation.

### SECURITY IN PARLIAMENTARY PRECINCT

**Mr SPEAKER:** My final point today is that I ask all members to wear their identity passes at all times.

### PETITION

The following honourable member has sponsored an e-petition which is now closed and presented—

#### Whaling Programs

**Mrs Stuckey** from 475 petitioners requesting the House to commit to lobbying the Japanese Government to prohibit the expansion of any whaling programs and to support the Federal Government in creating an international whale sanctuary.

## PAPERS

### PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

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

3 October 2005—

- WorkCover Queensland—Annual Report 2004-05
- WorkCover Queensland—Statement of Corporate Intent 2004-05
- Growing Regional Business—Annual Report 2004-05
- Response from the Minister for Education and the Arts (Mr Welford) to a paper petition sponsored by Ms Lee Long from 605 petitioners requesting the House to not sell off the Mareeba Pre-school and relocate the children into the Primary School
- Response from the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women (Ms Boyle) to an e-petition sponsored by Mr Messenger from 47 petitioners requesting the House to see that the objectives of the Strategic Plan items 11.5.2 and 11.5.5(2) be adhered to in relation to the development of land on The Esplanade of Elliott Heads with all developments on coastal foreshores and, if necessary, resumption of foreshore land should be considered by State and Local Governments

### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

- Transport Operations (Road Use Management-Accreditation and Other Provisions) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 237

Building and Construction Industry Payments Act 2004—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 238

Geothermal Exploration Act 2004—

- Geothermal Exploration Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 239

Aboriginal Land Act 1991—

- Aboriginal Land Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2005, No. 240

Nature Conservation Act 1992, Recreation Areas Management Act 1988—

- Nature Conservation and Recreation Areas Management Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 241

Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991—

- Uniform Civil Procedure Amendment Rule (No. 3) 2005, No. 242

Public Trustee Act 1978—

- Public Trustee Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2005, No. 243

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### Regional Sitzings of Parliament, Rockhampton

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (9.35 am): I give notice that I will move—

That the House endorses the historic central Queensland sitting of the Legislative Assembly in Rockhampton this week.

That, with great pleasure and enthusiasm, the House notes the significance of this region to Queensland and endorses parliament's decision to hold regional parliament in Rockhampton.

That the House thanks and congratulates the Rockhampton community on its enthusiastic support for this historic sitting.

That the House endorses the principle that regional sittings should continue once a term.

Further—

That the debate of this motion will commence at 12.30 pm today, and, notwithstanding standing and sessional orders, the length of this debate will not exceed two hours and the time limit for speeches to this motion will be 10 minutes only.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Regional Sitzings of Parliament, Rockhampton

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (9.36 am): Today is only the second time since 1859 that the Queensland parliament has convened outside Brisbane. I extend a warm welcome to everyone from central Queensland who has come along on this historic occasion to see how parliament operates, and you are very welcome—very welcome indeed. It does not matter what your political allegiances are; the important point is that you have chosen to take an interest in proceedings which form the very heart of the democratic process, and I thank you for your interest.

As we all know, democracy withers when it is neglected. It needs interest and attention for it to flourish. By bringing parliament to regional Queensland we are engaging and enabling people to show that interest and attention. It also means that upwards of 3,500 school students—and I notice a number in the gallery today, and I particularly welcome you—will be able to learn about parliament through personal experience from a visit here with their schools. This exercise in democracy works in two directions. Not only does it give people in regional Queensland who do not have an opportunity to visit Parliament House in Brisbane a chance to experience question time or a debate about new legislation; I believe it is also essential that all members of parliament gain a first-hand appreciation of the issues affecting regional Queensland.

Over the next three days every member here will develop an appreciation of the strengths and needs of central Queensland. To add to this experience, ministers spent yesterday morning at Gracemere Saleyards for a cabinet meeting at the same time as the Brahman stud sales were in progress. Townsville hosted the first regional sittings in September 2002 and more than 8,000 people attended. I urge central Queenslanders to take advantage of this opportunity to make sure parliamentarians are making the right decisions on their behalf. You elect us and pay us, so come along and check that we are doing a good job.

I also thank the people of central Queensland for the welcome they have extended to us, particularly last night. We had a very warm reception yesterday at the cattle sales at Gracemere as well. On arrival at the Pilbeam Theatre the staff presented us with beautiful bouquets of flowers, and I thank them as well. I also take this opportunity to announce that if we are re-elected we will hold a third regional meeting of parliament in the next term.

I finally say this, particularly for the schoolchildren who are present here today: when you look at the very ugly conflicts that are taking place in the world, it is important that we cherish our democracy, and what you see today is democracy in action. There are many places in the world where the leader and the opposition leader cannot be in the one room and where governments are changed by guns and bloodshed. In Queensland we live in a great democracy where those sorts of things do not happen. We have our differences in here in a robust way, and that is the strength of our democracy. I am delighted to see everyone here today. Thank you for coming.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Coal Industry

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (9.39 am): I want to move on to other matters relating to central Queensland. To say that coal, the bedrock of the central Queensland economy, is booming is a massive understatement. Last year just over 140 million tonnes of coal was exported from Queensland. Over the next four to five years, coal companies have committed projects to increase production by 65 million to 80 million tonnes a year. The bulk of that is for export, to take advantage of the massive increase in demand from China, India and other Asian economies for high-grade Queensland coal.

This involves capital expenditure estimated at between \$6 billion and \$8 billion in mine developments and rail and port infrastructure. This expenditure is almost exclusively here in central Queensland. It will underpin the prosperity of central Queensland for decades—prosperity for central Queensland home owners, who have seen the value of their homes in the mining towns of central Queensland double over the past 18 months; prosperity for central Queensland youth, being afforded incredible skills training and job opportunities; and, most importantly, significant supply chain opportunities for central Queensland and the businesses that go with it. It is the largest concentration of works undertaken in Queensland. Given that, I am delighted to announce this morning that the Coordinator-General yesterday declared the proposed Wiggins Island Coal Terminal at the port of Gladstone to be a significant project and, consequently, the environmental impact statement for the project is under way.

Completion of stage 1 of the Wiggins Island Coal Terminal, targeted for 2010, will boost the coal export capacity of the port by 20 million tonnes each year. When fully developed, Wiggins Island will add a massive 70 million tonnes of coal-exporting capacity for Queensland. This investment comes on top of the 25 million-tonne expansion of the RG Tanna Coal Terminal, which, as we all know, is currently under way. Combined, these two projects, along with the Barney Point Coal Terminal, will result in coal export capacity at the port of Gladstone reaching 140 million tonnes, making the port of Gladstone the largest coal-exporting port in the world. There will be none bigger.

The Wiggins Island Coal Terminal and associated rail and channel infrastructure will cost \$1.8 billion and create 500 construction jobs and 125 new operational jobs when completed. The project will be jointly developed by the Central Queensland Ports Authority and Queensland Rail, and will include an electrified rail connection to the main rail line, new rail loops, rail receipt stations, stockpile, ship-loaders and a 2.4 kilometre new wharf approach and wharf structure.

Queensland coal is the best and cleanest in the world, and this project will mean the port will be able to handle the projected substantial increases in coal production from new and expanded mines in the Bowen area, the Bowen Basin and other areas. In other words, it will position Queensland to take advantage of the strong future growth in overseas demand. We have never seen demand like this, particularly from China but it will enable us to take advantage of that demand for our high-quality coal as the state's coal exports are forecast to increase up to 210 million to 220 million tonnes a year by 2010. It ensures long-term supply chain opportunities for central Queensland coalfields and strengthens the possibility of further expansions in the Bowen and Surat basins. I thank the Coordinator-General for the hard work and approvals that he has given. I also thank the minister for transport, Paul Lucas.

Central Queensland's economic future is not only about coal; it is about resource processing—value adding to our mineral wealth. That is why the Queensland government has created the 21,000-hectare state development area at Gladstone, the largest of its type in our nation. To ensure adequate port facilities to service the Gladstone state development area, the Coordinator-General has also declared a major expansion of the Fisherman's Landing wharf centre as a significant project. What that means is that this development will involve the reclamation of 150,000 hectares of land in Port Curtis adjacent to the existing port facility at Fisherman's Landing to enable the creation of six additional wharves. Dredging will take place over a number of years to construct the berth pocket and approach channels.

The project will be developed in stages as dictated by the demand for port facilities. The first stage will cost \$161 million and focus on the construction of a bund and revetment wall to provide three new berths. The Fisherman's Landing wharf centre development will ensure the port of Gladstone has world-class port facilities—a critical factor which major resources companies consider when making decisions about where to locate new plants. So it is about value adding to link in with the natural resources we have.

These two projects, when completed, will represent almost \$2 billion of investment in Queensland infrastructure. We are in stellar times in central Queensland, and for that matter Queensland is riding the crest of a great job creation wave. We aim to make central Queensland the export capital of the nation.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Forster Report

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (9.44 am): Mr Speaker, on Friday, as you would be aware, Peter Forster delivered his independent, highly detailed and comprehensive final report on his review of Queensland Health systems. I said then that we would need further time to fully analyse and respond to the report but that I would provide parliament with a document outlining our first response, which I do today. A detailed response will be provided at the time of the mini budget on 25 October, three weeks from today.

Our first phase of reforms, in answer to the Forster report, will introduce the changes to systems recommended by the report and seek out the additional doctors, nurses and allied health professionals we need to attract to our public health system. A team of executives from Queensland Health, Queensland Treasury and my department started work on our detailed response on Friday. They have worked over the weekend to give this project the priority it deserves. Stephen Robertson, the Minister for Health, and I will continue to work on this together. Advertisements for the senior executives who will drive the changes to systems appeared in the media on Saturday. The new positions, which will match the new structure, are being advertised nationally, and they are: three positions for general managers of area health service positions; Chief Operations Officer; Chief Health Officer; Executive Director, Policy Planning and Resourcing; Executive Director, Performance; and Executive Director, Corporate Services.

Legislation will be introduced into parliament this week to establish three new health service areas—southern, central and northern. Each area health service will have greater management, budget and planning powers than under the current centralised system and will be led by a general manager reporting to Queensland Health's Director-General. In other words, this is about a decentralisation of Queensland Health to ensure that decisions are made in the regions. That is what it is all about.

Work has started on writing a new code of conduct for Queensland Health. The code is being rewritten to help create a more positive workplace culture at Queensland Health, and we will be consulting Queensland Health staff, the Queensland Nurses Union and other interested parties until 30 November. A new complaints system is being developed. Complaints will be dealt with locally in the first instance, with greater assistance for people wishing to lodge a complaint. Unresolved matters will automatically escalate after 30 days.

I started the process of recruitment, as advocated by the Forster document, in cooperation with the health minister, when I was in London last month. We placed an advertisement in the *Times* and created a Smart State recruitment site on the Queensland Health web site. A second advertisement

appeared in the highly respected *British Medical Journal* on Sunday. By Monday morning in Queensland—Sunday night in the UK—26 doctors had lodged expressions of interest in working for Queensland Health by filling in a form on the web site. They were joined by six nurses, five allied health professionals, two dentists and two others—a total of 41 in only 24 hours. In the last 24 hours we have had expressions of interest from a further 32 doctors. In total, we have received expressions of interest from 88 doctors, 23 nurses, 24 allied health professionals in a total of 167 health professionals who say that they would like to work for Queensland Health.

Work on our detailed response continues and will ultimately be reflected in the mini budget and various health plans that we will follow. Before tackling the long-term problems identified by the report, we need in the first instance to focus on tackling the most severe pressure points in Queensland Health—the pressure points that we will tackle step by step. We will announce interim measures as an immediate response to our own review and consultation dealing with these pressure points. These include cancer management, cardiac services, elective surgery, emergency department waiting times, additional intensive care beds, mental health services and renal services.

Health minister Stephen Robertson and I will be in a position to start making announcements in these areas in the near future as we work out what can be done immediately without waiting for the mini budget. In central Queensland, for example, elective surgery is a key pressure point providing stress. There is a risk that planned operations will not go ahead without extra funding. Hospitals to benefit from this immediate response to key pressure points include Emerald, Gladstone and Rockhampton hospitals. I announce today that for Rockhampton alone elective surgery waiting times will be targeted with an extra \$200,000 which will ensure about 80 operations proceed depending on the level of complexity. The surgery will concentrate on orthopaedic, ear, nose and throat and cataract surgery and will examine buying services from the private sector when the public hospital system is at capacity. I thank the local member, Rob Schwarten, for his input into this contribution.

In terms of our response to the Forster report, we will cut the central bureaucracy, put the savings into health services and ensure that these services get as many resources as possible through a new funding system based on population and regional needs and case mixed funding for hospitals. We will reduce the layers of bureaucracy. There will be new independent agencies to monitor Queensland Health's performance and keep the public informed such as through a new Health Commission. We will negotiate with the Commonwealth to develop more flexible models of primary health care.

It is important for me to emphasise that the government is committed to employing more doctors, more nurses and more allied health professionals and to more facilities, better training and better services. A key feature of the reforms will be more localised decision making to allow key operational decisions to be made as near as possible to where services are delivered. We will promote a culture of zero tolerance to bullying in the workplace through new leadership and a new code of conduct.

The second phase of reform will go even further. In partnership with our communities and our clinicians, we will find new, smarter ways to deliver health services, new ways to promote healthier lifestyles and prevent illness, systems to detect disease at an early stage to manage illness and improve patient survival and quality of life, new ways to provide greater care in the community through services close to home, and new ways to work in partnership with the private sector and help our hospitals to manage their workload more effectively and efficiently.

Although there is much more to be done, I ask everyone to remember that the five-month review found that Queensland's public health services are performing as well as any other health service in Australia. The changes we will deliver will make it even better. Whether we have their support or not—and I am talking about those opposite—we will deliver for Queenslanders, which we are entitled and required to do.

I table for the benefit of the House the response to our campaign of health recruitment in two different time layers and also the ad that appeared in that press.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Bali Bombings

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (9.51 am): The tragedy in Bali on the weekend has once again shocked us all. Images of the innocent victims who have been killed or injured by this senseless violence are horrific. Details of how we will work with the Commonwealth to ensure that all Australians work together to support those who have lost loved ones or who know people who are injured follow. We will do our bit. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

To date there have been no reported Queensland victims, nevertheless we stand ready to provide assistance whenever and wherever we can.



All emergency services support for Bali is being co-ordinated through Emergency Management Australia, which is part of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Queensland's Counter Disaster and Rescue Services—part of our Department of Emergency Services—have been involved in discussions with both these organisations.

Although not required at this time they are aware of our capacity to quickly deploy support teams such as paramedics, counselling services, and fire urban search and rescue teams.

Mr Speaker,

On Sunday night I was down in Sydney for the Grand Final when the request came through for the jet to be used in the transport of medical specialists to help victims.

I immediately authorised the use and made other arrangements to return to Brisbane on the King Air.

The jet flew to Coolangatta to pick up neurologist, Doctor Teresa Withers from the Gold Hospital and then flew her to Darwin to treat victims evacuated from Bali.

Yesterday a Queensland Health Emergency Response medical team was deployed to Brisbane International Airport to screen passengers arriving on a Garuda Indonesia flight arriving from Bali.

The team consisted of a Doctor and nurse from the Redcliffe Hospital as well as two nurses from the Department of Health.

No injured were reported among the passengers, however, not surprisingly a number were distressed by the bombings.

Counselling and mental health services have been provided through Lifeline and Centrelink to assist traumatised victims.

This applies also to victims of the 2002 bombing who have had to relive that moment through this fresh atrocity.

These bombing reinforce that terrorists can hit at anywhere and at anytime.

That is why we are introducing tougher laws to deal with these cowards.

At the recent Council of Australian Governments all states and territories agreed to pass laws which include detaining suspected terrorists for up to 14 days in order to try to prevent attacks.

We will also pass laws to enable police to stop, question and search people suspected of involvement with terrorism and to enable random bag searches in specially designated areas.

We also agreed in principle to the Commonwealth Criminal Code being amended to help deter and prevent potential acts of terrorism.

The amended Commonwealth Criminal Code will include control orders and preventative detention for up to 48 hours to restrict the movement of those who pose a terrorist risk.

We have to do everything we can to protect Queenslanders from the appalling acts of terrorism which have been inflicted on innocent people in Bali, the United States, Madrid and London.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Fitzroy Industry and Infrastructure Study

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (9.52 am): Today I am officially launching the Fitzroy Industry and Infrastructure Study, which aims to deliver central Queensland thousands of new jobs and attract hundreds of millions of dollars of value-adding investment. I table that for the information of the House. The study provides a critical analysis of major industry developments and opportunities in the Fitzroy area. There are two corridors: the Stanwell-Gracemere industrial corridor and the Fitzroy agricultural corridor.

I highlight that the study has identified that there was significant investment potential for the development of new large-scale beef feedlots to substantially increase the turn-off of cattle to supply central Queensland export meatworks. This means feedlots will increase the number of cattle available to local meatworks by as much as 200,000 to 300,000 extra cattle a year. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Study provides a critical analysis of major industry development opportunities in the Fitzroy area and the infrastructure required to support that development.

This is about ensuring that the Fitzroy area takes full advantage of our Smart State strategies.

It focuses on two major corridors in which future development opportunities and value-adding opportunities are most likely to occur.

These days, to stay on top, you have to be continually innovating and continually looking at ways to value-add.

The study project partners are:

- the Coordinator-General,
- the Department of State Development Trade and Innovation,
- the Fitzroy and Livingstone Shire Councils,
- Rockhampton City Council,
- Stanwell Corporation and
- Rockhampton Regional Development Limited.

The two corridors are:

1. The Stanwell-Gracemere Industrial Corridor where the focus will be on a mix of large scale, energy intensive industries, light and medium manufacturing enterprises, and stockfeed, stock-waste, meat and meat by-products processing.

2. The Fitzroy Agricultural Corridor between the McKenzie-Dawson River junction and the lands around the Eden Bann Weir. The focus here will be on intensive animal husbandry, predominantly cattle, and associated feed cropping with some irrigated horticulture.

It is intended that over the medium to longer term, most outputs of the Fitzroy Agricultural Corridor would be processed in the Stanwell-Gracemere Industrial Corridor.

The Fitzroy Industry and Infrastructure Study has identified that there is significant investment potential for the development of new large-scale beef feedlots to substantially increase the turn-off of cattle to supply central Queensland export meatworks.

This means that feedlots will increase the number of cattle available to local meatworks by as much as 200,000 to 300,000 extra cattle a year.

Meatworks in Queensland are struggling because of a limited supply of cattle—feedlots are the way to go.

Feedlots will lead to an increased supply of cattle and can potentially provide higher quality beef which is what international customers are demanding.

Development of the integrated Industrial and Agricultural Corridors has the potential to generate thousands of new jobs and attract hundreds of millions of dollars of value adding investment into the region.

When considering if and how to implement the Fitzroy Industry and Infrastructure Study, the Queensland Government and other project partners will give top priority to ensuring that development proposals don't impact adversely on water quality in the Fitzroy River.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Rockhampton Riverbank Redevelopment Project

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (9.52 am): Later today the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing and the member for Rockhampton, Robert Schwarten, and I will officially launch construction of the \$9.5 million Rockhampton Riverbank Redevelopment Project. The Fitzroy River has always been one of Rockhampton's greatest assets. This project will make the river even more attractive on both banks. I thank the minister for his support for this project. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

On the south side redevelopment will take place in the areas between Hall Street, bordering Victoria Park, and existing developed path networks.

On the north side the work will be in sections between the Alexandra Bridge and the boat ramp.

Improvements will include installation of riverwalks, vantage points, bike tracks, shelters, barbecue areas, amenity blocks, play equipment, seating and public art.

Work will include car parking facilities and associated earthworks on the river's north bank, as part of a government-funded project to revitalise the city's recreational and cultural links with the Fitzroy.

Initial work on the north side and in Victoria Park on the south side will be construction-managed by QBuild and carried out by the Rockhampton City Council workforce.

The project will begin with small packages of work, building up to a larger component around April 2006.

Every effort will be made to employ local workers throughout the construction project, which will extend to November 2006.

For example, Greening Australia will enlist the services of local unemployed and Indigenous people in an extensive program of weed removal, replanting, and fishing-track installation.

Native vegetation that suits the dry conditions of Central Queensland, will be used to rehabilitate and stabilise sections of foreshore on both sides of the Fitzroy.

The local people involved will learn new skills and will be encouraged to further develop these skills through study.

Today we are seeing the results of an election commitment, intensive community consultation, and project management and co-ordination over many months by the Queensland Government.

We commissioned a number of specialist reports covering aspects such as plants and wildlife in the area, cultural heritage, surveying, geotechnical data, and access for people with a disability.

A line of old fig trees in Victoria Park will be protected, as will the heritage-listed Alexandra Bridge.

We have been negotiating with many stakeholders including the Rockhampton City Council and our door remains open.

The Government is keen to provide a level of amenity that satisfies the results of consultation, as well as community needs, without creating a maintenance burden for the people of Rockhampton.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### National Livestock Identification Scheme

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (9.53 am): By way of report, yesterday I announced a further \$800,000 for the state beef industry's implementation of the National Livestock Identification Scheme, NLIS. This brings our total contribution to \$16.4 million. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Therefore the State's total contribution to the system between 2004-05 and 2007-08 will be \$17.2 million.

Qld is Australia's premier beef-producing State and we have that and our cherished international reputation as a clean and safe producer to protect.

The NLIS is critical to maintaining that reputation as the world's best meat products.

State Govt and livestock industries have also finalised a business case to secure an additional \$6.2 million for the System's implementation.

Our additional \$800,000 will help leverage \$5.4 million from the Federal Government.

It is recommended that the additional \$6.2 million be allocated to:

\$2.6 million for innovation grants to NLIS tag manufacturers to reduce the cost of NLIS tags to producers;

\$2.67 million for rebates on NLIS reading equipment;

\$690,000 to double the funds available existing grant scheme for saleyards implementing NLIS to \$1.38 million; and

\$230,000 for Australian Livestock and Property Agents to distribute funds to the stock and station agents in Queensland to assist them with costs incurred in NLIS implementation and compliance.

Mr Speaker, Australia is free of diseases, such as Mad Cow Disease, that have caused so much disruption for the beef industry in the United States.

Through our support of initiatives such as the National Livestock Identification Scheme we can help ensure it stays that way.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Beef Expo 2006

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (9.53 am): Yesterday I announced our support with \$505,000 to support next year's Beef Expo 2006. I seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard* a media release outlining details of our support.

Leave granted.

The Queensland Government has reaffirmed Rockhampton's status as the "beef capital" by committing \$505,000 to support next year's Beef Expo 2006.

Premier Peter Beattie made the announcement at today's Cabinet meeting at the Gracemere Saleyards which will be followed by a three day sitting of Parliament in the Pilbeam Theatre.

"The Cabinet meeting is a unique part of the annual Brahman Week sales and the ideal lead-in to the historic Central Queensland sitting of State Parliament," Mr Beattie said.

"Beef Australia 2006 in May will be the seventh triennial Australian Beef expo in Rocky, and is certain to again attract international and national interest," said the Premier.

"The State Government is a Foundation Partner for Beef Australia 2006, contributing a total of \$505,000 in cash and in-kind sponsorship.

"Next year's World Braford Congress is an important component of Beef Australia 2006 and the Expo also sits well with Brisbane's hosting the prestigious World Meat Congress in late April," he said.

Member for Rockhampton, Public Works and Housing Minister Robert Schwarten said that again Rocky and beef would be on the world stage.

He thanked the different Government departments—Premier and Cabinet, State Development, Trade, and Primary Industries and Fisheries and Natural Resources and Mines for their support of the Expo.

Member for Fitzroy, Jim Pearce, who represents a large slice of Central Queensland's beef producing area, said it was important for the government to continue to back these expos.

Deputy Premier, State Development and Trade Minister Anna Bligh said that a key objective of supporting Beef Australia was to further develop a globally competitive and sustainable Queensland beef industry.

"The Expo and the Congress will showcase Queensland's beef expertise and further develop international business networks to support increased trade and investment in our world-class safe industry," she said.

"It's all about continuing to generate the sustainable economic wealth driving regional Queensland."

Mr Beattie said that the Government's Queensland Events Corporation was a cash contributor for the Expo and would also offer professional event advice.

"The government played a lead role in having the World Beef congress in Brisbane in late April (26—29) just before Rocky's beef Expo.

"This—and Rocky's Beef Expo—reaffirm Queensland's position as Australia's premier state for meat processing and also the destination for international events."

Queensland exports meat and meat products worth more than \$2.5 billion to more than 100 countries—this accounts for 61% of Australia's total meat exports and firmly puts the Smart State at number one.

The 3-day Congress, to be held at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, will bring together between 600 and 800 industry representatives from around the world.

It will be held from 26-29 April 2006 to discuss current industry challenges and showcase Queensland's meat industry.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Bird Flu

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (9.53 am): Finally, I mention the bird flu. The government has been working on a plan to ensure that we do everything we can to protect Australians, Queenslanders and our livestock. There is a small threat posed by migratory water birds, but other than that the risk is low. Nevertheless, we need to be prepared. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

While I hope that we can prevent such an outbreak and will never have to use our response plans, it would be irresponsible to ignore the threat.

That's why we are preparing for any possible level of outbreak.

The H5N1 is a sub type of the avian influenza that has spread throughout Asia resulting in the death and destruction of millions of poultry and more than 50 human deaths.

The United Nations has warned that a pandemic of the human bird flu could kill a staggering 150 million people.

A significant outbreak of the influenza could threaten our poultry industries, trade, tourism and the broader economy as well as pose a significant threat to the health and well-being of poultry workers, their families and the broader community.

We have developed a contingency plan across a number of Queensland Government departments, addressing destruction, disposal and transport of birds and decontamination of the environment.

In addition to that, we are working with the Australian Health Disaster Management Policy Committee, which is developing a national response plan for an outbreak.

If an outbreak occurs, it will be a national issue that will need an immediate national response.

Any outbreak would be managed through the Committee utilising both Commonwealth and State resources.

We will also be participating in a national exercise soon to test our preparedness and cross-agency coordination in the event of an outbreak.

To date, the disease has not affected Australian poultry and there is no danger to either poultry industry workers or consumers.

The public can be assured that our poultry industry has very strong safety and health standards; and we don't import live poultry, raw chicken products or eggs for human consumption.

However, there is still a threat posed from migratory water birds and that is why it is only sensible to have plans in place for dealing with an outbreak.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Beef Industry

**Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Finance and Minister for State Development, Trade and Innovation) (9.54 am): Following yesterday's announcement of new funds to assist the beef industry, I am pleased to announce that we have more good news for this very important industry in central Queensland. A new \$300,000 grant from the Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation will add to the valuable research being undertaken by the Cooperative Research Centre for Beef Genetic Technologies. This grant is destined to have far-reaching consequences for our cattle industry and is expected to lead to an increasingly productive and, therefore, more valuable herd.

I do not have to tell the people of Rockhampton that beef is the largest agricultural industry in our state. It accounts for around 40 per cent of Queensland's rural exports with 24,700 jobs statewide. In 2003-04, the value of cattle sold for live export or slaughter in Queensland was in excess of \$3.2 billion. The CRC aims to increase the gross revenue of the Australian beef industry through the development of the greater use of emerging genetic technologies. In fact, the aim is to increase that revenue by \$179 million by 2012.

The CRC will use the new funding to develop five to 10 commercial DNA tests to improve cow reconception rates and advance their fertility age to increase calving rates without compromising cow or calf survival. The CRC expects to have the first DNA test available in 2008. This Smart State technology is expected to primarily improve the reproductive performance of cattle already adapted to the tropics. So it also has the potential to be put to use in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Queensland is a world leader in developing DNA tests for beef tenderness and marbling, with Brisbane based company Genetic Solutions introducing the world's first commercial DNA test for tender beef. This progressive company will be involved in the commercialisation of DNA tests that the CRC develops in association with this grant.

We have world-best expertise here in Queensland. Through grants such as this one that we are making available to the CRC, the Queensland government is ensuring that Smart State companies remain at the cutting edge of their field. What we saw yesterday at the Gracemere saleyards—and I am sure that my colleagues will agree—highlighted to all of us the importance and success of this very dynamic industry. As Bruce McCamley told us yesterday, the state's feedlot capacity is predicted to double over the next few years.

There is more good news, however, for the beef capital and its other related businesses. Firstly, this year saw Rockhampton's Festival of Innovation held in July. I am pleased to say that it was so successful that the Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation will not only continue to sponsor it but also double its sponsorship from \$6,000 to \$12,000.

In addition, we recognise the vital importance of new technology industries. I am pleased to inform the House of a further development in that area for Rockhampton. The government has approved \$20,000 in dollar-for-dollar funding which will be allocated towards the cost of a feasibility study to examine the benefits of establishing a technology incubator here in Rockhampton. All of this is good news not only for the beef industry but also for other businesses in this very important part of the state.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Queensland Health, Code of Conduct

**Hon. S ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.57 am): One of the most important issues highlighted during the Forster review and the commission of inquiry was the significant concerns expressed and evidence of a negative and inappropriate workplace culture throughout Queensland Health. Some of the features of the workplace culture that exists within Queensland Health include bullying, intimidation, a lack of openness and sharing information, disempowered clinical teams, frustration with slow formal decision-making processes and overly prescriptive and, at times, conflicting policies and procedures. The review has found that this culture has led to the production of reports which have failed to highlight these problems or a tendency simply not to report. The review has identified effective leadership as the key to cultural change. The Beattie government agrees wholeheartedly.

The Forster report has also noted that there has been much negative feedback from staff about the misuse of the existing code of conduct. It is recommended that all written correspondence, including the code, is written using enabling rather than constraining language, and again we agree. The review also endorsed my decision to develop a new code of conduct as a matter of priority. As a result, a new draft code of conduct has been prepared and will now go out for consultation. I now table a copy of the draft code for the information of honourable members.

The draft code is a guide to the standards of behaviour expected of managers and staff alike within Queensland Health. The government is committed to having a department where staff are valued, respected and encouraged to participate in decision-making processes. The draft code sets very high standards because I believe Queenslanders and the Queensland Health work force expect nothing less.

The five principles of the draft code are: one, respect for people; two, integrity; three, diligence; four, economy and efficiency; and, five, respect for the law and system of government. Queensland Health staff will be able to comment on the draft code until 30 November. Not all sections of the draft code have been finalised. Two important areas covered in the draft code—how staff can make complaints and protection for whistleblowers—are currently being reviewed.

It has also been suggested that we might have a specific code for managers as some other health organisations do. I would be interested to hear views on that idea. We anticipate the code will be finalised by the end of 2005. The five principles of the code of conduct are connected to the new values of Queensland Health. They are: caring for people, leadership, respect, integrity and public service.

Every organisation is built on the values of its people. Values determine what is important and how we behave and shape the culture of a workplace. In Queensland Health we will use these new values and the new code of conduct to build a positive, enabling culture where the contribution of our work force is valued and respected. A happier, more positive workplace will help us to refocus and reshape our public health system and, to that end, it will ultimately lead to better health care for all Queenslanders.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Housing, Central Queensland

**Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.01 am): Our government, through the Department of Housing, is playing a vital role in assisting thousands of people in central Queensland who would otherwise struggle to keep a roof over their heads. As property prices and rents continue to rise many people on low incomes simply cannot afford to buy or rent a home. Other people who have specific housing needs, such as people with a disability or seniors, find it difficult to find a home that meets their requirements.

Since I have been the minister for housing more than \$175 million has been spent on housing and housing related services in central Queensland. This investment includes the construction of new homes, purchasing land and existing homes from the private market and upgrading and renewing

existing homes. In total, around 300 new dwellings have been constructed and 3,000 dwellings have been upgraded.

Currently, we are constructing a new 14 studio apartment complex in Murray Street, worth more than \$3 million, which will provide much-needed low-cost accommodation in this high-demand area in Rockhampton. The Department of Housing also partners with not-for-profit community organisations and local governments to boost the supply of housing in this region and provide crisis, transitional and long-term accommodation as well as advice and advocacy and priority housing support.

The department owns 175 community housing properties in the central Queensland area and provides grants to local organisations to operate a further 650 units of accommodation. Through the Crisis Accommodation Program we help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, in crisis and/or in need of transitional support in the move towards independent living. Under this program funding has recently been approved to replace youth shelters in Rockhampton for the Darumbal Community Youth Service and Rockhampton New Horizons as well as a new women's shelter for Ozcare in Gladstone.

**Mr Lingard** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Beaudesert!

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** May I be allowed to continue without the inane and stupid comments from those opposite?

**Mr Lingard** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the member for Beaudesert under standing order 253.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I am delighted to see the schoolchildren of Rockhampton here, Mr Speaker, who are being exposed to the ignorant behaviour of those opposite. I hope they do not emulate it.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, continue please.

**Mr Springborg** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Under the long-term Community Housing Program \$3.8 million has recently been approved to build 16 new dwellings in Sapphire, Moura, Gracemere, Marian, Glenden, Augathella and Mount Perry. As I have outlined, the Department of Housing has made a significant investment in this region. Of particular interest to honourable members should be the 32-unit North Street singles complex constructed by local builder JM Kelly for the Department of Housing at a cost of \$4 million. I invite honourable members to familiarise themselves with this project.

This modern complex replaces one of the last disgraceful legacies of the National Party to the people of Rockhampton. The National Party's fibro hovels which housed the sick and elderly in this city for its entire 32-year reign in government say it all about the National Party's contempt for this city. I am absolutely proud to have obliterated that blight from our community.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** The truth hurts the opposition. Those members of the opposition who think that those fibro hovels that those sick and elderly people lived in were something they should be proud of ought to hang their heads in shame.

**Mr Horan** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the member for Toowoomba South under standing order 253.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Another myth from the member for Toowoomba South. If he told the truth it would be by accident. Also close by is Rockhampton Research House, which was constructed in 2001 for \$365,000 to showcase smart housing products. It is an internationally acclaimed model of housing sustainability. The Department of Housing in 2002 also arranged for 30 former Defence houses to be relocated from Amberley to Gladstone. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the 30 staff of the Department of Housing in the Rockhampton region and partnering community organisations for their achievements in providing housing assistance to the people of central Queensland.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Fitzroy River, Crocodiles

**Hon. D BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women) (10.06 am): This sitting of parliament is taking place in croc country. Some Rockhampton residents are concerned about the presence of crocodiles, in particular a three-metre crocodile in the Fitzroy River. It is important that we have a healthy respect for these magnificent creatures. But removing them all is not the answer. Firstly, we can never guarantee a crocodile-free waterway in the region. This is, after all, their habitat.

Secondly, crocodiles have an important role to play. They are a vital part of the ecosystem. The crocodile seen in the Fitzroy is part of a breeding pair. The survival rate of crocodile offspring in general is very low—less than one per cent. So far as this particular crocodile is concerned, only one crocodile is surviving from this pair's 18 eggs that were laid last February.

I am pleased to announce this morning that the very successful world-first Crocs in Space satellite tracking program is going to be expanded to the region in a particularly innovative way. My rangers are going to attempt to trap the male crocodile. People should understand that this, in itself, can be a difficult exercise. Then we will use minor surgery to attach the satellite tracking equipment to the large scales behind the crocodile's shoulders. Tracking him will show us where he lives, where he moves to, how often he moves and how far he travels. Thereby we will have much better information on whether he is a threat and whether in fact he should be relocated.

We will also have high-quality information that will be of interest to crocodile experts all over Queensland and northern Australia. Crocodiles that are a source of danger or—

**Mr Messenger** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the member for Burnett under standing order 253.

**Ms BOYLE:** Crocodiles that are a source of danger or are likely to be a source of danger to humans are identified as problem crocodiles and are targeted for removal. However, the removal of problem crocodiles from the Fitzroy River does not make it a crocodile-free river. Many of the risks identified in the Fitzroy River risk assessment report were the result of people putting themselves in danger and not using croc-wise behaviour. Living in croc country means croc-wise behaviour is essential.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service will step up the croc-wise public education campaign to remind people how to live safely with crocodiles. Warning signs will be installed at several locations within the Rockhampton, Fitzroy and Livingstone council areas as a priority and people should also follow these croc-wise tips. Stand at least a few metres back from the water's edge. Do not stand on logs or branches overhanging deep pools as crocs can jump. Never clean fish or discard fish scraps near the water's edge or at boat ramps. Dispose of fish frames and bait away from the water's edge so as not to attract crocodiles. Launch and retrieve boats without entering the water. Never dangle arms and legs over the side of a boat. If someone falls out of a boat they should get out of the water as quickly as possible!

I look forward to meeting with local expert Mr John Lever and community representatives tomorrow and discussing with them this innovative yet practical program to address local concerns.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Cooler Schools Program

**Hon. RJ WELFORD** (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for the Arts) (10.09 am): We thank the minister for local government for that wonderful education about crocodiles. I am pleased to advise members of the parliament that another 520 classrooms in the hottest and most humid parts of Queensland are set to receive airconditioning under our government's Cooler Schools program. I join with other members in welcoming the schools from the central Queensland district to the parliament this week, and I do trust that they enjoy their experience of Queensland's democratic process.

Today I am inviting schools in the Cooler Schools zone to apply for a share of \$13.2 million that our government is making available in round 6 of the program. This funding is in addition to almost \$140 million we have allocated over the past six years to schools in the Cooler Schools zone. This zone covers a vast area from Torres Strait in the north, south to Rockhampton, Gladstone, Biloela and Theodore and west to the Great Dividing Range. Since 1998 some 3,500 classrooms in this region have been airconditioned. The good news in this round is that even more schools will benefit. That is because we are broadening the dollar subsidy to support schools that may not have extensive fundraising capabilities or resources. Previously under the program we had been providing a subsidy to schools of \$4 for every \$1 raised. In this round, the subsidy will vary from school to school depending on its socioeconomic needs and student enrolment numbers. But some schools may be eligible for contributions of up to \$10 for every \$1 raised.

This round of the program will focus on installing airconditioning in essential classroom areas. The number of classrooms in a school considered to be essential for this purpose will be determined on the basis of total student enrolments. The aim is to ensure that all schools in the Cooler Schools zone can benefit from the program, not just those in wealthy areas or those with strong fundraising programs already in existence. Information kits on how to seek funding have now been sent to all schools in the zone. Applications close on 21 October this year. Schools whose applications are successful will be notified during November and work will commence on projects early in the next year—2006.

It was the Beattie government that recognised the needs of teachers and students by expanding the previous airconditioning zones south to include the Capricornia region. Our government is ensuring the Cooler Schools program is continuing to help create optimum learning environments for our teachers and students in the hottest and most humid parts of our state.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Breaking the Unemployment Cycle

**Hon. TA BARTON** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (10.12 am): It is almost exactly seven years since the Beattie government launched its Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative for Queensland's most disadvantaged job seekers. Today I am proud to say that it has served central Queensland very well, thanks to the spirit of communities here that have supported it since 1998. In the seven years this initiative has helped create over 7,800 jobs in central Queensland, which is a great return for the \$72 million that this government has invested in it here. The government learnt long ago that local communities know where the jobs are. It is the open secret of the scheme's success. Among the range of employment and training programs it has produced, there has been an opportunity to turn around the lives of those participating—groups such as the mature aged, long-term unemployed, Indigenous people, single parents and people with poor English language skills.

I was interested to hear about some of the programs actually under way in the region this week. They include a jobs program to upgrade Yeppoon Turf Club's Keppel Park facilities with 10 job seekers receiving paid employment through a government grant of \$125,000; at Emerald eight young people who left school early are being helped through a Get Set for Work project providing special training and work experience; and a program at Dysart in which 10 disadvantaged job seekers are gaining skills, confidence and experience by working with various community and charity organisations thanks to a \$119,000 grant. We also have a big Training in Communities project where 132 low-skilled and unemployed people in Rockhampton are receiving training to enable them to gain jobs in the construction and tourism industries. The 132 job seekers are currently undertaking courses run over 45 weeks by the Capricornia Training Co.

I would finally like to summarise the results of Breaking the Unemployment Cycle programs in specific electorates over the seven years. Some \$12.65 million has been invested in Callide to create 1,248 jobs; \$9.33 million in Fitzroy to create 1,054 jobs; \$8.34 million in Gladstone resulting in 1,034 jobs; \$14.92 million in Gregory creating 1,462 jobs; \$6.29 million in Keppel creating 717 jobs; \$5.68 million in Mirani creating 705 jobs; and in Rockhampton \$15.6 million has created 1,649 jobs. Again, I thank all of the employers, community groups and job seekers who have done their bit to make this program such a winner for central Queensland.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Energy Industry, Central Queensland

**Hon. RJ MICKEL** (Logan—ALP) (Minister for Energy and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (10.15 am): Economic growth in Queensland continues to outpace every state in our nation. With this growth comes the need for continued focus on providing the Queensland community with a safe and reliable supply of electricity. To help achieve this, the government owned energy corporations are planning a total capital expenditure throughout the state of \$2.27 billion during this financial year. Here in the central Queensland region I am pleased to advise the House that significant investment is also occurring, with a total capital expenditure of \$236 million in this financial year. This amount is being invested through four government owned corporations active in central Queensland—Powerlink, Stanwell Corporation, Ergon Energy and CS Energy.

Powerlink is undertaking refurbishment work at its Rockhampton substation at a total cost of approximately \$5 million, due for completion in October 2006. Powerlink is also installing new equipment and associated systems at its Blackwater substation, expected to be completed by October 2006 at a total cost of \$12.2 million. The transmission network around Biloela will benefit from a \$4 million project which will see new secondary systems equipment installed in that same time frame. Stanwell Corporation Ltd is currently investing \$19 million in a maintenance overhaul of unit 3 at Stanwell Power Station. The overhaul will increase the unit's capacity and efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 38,000 tonnes annually. Importantly, nearly half of the project cost—\$8 million—will be spent locally, a significant injection for the region's industrial economy. Ergon Energy is also very busy in central Queensland—including the major centres of Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Yeppoon and Emerald—with a capital expenditure budget for this financial year of \$166.4 million, with \$114.8 million of this being invested in the Capricornia area.



Some of the significant projects in the region include development of a new powerline from South Gladstone to Calliope, completion of a power supply in coming weeks to Rolleston coalmine and establishment of the Granite Creek bulk supply substation in the Miriam Vale shire, which will be completed in March 2007. Ergon Energy will also spend \$10 million on defect remediation in 2005 and a further \$8.8 million in 2006. Significant parts of central Queensland, especially the western region, are serviced by single-wire earth return networks, and Ergon Energy will invest \$119 million for maintenance, system augmentation and supply improvements to this network over the next five years. A further \$59 million to address additional supply-side and demand-side management initiatives and quality of supply issues will also be invested.

Finally, CS Energy is hard at work in this region on a number of projects, including construction of a pipeline which will carry approximately 27,500 megalitres of water 15 kilometres from Stag Creek Gorge along Callide Creek to Callide Dam each year. This water-saving initiative will save 3,000 megalitres of water a year, water that was previously lost in watercourse seepage. The project highlights the increasing focus on one of our nation's most valuable natural resources. CS Energy also recently completed the first overhaul of a supercritical coal-fired electricity generation unit in Australia at a cost of \$8 million. The 250 contractors on site injected a considerable amount into the local economy, with over 40,000 hours worked in just three weeks with no time lost for injury.

Clearly there is a lot happening in this part of the world. The Queensland government will continue to work closely with its energy utilities to ensure Queenslanders have access to a continued reliable and cost-competitive energy supply.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Safety of Public Transport

**Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.20 am): Today the Beattie government will launch a campaign to strengthen the safety of public transport in regional Queensland, including Rockhampton. The second wave of terrorist attacks on Bali is a chilling reminder that terrorists can attack anywhere, anytime and that Queensland must be prepared. Our public awareness campaign is a deliberate strategy to prompt public transport users to report suspicious items and suspicious behaviour. The campaign, which starts this week in Rockhampton, aims to keep public transport services safe by alerting passengers to the potential for terrorist attacks. People will be reminded of the risks and will be urged to report suspicious items, such as unattended bags or suspicious behaviour, to transport staff or to the national security hotline, 1800123400.

Terrorism is no longer a world away—it is a very real possibility—which is why all the state, territory and Commonwealth governments are working together on this issue. We have liaised with other governments in developing the campaign, which is a critical part of the state government's counter terrorism strategy.

Advertising starts this week in the *Morning Bulletin*, and over the next week the people of Rockhampton will start seeing posters on buses and ferries and in bus interchanges, the railway station, the Keppel Bay ferry terminal and Queensland Transport's customer service centre. The campaign will roll out in Mackay, Townsville and Cairns in the coming months. Trained national security hotline operators will assess all calls and determine whether to quickly direct them to security agencies, including the Queensland Police Service.

We have more than 9,000 kilometres of railway network in Queensland over and above our bus routes. It is not physically possible to protect them from terrorist attacks. As the Prime Minister said after the London bombings, 'It's a sad reality that Australia was a terrorist target, but it's important that the country was prepared for the unthinkable.'

Our greatest asset is the thousands of public transport staff and the millions of passengers who use public transport each year. Security is everyone's responsibility. I urge people to be extra vigilant in these troubling times—to be our eyes and ears.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Beef Industry

**Hon. CP CUMMINS** (Kawana—ALP) (Minister for Small Business, Information Technology Policy and Multicultural Affairs) (10.22 am): The beef industry is vital to the economic prosperity of Queensland. Our industry is a world leader in innovation and cutting-edge technology. To maintain our position, the industry is taking advantage of everything the Smart State has to offer. In fact, other states look to us as well. Yesterday the Beattie government announced \$505,000 in funding for Beef Expo 2006 and a further \$800,000 in order to leverage a possible \$5.4 million from the federal government for

the National Livestock Identification Scheme to reduce the future cost of tags. This brings our expenditure on NLIS to \$17.2 million. On the job's front, the Queensland beef industry provides more than 24,700 jobs statewide and is worth \$3.2 billion per annum, a large proportion of which comes from the beef capital itself. It is Rocky operators like Australian Meat Holdings and Teys Bros that deliver these benefits to our economy.

Today I can announce that the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries' Toowoomba Veterinary Laboratory has been selected for a two-year feasibility study to find whether testing for enhanced surveillance of TSEs could be done at a regional centre. TSEs include mad cow disease in cattle, and the testing is part of a national program to demonstrate Australia's freedom from the diseases. This will maintain our overseas trading partners' confidence in the quality and safety of Australian meat, of major importance to not only the industry but also the state and national economies. The producers I met at the saleyards at Gracemere yesterday were well aware of the importance of the National Livestock Identification Scheme to ensure the quality of our beef from paddock to plate.

This meat and livestock association project run by Animal Health Australia and the Toowoomba Veterinary Laboratory will examine whether a regional facility can be established to deliver this invaluable service. The testing was previously being done at the CSIRO Australian Animal Health laboratory at Geelong but has been shifted to Toowoomba. It involves a rapid screening test routinely used in Europe, Japan and North America. The national TSE steering committee has visited Toowoomba and commended laboratory staff on the progress they have made with the technology and the development of the TSE testing laboratory, which will test around 2,000 samples a year from around the country. This is just another example of how we are helping to maintain the value of Queensland's most valuable agricultural export.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Regional Sitzings of Parliament, Rockhampton

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.26 am): Ever since the former member for Keppel, Vince Lester, suggested that regional parliament should come to central Queensland, the people of this area have been looking forward to this opportunity. The real test of this parliament will be what it leaves behind for the people of central Queensland, whether they live in Rockhampton, on the Capricorn Coast or south, north or west of here. We have heard much from the government this morning about what it is promising. We have heard many promises reannounced this morning, but there are some fundamental issues which need to be addressed by this government and it cannot leave without addressing these issues.

I turn my attention to the Yeppoon Hospital on the Capricorn Coast and an announcement made by the government prior to the last state election to build a new hospital on a greenfield site with an associated nursing home.

**Mr Beattie** interjected.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** We have a government which has been welshing on that agreement ever since. This government must make a commitment which it must fulfil. The people of the Capricorn Coast and this region must be in no doubt when the government leaves. The Premier interjected that it will be \$8 million. The government said \$16 million at the last election.

Issues in relation to the emergency department at the Rockhampton Hospital must be addressed. The Capricorn Coast and also the Nathan Dam are issues which have dragged on under this government over a long period of time—in fact, over seven years now. We have heard about a crocodile management plan this morning which is not a crocodile management plan. This government has said that it is happy to track crocodiles, but it is not happy to track paedophiles. This government does not care about the kids that kayak and canoe along the river, the concerns that those people have and the cancellation of some of those very important community events here as a consequence.

### Queensland Health

**Mr PEARCE** (Fitzroy—ALP) (10.28 am): Over recent months we have heard nothing but bad news about Queensland Health. Horrific stories coming out of the Bundaberg Hospital inquiry have understandably caused the community to become anxious about health services. Unfortunately, there tends to be a focus on the bad news and little effort put into the good news about what is happening in Queensland Health.

As an elected representative of people working closely with the grassroots of Queensland Health, I see thousands of dedicated health professionals working hard every day to deliver quality health care to the community. I see doctors and specialists, both Australian and overseas trained, working long hours to deliver the highest standards of health care. I see a health service that is equal to or better than any health service in the world, and it is an insult to the health workers of this state to suggest that we

have a health system that is like that of a Third World nation. Fair dinkum, where are these fools coming from when they start knocking the health system in the way that they do?

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr PEARCE:** There are management issues, and I can see on reading the Forster report that there is a lot of work to be done.

**Miss Elisa Roberts** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gympie, I warn you under 253.

**Mr PEARCE:** There is a lot of work that needs to be done, but this government will get on and do that hard job. What about the good work being done every hour of the day in our hospitals and through our health service? Every day in Queensland Health around 3,300 people are treated in accident and emergency departments; just over 7,000 are cared for in public hospitals; 24,000 outpatients receive services; 900 to 1,000 receive day-only procedures; 90 to 100 babies are born; and just over 500 women are screened for breast cancer. I am proud of the health system that we have in Queensland. I am proud of the health workers and I am proud to stand here and say that they are doing a good job in central Queensland.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Forster Report

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (10.30 am): My question without notice is to the Premier, who is not quite so far away today. I refer the Premier to 10 August when, responding to a question, he said—

These inquiries were not set up by the man on the moon. We set them up as a government to advance those areas of health that need improving. We are not going to cover anything up.

The Premier commissioned the Forster report. He paid for it with taxpayers' money. His government owns that report and all its associated drafts on behalf of the taxpayers of Queensland. The Premier said nothing is going to be covered up but has offered a private briefing only to discuss the draft. Will the Premier now release the Forster draft report so that all Queenslanders can be sure that he has not sanitised it and will not try to explain it away and that there is nothing embarrassing to his government in that draft report?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for his question. Subsequent to the issue raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who gets paid \$26,000 more than the deputy leader of the coalition—he can swap any time—I had one of my staff talk to Peter Forster. Peter Forster's view about this is very simple. He says that it is a working document.

**Mr Springborg** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Hang on. Just be patient.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Opposition, you have asked your question. Allow the Premier to answer.

**Mr BEATTIE:** He said that it is a working document. As a professional, he would prefer not to release the working document, the reason for that being that it was just that—a working document. It was not the final document. The final document that I tabled on Friday incorporated the clear thrust of the draft document. Peter Forster offered to sit down with the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party, who is so far back I cannot see him—

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, that is a cheap shot from the Premier. You explained the reason for that this morning.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, I did state that earlier on.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I withdraw. Let me come back to the point. Peter Forster offered to brief both the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party and to sit down and go through the document with them. The bottom line is: has the Leader of the Opposition rung him?

**Mr Springborg** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** No, he has not rung him. Has the Leader of the Liberal Party rung him? No. Neither of them have rung him. The Leader of the Opposition is not serious about this and he knows it. He has not rung him because he does not want to know what is in it.

**Mr Springborg** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Opposition, I warn you under standing order 253.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Let me make it really clear to the people of Queensland.

**Dr Flegg** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Moggill, I warn you under standing order 253.

**Mr BEATTIE:** The usual attack by the Leader of the National Party, the Leader of the Opposition, is to try to undermine any reforms in the health system. That is what he does. Here is a man who provided a draft that was incorporated in the final report and who offered to sit down with the Leader of the Opposition and go through it and the Leader of the Opposition has not even bothered to ring him and neither has the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Let me make it clear: I will ring Peter Forster later today and I will indicate to him that I will be releasing the report. I have no issues to hide in relation to this, but I have some respect for his professional integrity. I will tell him that, because of the stupid political games played by the Leader of the Opposition, I do not want there to be any doubt about this. When the Leader of the Opposition sees that draft report I will tell him what he will find. He will find that it is incorporated in the final report. All we have seen from him is the typical silly nonsense to try to undermine the health system. It will be released and then the Leader of the Opposition will owe Peter Forster an apology.

### Davies Inquiry

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** My second question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to the evidence provided by his hand-picked Deputy Director-General, Dr Gerry FitzGerald, to the Davies inquiry on 29 September. In his testimony, Dr FitzGerald agreed that he had said on or about 22 March that Dr Patel was neither the best surgeon nor the worst surgeon in the Queensland health system. His Deputy DG said that he had formed this view on the 'data from various hospitals' across Queensland. Will the Premier now release this data on which Dr FitzGerald based his assessment or will he continue to cover it up so that we have rogue people operating in the system?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I do not have with me details of the information to which Dr FitzGerald referred. However, let me remind the Leader of the Opposition that these matters are before a royal commission established by my government. I would be quite prepared to write to Commissioner Davies today and indicate to Commissioner Davies that the Leader of the Opposition has asked this question—I will put it in context, of course—and, in doing so, indicate to Commissioner Davies that it would be the government's view that we would welcome any supporting material on which Dr FitzGerald had any reliance being released in his final report.

It is important that, while the Leader of the Opposition has no respect for the law, I do, and it is important that the Premier of the day and the government have respect for the law. The Leader of the Opposition is never satisfied. All he is interested in is cheap politics. We have a commission of inquiry that has been established—established by a former retired judge of very high standing. He is held in high standing by all sides of politics—by the people who support the opposition, as few as they are, and the people who support us. Every one of them knows that this man is a man of integrity. Every one of them has faith in him. At that inquiry he ensured that the appropriate questions were asked of Dr FitzGerald. Dr FitzGerald gave honest answers. Any material on which he relied I am quite happy to be released, but that is a matter that is before a royal commission. They are appropriate matters that need to be considered by Commissioner Davies. I will write to Commissioner Davies today and I will highlight the Leader of the Opposition's question and I will point out that, in my view, any material on which he relied should be released publicly, including that referred to by Dr FitzGerald.

### Health System

**Mr PEARCE:** My question without notice is to the Premier. There has been much debate about the far-reaching final report on the review of Queensland Health systems which found that Queensland Health is performing as well as any other health service in Australia but that all health systems are under the same pressure. I ask: what is the Premier doing to ensure that there is a national approach to this problem?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I thank the honourable member for his question. It is delightful to be in his region, and I thank him, too, for being one of the people supporting the parliament being held here. I will be writing today to all the other premiers and territory leaders and I will be highlighting the essence of the report from Peter Forster, which points out that there are many issues at a national level that need to be addressed if we are going to resolve these health issues. I have a draft of the letter with me, and I am happy to let the Leader of the Opposition have the draft as well. The letter says—

The final report of a five-month independent review of Queensland health systems points out that all state and territory health systems are facing major problems in continuing to deliver their present level of health services.

The letter goes on—

The report says—

That is the Forster report—

"that if demand for health and hospital services keeps trending the way that it has been in recent years, then greater and greater percentages of gross domestic product will be required to support health care."

That is the ageing of the population, the baby boomers who are coming through the system, confronting every state, not just Queensland. The letter goes on—

It says—

That is the report—

options to deal with this issue include increasing taxes, means-tested co-payments and rationing or withdrawing from certain health services.

All of these are ugly issues that Peter Forster refers to. The letter continues—

It warns: "Without significant changes to the way services are delivered and funded at both State and Commonwealth level, rationing of public health services in the future is likely to get worse."

That is what Peter Forster said. The letter continues—

It says: "Fiscal projections of future health expenditure requirements serve to reinforce the need to fundamentally change the way the Australian health system is structured in the future.

It found that the current system of mixed roles and responsibilities for funding and delivering health services between the Commonwealth and the states is a major barrier to health service improvements.

Of course we want a change in what is happening nationally. Of course we want the other states to work with us to end up with a national assessment. Peter Forster took the view that there should be a national review. I will write to him in these terms—

I ask you to join me in seeking the national review advocated by the report and in urging the Prime Minister to channel his Budget surplus into state and territory health systems, where it is so obviously urgently needed, instead of making tax cuts.

I table that draft letter for the information of the House, and I say this: I hope for once—and I know I am probably an optimist by nature—that we can get some bipartisan support to try to get the Commonwealth government to work with us and the other states in Australia to come up with a better system. Last week all the Labor states and territories sat down with a Liberal Prime Minister, and what did we do? We agreed on the fight against terrorism together. We got united bipartisan support. It is a shame that we do not have that level of maturity here. It is a shame we cannot get that same bipartisan support in Queensland.

### Health System

**Mr QUINN:** My question is also directed to the Premier. Despite the fact that the government has had eight years in which to fix the Queensland health system, can the Premier explain why, on top of all the other problems affecting our health system, in the past few days the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Princess Alexandra Hospital, Redcliffe and Gold Coast hospitals have all been placed on bypass alert and the Logan Hospital has been ordered to close 15 beds as a cost-saving measure?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am happy to answer that question. I thank the Leader of the Liberal Party for his question. My government has been in office for just over seven years and in that time we have increased health expenditure by 60 per cent. We are closer now to national average funding for health than at any time in the history of Queensland.

**Miss Simpson** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Maroochydore, I warn you under standing order 253.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Recently, with the support of the Deputy Premier, the health minister and the minister for industrial relations, the Queensland government negotiated an agreement with the visiting medical officers and our in-house doctors to get to a national standard. That has never happened in Queensland's history. It never happened under a National-Liberal government. It is the first time ever that we have got close to the national standard of paying our doctors properly. I made it clear when we embarked on this very politically dangerous course of having a royal commission—which was not set up by the man on the moon; it was set up by this government—and by asking Peter Forster to do a report that at the end of it we would come forward with pragmatic and sensible strategies to improve the health system.

Those opposite have heard from the health minister and me details of some of the solutions that will be needed to fix the system, but they are not satisfied with that. They are not satisfied with Peter Forster's report. All weekend and ever since Peter Forster's report came down, we have had attempts to undermine it. The Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party are only interested in politics; they are not concerned about patients or Queenslanders. Well, we are.

Let me come back to the particular details raised by the Leader of the Liberal Party. We have a coordinated strategy existing between hospitals about providing comprehensive care. I say to the Leader of the Liberal Party that each one of those hospitals has to act in a coordinated way. How crazy would it be if they acted as individual units? You name the number of hospitals. They interface with one another.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Guys, do you want to hear this answer or do you just want to be rude? If you are happy to be rude, I am happy to wait. If you want an answer, don't be rude.

**Mr McArdle** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Caloundra, I warn you under standing order 253.

**Mr BEATTIE:** There is a coordinated approach where, from time to time, hospitals will go on bypass. If there has been a number of major accidents, for example, or there is a bus collision in any area—

**Mr Copeland** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Do you want an answer or do you just want to be rude as well?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Cunningham, I warn you under standing order 253.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am happy to give you sensible answers; all I ask is for some good manners, which is something your mother should have taught you a long time ago. I want to make this point: it is a sensible strategy to ensure that if there is a large demand at one hospital other patients are treated at another nearby hospital. This may surprise the Leader of the Liberal Party, but some hospitals like the Mater and the PA are very close; they are actually within walking distance of each other.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the member for Mackay, I want to warn honourable members that once they are warned under standing order 253 the next step is they are going to leave the chamber.

### Coalition Agreement

**Mr MULHERIN:** My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Last week the Premier highlighted the constitutional issues plaguing the Liberals' and Nationals' search for a coalition of equals. Can the Premier inform the House whether there are any particular preselection problems confronting the Liberal Party?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I thank the member for Mackay.

**Mr Quinn** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Liberal Party, I warn you under standing order 253.

**Mr BEATTIE:** We have had two questions from the Leader of the National Party about what draft reports I will provide. I would like to call on the Leader of the National Party and the Leader of the Liberal Party to table their coalition agreement. If you have an agreement, table it in the House. I urge you today, if you have an agreement, to table it. Come on, let's see it.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, can you direct your comments through the chair, please?

**Mr BEATTIE:** Thank you, Mr Speaker; I will. If we are going to have accountability and openness, where is the agreement? There is not a secret agreement that they are hiding from the people of Queensland, is there? The coalition have a secret draft agreement. The coalition have a secret, secret draft agreement. They cannot have it both ways. You know what it is called? It starts with 'h' in the dictionary, and I will not say it because I am a gentleman. Those opposite talk about accountability. The people of Queensland are entitled to see the coalition agreement and I urge them to table it in the House today.

Let us look at how the Liberal Party operates. I was interested to see that the Liberal Party chose its candidate for Clayfield on the weekend. There was so much enthusiasm, because the member for Chatsworth does a lot of organising in these things. There were two candidates. There were 180 Liberal Party members who turned up. Councillor Nicholls defeated Sally Hannah by just two votes, but there was such enthusiasm in this that a large number of Liberal Party executive members turned up. There were so many that they had to have a ballot to see who was going to participate in the ballot. Do members know who lost and who was sent home? It was the Lord Mayor, Campbell Newman. He was not even given a vote. To make it worse, the Prime Minister's representative was also sent home. He was defeated. Senator Ian Macdonald, who had flown all the way from north Queensland to be at this Liberal Party preselection, was told, 'Nick off, we don't want you. You're gone.'

What sort of a system of preselection is this? The honourable member for Chatsworth will sit back there because he got his factional mate up, but I say to the Lord Mayor of Brisbane: Campbell, we know you are in the Liberal Party, we know you are a decent bloke. I will send you a membership application form. We at least value the job you are doing for Brisbane.

What sort of a system is this when the Lord Mayor of Brisbane is excluded from having a vote and the Prime Minister does not even get a say? Talk about factional politics! The member for Chatsworth can explain all this, but they ended up in the position of excluding the Prime Minister's representative and the Lord Mayor. Do members know who lost? The Leader of the Liberal Party and the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party both got rolled. That is what happened. You both got done and you know you got done. You know we support you, Bob, over the member for Chatsworth; we will always stick with you.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, refer to members by their electorate.

### Yeppoon Hospital

**Mr SEENEY:** My question without notice is directed to the Premier. His government promised at the 2004 state election to build a new hospital at Yeppoon. He also promised to build a new nursing home at Yeppoon. The promise was a reannouncement of an announcement that was made in 2002 when he promised 'to construct a new \$10 million, 72-bed nursing home colocated with a planned new hospital at Yeppoon'. Can I ask the question that the member for Keppel should be asking: when will he stop promising and reannouncing and deliver to the people of Yeppoon the new hospital and the new nursing home that they so badly need?

**Mr BEATTIE:** It is a dorothy dixer. The member aims to please, I know. I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for his question. I gave very clear commitments in relation to the Yeppoon Hospital. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is aware of that. I just ask the member opposite to stay tuned because—

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Callide!

**Mr BEATTIE:** Do not get impatient. The member knows as well as I do that there have been some issues about the negotiation of the site. I am happy to tell the member that, as I understand it, these negotiations have now been resolved. We have peace in our time; we have happiness in our time. The Minister for Health will be making an appropriate announcement about where it will be built. I would be surprised if that did not happen before the end of this week, but I thank the member for the question.

### Housing, Central Queensland

**Mr HOOLIHAN:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. As rents continue to rise and traditional forms of affordable housing are lost in the private rental market, there has been a growing trend for singles wanting housing assistance. Can the minister please inform the House what projects the Department of Housing has under way to meet this changing demand in the central Queensland region?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I thank the honourable member for his ongoing support for the people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness in his electorate. I also want to place on record the solid effort that he has put in to try to find an alternative site for the Yeppoon Hospital. I know, as the minister for public works, just how much effort the member has put in. That would not have been necessary if the National Party had not built that hospital right on the coast where it is now deemed to be unsatisfactory. If it is unsatisfactory now, why was it built there in the first place? We could have a new hospital there right now, and Jim Pearce knows that better than anybody. Well done in sticking with it, member for Keppel.

The assistance that the member has also given us with the Adelaide Park site in terms of finding a site for 20 single units which will form a boarding house there has also been appreciated. These things are not easy, as members well know. The Tories who sit opposite are never knock-up in being unhelpful at finding these sorts of sites. This side of politics does understand the reality of the need for boarding houses in Queensland. They are an initiative of the Labor government. I am very thankful for the support of the member for Keppel in finding the site at Adelaide Park Road, which we have now purchased for around \$385,000. We will spend between \$2 million and \$3 million putting that site together.

It will be very similarly approached in Rockhampton in Denham Street, where we have just purchased land for a similar site. We have intentions to do the same in Mackay, Gladstone, Gympie and Hervey Bay. The reality is that we believe the Boarding House Program is a very efficient way of dealing with the burgeoning problem that we have in terms of homelessness, especially amongst single people. The member for Keppel has acquainted me, on a number of occasions, with the continued pressure that is occurring on the Capricorn Coast as rents continue to escalate and the lower end of the market dissipates. The boarding houses have simply dried up. If it was not for the Queensland government's initiative in boarding houses—the \$235 million homelessness project that we have, and specifically the \$50 million that we have set aside in this budget for boarding houses—then we would be in worse straits than we are.

Of course, all of that is falling on deaf ears in the federal government, which continues to hack away at capital funding, knowing full well that the private sector response to boarding houses has basically been to close them down. By dint of fact that there is no support for boarding houses in Queensland from a federal government point of view, the reality is that it is completely up to the state. That is why we are finding it difficult to continue to meet demand. But we will continue to build housing units in places like Yeppoon, where we get local members who are on side to help with the difficult issue of finding sites. That goes for every member on this side of the parliament, I might add. I have never had any problems with any member on this side of the House in those terms—unlike the Tories who sit opposite.

### Dolphin Feeding, Tin Can Bay

**Miss ELISA ROBERTS:** My question is to the minister for the environment. In response to the community outrage over the minister's decision to end dolphin feeding at Tin Can Bay without allowing any discussion, investigation, consultation or compromise in regard to my representations or those made by residents of Tin Can Bay, will the minister defer a definitive decision and allow the dolphins to be monitored over a three-month period to determine the true situation regarding the dolphins' health and safety?

**Ms BOYLE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. It is an important question for people who live in the Tin Can Bay area. Quite widespread concern has been expressed in the local newspapers about the announcement I made that the feeding of dolphins at Tin Can Bay has to stop. I understand their disappointment and their concern about that, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to explain the decision.

In fact, a little bit of history is necessary. A special arrangement had been reached with the previous owner of the cafe at that spot in recognition of the long-time feeding of several dolphins in that area. That was actually against the Nature Conservation Act because the feeding of wild dolphins or any other wild animals is, of course, prohibited. It is not a good thing for their safety or their health. Nonetheless, we had made this special arrangement that was only for the life of the two dolphins that were being fed at that time. It was a small proportion of their daily feeding so that they would not lose their ability to live in the natural environment. That arrangement was to end with the lessee of that cafe.

A new lessee took over this year and professed not to know about that arrangement and has since called for a change to the arrangement. He wants to feed dolphins more regularly, more often, for longer periods with more fish and create a bigger tourist attraction. I understand that he wants to do that. I have been very reasonable in giving him over three months to put in a submission. He certainly took his time to write it. I have to tell honourable members that the disappointing thing is that the submission shows no understanding of these amazing and wild animals—none at all—of the safety and health risks that exist in luring them into the port with fish. The lessee has increased the feeding of the dolphins and the number of dolphins he is feeding. His submission calls for no limitation on the hours of feeding or the numbers of dolphins he feeds. It just defies all good sense in terms of these amazing animals.

I understand that people want to get close to them; dolphins are very special. But for their safety and their health, the closest that human beings should get to wild dolphins in their natural environment is observing them at a distance. We can transmit various kinds of germs, flus and viruses on our hands through the fish. We lure dolphins into ports. They are at risk from striking by boats, from bait, from ingesting fuel spills that are in the water and sewage outfalls in the water. It is not healthy for them to be lured into coastal waters where they are put at risk. I stand by my decision. I gave the operator of the cafe a fair go. I have had a look at his submission. It is not reasonable. It has to come to an end.

### Beef Expo 2006

**Ms JARRATT:** My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier and minister for state development and trade. Yesterday the Premier announced that the Australian Beef Expo 2006 in Rockhampton has attracted \$505,000 in support. What level of support has the minister's department extended, and are there any initiatives that will further highlight this support?

**Ms BLIGH:** I thank the honourable member for her question and for her interest in this important event. It is entirely responsible that the Beattie government has reaffirmed Rockhampton's status as the beef capital of Australia by committing \$505,000 to support next year's Beef Expo. Beef Australia 2006, to be held in May, will be the seventh triennial Australian Beef Expo held in Rockhampton. I think it is again going to be a great event, and it will attract international and national interest.

The Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation has committed \$80,000 in cash and \$30,000 in-kind support to make this expo everything that it can be. We are pleased to be supporting Jeff Murphy and Beef Australia to further develop a globally competitive and sustainable Queensland beef industry.

To enhance this year's expo, I am pleased to advise the House that the Rockhampton Tourist and Business Information Board has developed a very innovative competition. It is called Put a Bull in Your Front Yard. Today, as part of the Beef Expo lead-up promotions, the Premier and I, at the free civic barbecue, will unveil State Development's entry into this competition. It is a \$1,600 fibreglass bull and it will be called Exportabull. It will join other themed bulls across Rocky's business houses, residences, schools and nightspots in promoting the expo in a clever and attention-grabbing way.

The bull competition is a great way to promote the Beef Expo and play a role in it that is going to make a great difference. Exportabull was purchased from a local business, Custom Fibreglass in Knight Street, North Rockhampton. As I said, it is a \$1,600 bull and it has been painted by the new local firm Mug Shots.

Examples of other themed bulls around town include a local law firm which has purchased a bull called Liabull and a local watering hole which has purchased Unquenchabull. I understand the local



member, Minister Schwarten, has a small bull in his own office that is called Accountabull, Respectabull and Electabull.

I would like to challenge the opposition to make some entries. As members know, this theatre is named after Rocky's most affable Liberal and former member Rex Pilbeam. It is simply despicable that the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party rejected coming here to Rockhampton for this historic sitting. This position is laughable. The position of those opposite on this very sitting makes it clear that they could only enter 'Irreconcilabull'.

Rex Pilbeam would be shattered if he was alive to see a Liberal deny his beloved city such a great event. Rex would think that voting for today's Liberals was simply 'unthinkabull'. I want to thank the member for Moggill for giving us all the opportunity to talk about Rockhampton because, for those of us on this side of the House, Rockhampton: you used to look good to us, but now we find you simply irresistible.

### Health System

**Dr FLEGG:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer the minister to the critical shortage of operational hospital beds resulting in the inability of emergency departments and ambulances to find beds for their seriously ill patients. This access block has recently been referred to as capacity alert, bypass and—the latest terminology being used by ambulance officers—ramp up as their ambulances sit up the ramp waiting to try to discharge patients. Do all these terms just not mean that we do not have beds for patients? Would it not be better to fix the problem than invent new euphemisms?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The simple answer is: watch this space. I am the first person to acknowledge that our health system is, in fact, under pressure. The events over the last number of weeks, during the busiest time of year for our hospitals, nevertheless highlight the growth pressures that our health system is under. The challenge for the Beattie government, as the Premier has said repeatedly, is for us to respond to those pressures. Those pressures were highlighted quite graphically in the Forster review—the Forster review that the member has been so critical of over the last number of days.

I have noticed a few comments that the member has been making around the place. Of course there was the nonsense alleging that the Premier had refused to release Forster's draft report.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** That was absolute rubbish and those opposite know it. The day before the Premier had stood in the parliament and had actually told those opposite that it was Forster himself who had said no to the release of that draft report. Despite that those opposite carried on with the dishonesty.

The second issue is the allegation against Peter Forster himself in terms of his report with respect to the number of jobs that will be reduced as a result of the recommendations contained in his report. I refer the honourable member to a transcript of an interview with Mr Forster this morning on Brisbane 612. He was asked a question by Steve Austin with respect to the proportion of so-called operational people versus the bureaucracy. This is what Forster had to say—

It is incorrect Steve. Eighty per cent of everybody that is employed in the health service or involved directly with delivering services to patients whether that be the wards people in our hospitals, the people who are preparing food, the people who are doing the cleaning services or in fact our many clinicians. In fact our nurses and doctors and allied health professionals make up over 50 per cent of the numbers. So only 19 per cent of the total number would be what we call administrative or managerial staff. When we look at our hospitals there are less of those administrative people than there are in comparable hospitals in other states.

There it is from the mouth of Peter Forster himself. He is making a comparison between our hospital system and the size of our bureaucracy vis-a-vis interstate. What did he find? He found that we are running administratively leaner than comparable hospitals interstate. Yet the member continues to perpetuate the nonsense that he has been going around saying, and that is that Queensland Health is top heavy.

He has made some specific recommendations in terms of reducing numbers at head office. That is true—162. It is about time that Dr Flegg was a bit honest with the people of Queensland in his commentary about health issues. There it is from Peter Forster himself in terms of the mix between the bureaucracy and operational people. It is about time the member started telling the truth.

### Bauhinia Regional Rail Project

**Mr LEE:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Could the minister please inform the House of the progress of the Bauhinia regional rail project—the line linking the new Rolleston coalmine to the Blackwater coal system?

**Mr LUCAS:** I thank the honourable member for his question. It is always good to give those opposite a lesson in what we on this side of the House do in terms of rail. In fact, the member for Chatsworth sought to give us a bit of a lesson the other day in his maiden speech. He was bragging about rail lines and the like. He mentioned Sir Thomas Hiley, who was the member for Chatsworth and

Treasurer in 1965 when the crowd opposite closed down the Gold Coast railway line and ripped up the other half of Queensland's railway lines.

It is an exciting time for transport development in Queensland.

**Mr Malone** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Mirani, this is your final warning.

**Mr LUCAS:** It is a particularly exciting time for rail. This massive Bauhinia rail project is well ahead of schedule. I am pleased to announce that QR ran the first commercial coal train on the line last night. That train passed through Rocky last night just after 7 pm, hauling 8,000 tonnes of coal. It is a vital link in hauling export coal from Xstrata's new mine to the port of Gladstone.

The Premier indicated earlier that the Coordinator-General has signed off on the major project status for the Wiggins Island expansion. It is 70 million tonnes. The Leader of the Opposition was babbling on in the *Courier-Mail* about infrastructure of which he knows nothing. In Brisbane it is three and a half million tonnes of coal. Some 70 million tonnes is eventually going to go out of Gladstone under that project.

Projects like the Bauhinia regional rail project create vital transport links between the new reserves of Queensland coal and the lucrative export market. The completion of skeleton track work was seven weeks ahead of schedule, despite delays due to unseasonably heavy rains in May and June. It is a wonderful project when one goes out there. One can see the modern track-laying machines and how quickly they can lay sleepers. The last of 160,000 sleepers were laid in September at the 103 kilometre mark near the coal loading facility at the time. I inspected it earlier this year. Completion of track laying, top soiling, site tidying, landscaping and corridor fencing has all been undertaken.

This is the longest rail line to be built in Queensland for the past two decades. It is part of the \$335 million Blackwater system enhancement program. Why do we support this? Because coal exports create jobs. They not only create jobs in central Queensland, in Brisbane and in other parts but also provide us with revenue from QR commercial services to pay for our teachers, our police and our nurses. That is what they do and that is why we support it so strongly. That is why we will leave no stone unturned to get that coal up and out of the country with no help from the Commonwealth government.

Those opposite never say anything about infrastructure expenditure that will help. They do nothing about the Toowoomba second range crossing or rail lines anywhere on to the Darling Downs. QR has won every coal contract in Queensland that was up for competition in its time. It has also won 12 per cent of the Hunter Valley market. That is a wonderful achievement by QR in this outcome. We are happy to say, 'Keep on hauling it out. Keep on paying the royalties because we want them. They are well spent and very much appreciated.'

### Fire Ants

**Mr HORAN:** My question without notice is to the acting minister for the primary industries. I refer the minister to the announcement that a further 2,400 hectares of land around Rochedale has been declared as a fire ant restricted area after new infestations were found. There are 1,200 properties in this area that are known to be infested. Will the minister advise how many of these properties have actually been treated? Has this information been included in reports to Australia's Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council? Or has it been deliberately concealed as the department embarks on the Beattie Labor government's latest campaign to deny and smear whistleblowers?

**Mr CUMMINS:** I would like to thank the member for the question. Sadly, the pretext of the question is well out of order. At no time would the department or this government ever try to hide the facts. The one point of the question that he did get correct is that the Fire Ant Eradication Program is audited by the federal, state and territory governments as they commit funds to it.

We will not try to besmirch or belittle anyone who wishes to come forward with information. I saw that the member opposite made outrageous claims in the paper on the weekend. If he has any of the facts, he will table them. I have called on him to do that, and he has not. The Beattie government is committed to the eradication of fire ants—

**Mr HORAN:** I rise to a point of order. Those facts are with the CMC.

**Mr CUMMINS:** I will not comment on the process before the CMC. He has been in politics long enough to know that there is an investigation going on and it would be inappropriate to bring those issues up.

The Beattie government is committed to the eradication of fire ants in Queensland. Fire ants are one of the world's most invasive pests and no country has successfully eradicated them. A \$175 million six-year fire ant eradication campaign is being managed by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. The Fire Ant Control Centre in Brisbane has effectively implemented an eradication strategy funded nationally and overseen nationally for the last four years.

At the weekend the *Sunday Mail* reported that the Crime and Misconduct Commission was examining complaints made by a former staffer. As acting minister, I cannot and will not pre-empt the CMC's deliberations. The department has cooperated with the CMC and will continue to do so. I was very disappointed that the National Party spokesman and his leader tried to pre-empt the CMC. I am particularly disappointed that the member for Toowoomba South linked the complaints with the commitment of other governments to continue to fund the program.

Further, at no time has the opposition asked for a briefing on this matter from the department or from my office. The National Party is ignorant on many things, including that the eradication campaign is overseen by a national consultative committee chaired by the Australian government—the Commonwealth chairs this committee—and that the eradication campaign has been the subject of an independent scientific review by a panel of overseas and Australian experts which stated that it was 'impressed with the overall progress made by the Fire Ant Control Centre to eradicate the red imported fire ant'. The panel said that it was impressed with the overall progress made by the Fire Ant Control Centre. It is also ignorant of the fact that the eradication campaign is subject to an external audit.

Time expired.

### Mining Industry, Emerald

**Mr ENGLISH:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. I refer to the minister's media release dated 24 August this year regarding a release of land for prospecting rights at Taraborah, west of Emerald. Could the minister provide an update on what sort of interest mining companies have shown in acquiring these exploration rights?

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a good question because the answer will give good news to Queensland. He mentioned an area called Taraborah, which is 26 kilometres west of Emerald. Emerald is a great area which is close to local infrastructure such as rail and so on. On 12 September I was able to call for expressions of interest to see whether people would like to mine this area. Since then we have received 10 expressions of interest—all of which are acceptable—from not only Queensland and the rest of Australia but also overseas. That proves that our coal is much needed and much appreciated by our buyers from overseas.

What do we have now? The good news is that the reserve is a moderate reserve of around 157 million tonnes. Some of it is thermal coal; some of it is the ordinary coal. However, about half of that coal reserve will be able to be mined through the open-cut method and the remainder will be able to be mined through the underground method.

The further good news is that north of this Taraborah reserve it appears that there are further reserves which we will also be able to have a look at. As the minister for transport said in answer to a question in relation to transport and rail infrastructure, the coal industry is an industry on which employment is greatly dependent here in Queensland. Our coal industry and our mining industry have now overtaken tourism as our No. 1 export earner.

I suggest to the students who are sitting here in the gallery that if they are interested in a good job, a long-term job and a well-paying job they should have a look at the mining industry, in particular the coalmining industry. If they do, they will become a part of the future of the mining industry here in Queensland. University courses and TAFE courses are all acceptable. As minister, I would really recommend to the students here that they consider a career in the mining industry. I want to say one final thing: this is really good news for Queensland and, more importantly, good news for central Queensland.

### Maroochy Shire Council, Development Application

**Mr WELLINGTON:** My question is to the minister for local government and the environment. Minister, I understand that last week the Maroochy Shire Council provided preliminary approval for the controversial Links development proposed for the Sunshine Coast hinterland at Montville, and as we speak there are many petitions being couriered for presentation to this parliament tomorrow. I ask: when does the minister anticipate that she will be in a position, under her call-in powers, to make a decision on whether to overturn the decision, resubmit the decision to council for reconsideration or approve the decision?

**Ms BOYLE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a very important question on the Sunshine Coast at this time—a question that has concerned so many residents that I have had a large number of emails and messages to my office, though I might say that these go back some good number of months. I will address the member's question specifically, but because the decision as yet is uncertain I will make some more general remarks on the issues that I believe bear on this particular decision.

The decision is not liked by many residents who do not see that the golf course and the resort are an appropriate development. But it goes further than that. My information presently is that the decision is outside the council's planning scheme. That, therefore, calls into question the validity of the decision. If

in fact it is so as reported, the councillors have supported and voted in favour of a development against the recommendation of their planners and against their own planning scheme.

This is an issue that concerns me generally with councils in the growth areas, where there are some councillors who, it seems, regard their planning scheme as some kind of a guideline. A planning scheme is a statutory document. Yes, of course there are some levels of discretion in there to allow for localised community concern and issues of the day, but it would seem that this is a decision that goes well beyond that. However, potentially even more serious than that are the reports that I have to this point in time that this development is outside the SEQ Regional Plan. The South East Queensland Regional Plan is an excellent plan. It is leading Australia. People from other states are in south-east Queensland at the moment studying what we have done and saying, 'We're going to have one of those.' What we have done for the metropolitan region of south-east Queensland—I must acknowledge the fact that it was led by the former Deputy Premier, Terry Mackenroth—is put in place a statutory plan, and that means it must be obeyed.

I am aware that the Premier, as the minister for regional planning, is also examining this. We both have call-in powers, and whether either of us uses them remains to be seen. What we have done is the right thing to do, and that is to give the council a 'please explain'. In the first instance, we have written to the council to say, 'What have you done? What are your reasons?' We will give it a fair chance to respond to that before we make our decision. I nonetheless take the opportunity to signal to all 18 councils in the south-east Queensland region that the South East Queensland Regional Plan is very serious business. The development industry as well as the building industry, all local government players and all residents need to know that that plan is dinky-di and that that will be the future blueprint for the region.

### Health Services

**Mr McNAMARA:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. Will the minister inform the House about any smart technology employed by Queensland Health to improve health services, in particular among regional and rural areas?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I thank the member for Hervey Bay for that question because he would know that in a dispersed state such as ours it is vital that we employ smart methods to improve the provision of health services in our communities. This includes smart forms of communication between our hospitals and our local doctors. That is why I am pleased to inform the House that an innovative system between public hospitals and GPs is catching on throughout Queensland.

Queensland Health's GP Connect allows GPs from Mount Isa to Brisbane to receive electronic pathology reports about their patients from hospitals. GPs in Rockhampton, Emerald, Gladstone and all the way to Longreach are using the service in central Queensland. Since it began in 2003 more than 2,300 GPs across the state have signed up to use the service which is bridging the gap between our health professionals.

Last month GP Connect reached a major milestone, having sent more than half a million pathology reports to doctors. Pathology staff predict a million reports next year as GP Connect grows in popularity. Queensland Health developed the system to improve the continuity of care between Queensland Health and local doctors. As such, it benefits GPs, their patients and all hospitals involved through improved communication and more efficient patient care. It is currently sending more than 20,000 results every month to more than 500 clinics. It is a godsend for many GPs in regional areas and, not surprisingly, they are the highest users. Put simply, this new system allows them to get results much faster for the benefit of both doctors and, most importantly, their patients. Some reports are also outcomes of tests ordered by Queensland Health doctors but copied to the patients' own GPs, hopefully reducing the amount of repeat testing.

The growing popularity of GP Connect falls in line with the Queensland Health systems review, which recommended that systems need to be designed with connectivity to external providers such as general practitioners, private hospitals and non-government organisations as a key consideration. Peter Forster's recommendations and observations in his interim report have not gone unnoticed, and preliminary discussions are under way to expand the technology's potential and send other messages such as radiology reports, hospital discharge summaries and public health alerts and instructions. It is important that the community understands that GP Connect offers a secure system with each pathology report encrypted using specialised software. The reports can be automatically imported into patient records, providing a more secure process than faxing. It also saves private practice staff time, negating the need to scan faxed reports and attach the report to the patient report. Hospitals also win from the technology by having a reduced reliance on other more time consuming forms of communication. It is available free of charge to any Queensland practice that has appropriate software.

We are serious about the review's recommendations, including those on information and communication systems. GP Connect is a shining example of Queensland Health already putting in place smart technology, working with GPs delivering smart health care.

### Capricornia School of Distance Education, Rockhampton Campus

**Mr COPELAND:** My question is for the Minister for Education and Minister for the Arts. As the minister knows, a true Smart State would never even speculate about closing any educational institutions, but Labor has refused to rule out the closure of the local school of distance education. In the interests of students, their parents, their families and staff, will the minister now give a commitment to keep open the Rockhampton campus of the Capricornia School of Distance Education? We should be keeping services in central Queensland, not closing them.

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gregory!

**Mr WELFORD:** The honourable member is needlessly fanning a scare campaign on this issue. The fact of the matter is that I have undertaken, together with the member for Fitzroy, to meet this afternoon with families representing students who have access to the Rockhampton campus of the Capricornia School of Distance Education to talk about the issues of concern that they may have in relation to the reorganisation of services that are being delivered from that campus. The primary campus for the Capricornia School of Distance Education for central Queensland is established in Emerald. It was established there under a coalition government, as I understand it, prior to 1990. In 1991 a Labor government established—

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Gregory, 253!

**Mr WELFORD:** In 1991 a Labor government established a branch of the campus here in Rockhampton because of the then inadequacy of HF radio connections for students in rural areas in this region. In more recent times the provision of distance education has been transferred to telephone communications which, of course, with modern technology are much more superior. So the capacity to deliver distance education, in effect, from anywhere in the state is now greatly enhanced by the telecommunications technology that is now available. Nevertheless, I understand that the availability of access to teachers in Rockhampton is a desirable feature of the service that the Capricornia School of Distance Education based in Emerald is able to provide to families. I will meet this afternoon to discuss that with families and look at ways in which we can at the least maintain the number of field services for students in this area and whether we can retain a teacher in the Rockhampton area to meet the needs of parents or students who might want to meet one of the teachers from the Emerald Distance Education Unit when they visit Rockhampton.

I will not make a final decision on the precise configuration of services that are going to be offered in Rockhampton until I meet with the families and discuss precisely what it is that they are seeking.

### National Livestock Identification Scheme

**Mr LIVINGSTONE:** My question without notice is to the Acting Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries. Is the minister aware of any recent comments supporting the National Livestock Identification Scheme?

**Mr CUMMINS:** A big yes, and I would like to thank the member for the question. Again, sadly, we have to correct misinformation from those opposite. I would like to quote from the *Pittsworth Sentinel* of Wednesday, 28 September 2005—

Chairman of the northern region of the Australian Livestock & Property Agents Association, Noel Grant, reported that the QuickTag system introduced by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries has been a phenomenal success.

Mr Grant went on to say—

The DPI&F NLIS QuickTag system has allowed 63,000 cattle valued at \$43 million to be sold in saleyards across the state during the last three months and a further 10,000 tags supplied for property-to-property movements.

Without QuickTags, the number of cattle going through saleyards would have been reduced as producers would have opted for either direct consignment to abattoirs or waiting for their own orders of NLIS tags to be delivered.

Mr Grant also said that the NLIS QuickTag system has allowed producers to capitalise on the present buoyant cattle market fuelled by unprecedented levels of competition in saleyards over the past three months. He said—

I acknowledge the tremendous cooperation that the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries has provided in the development and ongoing management of the QuickTag system.

He further went on to say—

The Queensland NLIS QuickTag system is far better than the emergency tail tags used in other states.

**Mr Hopper** interjected.

**Mr CUMMINS:** The member opposite does not like the good news, does he?

**Mr Hopper** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Darling Downs!

**Mr CUMMINS:** It means that tags are supplied to the livestock owner and cattle presented at the saleyards ready for reading ID numbers. There is less work for agents and that makes data handling easier for saleyard operators while ensuring that electronic traceability of stock is not compromised. He further went on to say—

Saleyard operators and agents are indebted to the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries for this quality solution.

Mr Grant said—

Both Quicktags and NLIS as a whole, are working extremely well in Queensland and the DPI&F, saleyard operators and agents should be congratulated on the way that they have worked together to make NLIS a success in Queensland.

That was last week. Yesterday the Queensland government and livestock industries finalised the business case to secure extra funding with an \$800,000 announcement. That is all good news for central Queensland.

## MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

### Beattie Government

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): Before the acting minister for primary industries hits his seat, it is obvious that he does not have a clue why the QuickTag system in Queensland is in such demand. It is in such demand because the system of NLIS tagging, the bulk ordering and the orders which have been placed by cattle producers in Queensland are so far behind that they now have no choice but to get QuickTags. Numerous people in my electorate ordered their NLIS tags some three months ago and are still waiting for them to come in the post, and they have paid a significant amount for them, some \$5 each.

We are now seeing duplication, where those people who have cattle and who are tailoring out because the feed is cut because of the dry weather are being forced to move their cattle and the only way they can move their cattle is to apply for QuickTags. So they are duplicating. They are now having to get QuickTags because this government is unable to provide them in a timely way with their NLIS tags, which they ordered some three months ago. How many members in this place know that? The minister does not know that. In the case of many producers they will have had to pay for two lots of tags because of this government's incompetence. The only thing they can do now is to get QuickTags because the other tags are not available. I will make the point again: these people have been waiting for up to three months, and if the government wants case examples we have a number of them and they are very close to home. The minister has failed in the fundamental obligation he has to make sure that his department, through the bulk purchasing system, delivers those tags in the first place.

In this place this morning we again heard the Premier and other ministers talk about many areas in which they are failing. The Premier has jumped up in this place and has sought to portray a line that the health system in Queensland is going really well. In the past he said it was the best in the world. Do members remember a couple of years ago when he got his spin doctor to publish the report and put it on the internet that said it was the best in the world? Now he is struggling for best in Australia and maybe world-class. So we have this gradual falling down the other side.

The Premier had the audacity to stand in this place this morning and seek to implicate other Australian states in the way that their health system is operating. We do not have the Dr Patels in the other Australian states. We do not have the Vincent Bergs in the other Australian states. We do not have the endemic crises of bullying in the other Australian states—bullying which we have been trying for years now to expose and which this government, led by its various ministers, has been seeking to deny over and over and over. Look at the way the government treated Wendy Erglis, look at the way the government treated Associate Professor Con Aroney, look at the way the government and its system responded to Toni Hoffman when she came forward to blow the whistle. In the government's view, anyone who comes forward with a concern is a whinger, somebody who themselves is the problem, not the system. So the Premier should not seek to rewrite history just for the sake of it.

The Premier said that he is now willing to work cooperatively with the Commonwealth government. At football finals time in 2004 when there was a Council of Australian Governments meeting called by the Prime Minister, with other Australian state and territory premiers, guess what they did when the Prime Minister came to the action item 'health'? They walked out for a photo opportunity in their respective team football jerseys. They wound up the COAG meeting. They walked out 12 months ago. Now we have the Premier trying to sheet the blame home to other Australian states and the Commonwealth government.

The other fact which everyone needs to know—it is important as we have many people here today—is that this government became absolutely addicted to overseas trained doctors. There is no problem with properly qualified overseas trained doctors. The problem is the government's incapacity to retain doctors who had been trained and accredited in our own state and our own country because of the culture of bullying and cover-up in the system which drove those people out. It became addicted to overseas trained doctors. I put this to the Premier during estimates this year and he said that he did not know what we were talking about.

Lo and behold, when Tony Morris was investigating this matter he said that the government became addicted to it—facts which we knew—because it could control these people. They come here on work visas and because they are on contracts the government can control them and get them to do what other doctors may not necessarily do. The majority of overseas trained doctors are no problem whatsoever and have extraordinary skills. While 20 per cent of the Australian population resides in Queensland, we have 40 per cent of overseas trained doctors. The reason we have such a high proportion of overseas trained doctors is this government's failure to properly address the issues about retaining the professionals that we need in the health system in Queensland.

The sad indictment on this government is that of the first lot of graduates from the undergraduate medical school at James Cook University half of them left Queensland. We heard more from the Premier in this place this morning about how he has placed ads in international journals and that there have been a number of internet hits on his web site from people wanting to come and work in Australia from Great Britain. I do not have a problem with that. But what the Premier also has to be able to tell us is what their levels of qualifications and accreditations are. They are very, very important issues. Let us get away from this particular glibness.

We have also heard a lot about the Forster inquiry and what it is going to do in completely changing and revamping the health system in Queensland. This government is addicted to reviews. This government has had so many reviews and made so many promises and has so many things gathering dust sitting in the archived annals that one could not jump over them. Let us look at some of the less palatable aspects of the Forster report. There are good aspects of it and we have never stepped away from them. The government has rebadged and renamed the bureaucracy in Queensland. So we are going to see the zonal system called an area system. It is going to be rebadged and renamed. We are still going to have the four tiers of bureaucracy in Queensland Health—local, district, zonal/area and central. The government has to seriously look at the issue of whether we need all those levels of bureaucracy. I would dare suggest that it could be streamlined much more.

This government talks about having some form of local engagement on the issue of health but it fails fundamentally with what the community wants. The community wants a return to hospital boards. If those opposite do not believe me, they should go out and do some research. They should walk down the main streets of Rockhampton or any other community around Queensland and ask people what they think of hospital boards. So we have more basketweaving, more promises and more glossy brochures but we do not necessarily have the things that the community really wants in order to address the issues in the health system in Queensland.

Why is it that we have this so-called open and accountable Premier who refuses to release the figures of the number of funded hospital beds in Queensland that are closed? Peter Forster said himself the other day in his report that hospital beds are a true indication of the capacity of the health system to respond to the urgent need of the community or the emergent need of the community. That is paraphrasing what he said. This government has said for a long time that the number of funded hospital beds is not an indication of anything. Why is it that the Premier will now not release the number of hospital beds in Queensland which are funded and are closed at the Rockhampton Base Hospital, at the Mackay Base Hospital and at all the other hospitals right throughout the region and central major population areas of Queensland? He will not because he knows he will be embarrassed, because those beds have been closed by a penny-pinching government that is not fundamentally interested in patient care in Queensland. It is not interested in patient care. It is more interested in the health and safety of the government than it is in the health and safety of the patients in Queensland. That is what it is all about.

Just look at the figures. Just look at what has happened in south-east Queensland in the last couple of days in hospitals in fast-growing areas. We have had the term 'bypass'. That means that when they do not have enough beds or capacity at a hospital patients bypass. They go somewhere else. The reason they came up with that term was that it is better than saying, 'We don't have enough beds and we're failing.' So that is what 'bypass' means. Once people sniffed out what 'bypass' meant, they used the term 'capacity alert'. 'Capacity alert' means the same thing. Now we have 'ramping up'. 'Ramping up' means that when the ambulance turns up they go up the ramp and sit there behind the other ambulance. They are ramping up. So what will it be tomorrow? That is what we have in the health system in Queensland—a government which has failed in the fundamental areas that are so important to the people of this state, a government which firmly deserves to be held to account and tossed out for its inaction in health and its neglect right across the state.

### Coal Industry

**Ms JARRATT** (Whitsunday—ALP) (11.39 am): It seems that the whole state is abuzz with the impacts and consequences of the resources boom taking place in the coalfields to the west and north-west of the great city of Rockhampton. Just as we are aware of the exodus of skilled labour to the more lucrative potential of the mines and associated industries, we are also becoming increasingly cognisant of the enormous potential wealth that just might be generated from mining activity and export. Almost gone is the distant memory of only three or four years ago when the coal industry in this state seemed to

be grinding to a halt and houses in places like Moranbah and Collinsville could not be rented let alone sold. What a difference a few years and a resource-hungry China have made to that equation.

The impact of the resurgence in the coalmining industry is hard to miss in places like Mackay, where engineering and mining related workshops and businesses are sprouting like mushrooms and accommodation is at an absolute premium. But the really exciting news from my point of view is that the wealth associated with the resources boom has the potential to spread beyond the major centres and into areas where it will extend an economic lifeline.

The town of Bowen in my electorate sits on the cusp of unprecedented economic development thanks to a series of projects being nurtured by mining companies and the Beattie government. Bowen is a beautiful beachside town that has had to bear an unfair share of difficult times following the closure of its meatworks and the downturn in the mining industry in and around Collinsville over the past decade. One of the town's greatest assets, however, has always been the positioning of the port of Abbot Point, just north of Bowen, which is currently the third-largest coal export port in Queensland.

Abbot Point, which is managed by the Ports Corporation of Queensland, has always had enormous potential for growth and is currently undergoing a stage 2 expansion that will almost double its coal-loading capacity from 15 million tonnes per annum to around 25 million tonnes per annum. However, even with this expansion the state's capacity to load coal for export has come under well-publicised stress, and mining companies are looking to get their coal out of our ports at an even faster rate than we can presently accommodate.

There are of course a range of options open to provide this growth in capacity, but I am fairly excited to say that consideration of a stage 3 expansion at Abbot Point is one of those options under consideration. The potential of this project is such that it was declared to be a significant project under section 26 of the Queensland State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971 by the Coordinator-General in July of this year. This initiative comes in recognition of a range of factors including the level of investment necessary for the project to proceed, the enormous potential for employment generation and the overall significance of the project to the region and the state.

The proposed expansion would take the port's coal-loading capacity up to around 50 million tonnes per annum, which would make a significant contribution to the state's export capacity. But this is not a simple case of 'if you build it they will come', because there is one crucial piece of the puzzle that needs to be solved before Abbot Point can realistically seek to access a supply of coal that would sustain such an expansion, and that piece of the puzzle is quite aptly known as the missing link project.

The missing link project is a proposal to provide some 70 kilometres of rail line that would link the existing North Goonyella rail network to the Newlands line, allowing coal from the Bowen Basin coalfields to be railed to Abbot Point for shipment. It is anticipated that this project alone could generate up to 900 jobs during construction, so it is not hard to see why I, as the state member representing Bowen, am very pleased that the Beattie government has also declared this project to be of significance and is coordinating the necessary EIS process.

While this project is so fundamental to the future economic growth of Bowen, it has to be acknowledged that the project will not go ahead without the support of the mining industry, which will weigh up the economic benefits of taking coal north to Abbot Point for export. So there is some way to go before the economic future of Bowen is in the bag, but I do not think the potential has ever been greater, and I know that the Beattie government is doing its bit to ensure that the necessary processes are expedited.

The time for comments on the draft terms of reference for the missing link project closed yesterday, so we are one step closer to knowing our fate and hopefully one step closer to sharing in the bounty of the current resources boom. I truly hope that these projects are successful, as together they will undoubtedly mark the beginning of a bright new future for the people of Bowen.

### **Stroke Prevention**

**Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (11.44 am): The Mackay community recently welcomed a range of initiatives regarding stroke prevention and support. The Beattie government has committed \$9 million over three years for five new community based stroke rehabilitation teams, including one based in Mackay, and \$8.2 million to support programs aimed at preventing strokes as well as treating and rehabilitating Queenslanders who have suffered a stroke.

Last year 150 people in the Mackay district suffered a stroke. For these patients the rehabilitation team means community based rehabilitation services are available close to where they live. It also means that the families of stroke patients are able to be more involved in the stroke rehabilitation program. These two factors alone will continue to have a major impact on the rehabilitation outcomes for many people. The Mackay community based rehabilitation team consists of eight health care professionals including occupational therapists, physiotherapists, a dietician, an allied health assistant and a social worker under the direction of team leader Jo Hack.



The team is currently delivering an in-home therapy service to stroke patients in the community, and centre based therapy will also eventually be established at the Mackay Base Hospital. The implementation of the Mackay community based rehabilitation team is part of the election commitment made by the Beattie government to ensure stroke sufferers in Mackay have access to world-class treatment and facilities.

The new initiatives also build on the aged care and rehabilitation unit we established three years ago at the Mackay Base Hospital. Patients have access to the Mackay community based rehabilitation team serviced by referral from their doctor which is a specific CBRT referral form. The referral is required to assess whether the client's condition is stable and they are able to participate in the program. Following an assessment, the team implements an eight- to 12-week rehabilitation program that is individualised for each client.

I am pleased to advise that since the announcement of the introduction of the community based rehabilitation team, which was made at the end of August, there are already seven people currently being treated, four have already been discharged from the service and three assessments are coming up. The service is free. However, the therapist may ask clients to purchase some basic items for their therapy programs at home. The new service demonstrates the state government's commitment to providing assessable and effective community health care throughout regional Queensland. It is about real people receiving real care within their local community.

The new service reaches as far north as the Whitsundays and Proserpine and south to St Lawrence. About 120 local stroke patients are expected to benefit this year from the new service. Statistics on a wider scale indicate that about 8,000 people suffer stroke annually in Queensland leading to 2,200 deaths, and around one-third of these are left permanently disabled. Stroke is a very debilitating event which requires specialised care and rehabilitation. Even more so, it is a problem that requires attention to prevention.

Since 1998 the Beattie government has undertaken a range of initiatives to address the problem of stroke which have included programs to address risk factors such as smoking, poor nutrition and diabetes. This has included funding for Indigenous smoke-free programs that target tobacco use in communities involving GPs and Indigenous community health workers; media awareness campaigns—and telephone support has continued to support the Quit campaign; the employment of 27 nutritionists working with communities including Cairns, Mount Isa, Wujal Wujal, Hervey Bay and Rockhampton to address obesity, a cause of stroke; a diabetes specialist to provide outreach services for Indigenous communities in Cape York and the Torres Strait; and many other significant programs such as the very successful 10000 Steps program, which originated in Rockhampton. It was trialed here, and I know that we have launched it in places like Mackay. It has a lot of people who are supporting it. A lot of businesses have encouraged their workers to be part of that.

All these types of programs play an integral role in the government's commitment to help prevent stroke. The importance of the community based rehabilitation team to patients and their families cannot be underestimated. I welcome this new service to the Mackay region and look forward to the continued success of this initiative.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): Order! Honourable members, in the absence of the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier, I suggest that in this debate the members actually go to the dispatch box. It is much more user friendly for those in the public gallery.

### Comments by Member for Burleigh

**Mr QUINN** (Robina—Lib) (11.49 am): It is not too often in politics that a member of a government delivers a frank assessment of that government's performance over the past four or five years. However, we had one such member of the Labor government doing that last week. On Friday, the front page of the *Gold Coast Bulletin* carried the comments made by the member for Burleigh, Mrs Christine Smith, to the effect that she believed that the government probably deserved to be out on its ears. While it carried the headline 'We Deserve to be Sacked', I understand the member disputes that she actually said that, and I believe that to be the case. However, the sentiment of the article is exactly that. The sentiment of the comments made at the meeting on mental health issues that she attended the previous night on the Gold Coast is accurately reflected in the comments in the paper. In terms of the government's performance on mental health on the Gold Coast over that period, she has also described its position as indefensible—unable to be defended—under any circumstances.

There was some confusion, naturally, because when this article was published in the paper we, on this side, could hardly believe our eyes that a member of the Labor Party would be so honest and frank in terms of her assessment. Then she came into the House and made a personal explanation saying that she did not say that the government should be sacked nor did she believe that to be the case. Surprise, surprise, we actually found a transcript from a radio program in which she had been interviewed earlier that morning on the ABC on the Gold Coast. Questions were put to her by the radio interviewer. During that interview, Briony Petch quoted the member for Burleigh as saying, 'At the next election we will probably deserve to be out on our ear but I don't know if that is the answer.' She was

asked, 'So, did you say that?' The answer given by Mrs Smith was, 'I did say that, yes, and I guess I have to admit that I did say that.'

What we are dealing with here is someone who is absolutely splitting hairs. On the one hand, she says that the government should be out on its ear, that the position of the government over the past three or four years is indefensible. What does that mean? Does that mean the government should be sacked? No, it does not mean the government should be sacked. What does it mean? We are waiting for the member to get up here and tell us what it means. If it does not mean the government should be sacked, then 99 per cent of Queenslanders have the wrong impression about what the member meant. Quite clearly, the intent, the sentiment, of what she said was that she, through her own personal experience, as she makes quite plain in the interview in the paper, believes that the government's position over the past 12 months was indefensible and that at the next election the government members should be out on their ears.

I say that we on this of the House totally agree with her. Why would we not agree with her? We understand how appallingly this government has performed in the past.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr QUINN:** I excuse this little section of rabble on our side of politics.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): Order! Member for Robina, I suggest you do not use that word. Withdraw it.

**Mr QUINN:** Can I say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it has been used consistently by the Premier in this parliament over the past 18 months and not once was the Premier pulled up by the former Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Robina, I ask you to withdraw that. I am in the chair now. Members should speak through the chair. I do not think that we need to use that sort of emotive language.

**Mr QUINN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, in deference to your position I do withdraw the term 'rabble'.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**Mr QUINN:** In terms of who they are on this side of the House—

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr QUINN:** By sheer dent of numbers in the House—

**Mrs SMITH:** I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I made a statement in this House last week, and I stand by that statement.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** What is your point of order? There is no point of order. Resume your seat.

**Mr QUINN:** As I said, the statement was made. It is a case of splitting hairs. We all know what the member meant. Everyone at that meeting knows what the member meant. The *Gold Coast Bulletin* knows what the member meant. Everyone in Queensland who hears a member stand up and say, 'The record of our government is indefensible; we deserve to be thrown out on our ears,' knows what the member meant. We know and government members know what she meant as well. That is, they should be sacked. The headline is correct.

### Small Business

**Hon. NI CUNNINGHAM** (Bundaberg—ALP) (11.54 am): I would like to place on record in this parliament the fact that, because small business is a big priority of the Beattie government and because of this government's support, Bundaberg is now leading our region with enormous growth in small business development.

When I joined this parliament in 1998, Bundaberg was struggling economically with one of the worst unemployment levels in Australia. This government's support for Bundaberg and for regional Queensland was clearly evident in its early decision to build \$240 million of water infrastructure in our region. The start of construction of that major dam on the Burnett for which we had to wait almost 27 years has had a huge impact on the confidence of our entire region, the confidence of industry and commerce, and the confidence of our growers, who have already introduced new crops, expanded other crops and increased processing of new products that are already being exported worldwide.

This government's recent commitment to a \$42 million heavy vehicle ring-road around the south of our city is another huge investment in infrastructure for Bundaberg and another win for regional Queensland. It will cater for the transport needs of Bundaberg's expanding industrial base. Additionally, the programs and workshops being provided through the Bundaberg Office of State Development, Trade and Innovation, the first such office established in regional Queensland—programs such as Setting Your Sails for Success—are helping our small businesses to grow successfully with more than 15 businesses gaining financial support through the Small Business Accelerator Program. One of our

small business owners who recently praised those programs, John Fisher of John Fisher Cabinets, said—

I could not recommend this process more highly for anyone who is serious about pursuing growth in their business.

The Bundaberg area now has a diverse and exciting business mix from manufacturing, minerals extraction and processing to aquaculture and ICT. Throughout our region there are 6,000 businesses employing local people in local jobs. During Minister Chris Cummins' recent visit to Bundaberg, he saw first-hand a very successful and expanding computer technology business called B2K. Microair Avionics, which is based at our airport, is the only company in Australia that manufactures both light aircraft and aircraft engines. Chris Cummins also saw the old Austoft site, where a number of small industries have been established. One of those companies is employing 55 of the former Austoft workers. The minister saw that another local company, Queensland Sea Scallop Ltd, has established itself at our Bundaberg port and is revitalising the Queensland sea scallop industry. This company has begun growing immature scallop in its licensed aquaculture areas in Hervey Bay. It has two licensed aquaculture areas totalling 72 square kilometres. It expects to reach its full potential by the year 2012. It expects to generate employment with up to 1,500 jobs and annual exports worth \$128 million.

Other success stories include SP Exports, which has joined the list of regional exporters; the Exotic Jam Factory, exporting gourmet jams; Farm Fresh Fine Foods, exporting product to Japan; Organic Foods of Australia, exporting processed frozen organic vegetables; and Bundaberg Brewed Drinks, now exporting to 29 countries. Another Bundaberg company, Megatoy Play Systems, makes the playgrounds for several fast food chains around Australia. It has supplied playground equipment to the Middle East for the Asian Games site. It is also selling playground systems in Singapore, Taiwan and New Zealand.

Clearly, our government's initiatives are working. There is a new business confidence in Bundaberg as our major dam reaches completion. State development continues to assist and support our small business operators, and the recently announced plans to introduce retail competition for the electricity market by July 2007 will offer yet another opportunity to reduce costs and further expand small business in Bundaberg.

With regard to jobs, jobs, jobs, unemployment in Bundaberg has dropped to around seven per cent and the Queensland government remains Bundaberg's biggest employer, with more than 2,850 employees working at our schools, our hospital and in other state departments.

### **Water Meters**

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (11.59 am): Landowners in my electorate invited me to attend a meeting between landowners with water licences out of the Boyne River and DNRM officers to discuss the mandatory installation of water metering devices. On the basis of information previously provided to landowners a number had looked at local options for installation and possible savings. Several had identified at least one provider who appeared to offer savings in some areas of the required installation.

It was therefore suggested to DNRM officers that they discuss with this local company any opportunity for them to become involved with a view to saving residents costs which, DNRM had advised, would, as a matter of course, be borne by the landowners. Because a number of those present had quotes from this company and the company was able to purchase a single designated meter at a price slightly dearer than a bulk purchase, residents raised the prospect with DNRM officers that the company be given an opportunity to competitively tender. DNRM officers at the meeting gave an undertaking that they would approach the company and get a quotation based on a clear specification so that like could be compared to like.

After the meeting I had a couple of people come up to me with concerns. A further meeting was scheduled with the landowners and DNRM officers for 15 September. At this meeting the DNRM officers advised residents that they had met with the company, that they had got information and after all costs were included DNRM costings were favourable. I was given information the day after that meeting that the local company had not been offered an opportunity to supply a quote. I called them up and had a discussion about this.

The manager of that business advised that DNRM officers had visited his shop the next day. He had met with them over a cup of coffee. He advised that he was busy with coalmining jobs but was very interested in quoting for the Boyne Valley meter installation and would supply a quote once a specification was received. That specification was never forwarded by DNRM officers. A full quote was never, therefore, given. A reasonable person could assume, then, that the DNRM officer misled residents and that a detailed and accurate comparison between the quotes relied upon by DNRM from out-of-area suppliers and a local alternative was never made, in spite of what residents were told at the meeting. I am seeking to have that matter investigated.

It highlights the distrust that landowners face in relation to water supply issues. The Queensland Dairy Farmers Organisation has stated in its newsletter that the Queensland government has yet again

stuck its revenue siphon into rural Queensland and ignored the facts about rural water use and management. It has targeted costs, such as the cost on stock and domestic bores, being inequitable because no government dollars are involved in the installation of those bores. They do not have a problem with the bores being licensed to identify location, but that licensing should be perpetual, without a recurring cost.

It states that the announced \$4 per megalitre charge and the \$100 annual licence fee for stock and domestic water will directly reduce farm family income and undermine the profitability of rural businesses. What makes this so-called plan really unpalatable is that the Queensland government is asking farmers to pay these new water charges when they are in the middle of one of the worst droughts in history and many producers do not have any water to access.

Farmers could be up for thousands of dollars in water charges and not have any water to show for it. The same applies to water licences in my electorate. Quite a number of the farmers have not got any water to access and yet are being required to install these meters. There is no indication as to when that water will be available. It also states that the Queensland government seems to keep forgetting that rural industries do not have the capacity to absorb additional government charges or the ability to pass on these higher costs. I think most rural and regional people will agree that farmers are price takers, not price makers.

In relation to historic schemes, the Beattie government proposal to make these old schemes—that is, the rate of return on old schemes—pay more is simply unjust as these schemes were never designed for a rate of return and farmers and others have made investment on the scheme designed at that time. Farmers feel that they are not being represented by the government. They do not believe that the government is governing for all Queenslanders. They feel that the Premier's water plan proves that this is not the case.

### Coalition

**Mr McNAMARA** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (12.04 pm): There have recently been some reported sightings in Brisbane of that most rare of creatures, the almost mythical coalition unity. Little is known about this strange, shy creature. Indeed, experts are unable to agree on many of the fundamentals of this creature. They do not know whether it prefers more or less daylight and they are unsure as to whether it prefers more or less vegetation in its natural environment.

In the last few weeks there has been intense interest in the breeding habits of this rare, shy creature, with all sorts of speculation about how their young, called 'coalition candidates', are produced. In Hervey Bay I have to say the consensus is that coalition unity is, in fact, extinct and has been for some time. The extinction has been dated back to 2 December 1989, when locals for the first time noticed on their ballot papers a National Party candidate, a Liberal Party candidate and an independent National Party candidate. The independent National candidate was the Nationals' ex-education minister Lin Powell.

The ALP, via Bill Nunn, won the seat in 1989, but the book-burning policies of Lin Powell spawned a generation of Liberal Party activists who over the last 16 years have been absolutely dedicated to ensuring that there can be no revival of coalition unity any time soon. Long-time former Liberal branch president David Lewis has devoted a significant amount of time and letters to the editor to reminding locals of the corruption of the National Party, the perversion of our democratic institutions under Sir Joh and, particularly, the lack of relevance of an old-style agrarian socialist outfit like the Nats to a modern coastal city like Hervey Bay.

Ironically, though, I know that David Lewis has plenty of enemies in the National Party due to his habit of telling the truth about them. But he was, as usual in coalition politics, done in by his own side. David perhaps naively refused to sign up to one of the Liberal Party factions. Even though he was prepared to run in 1998 and 2001, he never received any support from the Liberal Party head office. After Mr Lewis was rolled as branch president in 2001 by a good friend of the new member for Chatsworth, the Liberal Party has since become very interested in Hervey Bay. Now the current Liberal branch president—

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr McNAMARA:** The member told me at the last two elections that I would not be back.

Stephen Dixon might have shown David Lewis a thing or two about stacking a branch and rolling a president, but he is straight out of the same mould when it comes to his lack of regard for the National Party. I note that the National and Liberal parties have announced that they will be holding a joint preselection to find a candidate for the seat of Hervey Bay for the next election.

I would not hold my breath waiting for an outbreak of coalition. The potential candidates are Bernie Martin from the National Party—I would be interested to see whether there are any calls of 'hear, hear' from the Nationals for him—and Stephen Dixon from the Liberals. I have been told already by members of both parties that the other party's candidate is completely unacceptable. The Nats are

incensed that the Liberals want them to support someone who after the 2001 election was reported in the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* as saying that he voted for me. The next potential Liberal candidate voted Labor at the 2001 election and told the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* that if it came to a choice between the Nats and Labor 'you had no choice; you had to vote Labor'. That is a message that I am sure some of my colleagues might carry up and down the length and breadth of Queensland if Mr Dixon gets to be the Liberal Party candidate.

My Liberal Party sources in Hervey Bay are even more irate that they might have the Nats' Bernie Martin foisted upon them as the coalition candidate. Mr Martin recently gained notoriety statewide for running a National Party fundraiser under the heading 'Raise money for the SES'. That is right: the National Party's candidate actually sent out an email to one of his Liberal friends who sent it to me because they are such good friends. The email said, 'I have deliberately left off any mention of the National Party on the advertising for this event but, don't worry, we the Nationals will keep the money that is raised.'

Last week a prominent National Party member posed the question to me: how can they be expected to vote for a Labor-voting Liberal divorce lawyer? He reckons he might have to hand out for Family First. Talk about a coalition of the unwilling! Coalition unity remains as elusive as the Tasmania tiger. If the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party think they have seen it, I suspect they were more likely looking at a weather balloon, or perhaps they were flying upside down in a plane and saw their own reflections in a puddle.

### Fire Ants

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (12.10 pm): Fire ants are a serious insect pest that have the potential to destroy our outdoor lifestyle, environment and agricultural production. The ant is native to South America and was first discovered in the Brisbane port area of Fisherman Islands on 22 February 2001. A national Fire Ant Eradication Program was established shortly after the ants were discovered, with \$175 million committed over six years to 2006-07. More than 90 per cent of this funding comes from the federal government and other states, with Queensland providing about nine per cent.

Over the past two years the Beattie government has constantly claimed that it is winning the war against fire ants. Former primary industries minister Mr Palaszczuk's stock standard excuse as to why Labor cuts the DPIF budget every year is that the fire ant campaign is winding up and funding is being reduced. The spin from the Beattie government in recent times has been that 99.5 per cent of fire ants have been destroyed, a line designed to create an impression that the ant has been almost wiped out. But the reality is that this 99.5 per cent only refers to the situation on previously infested properties that are regularly surveyed by the DPIF and have been treated again and again—in fact, they have been nuked.

While at the same time the Beattie government is claiming success on the basis of this small survey of properties, more and more suburbs are being added to the restricted area for fire ants. Just two weeks ago, 2,400 hectares covering the suburbs of Rochedale, Priestdale, Burbank and Sheldon were added to this restricted area. In fact, at least 17 suburbs have been added over this period of time. According to the latest facts and figures from the Fire Ant Control Centre which do not take into account the recent additions, the fire ant treatment area is 27,275 hectares while the surveillance area is 59,034 hectares and spans right out to western areas like Ipswich, Yamanto and Purga.

This week the opposition revealed that the Crime and Misconduct Commission is investigating the claims of a former senior DPIF officer. This whistleblower claims that the Beattie government has been misreporting the progress of the Fire Ant Eradication Program to the Natural Resource Management Council. This whistleblower warned the Premier and the former director-general of DPIF of the concerns in March 2003. The current director-general is also aware of the concerns. These concerns, which were backed up with extensive documentary evidence, include surveillance staff being diverted from their tasks, the monitoring sites receiving additional different treatments to the general treatment area, the program failing to treat a large number of properties in the treatment area for various reasons and failing to report this, the program failing to report any new detections or reinfestations within the treatment area, the program not reporting on the percentage of high-risk businesses and activities complying with movement restrictions, and the fire ant information system being flawed because treatment and surveillance efforts are reported on the basis of properties while the database is arranged according to land parcels.

An independent investigation by PricewaterhouseCoopers was instigated into the whistleblower's claims. However, the whistleblower claims that the terms of reference the investigator was given were deliberately limited to avoid proper examination of the allegations. The investigation only focused on whether the chair of the Fire Ant Steering Committee—the DPI director-general—knew about the issues the whistleblower raised, not whether state and national funders were being misled by reports overstating the success of the program. The whistleblower also states that she was subject to the usual Labor government campaign of reprisal until she resigned earlier this year, and she has been left in little doubt that the Premier's claims that he wants to protect whistleblowers is nothing but hot air. The

whistleblower also approached the CMC in 2003 and provided further information to that organisation in 2004-05. She has been interviewed three times by the CMC and advised in April that the CMC would finalise its report shortly yet is still awaiting a reply.

What have we had from the Beattie government since this information was finally revealed on the weekend? The same old spin. In an AAP report, the acting minister claimed that a US expert gave the program a clean bill of health. Surprise, surprise! What can we expect when he was given the same sanitised information that the Beattie government has provided to the Natural Resource Management Council? On ABC *Country Hour* yesterday the Fire Ant Control Centre general manager was still talking about the survey of infested properties and that 99.5 per cent of fire ants in the initial core area have been destroyed. But what evidence does the government have to confirm the percentage of fire ants in the total area—not just the initial area or the core area—which have been destroyed? We have not heard a thing. It is time the Beattie government and the primary industries minister, whoever that may be this week—we have had three in three months—came forward and told us what the true and accurate situation is with regard to fire ants. The culture of cover-up fostered by Labor has to end. If fire ants get out of control, it could be a disaster for Queensland's agricultural production and a disaster for our outdoor way of life.

### Keppel Electorate

**Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (12.14 pm): This historic sitting of parliament was brought to Rockhampton at the request and insistence and actions of Robert Schwarten, Jim Pearce and ultimately by my own small contribution. Keppel, the seat which has been mentioned as being held by Vince Lester, was held for many years by the Labor Party and was previously held by the Labor Party from 1989 to 1992 when the current member for Fitzroy, Jim Pearce, was the elected member, and a darned good job he did. From 7 February 2004 I have been representing the seat of Keppel. It might interest members opposite to know that you do not have to stand up and ask questions in parliament about things that really matter, because we have the ability to discuss matters with our individual ministers. We can approach the ministers and we can talk to the ministers, whereas you do not even want to listen to the ministers, let alone speak to them!

**Mr Horan** interjected.

**Mr HOOLIHAN:** You see me at every sittings.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Copeland): Order! Please direct your comments through the chair, member for Keppel.

**Mr HOOLIHAN:** There was mention made of the Yeppoon Hospital this morning, and the Minister for Health has indicated to watch this space, and I say again to all members opposite: watch this space. But what about the rest of the benefits that have accrued to the seat of Keppel? There is \$26 million in road funding going into the western bypass. What about schools? Tomorrow morning I will be at Frenchville State School to open a new arts centre which has been funded.

**Mr Cummins:** They're here today.

**Mr HOOLIHAN:** I know Frenchville is here today; there are a number of schools from Keppel that are here today, and I have kept in constant contact with those schools because it is very important that these parliamentary sittings show the people of central Queensland that we care for the whole of Queensland and not just the south-east corner, as the Liberal Party does.

Besides roads, money has gone into schools and gone into the harbour. I am currently negotiating for funding with regard to a public pontoon at Keppel Bay Marina. Funding for local government, the sewerage treatment works at Yeppoon and additional funding for North Rockhampton all come from having a member who is a member of government. There have been major redevelopments in the Yeppoon and Emu Park CBD. For those people who do go to the coast while they are here—and I would invite them to the lovely seaside at Yeppoon or Emu Park—as they travel there they can also see how the \$3.5 million was spent for the double-lane highway, which has just been opened. That is a tremendous road, and that is achieved by working hard for the electorate. Some members opposite should probably learn how to work hard for their electorates instead of sitting there sniping.

Keppel has benefited greatly by having a local member as a member of government. From the first cabinet meeting of the 51st Parliament to today, it has benefited greatly and it will continue to benefit greatly, because members of our government have worked really hard to govern for all of Queensland, not just my own electorate, and that can be seen right throughout the state of Queensland. It is only the tip of the iceberg having the regional parliament here. It will happen again. It will happen in regional Queensland, because the Beattie government governs for the whole of Queensland. From Cape York to Brisbane and out to the border, including Vaughan Johnson's electorate, the Beattie government has cared for the people of Queensland, has advanced the people of Queensland and will continue to advance the people of Queensland while it continues to govern regionally and well.

### Labor Preselection, Bundaberg

**Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—NPA) (12.20 pm): If the member for Keppel thinks it is an advantage being a member of the government he should ask himself why Toni Hoffman came to see me instead of the member for Bundaberg. Yesterday I had an unusual meeting with a couple of significant Labor Party members who provided me with some interesting documents relating to what they call missing ALP funds. I table those documents.

During an hour and a half meeting between myself, former state Labor candidate and branch secretary Greg McMahon, former Labor federal member for Hinkler Brian Courtice and Burnett Shire Mayor Ray Duffy, who alerted me to the fact that these gentlemen wanted to speak with me, I was given a unique insight into the Queensland Labor Party factional system, Left versus Right, where cover-ups, threats of physical violence, intimidation and jobs for the boys and girls are just par for the course.

**Ms Liddy Clark** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, member for Clayfield!

**Mr MESSENGER:** It was very hard not to feel like having a hot shower—a long one, too—after I was informed by these longstanding members of the Labor Party about the thuggery and cover-ups and how it is just a natural part of the political culture in Bundaberg and in Queensland and how they wanted me to clean it up. They said that they would prefer to see an honest, conservative government in power in Queensland than a corrupt Labor government which, in Brian Courtice's opinion, after listening carefully to the evidence given to the 'Dr Death' royal commission, is responsible for the deaths of many of his former constituents. Mr Courtice was very angry about this. He is a former Labor member of federal parliament and a senior Labor figure. He agreed with me when I said that our Premier, Peter Beattie, has as much blood on his hands as 'Dr Death'.

Mr Courtice was very critical of Mr Beattie, the current member for Bundaberg and the newly preselected Labor candidate for Bundaberg, Sonja Cleary, whom he said was part of a hospital council which sent 'Dr Death' a glowing reference after he had fled to the USA on a ticket bought by this government.

Brian Courtice's wife, Marcia, works for the current member for Bundaberg, Nita Cunningham, and was one of the ALP candidates who stood for preselection. Even though she received 60 per cent of the two Bundaberg regional ALP branches' vote she was defeated by the left wing of the ALP which cooked up a shabby deal.

Brian made a number of serious allegations involving missing ALP branch funds and political interference into police investigations. I think it is in the public interest to table those documents, as I have, which contain allegations in a letter from Gregory McMahon to Nita Cunningham that—

Nita Cunningham withheld Labor branch records from Mr McMahon.

he was a branch secretary—

which 'may be the subject of internal party, police or apparently now, Crime and Misconduct Commission investigations'.

In another letter—

There were 'irregularities with the keeping of the former Bundaberg EEC accounts'.

That is a Labor Party account. Mr McMahon also made the allegation—

There is prima facie evidence to suggest that the Bundaberg EEC accounts have not been properly administered in accordance with party Rules. As I have previously stated, \$7,205.89 remains unaccounted for at this date.

Another letter from Mr Campbell to Mrs C Dorrton states—and I am sure bingo players in Burnett and Bundaberg will be interested in this—

On behalf of the Bingo Sub Committee I have great pleasure in enclosing a cheque for \$2,600 from our half yearly distribution of funds. This now brings our total payout from our profits to \$18,750.

From bingo! My mum used to play a fair bit of bingo around the Burnett and Bundaberg and I just wonder if she knew that her profits were going to the Labor Party—\$18,000! Wow!

The Premier has taken great delight in trying to ridicule the Liberals and Nationals in relation to its preselection process. It is now time for the Premier to clean up his own backyard and sort out the putrid, rotting mess which is the corrupt factional system within the Queensland Labor Party. Honest Labor voters deserve action. This paperwork supplied to me by Mr Courtice certainly provokes more questions than answers and we need the Premier to answer those questions.

### Blackwater Hospital

**Mr PEARCE** (Fitzroy—ALP) (12.25 pm): I rise to bring to the attention of the House the good work being done by Queensland Health, a consortium of five mining companies and the Blackwater Hospital's medical superintendent, Dr Mark Brown, in putting together an incentives package that will attract a second doctor to work alongside Dr Brown at the hospital and with him in his private practice.

Dr Brown, who is the hospital medical superintendent with a right to private practice, has been forced to take unexpected sick leave on two occasions in recent months which has certainly caused many issues for the people of Blackwater. Because of the shortage of medical practitioners, this has meant that the Blackwater Hospital has unfortunately been left without medical cover for extended periods, a situation that has caused a great deal of anxiety for the people of Blackwater and surrounding districts. As the local member I understand how they feel and certainly respect the arguments that people put forward when they contact me over this issue.

Blackwater has a 24/7 booming coal industry, a diverse and mobile primary industries sector, current major rail line construction works, the busy Capricorn Highway and a population in excess of 8,000 people, which means that there is a lot of pressure on people like myself to find a second doctor. The Blackwater residents, quite rightly, expect their local hospital to have appropriate medical coverage that can respond to the needs of the community and the work force of those industries operating in the area. Unfortunately for me and for Pat Castles, the acting district manager of the Central Highlands Health Service District, the difficulty in securing a relief doctor to cover the hospital at short notice is not just a problem for us in central Queensland; it is a problem right across the state, as we found out in our search to locate a relief doctor that could fill in until Dr Brown was fit to return.

When Dr Brown went on unexpected leave, Mr Castles, through Queensland Health, contacted all 37 health districts requesting assistance, all known current and previous locums, semi-retired doctors, GPs in the area, all known locum agencies—a total of 15 across Queensland—and the RFDS, but we could not find a doctor that would come to Blackwater on short notice. It made it very, very difficult for us.

The Blackwater community is very fortunate in that it has a hospital with a first-class nursing team ably led by Cherene Dolliver, director of nursing, who is a rural and remote nurse. If anybody knows anything about people with those qualifications they would know that she is a very professional, highly skilled woman who has a great commitment to health. Nursing staff have the expertise, the training and the skills necessary to carry out advanced patient care, and this includes assessment and treatment of patients when they turn up at the hospital. When people turn up at the hospital they have people there with the skills, expertise and competence to treat them. Without the presence of a doctor at the hospital we can still deliver high-quality service and deliver it with professionalism. That is because of the quality of the nurses who work at the Blackwater Hospital. While this is comforting, it is not an ideal situation. We have to do better; I know that. That is why we have been pursuing the issue of a second permanent doctor for the Blackwater Hospital.

I am pleased to confirm that a consortium of five Blackwater mining enterprises is working with Queensland Health and Dr Brown to see what options are available to secure that second doctor. A package is being finalised which will look at resources, housing, employment conditions, recruitment and training in a private practice partnership arrangement. The best solution for Queensland Health and the people of Blackwater is to have a second permanent medical officer at the Blackwater Hospital. Once appointed a second doctor will ensure that we have around-the-clock medical practitioner coverage at the Blackwater Hospital. That is a positive thing. We are setting up a model that can be copied and used in other communities across the state. There is already some interest in the position. The booming mining industry means that Blackwater is a growing community and one which will be best served by the presence of two medical officers in the town.

I want to very quickly thank Dr Louise Russell, the wife of a primary producer in the Springsure area, who gave us some very valuable time away from her family. We made arrangements with her, through Queensland Health, to fly her into the job because she has long distances to travel. She did an outstanding job for the community and we thank her very much for the professionalism and the way that she went about helping the people of Blackwater.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Fire Ant Eradication Program

**Hon. CP CUMMINS** (Kawana—ALP) (Minister for Small Business, Information Technology Policy and Multicultural Affairs) (12.29 pm), by leave: Again I need to correct misinformation from members opposite. This morning I was asked a question about the national Fire Ant Eradication Program and committed to come back with specific and more detailed information. Thirty-three properties with 51 active fire ant colonies have been found since July 2004. Recent surveys of the 33 properties have detected no remaining infestation in the core restricted area.

In the 2004-05 financial year, more than 222,500 property surveys covering approximately 54,000 hectares were completed. The member for Mansfield has constantly been in contact with my office as the local member for the areas I mentioned. The most significant of the outlying infestations is centred on the suburbs of Rochedale and Burbank. There have been 30 infested properties discovered in this area, with the majority found in farmland at Rochedale. This area will constitute the major treatment area for 2005-06.



Work on the 2005-06 program has commenced. There are 155,000 properties covering approximately 66,000 hectares to be surveyed this year. The treatment component is 7,000 properties covering 3,500 hectares. I also table our latest fire ant declaration published in the *Courier-Mail* on Monday, 19 September. I thank our dedicated staff for their hard work towards eradicating fire ants in Queensland.

## ORDER OF BUSINESS; SESSIONAL ORDERS

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (12.31 pm), by leave: I move—

That, notwithstanding standing and sessional orders, leave be granted for me to move a motion endorsing the historic central Queensland sitting of the Legislative Assembly in Rockhampton this week.

The debate on this motion will not exceed two hours and the time limit for speeches to this motion will be 10 minutes only.

Motion agreed to.

## REGIONAL SITTINGS OF PARLIAMENT, ROCKHAMPTON

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (12.31 pm): I move—

That the House endorses the historic central Queensland sitting of the Legislative Assembly in Rockhampton this week.

That, with great pleasure and enthusiasm, the House notes the significance of this region to Queensland and endorses parliament's decision to hold regional parliament in Rockhampton.

That the House thanks and congratulates the Rockhampton community on its enthusiastic support for this historic sitting.

That the House endorses the principle that regional sittings should continue once a term.

Further—

That the debate of this motion will commence at 12.30 pm today, and, notwithstanding standing and sessional orders, the length of this debate will not exceed two hours and the time limit for speeches to this motion will be 10 minutes only.

My government was the first in the history of Queensland to recommend to the parliament that the parliament move from Brisbane to a regional centre. It has happened only twice since 1859. The first time was in Townsville during our last term and the second time, of course, is this sitting of parliament in Rockhampton.

Let me talk a little bit about the history. I said when I became Premier that my government would listen to all Queenslanders and take government processes to them, and we have done that in an unprecedented way. In the 1890s the Central Queensland Territorial Separation League was formed because the citizens of the region felt divorced from the parliament in Brisbane. So confident were they of success that they even had a governor's residence built right here in Rockhampton.

**Ms Keech:** That is optimism.

**Mr BEATTIE:** That is optimism. That magnificent building is now the key building for the Sisters of Mercy's Mater Hospital. My government places great value on all regions and has demonstrated this by taking our community cabinets all over Queensland. Unlike previous governments, we actually made a great point of inviting all Queenslanders to come along and tap a minister or a director-general on the shoulder to raise concerns and make suggestions. Coalition governments used to invite only VIPs whenever they decided to visit regional Queensland. We have gone one step further than holding community cabinets. Today we are sitting in a community parliament. It is about bringing government to the local community and taking the opportunity to learn more about the needs and strengths of the region.

At 1 pm I will be turning my hand to cheffing at the regional parliament public barbecue at Riverside Park, Quay Street. Mr Deputy Speaker, can you think of anything more Australian than a barbecue in the local park? Barbecues are always an opportunity for people of all backgrounds to mix and swap stories, exchange views and chat, importantly, on equal terms. This barbecue is an example of the spirit surrounding this regional parliament. This sitting allows residents from areas such as Winton, Longreach, Biloela, Emerald, Gladstone, Yeppoon and Mackay to come to watch how parliament works. I am delighted to see so many young Queenslanders from our schools represented here today, and I make sure that you are welcome.

As I said, this is the second regional sitting of parliament, following the highly successful sitting in north Queensland at Townsville in September 2002. With Queensland being the most decentralised state in Australia and also the second biggest geographically, it is crucial that we continue to find new ways to involve all Queenslanders in our decision making. It is important to remember that we are a state of 1.74 million square kilometres. It is huge. We have to ensure that the people have an opportunity to have their say. With Queensland as decentralised as that, we need to and also do ensure that we use technology and physical presence to improve access to government.

We have already opened up access to the parliament in its processes through providing Queenslanders with immediate access to the internet broadcast of proceedings via the Queensland parliament's web site. This initiative is helping to involve all Queenslanders in the parliamentary process. Holding a parliamentary sitting in a regional location on a regular basis will strengthen that involvement.

We note the significance of this region to Queensland. Before I move on, if my government is re-elected I commit again here today that there will be another regional sitting of the Queensland parliament in another regional centre in our next term.

**Mr Cummins:** Like on the Sunshine Coast.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I have no doubt that there will be all sorts of bids for it. We have just had one already.

**Ms Keech:** Beenleigh.

**Mr BEATTIE:** And we have had another.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** And another. I think I had better move on while I am ahead. We note the significance of this region to Queensland. Central Queensland is the heart in many senses, but particularly in a geographical sense, of Queensland and it has had a very proud history. We are meeting in the Pilbeam Theatre. One of the people who made a significant contribution to Queensland was, of course, the former member and mayor. He was, in fact, a Liberal member. That just goes to show, though, how much things have changed since then and how much, indeed, the Liberal Party has lost its way. These days, instead of looking at the interests of a great city such as Rockhampton like Mr Pilbeam did, we had the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party suggesting that we should not be here, suggesting that the money should be spent elsewhere.

I just say this: yes, there is a cost involved. Democracy costs money. The easiest way not to have democracy is to have a dictator. It is a lot cheaper, but it is not our way and it is not the Australian way. Yes, it costs money to bring members of parliament to Brisbane, and it costs money to bring members of parliament to Rockhampton. But there is an ongoing cost of parliament sitting anyway. The people want the parliament to sit. The people want the government of the day, regardless of who it is, to be accountable. I totally and utterly reject the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party's assertion that we should not be here. I remind him that there is more to Queensland than south of the Noosa River, that in fact Queensland does extend beyond the Noosa River. Mind you, there is a wonderful electorate around Noosa, let me hasten to add. But there is more to Queensland than the south-east corner.

I represent the most central electorate of all. I represent the heart of Brisbane, Brisbane Central. If the elected members representing electorates in Brisbane and the south-east corner can get out and talk to the regions, then anyone can do it. My electorate is the centre of Brisbane—

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am happy to do that because—

**Mr Seeney:** I have money on you. You will tell us about that.

**Mr BEATTIE:** You have a few tickets on yourself as well. The great thing about this is that we can always rely on the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He does not agree with the Liberal Party on this.

**Mr Seeney:** No, I don't.

**Mr BEATTIE:** No, exactly right. He said that and I take it—and nor should you agree with the Liberal Party on that.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr English): Order! Will the Premier please direct his comments through the chair.

**Mr BEATTIE:** The important point I want to make here is that if people cannot agree on these policies in opposition then they cannot run the government of Queensland. This is another division within the Liberal Party. This is another division between the Liberal Party and the National Party. If they have any fortitude, members of the National Party or the Leader of the Opposition will get up after the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing, Robert Schwarten, seconds my motion and say that they support this regional parliament in central Queensland. That is what they will do, and so they should because it is the right thing to do. We have the Liberal Party, who have become a whole lot of urban yuppies who do not really care about the rest of Queensland. That is what they have become—urban yuppies. You had never been north of the Noosa River until we brought you up here. You thought Rockhampton was a suburb of New York. I know; you had no idea.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Please direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr BEATTIE:** It is important that I highlight to this parliament that the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party has had a sense of discovery by coming to Rockhampton. He had never been to regional Queensland.

**Dr Flegg:** It's my second time.

**Mr BEATTIE:** If he had—and I take his interjection to get the record straight—he would not have said what he did yesterday. What the member for Moggill said yesterday was a cheap shot. That is what it was—a cheap shot. I am not going to stand by and let the good people of central Queensland be underrepresented or not listened to. That is why we are here, and my government will continue to do that.

As I said, too often we just simply focus on Brisbane. I represent the heart of Brisbane, but there is more to Queensland than Brisbane. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition scoffs. Yes, I did grow up in Atherton and I actually know regional Queensland. When I was a kid, where I grew up they used to talk about all the southerners in Townsville. I have a very good idea of regional Queensland.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** The honourable member supported the Tigers on Sunday as well; it is all right. Let me be very clear about this: we had a former mayor here who was a Liberal Party member. Where is the Liberal Party now? They represent no-one outside Brisbane. Their most northerly seats are the Sunshine Coast because they do not care about the regions. They have no interest in the regions.

**Mr Reynolds:** Why do you hate Townsville?

**Mr BEATTIE:** Why do they hate Townsville? Why do they hate Rockhampton? Why do they not want to be here? They do not want to be here because, frankly, they are not interested in the people of Rockhampton. Well, we are. Let me finish with this point: look at our capital works program.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Don't get excited; it is not good for the heart. In terms of our capital works program, in the last budget we had \$8 billion. Sixty per cent of that is spent outside the greater Brisbane area—\$4.6 billion—because the regions are our strength. Look at all the announcements we made today in relation to energy infrastructure, port infrastructure, rail and mines. It was all in central Queensland, an absolutely vital part of this state. While I am Premier of this state, we are going to get members of parliament off their backsides and out into the regions to listen to the real people. I make no apology for that.

I will finish with these remarks: I urge the Liberal Party members who oppose this—and I understand there may be one or two others—to get up in this debate and have the courage to say why they do not want to be here. I made some reference before to the preselection processes of the Liberal Party. They will not even let the Lord Mayor have a say. 'Can-Do' cannot get a vote. Poor old 'Can-Do' could not vote on Sunday in the preselection process. But what does 'Can-Do' do? 'Can-Do' goes out and has council community cabinets in greater Brisbane. Why? Because he followed our model of community cabinets. The Liberal Lord Mayor of Brisbane is prepared to go out and talk to the people but the Liberal Party as a whole, this faction-ridden organisation, will not. I am delighted we are here in Rockhampton. I thank the people of Rockhampton for their hospitality. We will be back.

**Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (12.42 pm): I second the motion moved so capably by the Premier. In so doing, let me say at the outset that this is really baseline politics.

**Dr Flegg** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Well, that is for sure, the way the member has behaved. He ought to be ashamed of himself because what the member for Moggill has done is to pander to that minority of people out there, the One Nations of this world, who start talking about how much government costs to run. If we follow logically what he said, I would have to live in Brisbane because it costs a lot of money to get me to and from my electorate to Brisbane. So we can save all that money by living on his doorstep in the leafy suburbs of Moggill. Would democracy be well served there?

**Government members:** No.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** No, it would not. Would we save 60 grand a year? Yes, we would. The same applies to most of these National Party members. I do not think it applies to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition because he lives in Brisbane now.

**Mr SEENEY:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I find that offensive. If the member for Rockhampton would like to visit me, I will cook him a barbecue on my back veranda at Monto.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr English): Order! Withdraw.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I am quite happy to take him up on that and I will visit him at The Gap as well. If he finds it offensive, I withdraw.

**Mr SEENEY:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I find that offensive; I have not been to The Gap for years.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Oh, sure. The reality is that the member for Mount Isa, for example, would run up a huge bill. The member for Gregory would run up a huge bill. This gentleman over here flies his own

plane down there, and so he should. That is the price we pay to have people in regional Queensland. And so it should be that these people here get the opportunity to see how the parliament is run in central Queensland.

We kicked this off by having the community cabinet process strengthened by having community forums where people could come along and put the Premier on the griller. When he put that up as an idea I said to the Premier, 'I think you're mad because every person out there who has an axe to grind about every minor thing, every pothole in the street, will beat you up about it.' That has not happened.

**Mr Springborg** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** You have never been to them, obviously. The one in Stanthorpe is a classic example in your home territory. The people there did not put him on his mettle at all. What they did was turn out in droves to endorse the procedure that we had and our sensible well-guided questions. Yes, we have had protests in regional Queensland. That process has cost millions and millions of dollars, but go to Cooktown and tell the people there that we should not go there. Go to Mount Isa and tell the people there that we should not go there. Tell all those cockies who turned up at Winton that we should not go there and allow them to protest or at Roma.

**Mr Beattie:** It was the same thing at Charleville.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** It was the same deal. I do not know what they have against Rocky, but old Rex Pilbeam would be rolling in his grave because they used to call him 'Mr Rockhampton'. He would have been delighted to have the parliament here. You have spat in the eye of every Liberal supporter in this city and you ought to apologise to them here and now. You ought to. There are some very decent Liberal people in this city and they expect better than the likes of you descending down from your ivory tower and leafy suburb of Moggill telling them that they are not good enough to see what we see in Brisbane on a daily basis and that we have to travel down to.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Will the minister direct his comments through the chair.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** The fact of the matter is that politics is not well served by people who want to take those sorts of cheap shots and the reality is that there is a certain local commentator on 4RO whom the member has probably got his line from. He has to understand that he does not speak for the majority of people in this area. The majority of the people in this area welcome the opportunity of having the parliament here. I challenge the member for Moggill to go to any of the businesses around here—and I do not know how the proprietors of them vote—and tell them that we should not be here. Go to Fenlon's pub and tell them that we should not be here. Go to the Country Comfort and tell them we should not be here. Go to Turnbull at the Criterion and tell him that we should not be here. Tell him that the money that is raised through taxes in the state should all stay in the south-east corner. That is my challenge to the member.

The challenge that you have here today is to justify to all these people in here why you made such a foolhardy statement. What is it that you are crooked on this part of the world about? It is all very well to say that the money should go into health. We have addressed that issue. We have addressed that issue in this way: we have addressed it by saying that we will have a mini budget. There is the opportunity to participate in a debate about where money should go. This was budgeted for in last year's budget. Did you get up then? No, of course you did not get up then and complain about it. What you did was just a little bit too cute and half-smart and quite stupid, quite frankly. We on this side of politics go to places throughout Queensland where people will never vote for us. That is no reason why you, who cannot field a decent Liberal candidate here—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Minister, can you please refer to members as 'the honourable member'.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** At last count they have not been able to field a candidate here of any great merit for a long period of time. They cannot get a branch structure going here because they are too lazy to come up here and do it. The reason they do not want to be here is that they lack support. They will never get support in this part of the world if they continue with this toffee-nosed arrogance that everything outside of Brisbane is bad. Again, I say that democracy costs money and giving people access to democracy costs money. If they want to keep snipping away at that, reduce the number of members in parliament that we have. Reduce the entitlements that people have and make them come to parliament for nothing. That is the old Tory way. That is how they stacked them in the upper house back in the good old days to make sure that only the rich could be in parliament.

**Mr Beattie:** The upper house was all about that.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Absolutely! The suicide squad was put in place to get rid of it, and I spoke about Purnell last night. The union movement paid for them to be in parliament because they were too poor to be sitting down there with the silvertails who had great incomes that allowed them to sit in parliament. That is the sort of politics that the opposition clearly has a great belief in.

I always thought that the Liberal Party that spurned Rex Pilbeam was a different party to that.

**Mr Beattie:** It is a different party.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I am sure it is a different party. Pilly and I had our moments, don't worry about that. One thing that I will always say about Rex Pilbeam is that he always stood up for the region. The opposition talked about Hiley yesterday. Pilbeam took Hiley on over Port Alma. He ended up with a monstrosity that the ratepayers here paid off for a long period of time. I disagree with him about that; I think it was wrong. The reality is that he never gave up on this region, even when he was the mayor.

The Liberal Party flourished in this part of the world. While it could not win seats back from us, the reality is that there was a Liberal Party presence here which we do not have today. Such a presence is unlikely to recur if the opposition continues with the arrogance that it has displayed in attacking this parliament coming to Rockhampton on this occasion.

I think the best and smartest thing for the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party to do is to retract his statement. I certainly hope that the National Party will roundly condemn the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party for his statement because he is saying that anybody who incurs a cost extra to the parliament, outside the honourable member driving his BMW or whatever he drives—

**Mr Beattie:** Mercedes.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:**—or Mercedes from Moggill—

**Dr Flegg:** Neither, and I don't have a chauffeur, either.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** The honourable member is probably crooked on that, too, but that is a fundamental part of the way we do business as well.

**Dr Flegg:** Take a backward step, Robert.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** No, I do not intend to take a backward step. That is what the opposition would like me to do. I do not intend to do that.

**Mr Beattie:** No, you stick with it, Robert.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I will stand up for this city. I expect the honourable member to do the honourable and decent thing and apologise to these decent people. The honourable member can laugh at the people of Rockhampton and think they are a joke, and I know that is what he really believes deep down. The grubby sort of politics that we have seen displayed here will not wash with the people of Rockhampton. Regardless of their political persuasion in this city, the decent people of this city are pleased to see the parliament here. Quite frankly, the honourable member ought to be ashamed to be a part of any party. I call on every Liberal member here to dissociate themselves from Dr Flegg, but, even more so, I call on the National Party to do it.

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.52 pm): The Nationals supported the regional parliament in Townsville, and the Nationals support the regional parliament in Rockhampton. The opposition unequivocally supports the principle and retention of regional parliaments and the relocation of those regional parliaments to a major regional centre in Queensland in each term of government. We support the initiative. We believe that it is good. We believe that it gives people the opportunity to be able to see and appreciate democracy at their local level and to be able to understand how the parliament operates at their local level.

This morning in this place I said that the test of a regional parliament is not only going to the place and having lots of photographs of the Premier in the local newspaper; it is also about making sure that practical things are delivered, that matters that are important to the local community are addressed in that local community. There is a range of issues that local Labor members of parliament in this region have been negligent in not taking up on behalf of their constituents.

This morning I mentioned the issue of the new hospital and nursing home at Yeppoon. It was a commitment not only of the Labor Party prior to the last state election but also of the then coalition at the last state election to build that new—

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** We have a new one, do we not? I am talking about the then commitment. We had a very strong commitment—it was a bipartisan commitment—to build that hospital on a greenfield site with an associated nursing home. That is something that the member for Keppel has been running away from ever since. That is the lack of representation that we have here. The flurry of activity—

**Mr HOOLIHAN:** I rise to a point of order. I find the comment offensive, and I would ask that it be withdrawn. It is untrue.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I withdraw it. All I say is that this government made a commitment at the last state election to establish a new hospital at a greenfield site with an associated nursing home. Since that time this government and the local member have been walking away from that and talking about redevelopment on the old site, which is not suitable for expansion. There is also no commitment to the 72-bed nursing home. Residents of Rockhampton are going to see a flurry of activity from their local members that they will not see when they go to parliament in Brisbane. We have already seen that flurry here this morning.

What about the issue of the honourable member for Rockhampton and the way that he has performed on the issue of the Rockhampton Base Hospital? At a time when people have been telling us about the problems with the emergency department and the ICU—the intensive care unit—being downgraded to a high dependency unit, where was the honourable member? Nowhere! He took a briefing from the district manager and said that everything was hunky-dory.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I rise to a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition is wilfully misleading this parliament. What he is saying is untrue and bears no resemblance to fact. I demand it be withdrawn.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I withdraw it.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr English): There is no point of order.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Just let me say this. When Peter Forster came to Rockhampton and held a meeting with the staff at the Rockhampton Base Hospital and discovered what everyone else in the community knew about the problems within the community, how the administration was not listening to the clinicians, the doctors and the nurses, and how there was a real dissatisfaction with what was going on, the member for Rockhampton was quoted as saying that he was unaware of those problems; that he had not been made aware of the problems in his briefings. The people had been telling us—

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the parliament yet again. What I said was—

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

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** What he is saying is untrue, offensive, non-factual, and I demand it be withdrawn.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Okay, if he says so.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The minister has found it offensive. Do you withdraw?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Okay, Mr Deputy Speaker, we will just get the press quotes and put them out there. So that is the level of representation that is necessary.

**Mr Reynolds:** Have you withdrawn?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I will withdraw. We will rely on what is on the public record. It was Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen and the then coalition government who made country cabinets a very, very important part of democracy in Queensland. This government has replaced those with what are called community cabinets and has made some enhancements. It is not right for the government to say that it came up with the initiative. We have no problem with the concept of community cabinet or full regional parliament.

There are some things that can be done to enhance this process. We need to make sure that there are things such as the new Yeppoon Hospital with associated nursing facilities, a commitment to the retention of the School of the Air, a water pipeline for the Capricorn Coast and Nathan Dam—the sorts of issues that are important to people in this region. The government should not just reannounce projects or give people what they are entitled to anyway and make them jump up and down applaud the government for doing so. What new initiatives are there and what is the government actually going to deliver for those people? That is the important thing. The outcomes are the true measure of success.

I think that it would be great for the next regional parliament to go south. We have been in the north; we have been in the central part of Queensland. It would be very good to go south and inland. The obvious place, in my view, for the next regional parliament is Toowoomba. It is the obvious place because that would ensure that in the first three sittings of regional parliament we have an appropriate geographic spread across Queensland. It would give an opportunity to the people of south-west Queensland, the Darling Downs and surrounding areas to be able to come in and be able to appreciate parliament.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I note that the honourable members opposite are scoffing at that suggestion.

This morning the Premier stood in this House and made cheap shots about people not understanding and not travelling north of the Noosa River. I wished that when the Premier travelled out of Brisbane he actually listened to what people are saying north of the Noosa River. He never listened to what those people were saying on property rights, on the issue of vegetation management, on the issue of water pricing and the imposition of those extraordinary taxes in recent times. He has never listened. It is one thing to go out there, give people a cuddle and pledge that he has an affinity with them, but it is another to then say at some form of AgForce function, 'Don't belt me up because Heather and I are from Atherton and Charleville.' If he is going to say that he has an affinity, he has to show that he has an affinity. The Premier's demonstration is far from that.

There is the issue of water and there is the issue of property rights, on which the government has done nothing but to ensure the hardship and misery of people in regional Queensland. On the issue of water, honourable members should look at the negligence that the Premier's side of politics has foisted on people not only in the regions but also in south-east Queensland when it comes to guaranteeing

them and ensuring them their right, which is water for their urban and industrial needs. Western hardwoods is another classic example. Notwithstanding that that project received an international award for forest management, which was announced by the former minister for primary industries, the government is going to close that to access. It is not listening to those people.

The Premier talked about other things including preselection and making sure there is local input. Let us talk about the Bundaberg preselection. The Premier has been rolled at the Labor Party conference. The unions took over the Labor Party's preselection process. The local people of Bundaberg have no right to endorse their local candidate. So the faceless men and women in Brisbane—the lawyers, the union hacks and the union masters—tell the good Labor Party branch members of Bundaberg that they have no right to choose their candidate. The member for Rockhampton supports the faceless men of the Labor Party in Brisbane rolling local branch people regarding who should be their candidate. So he should not talk about democracy and understanding the regions and then go and forget about them.

There is an enhancement that can be made to the operation of regional parliament. It is not the government's parliament; it is parliament's parliament. I think there is an enhancement that should be enshrined for the future. The Premier and the opposition leader should actually host such receptions of a parliament because it is the parliament's parliament. The government is one thing and it is led by the Premier, but the Premier and the Leader of Opposition should actually host those events. I think people understand that it is the parliament's parliament.

Time expired.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

Debate, on motion of Mr Quinn, adjourned.

## STATE DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS ORGANISATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### First Reading

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (2.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971, and for other purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

### Second Reading

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (2.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill is further evidence of the government's continuing commitment to the timely and efficient provision of infrastructure to provide for Queensland's rapid growth. That is for the growth centre of Australia. It also is intended to ensure that the approvals regime for major projects in this state provides an efficient and effective process for project assessment meeting contemporary standards. High-quality, cost-effective and efficient infrastructure is fundamental to the continued economic growth and development of the state and to maintaining Queenslanders' high standard of living.

The Queensland government is taking steps to ensure that the infrastructure required to support this growth is provided when and where it is required. To date, the government has developed comprehensive infrastructure programs for priority infrastructure for south-east Queensland and the coal industry, particularly in central Queensland in areas like the Bowen Basin, which we heard about earlier today.

To implement these programs and identify and deliver on other critical infrastructure priorities, I recently created a separate Public Service Office of the Coordinator-General reporting directly to me. The Coordinator-General is a statutory position established under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act. The act provides the Coordinator-General with unique powers to coordinate across government to facilitate priority infrastructure and development projects. We have seen evidence of that in recent times, and particularly today. It also provides the framework for impact assessment of infrastructure and other major projects. One such project is the north-south bypass tunnel.

In a statement I made to the House on 25 August, when I tabled the Coordinator-General's report about the environmental impact statement for the north-south bypass tunnel project, I foreshadowed that the government would consider more legislative changes to facilitate this project and other projects delivered through public-private partnerships. The bill before the House today amends the State

Development and Public Works Organisation Act in the way foreshadowed in that statement. It also makes a number of other amendments to the act to bring it in line with contemporary processes in other acts and provides for consequential amendments to the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act.

The State Development Act has historically played an important role in the development of the state. It is important that government responds to the changing environment in which development occurs. The changes I am outlining today are aimed at responding to this changed environment. It is time to modernise and update the provisions to enable government to respond efficiently and expeditiously to the demands created for the provision of economic infrastructure whilst ensuring that the community's expectation about environmental management continues to be met.

Like other governments in Australia and around the world, the Queensland government has acknowledged the importance of harnessing the private sector's capacity and capabilities in delivering innovative infrastructure solutions and managing certain associated risks. This bill recognises the emerging and important role of the private sector in infrastructure planning, development and delivery. Increasingly, proponents are conducting their environmental assessments at an earlier stage in the development of a proposal, as part of the feasibility stage. That makes sense when we think about it. This is particularly so in the case of public-private partnerships, where the EIS is used as the basis for calling tenders for the construction of the project which may then result in changes to aspects of the project, such as the design, scope, construction methodology or available technology.

The bill provides that the Coordinator-General can evaluate changes proposed to a significant project after the completion of the EIS process but before the project commences. This will allow proponents to finetune their development proposals and submit to the Coordinator-General information about the proposed change, together with its effects on the environment. The Coordinator-General will then determine whether any further assessment should be done and if there is a need for public consultation on the proposed change. The amendments will assist in the efficient delivery of projects, use of government resources and thorough assessment by responding to a change in the proposal without the need to restart the EIS process from the beginning. That makes sense when we think about it.

The need for this type of provision arose in the course of the EIS process for the Brisbane City Council's north-south bypass tunnel project. The council sought a mechanism by which to have a change proposed by the successful consortium considered by the Coordinator-General without the need to recommence the EIS process. Otherwise this could have gone on like *Blue Hills*. We would have all been dead by the time it was finished. The Coordinator-General's project facilitation role in coordinating environmental impact statements, which provide a whole-of-government response for projects declared to be significant projects requiring an EIS, is enhanced by improving the act's integration with a range of environmental and planning legislation. The necessary linkages to other legislation to enable the Coordinator-General to state conditions or make recommendations for decisions under other statutes have been a fundamental part of the act since 1999.

With the recent commencement of the Petroleum and Gas Act, it is considered desirable to provide specific linkages to that act to enable the Coordinator-General to coordinate the assessment and facilitation of significant projects which require leases or licences under the Petroleum and Gas Act. The amendments ensure that any conditions stated in the Coordinator-General's report are included in any licence or lease granted for gas or petroleum projects. These linkages are similar to existing linkages between the act and the Integrated Planning Act, the Mineral Resources Act and the Environmental Protection Act.

Some minor amendments are also required to the Petroleum and Gas Act as a consequence of these amendments to the State Development Act. An impact assessment study was prepared for the Papua New Guinea pipeline project prior to the inclusion of significant project provisions in the act in 1999. This assessment was very extensive and met the requirements of both the Commonwealth and the Queensland governments. The project has been in abeyance since 1998 but has recently been revived. The amendments to the act recognise the earlier environmental assessment work completed for the pipeline project and the desire to remove any potential duplication of this work under provisions of the Environmental Protection Act or the Nature Conservation Act which have been introduced since that time. I want to be upfront about that so that everyone understands exactly what we are doing in relation to the PNG pipeline project.

As currently drafted, the act provides the Coordinator-General with decision-making powers to determine whether a project is a significant project—that is, one that has important economic consequences for the state or for a region. The EIS provisions under the State Development Act provide a framework to coordinate the environmental assessments normally required and undertaken under other legislation such as the Integrated Planning Act. However, the act provides no discretion about the level of impact assessment that is required for significant projects, even if there are additional assessment and advertising processes specified in other legislation that must be followed once the EIS under the State Development Act is completed.



To address this issue, the bill enables the Coordinator-General to declare a project to be a significant project but not require the preparation of an EIS under the act if previous or planned assessments under other acts are deemed sufficient. In other words, we have not moved away from environmental considerations. We have just streamlined them and made sure that we end up with an outcome. This amendment provides for the nature and significance of projects to the state or region to be considered and if these criteria are satisfied a determination that projects warrant further assessment. This amendment will have particular application to projects seeking approvals under the vegetation management and water acts such as expansions of industrial estates or development of feedlots. I know that those opposite will be supportive of this.

The amendments seek to recognise and encourage the important role of the private sector in the planning, development and delivery of infrastructure. But just as the private sector is demanding more of government, government's resources are best used where proponents can demonstrate willingness and a capacity to deliver. It is interesting that the feedlot issue was raised with us only yesterday. How quickly the government responds!

The Coordinator-General's project facilitation role for project proponents is enhanced by the preparation of assessment and approval time lines in consultation with project proponents and other government agencies. To ensure the equitable allocation and efficient use of government resources, there is a need for the timely completion of the EIS and commencement of development by a proponent. The bill provides that proponents must provide their EIS to the Coordinator-General within two years from the date the terms of reference are completed for the EIS. This will not affect the public notification and any requests for further information which occur after the Coordinator-General has received the EIS.

Following the model in the Integrated Planning Act, a proponent will generally have four years from the date the Coordinator-General completes the evaluation of the EIS in which to make a development application for the project, after which time the currency period of the Coordinator-General's report will expire. In other words, we want them to get on with the project. That is what we want. This also embodies the 'use it or lose it' approach—that is what this is; either use it or lose it—adopted in the Integrated Planning Act for development approvals. Any approvals given by the Coordinator-General for uses in a state development area will now also have a currency period of four years in which to commence the development. We do, however, recognise that there may be compelling reasons why the Coordinator-General's report about an EIS for a significant project or an approval in a state development area should be extended beyond four years, and the Coordinator-General will have discretion to extend the report or approval in some circumstances.

The need to plan for the provision of linear infrastructure across the state is facilitated by amendments to the existing state development area provisions to provide that the Coordinator-General can take land for multiuser infrastructure corridors. The Coordinator-General can already take or otherwise acquire land situated in a state development area for the purpose of establishing industry or essential services. These multiuser infrastructure corridors may be directly associated with existing state development areas or they may be acquired for other multiple use corridors linking uses within existing state development areas, other strategic locations such as major resource areas, ports and other infrastructure corridors or transport and logistics hubs.

It is anticipated that these corridors—and I referred to two earlier today in relation to this region—would primarily be used for linear infrastructure such as gas, water or slurry pipelines, powerlines, conveyors, roads and other infrastructure as required. Private sector infrastructure providers and industry will benefit from the ability to access predetermined strategically placed corridors throughout the state to assist in the timely and efficient delivery of infrastructure through the colocation of linear infrastructure within the same corridor rather than a range of infrastructure providers developing multiple corridors to or from similar locations and the associated assessment, approval and land acquisition processes that must be addressed. Some of this happens now, and it is crazy. This is a sensible way to get linear infrastructure in place.

The ability to use common user infrastructure may also provide substantial cost savings to those infrastructure providers—and that is pretty logical—and, importantly, to users of their services. To this end, the Coordinator-General is currently investigating possible corridors across the state. The first of these corridor investigations is being undertaken between Gladstone and Rockhampton to support use by water pipelines and possibly rail. The increasing role of the private sector in development and operation of infrastructure now requires that works are able to be carried out by a person who has entered into an agreement to do those works. For example, works may be carried out by a private sector concession holder, such as may occur in a PPP, whereby the Coordinator-General, the government or a local body enters into an agreement with a private sector concession holder for a defined period to build, own, operate and then possibly transfer the works back to the local or state government at the end of a franchise period. We saw those sorts of build, own and operate schemes operating with the Airtrain link in Brisbane.

In the case of the north-south bypass tunnel project, the Brisbane City Council will be able to enter into an agreement with the successful consortium to build, own and operate the tunnel. Works approved as authorised works under the act are considered as exempt developments under the local government planning scheme and do not require assessment of the use by the local government under its scheme. The approval of works to be carried out in this way will not affect the need to obtain necessary environmental authorities under the Environmental Protection Act. The act also currently provides for the Coordinator-General to undertake works for a private person where those works are required for the development of a town or community. This provision is being amended to allow application of that provision to infrastructure more generally to allow, for example, the construction of a private pipeline or rail spur as part of a bigger multiuser project—in other words, a more significant outcome.

The Land Title Act 1994 and the Land Act 1994 provide for the registration of public utility easements by reference to an 'about' plan rather than a survey plan. There are potential cost savings associated with not doing a survey plan. However, the registration process for these easements requires the consent of the landowner. In cases where the Coordinator-General compulsorily takes the land, the requirement for the owner's consent cannot be met. The bill provides that the requirement of the Land Title Act 1994 for owner's consent is not required. These amendments will allow the Coordinator-General to take a water storage easement where it is not in the interests of either the landowner or the infrastructure owner for the affected land to be taken as freehold. The use of a water storage easement over land which would only be temporarily inundated would provide a more suitable mechanism by which to control land affected by water storage facilities than taking the land as fee simple. Again, that is pretty simple.

A review of the guidelines made under the act is currently being finalised and will include guidance about the use of water storage easements in relation to water infrastructure projects. The bill underlines the government's commitment to the provision of economic infrastructure to further drive the development of the Smart State. The amendments to the act will improve the workability of the legislation, its integration with other environmental and planning legislation and clarify provisions relating to the delivery of infrastructure by the private sector. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

## ORDER OF BUSINESS

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer): I move—

That government business orders of the day Nos 1 to 11 be postponed.

Motion agreed to.

## REGIONAL SITTINGS OF PARLIAMENT, ROCKHAMPTON

Debate resumed.

**Mr QUINN** (Robina—Lib) (2.45 pm): I rise today to support the motion moved in the House by the Premier, and I do so—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr QUINN**: Settle down, children.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Male): Order! That is not parliamentary.

**Mr QUINN**: I withdraw, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do so because, whilst regional parliaments such as this do need support, at the same time the basic services of the state must not be forgotten. I was rather intrigued by the two names mentioned by the Labor Party in putting this motion before the House this morning. One was Rex Pilbeam and the other Campbell Newman—two outstanding mayors in this state. If we look at their record and contrast the way in which they delivered basic services to their constituents over a long period of time compared to the way the Labor Party has delivered services over the past eight years, there could not be a starker contrast. Rex Pilbeam and Campbell Newman would support this process, mainly because they have outstanding records in delivering basic services for their ratepayers.

Rex Pilbeam was a mayor of this city for 30 years and a state member of parliament for nine years. When he took over as mayor in 1952, he inherited a heavy council debt in Rockhampton. He inherited a works program one year behind schedule and also inherited almost worthless plant and equipment. With that burden, over 30 years he reduced the debt of the city, he kept rate increases to as little as possible and also reduced administrative costs to the bone, as the residents in this city would attest to. He systematically planned and budgeted for sealed roads, water supply and sewerage. He was instrumental in improving recreational and cultural projects such as parks, gardens, libraries, the cultural centre, art collections, art galleries and the civic theatre. He in fact installed the most reliable

supply of water of any provincial city in Queensland right here in Rockhampton. He ensured that there was a barrage across the river so that the salt water from the Fitzroy could not contaminate the freshwater supply from the city.

Rex Pilbeam would have supported this because he knew that he had the basics in place. He had the basics in place. It is the same with Campbell Newman. In the very short time that Campbell Newman has been Lord Mayor of Brisbane, we have seen capital works on the agenda and started, dragging the Labor Party in this state to support the tunnels, revitalising the bus network and improving capital works while at the same time keeping rate increases to a moderate level. That is why he would support this sort of process as well, because he also has the basics right. We need to have the basics right, and that is what the member for Moggill was talking about. It is all very well to spend \$400,000 on a regional parliament, but at the same time we have to make sure that the basics are right.

You cannot have Logan Hospital closing 15 beds on a day when there are bypasses at other public hospitals in the south-east corner of the state. That is what this is all about. It is making sure that this government has the right priority. We know it has the wrong priority. The member for Moggill was saying that it is about time the government got the right priority.

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Members, order! There is a member on his feet speaking.

**Mr QUINN:** That is why members opposite do not like it. The member for Moggill was pointing out how they were willing, and quite rightly, to spend \$400,000 here but ignore the essential services and make sure that beds were kept open in our hospitals in the south-east corner.

**Mr Mickel** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Minister for Energy, order!

**Mr QUINN:** That is what this debate is about. As I said, we will be supporting the motion before the House, but there is a context in which we are supporting it, why Rex Pilbeam would be supporting it and why Campbell Newman would be supporting it: because they have their basics right. The problem with this government is that it has its basics wrong and its priorities wrong. That is what the member for Moggill was pointing out.

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.51 pm): I rise to lend my support to the motion that was moved by the Premier and has been supported by the Leader of the Opposition—that is, supporting the concept of regional parliaments and especially this one in Rockhampton. Before I do that, I acknowledge in the public gallery students from two schools in my electorate: St Therese's school in Monto and St Joseph's school in Biloela. It is great to see them here. Those kids are what regional parliaments are all about. I welcome all of the kids, I welcome the staff that have travelled with them and I welcome my old mate Peter Wilson, who is driving the bus and who was probably involved in a bit of training to get me here.

I represent a regional electorate. I have always represented a regional electorate. I was born and bred in regional Queensland and I am a product of regional Queensland. Despite the hallucinations of the member for Rockhampton, I will always live in regional Queensland. My wife is here, too. I should acknowledge her, otherwise I will get into trouble when I get home. My wife and I are in the early stages of building a new house in Monto, where I grew up. We will always be there. And, old mate, you are always welcome. There will always be a beer for you because I know that, even though your politics are wrong, your heart is in the right place.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member will address his comments through the chair.

**Mr SEENEY:** This motion should be supported. Regional parliaments should be supported, but they need to be the real thing. They put the focus on particular areas in Queensland. In this case, this regional parliament has put the focus on central Queensland. It gives us the chance to focus on the problems in central Queensland and the failings of you lot opposite with regard to the way that central Queensland has suffered under this government.

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Order, members!

**Mr SEENEY:** Over the next few days—

**Mrs Carryn Sullivan** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Pumicestone, order!

**Mr SEENEY:**—we will be pointing out in the various debates that it is a great thing to get the parliament out of Brisbane. For all of my public life—in state parliament, in local government and even before that—I have fought the idea that somehow people in Brisbane can come up with a solution and that solution will fit the whole of Queensland. People in Brisbane cannot truly understand the dynamics of rural communities—the types of communities that I represent. There are 14 small communities in my electorate. When I sit in the state parliament and hear some of the rubbish that members who represent

Brisbane and Gold Coast seats come up with in debates, I understand only too well how little they know and how little they understand.

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Members, order!

**Mr SEENEY:** The kids will enjoy this: there are members on that side of the House who blame the farmers for the fact that the crows have moved into Aspley and sing out in the mornings and keep them awake. They reckon it is all the farmers' fault because there are no trees in rural Queensland for the crows to sit in. There is another member who thinks that the flying foxes that make life unbearable for the people who live in Charters Towers are only there because the farmers knocked all the trees down. That is the Minister for Energy, a senior member of the government. That is the sort of thing that these people who come from Brisbane do not understand.

**Mrs Reilly** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Mudgeeraba, order!

**Mr SEENEY:** I was down at the bull sale yesterday and I had to explain to a minister of the government that you do not get rump steaks off Brahman bulls—do you, Tom? You do not get rump steaks off Brahman bulls. There is a whole range of things that these kids know that you have not got a clue about.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr SEENEY:** The more that we can get these Brisbane members out here the better. And rather than just stay here for three days—

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mr SEENEY:** I hope you have a great day. The more that we can get the Brisbane members out here—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members, order! I am on my feet! I will not have this behaviour in the House. I am not going to resume until there is complete order. I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr SEENEY:** I conclude by saying that the more that Brisbane and Gold Coast members can get out to rural and regional communities the better. I urge each and every member quite seriously to take every opportunity to do that. It should not be just a three-day flying trip—not just flying here and sitting here in an airconditioned auditorium and then flying back to Brisbane. They should take the opportunity to get their feet on the ground and understand the difference in dynamics, understand how big a place Queensland is and understand how Queenslanders in rural and regional areas have different needs. Whoever is in government has the responsibility to govern for all Queenslanders—to recognise the needs of all Queenslanders and not introduce crazy legislation that the minister for natural resources is now responsible for. I acknowledge the minister did not introduce it; I am talking about the vegetation management legislation and the impact that that has had on rural and regional Queensland.

**Ms Nelson-Carr** interjected.

**Mr Mickel** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Mundingburra and Minister for Energy!

**Mr SEENEY:** We have heard ridiculous contributions from so many members of that side of the House in debates on legislation such as that. The only chance that members who take part in those debates have of understanding the issues is to get outside of Brisbane into the rural areas, get out and get their feet on the ground, find out how hot it is and realise that kids need airconditioning or understand the other issues that we argue for, that I have always argued for and that I will always argue for. I am proud to be a champion of rural and regional Queensland.

**Mrs Reilly** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Mudgeeraba!

**Mr SEENEY:** I will always be so. Any government that seeks to close our hospitals, wind back our schools, not invest in our roads and not invest in water infrastructure will find that I will be a loud champion for those areas because those things are important to us.

**Mrs Reilly** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Mudgeeraba, I warn you under standing order 253.

**Mr SEENEY:** I hope that this short trip for some members will go a small way to making them understand how important that is. I certainly urge all members to support the motion before the House.

**Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (2.57 pm): I would like to remind the opposition and the Liberal Party that codswallop is not a fish. We have heard from the member for Robina and the member for Southern Downs and Leader of the Opposition. We have just heard from the member for Callide, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and not one of them has condemned the comments of the member for Moggill. They have conveniently left that out. They have come in and made excuses and said they support it, but they have not condemned the comments. They will not condemn the comments because, for the Liberal Party, guess what? Queensland finishes at the Noosa River. At least the National Party and Independents have representatives outside Brisbane who are aware that Queensland does not finish at the Noosa River. I challenge every speaker to stand up here and say they condemn what the member for Moggill said.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** He should apologise.

**Mr HOOLIHAN:** Maybe he should apologise. At least he should stand up and say, 'I did not say that. I did not mean that. I do not subscribe to that.' Every other member who stands up and says they support it should condemn him out of hand.

Let me deal with a couple of matters that have been mentioned. We heard the Leader of the Opposition stand up and say that regional cabinet meetings were commenced by Joh Bjelke-Petersen. He should have a look at his own party's history as history has a real way of trapping people. The first country cabinet meetings held by the National Party were, in fact, introduced by the Hon. Frank Nicklin. The first meeting was a cabinet meeting at Toowoomba on 4 February 1958. It does go back further, but they were not country cabinet meetings as we know them today. It was a local cabinet meeting and all the local dignitaries went along as long as they were supportive of that party. That was the only time people ever saw them. It was not any sort of assistance to rural Queensland. It never has been.

I know that people like the member for Gregory do have their feet on the ground. They do live in regional areas and they do support this sort of taking democracy to the people. But there are a lot of people on the other side of politics who do not. We even have people from north Queensland who do not object to regional parliaments. When I was running for Keppel in 2001 I had a gentleman come up to me and he said, 'I want you to have a look at this map,' and he held up a map of Queensland. I do apologise to the people of Townsville for the comment but it was the comment that was made. He said, 'See Townsville? See Brisbane? There's an awful lot of Queensland between Townsville and Brisbane and you better do something about it because parliament in Queensland is only in south-east Queensland.' The Beattie government recognised Townsville in 2002 and it had a regional sitting of parliament. In 2005 we have a regional sitting of parliament here in Rockhampton.

The Premier has given an undertaking that if his government is re-elected we will have another regional parliament. I do not object to the suggestion that it be Toowoomba. It may be somewhere else. Toowoomba is a major area outside the Noosa River area. That is the bottom line. We have spent money to bring cabinet here but that is all about democracy. We heard what the member for Rockhampton said: it is bringing democracy to the people. Quite rightly, the member for Callide said that it is about children, and we have children from every school. Hopefully a lot of people from central Queensland and Rockhampton will come along and listen to the debates—that is what it is all about—so that these people here see that we care about rural and regional Queensland.

I care about regional and rural Queensland because my home town is in the electorate of Gregory. Many of the people who live there remain my friends, and they are the people who I know need this sort of democracy, who need the ability to see how governments operate.

**Mr Johnson:** They need National Party representation.

**Mr HOOLIHAN:** I take that interjection from the member for Gregory. Unless all of those speakers stand up and condemn the member for Moggill for his comment and say that he was wrong and until he stands up and apologises, then any speaker who stands up here and says that they support this motion is really having two bob each way. That is not a very good way of punting, particularly when you run fourth out of three.

**Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—Lib) (3.03 pm): The Premier, in having moved this motion—I see that he is not here to defend it—thinks that he is pretty clever. He has tried to seize on some media reports from yesterday to try to make a political statement by manipulating the motion along political lines. Madam Deputy Speaker, you will notice that there is no reference to the funding issues surrounding regional parliament and there is certainly no mention of the funding issues that are gripping our health system in which context my remarks were made.

On the day we set off to come up here to regional parliament on our taxpayer-funded flights, the Logan Hospital, despite being completely full, had been instructed to close hospital beds and send patients away. The situation was so tight there, so desperate, that as soon as a patient got out of a bed at Logan Hospital the medical and nursing staff had to wheel the bed out of the hospital and across the road so that no well-meaning doctor or nurse could actually put a sick person into it in case they desperately needed that bed. That is the context in which my remarks that the funding priorities of this government are absolutely skew-whiff were made. I certainly do not back away from comments about the funding priorities of this government.

Today, on our first day of sittings here in Rockhampton, the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital is absolutely desperate. It does not have a vacant bed in the entire hospital. It has cancelled all but the most urgent of surgery and sent home all those people who have waited months and months and sometimes longer on those waiting lists. They have been on the phones ringing around every other hospital they can. They transferred six people out of Royal Brisbane in the middle of the night just to make beds available for desperately ill people. That is today. That is happening while we are standing here today debating this political motion in the House.

**A government member:** Do you support the motion?

**Dr FLEGG:** I still have another eight minutes to get to that. The budget cuts that this government makes and the spending priorities of this government are made at the expense of patients in the hospital system in Queensland. There is absolutely no doubt about that. To save money in the hospital system, we are closing beds and we are turning elective surgery patients away. We can find money for all sorts of other things except caring for the people of Queensland.

We see budget cuts affecting our patients in hospitals in Queensland. Bear in mind that the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital is the tertiary hospital that services the Rockhampton area; it is the hospital that takes the critically ill people and the seriously ill babies who need ventilation from Rockhampton. Today the news for people in Rockhampton is, 'There is no bed. Don't bother coming.' That is purely a reflection of the funding priorities of those government members sitting opposite.

**Mr Mickel:** Why don't you bulk-bill?

**Dr FLEGG:** I take it by the trivial nature of the interjections from the minister for electricity that he does not think the health system is in a serious situation. I am not going to trivialise it like he does.

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Barry): Honourable members, order!

**Dr FLEGG:** The Premier is totally off the mark if he thinks that the issue at principle here is to do with whether or not we are holding the parliament in regional Queensland. The issue of those remarks is the priorities of the government and where and what it can spend money on and where and what it can find money for. If the government can find \$400,000 or \$500,000 to bring the parliament to Rockhampton, surely it can find the—

**Mr Mickel** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the honourable member for Logan under standing order 253.

**Dr FLEGG:** It is Logan Hospital in the electorate of the member for Logan.

**Mr Mickel:** No, it's not.

**Dr FLEGG:** Well, servicing that member's electorate.

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order.

**Dr FLEGG:** The issue here is the funding priorities of the government, and the people of Rockhampton understand that. They understand the issues surrounding a government that can find money for all sorts of things but cannot deliver proper hospital services right here in Rockhampton. They understand that the issue here is funding priorities and providing decent health and, in some cases, life-saving treatment for Queensland's patients. I am not opposed in principle to the idea of having parliament in regional Queensland.

**Government members** interjected.

**Dr FLEGG:** I have all the Rehome transcripts here if members want to see what I said. I have no problem with the principle of having parliament in regional Queensland, but do not pay for it with budget allocations that should have been put into the health system. Let me suggest a couple of areas where the government might have been able to make some cuts instead of bulking more money into the administration and operation of the state. Let me suggest to the government where it might have made some cuts to pay for regional parliament to come to Rockhampton.

Perhaps the government could save some money on the glossy brochures that it puts out—the tens of thousands of dollars we spent on the health 20-20 promotion to hundreds of sites around Queensland which was a total publicity stunt for the government. I pulled out some information on the Premier's department. Two years ago the Premier's department cost \$80 million. Now it costs \$112 million to operate the Premier's department—a 40 per cent increase in spending in two years in the Premier's department and they are trying to tell us that their funding priorities are not all wrong. Make the cuts out of something that is not as essential as people's health and out of our hospitals and do not turn patients away from Queensland public hospitals in droves like they have been doing.

**Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (3.11 pm): It is a pleasure to speak in this important debate today. I must say that I was rather bemused by the Leader of the Opposition's support for this regional parliament in Rockhampton and also his call for Toowoomba as the place for the next regional parliament, particularly as I am the member for Toowoomba North. I remind honourable members that I called for Toowoomba to be a place for a regional parliament as long ago as the Townsville sittings—three years ago. I have been an ongoing advocate of that proposal to the Premier during those many visits that he has made to parliament over the ensuing three years. More recently, when discussion of the Rockhampton parliament was to hand, I raised the issue with him again.

I am further bemused, however, by the Leader of the Opposition, because honourable members may have forgotten—but I have not—that leading up to the last regional parliament in Townsville the then leader of the National Party, Mr Horan, the member for Toowoomba South, in fact did a Flegg. He opposed the holding of the regional parliament in Townsville. Remember he said that it was a waste of time and money? During the holding of that parliament he converted and became a supporter of the parliament, as any doubters would have. He saw the vast numbers of people who turned up in Townsville, as they are today in Rockhampton. He noticed, in particular, the media support. We all know the degree of importance the opposition puts on focus groups and the like. Significantly, I notice that the member for Toowoomba South is not here in the House this afternoon and he is not on the speaking list.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SHINE:** With respect, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is hard to get a word in here.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Barry): Order! Members will come to order.

**Mr SHINE:** I would have thought when it was the basis and major point of his leader's speech that the next parliament be in Toowoomba that he might be supported by the member for Toowoomba South. No doubt somebody might explain that omission in due course. As I said, he is not on the list and he is not in the House at the moment. At least the National Party has not given up on Toowoomba. As I understand it, in the recent deal done in places in Brisbane over the last few weeks the National Party at least has retained its interest in Toowoomba North. Little can be said for the Liberal Party in Brisbane, much to the disgust, I know, of certain sections of the Liberal Party in Toowoomba.

I just wanted to make those particular points. I also want to say that Toowoomba would be a magnificent place to hold the next parliament, for a number of reasons. It is an area of great economic significance. It is a centre of huge educational importance to the state, particularly its boarding schools and the USQ. Then there is the climate. At this time of year you can comfortably wear your coat in parliament without any distress at all.

I highly recommend the suggestion repeated today, but made originally by me three years ago, by the Leader of the Opposition. I just hope that the Leader of the Opposition, in his support for Toowoomba, carries on that support, particularly when it comes to issues that affect Toowoomba versus Warwick, like the second range crossing and the route of the inland rail line. We shall see about that.

It is of course important that the political engagement process that we have with community cabinets, with ministerial forums and with this regional parliament be promoted and encouraged. It is the right of all people in regional Queensland, central Queensland, northern Queensland and south-western Queensland to have the opportunity to view this most important democratic process but particularly the young people, many of whom we see here today. I am a great advocate of that being spread around the state. I commend the Premier and the government generally on the initiative in furthering the idea of this regional parliament.

In closing, might I just say that it is a great opportunity particularly for the young people here today to see the political process in practice first-hand. One of the things that they will grapple with is the splits in that section of this room today—the split within the National Party between the current leader and the former leader over the advocacy of regional parliaments and the split within the Liberal Party that we saw in the paper yesterday and the difference of view expressed today. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (3.17 pm): It gives me great pleasure today to speak in support of this motion moved by the Premier and seconded by the member for Rockhampton and the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. It is important to remember—and I think the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and member for Callide identified and illustrated it fairly clearly this afternoon—that this motion is about regional Queensland and what really happens in regional Queensland. Like the member for Callide, I am a western Queenslander and am very proud to represent the constituency of Gregory, which falls in the central part of this state.

A very important point that I want recognised this afternoon is the wealth generation capacity not only of central Queensland but the whole of Queensland. We need to realise the wealth that is generated here in central Queensland from the coalmining industry. We heard the Deputy Premier this morning mention the \$3 billion generated by the cattle industry in Queensland—some 40 per cent of the profitability of agriculture in this state. It all comes out of this great state.

There are a lot of issues out there, and I heard the minister for transport here today identifying with the new coal rail line from Blackwater down to the Rolleston mine at Media Park. This is all very good stuff, getting coal out of the central region, but at the same time while we talk about the cattle industry we must also have upgraded some of those roads in central Queensland. I talk here today about the cut-off point of type 2 road trains coming in from the north to the feedlot at Ganoo, just out of Emerald, where they can only pull a type 1 road train. For those people who are not aware, that is a road train pulling two trailers. With the cost of fuel now, a road train can travel only about 500 metres on a litre of diesel. So at the end of the day they have to pull two decks just to pay the fuel bill alone.

It is paramount that these links are upgraded to let these configurations get through to the Ganoo feedlot so a lot of those cattle can be finished and ultimately fetch a higher price. A lot of people tend to forget that for every beast that is killed in these eastern abattoirs—whether it is here at Rockhampton or back in the south-east—employment is created for three people every day. It is the multiplier effect. I think a lot of people are not aware of the multiplier effect.

The citrus industry in the Central Highlands has been absolutely savaged by the effects of citrus canker. That comes back to biosecurity in this country. I have heard various members of parliament, federal and state, talking about coastal surveillance and instituting coastal security. I would support that. Our agricultural industries are sacred—whether it is livestock, fruit and veg, horticulture or grain.

It is paramount that we recognise the problems brought about by the mismanagement of national parks in this state. If ever there is an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in this country it will never be contained because of the feral pig population that is running rampant over the length and breadth of not just Queensland but also Australia. Feral pigs are out of control in the gulf and in Cape York Peninsula. I can see the minister for natural resources nodding his head in agreement.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr JOHNSON:** He is agreeing, all right. He knows how serious the situation is. The young people in the gallery here today are our future. These are the mums and dads of tomorrow and the leaders of tomorrow. Regardless of what side of politics we are on, we must protect the economy, protect the environment and lead business the way it should be led in order to create a quality of life for these young people and let them progress further into the 21st century as they take over.

It is a damn good move to bring parliament to central Queensland, as it was to take it to Townsville. The people of the regions can come and see first-hand what is happening. I salute the government for it.

**Ms NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (3.22 pm): Three years and one week ago we celebrated parliament in Townsville. As a member who represents the Townsville community, it was something that I will never forget. I know that the members for Rockhampton, Fitzroy and Keppel will be feeling as proud as I was at that time. It is about having pride in your region for accepting the challenge to host this wonderful experience, about excitement and about knowing that your constituents will get the chance to see how parliament operates. That was certainly the feeling that we had in Townsville. I am reminded daily of that event because in my office I have a huge photo that was taken by the *Townsville Bulletin*. That shows all members sitting in the Townsville parliament.

The Townsville regional sittings made history for Queensland and Australia because it was the first time in 142 years that parliament had sat outside of Brisbane. Townsville itself is a very unique city. We all seem to turn out for the most basic of things. It is a family town. We have the mighty, mighty Cowboys. We have Crocodiles in the National Basketball League and the Fire in the Women's National Basketball League. We also have a very huge garrison city. Whenever we do anything at all—

**Mr Lucas:** You have the saint painted on the side of the mountain.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** We have the saint painted on the side of Castle Hill. It is a garrison city. Though many other regional communities may not support all of those industries and all of those businesses, Townsville certainly does. We have very competitive schools. We are a major decentralised state. As a former teacher, I believe that all young people need to have access to parliament. This is usually denied to most regional students.

The students in the audience today are able to watch democracy in progress. They are able to put faces to names or names to faces that they might have seen on TV. We all know that practicality is needed in order to learn. To learn about parliament, people need to be here and to take part in it. Voting is compulsory; therefore, they need to know what it is they are going to be voting for in the future.

In Townsville we had 89 parliamentarians, 90 staff members, eight Hansard reporters and 25 journalists as well as departmental directors-general. They all travelled to Townsville. In fact, even some of the furniture made the trip north from Parliament House. It was a very extraordinary opportunity for north Queenslanders—for schoolchildren, for mums and dads, for the business community and for industry and community leaders—to see the democratic process in action. It was a fantastic week. In the Premier's words, Townsville stood tall and showed its magnificence, pride and confidence in being a top regional city.



Even before parliament sat there, the local shopping centres held a display on the workings of government and the ways the community could become involved in government decision making. In those days we also had a parliamentary bowls team, of which I was a member, and we challenged local bowls clubs. All the funds that we raised were donated to the Red Cross house.

During the week many public events were planned including the 4TO FM free public barbecue. A similar barbecue was held in Rockhampton today. We all took part in cooking sausages for the general public. The Museum of Tropical Queensland in Townsville also hosted a display of parliamentary treasures to commemorate the Townsville sitting. Many important documents in Queensland's history came to the north for that important sitting.

About 8,000 people, including groups of schoolchildren from far and wide, attended the three-day history-making event at the Townsville Entertainment and Convention Centre. Parliament in Townsville also created an Australian record. One thousand people in the public gallery on the evening of the second sitting day set an attendance record for any Australian parliament. Even many of the most early sceptics, and there were some, changed their tune and praised the outcomes of the venture, which not only brought parliament to north Queensland but also gave a better understanding of how parliament works.

Survey recipients were asked whether they believed money was spent wisely on bringing the parliament to north Queensland. An overwhelming 73 per cent of people agreed that it was. We had an incredibly encouraging response from the business sector. There were 'no vacancy' signs everywhere in Townsville for accommodation. Restaurants and shops were pretty much fully booked out.

One of the great successes of parliament in Townsville was the way it reached children. I have already indicated that school groups came from far and wide. In our case they came from as far away as Lockhart River on Cape York and also from 800 kilometres north of Townsville. I might add that the state government subsidised the travel costs of those students.

A ballot was conducted by the Commission for Children and Young People. It polled 2,000 students. We wanted to find out what the major interests were for those students. People would be amazed, or maybe not amazed and not even surprised, that when the ballot results were collated the most important thing affecting young people today was found to be family—family values and the love of your family. It was overwhelmingly so. The value placed on families by young people was evidenced not just by age but also by cultural background and gender.

Another benefit of the occasion was that it facilitated a series of top-level meetings with government ministers and community leaders, groups and businesspeople. We had ministers captive in Townsville for almost a week. Community members were able to come along, meet the government and discuss their particular projects. Those meetings were packed. We had a breakfast with a number of students. I have to say that the negativity that we have encountered in the last couple of days by the Liberal Party is nothing short of—

**A government member:** Disgraceful.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Yes, disgraceful. Everybody else in this room agrees that a regional sitting of parliament, where we bring parliament to the people of Queensland, is the way to go. I was not pleased that in the last regional parliamentary sitting Rosa Lee Long also condemned spending money, claiming that it was an experience of indulgence. I am pleased to say that this time we have all come together and we agree that a regional sitting is the way to go.

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (3.29 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak in support of this sittings of regional parliament in Rockhampton. As most members would be aware and those in the audience would be aware, the seat of Mirani comes within 40 kilometres of the city of Rockhampton up near The Caves. I take a great deal of interest in what is happening in Rockhampton, regional Queensland and particularly central Queensland.

I have to say that this is probably a debate that we do not need to have. This theatre has seen many acts in its day. It has seen some comedy and some serious acts, but probably this is the biggest act it has ever seen. We appreciate that. I believe we all support a regional sittings of parliament. It was pleasing for me to be out at the magnificent Gracemere saleyards yesterday and to see the incredulous faces of some members from the other side of the House looking at the cream of the crop of young bulls being sold.

Regional Queensland has a lot on offer for all of Queensland. When the Premier spoke this morning about the coal industry in central Queensland he spoke with the pride that we all feel about the development of the coal industry in this state. I can tell members that it is not all rosy out there, as some on our side of parliament realise. We are looking down the barrel of the industry closing down if there is not sufficient rain in the next little while.

The government has proposed and is moving forward on a pipeline from the Burdekin Falls Dam into the mining areas to actually feed water into those areas. Despite the rhetoric in the parliament, the reality is that the mining industry is putting the money in for that pipeline. In reality, it is a trickle hose in terms of the water that is required and the resources that are required in central Queensland.

We should really be debating some of the serious issues that are prevalent in central Queensland and underpin the prosperity that we see in central Queensland. I can assure members that if the mining industry has to take a backwards step in terms of infrastructure development because of a lack of foresight on the part of the government then we will be in for a huge debate. It concerns me that the dam site on the Connors River that feeds into the Fitzroy is being overlooked yet again. The reality is that it is the closest water to the mining areas that could be developed. It is a huge dam and it would be a very reliable dam.

There are a lot of issues that we should be discussing today. It is a bit unfortunate that we are not doing that. I will not take up very much time. I assure members that I am pleased to see that some of the city members from the 40-odd seats in the south-east corner have come to the bush—I guess it is not quite the bush—to get some dust on their boots, to see that the temperatures are a little higher up here, to see that the people are real and that they take pride in the area in which they live. It is good to see that we have some people in the audience listening to the debate, but let us get on to something that is pretty serious.

**Mrs REILLY** (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (3.33 pm): I am delighted to rise in support of the motion moved by the Premier and Treasurer. I wholeheartedly support and endorse this historic central Queensland sittings of parliament in Rockhampton. I am a south-east Queensland member. I represent the hinterland seat of Mudgeeraba on the Gold Coast.

People may think that that means that I do not understand the challenges involved in putting regional issues on the agenda. In fact I do, because I very often have to fight the misconception that the Gold Coast is a suburb of Brisbane. Having said that, I recognise and understand that my constituency and I are relatively spoilt and fortunate because we are at worst an hour and half to two hours drive away from Brisbane and at best less than an hour away. It is an hour's train ride away. We are very fortunate. We can reach Brisbane, the capital, and go to head offices and bang on doors. It is easier for us to be heard and seen and it is harder to ignore us.

In central Queensland, in northern Queensland, in western Queensland, in the Wide Bay and in rural and remote Queensland it is a very different story. I have lived all my life in south-east Queensland. First I lived in Brisbane and then I moved to the Gold Coast. I have travelled a lot through Queensland. I have visited many parts of regional and rural Queensland both for work and pleasure.

I do not have time to go into the very many places I have seen and the experiences I have had other than to say that in the future I want to travel and spend more time in regional and rural Queensland. I am not planning to spend the rest of my life closeted away in south-east Queensland on the Gold Coast—magnificent as it is. What I have gained over the last 20 years is a real appreciation of the resilience and inventiveness of the people of remote country Queensland. What has always struck me about people who live more than two hours away from the capital is their ability and their willingness to just get on with it, usually without any complaint.

It is this quality of fortitude and endeavour which we, through this parliament, are recognising and honouring by bringing the Assembly to regional Queensland. Regional parliament says to the people of regional Queensland—in this case central Queensland, Rockhampton in particular—that we value them. We thank them and place ourselves in front of them to be accountable. We do it even though it takes us out of our comfort zone. We have all had to make adjustments to get here and we do it even though it costs money. Some things are worth paying for. Democracy is certainly worth paying for. The people of central Queensland certainly deserve to see that democracy in action. They deserve to have this money spent on them.

My son is six and in grade 1. He asked why parliament was going to Rockhampton and why he could not stay in Rockhampton. For the benefit of members who do not know, I have not just flown up here for three days to sit in airconditioned comfort. I came up on Saturday with my family to see friends up here. We went to Yeppoon and Rosslyn Bay. We bought seafood from the fish trawlers. We spent some time and had a look around. If I had more time I would do more, but I think the people of Mudgeeraba want me to go home as well. I sent my son home on the plane with his dad on Monday. He wanted to know why I had to stay and why parliament had to stay in Rockhampton. The first thing I could think of to get a little boy to understand why mummy was staying here when he was going home was that 3,700 children—he is trying to picture this big number—from central Queensland will get to see parliament because they live too far away from Brisbane to see parliament in Brisbane. He said, 'Okay, Mummy, that is a great idea.' It does not take a lot for a six-year-old to understand something when one puts it in the context of other children. He wants to share what he knows a little bit about.

It is not just about the children of central Queensland; it is about all the citizens—young and old. It is about those people who may never make it to Brisbane to see the wheels of democracy in action. We are really lucky that in 2005 we have advancements in technology that have brought democracy to the people like never before. It has made it so much more accessible. People can watch parliament on television and listen to question time in federal parliament on radio or see it on TV. We can listen to state parliament via the internet. All of these things have brought parliament and government and the wheels of democracy into people's homes.

That does not give us the right to be lazy or complacent about it. Not everyone has that opportunity. Not everyone has that easy access. Even if they do many still desire the opportunity to see and experience the people of parliament, the workings of government first-hand. That is why they come to Brisbane and sit in the public gallery. That is why thousands of school groups go to Brisbane to watch parliament. That is why thousands went to Townsville three years ago and thousands will come to Rockhampton to see it.

Nothing beats the real thing. Whether there is a positive debate or a bit of negativity or argy-bargy across the floor, nothing beats seeing it live. It cannot take away from the spectacle of having parliament in the regions. The people of Rockhampton deserve the opportunity to have us and the ministers on their home ground and to show off to us what it is that they are so proud of. They have every right to be proud of it. I commend the motion.

**Miss ELISA ROBERTS** (Gympie—Ind) (3.39 pm): I want to thank the people of Rockhampton for their wonderful hospitality and to compliment them on a beautiful city which is well worth being proud of. I do not support the Premier's view that regional sittings be held once every term. This has nothing to do with the people of Rockhampton personally, nor is it about playing politics. I find it disappointing that whenever someone disagrees with this government they are immediately branded with the 'playing politics' label. The Premier in his speech said that he did not want to see regional Queensland continue to be underrepresented. I am not aware of the individual representations made to his government by the local members of this region, but south-east Queensland seems to be of the greatest importance. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the majority of Labor seats are located there.

My reasons for not supporting the continuation of regional sittings are that the money required to sit outside Brisbane could be better spent, say, in employing additional specialists in northern Queensland hospitals. If people were given a choice of whether to have parliament in their city or additional medical staff employed to reduce the waiting lists, I have little doubt that they would choose the latter. Like the Premier, I do not want to see regional Queensland underrepresented. My question is: why is it underrepresented? How does bringing all 89 members and numerous support staff here for three days have anything to do with how the city is represented? This region elects members to do that. I do not expect parliament to sit in Gympie just so the people who live there are represented. That is what they elected me for. Why should it be any different in Rockhampton?

Much has been made of the distance between Brisbane and Rockhampton as an excuse for spending around \$400,000 to bring us here. But I fail to understand why north Queensland should suffer because of its location. Can members imagine if the Prime Minister said, 'Oh, Perth and the Northern Territory are too far away for us to appreciate their needs.' I believe that we live in one of the greatest democracies on earth, even if the Prime Minister does not take all of the federal politicians out of Canberra. Are the ACT and South Australia better represented simply due to the fact that they happen to be smaller than other states? With reference to the issue of democracy, does this mean that the other states in Australia that do not move their parliaments are not democratic?

In truth, we are the most undemocratic because we have only one House. In a democracy, whether one lives in Atherton or Everton, everyone is entitled to the same representation which should be provided by their elected members. To accuse those of us who would rather see the money of regional sittings being spent on vital services as having something against the people of Rockhampton is disgusting. I would rather see the people of Rockhampton have safe roads, all of the ambulances they need and 100 per cent of their school students leaving school literate. I would like to see north Queensland with extra dentists to reduce their dental waiting lists and additional specialists so they do not have to travel to Brisbane for treatment.

If regional Queensland is not being represented, as the Premier has stated, then the 10-hour days spent sitting in a building in Rockhampton are not going to change anything or give the government an insight into the needs of this region if it does not already know them. Queensland is a large state, but it is 2005 and technology is amazing. Communication lines are outstanding and, as a result, it is not that far from one end of Queensland to the other. We all have exactly the same opportunities to voice our electorate's concerns in the House. If locals feel that they are not being represented, then they need to make that clear at the ballot box.

The Premier has described the \$400,000 it cost to get us all here as a drop in the bucket. I am sure Bundaberg Hospital would be grateful for the money instead of having to ask the chamber of commerce to provide donations in order to get the hospital back on track. I am positive that the people of Rockhampton would not have resented the Premier redirecting this money to the people of Bundaberg. Finally, I want to impress upon the people of Rockhampton the fact that they have the right to representation as strong as that provided to Brisbane Central. They deserve more than a one-off political stunt to gauge their true value as Queenslanders in this state. For the record, the member for Tablelands does not support this motion, either.

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (3.43 pm): In responding to the contribution of the member for Gympie, if the people of Rockhampton pick up anything from this they will be smart enough in themselves to know that the \$400,000 cost of bringing the parliament to Rockhampton would not go all that far in fixing illiteracy, country roads and the health system. That is where we really need to start in

this debate. We need to put this into perspective. We need to understand how much this cost in the scheme of things.

Australians are three times richer than they were in the 1950s, but by most measures they are not happier. We are much less likely to trust our neighbours. There is not a relevant figure for Australia, but the American one is this: in the 1960s when Americans were asked which statement they would agree with, that most people can be trusted or you can never be too careful, two-thirds of Americans in the 1960s would have said the former—that is, most people can be trusted. Now it is reversed and two-thirds of Americans will say that you cannot be too careful. Similar trends have happened in Australia. We are less likely to trust our neighbours. We are less likely to participate in the community. We are all less likely to go to a community meeting. We are less likely as Australians, including as Rockhampton people, to know who our local member is and we are less likely to be members of a political party.

The decline that we have had in happiness is not about a loss of material wealth; it is about a really serious decline in our sense of community. That decline in community in turn has had a major impact on the legitimacy and the functioning of our institutions. People have to feel connected to their institutions. They have to know their local member to feel a sense of ownership over politics. They have to have some faith in the courts for our legal system to work. They have to believe in our schools in order to encourage their kids to go to our schools and get the best possible education. What we have seen in Australia since the 1960s—and it is generally blamed on the advent of television—is a real decline in our sense of community, and that is our single biggest threat. It is a much bigger threat, for instance, than terrorism. It is the single biggest threat to the strength of our institutions.

So why are we in Rockhampton? We are in Rockhampton to bring parliament to the people. We are in Rockhampton to make the parliament not just something that the people of Rockhampton see on TV. We are in Rockhampton so that the Premier is not just someone they have seen on the 6 o'clock news. For the children who have been coming through the day and who will come again, we are in Rockhampton to make the Premier the person they met and the person they saw when parliament came to their town. This is a part of a broad strategy to bring—

**Miss Elisa Roberts:** Where are they?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr O'Brien): Order! The member for Gympie has already been warned under standing order 253. This is her final warning.

**Ms NOLAN:** The Rockhampton parliament is a part of a broad strategy of this government to reinvigorate community. We are doing it through regional sittings of parliament. We are doing it through community cabinet, and we are doing it for the first time by having a Department of Communities. This is what modern politics is about. The Beattie government recognises that there are bigger social problems than can be solved with just the spending of money and that modern social problems will be solved by not just providing better health and education services but also getting people connected again, by giving people faith in their institutions and by being part of community.

I know that the opposition members do not like it. They have said two things on the public record. The member for Moggill said that we should not be here and that it was a waste of money. The Leader of the Opposition said that it was okay as long as it was not a stunt. Opposition members do not like it, and they do not like it for a couple of reasons. One is that they cannot connect with people, they are wreckers and they do not understand what this new kind of politics is about. The other reason why opposition members do not like it and have genuinely equivocated about the value of this parliament is that they know that if Queenslanders, including Rockhampton people, took a real interest in politics they would see what dinosaurs the opposition members really are.

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (3.48 pm): I was in two minds regarding this particular motion moved by the Premier, but one thing that I am very sure of is the appropriateness of this setting—appropriate in that we are on a stage in this beautiful Pilbeam Theatre and it is the people of Rocky who will judge if what they have seen here is the worst or best performance they have seen on this particular stage. Judging by the number who have walked out so far, I think I can guess which it is. My first indication from the people of Rockhampton of how they have received the parliament was from my driver from the airport. He is a local who I felt has been made to feel like an intruder in his own hometown streets. Surely that is not the purpose of this exercise.

The people of Rocky have been nothing but hospitable, and the grace and good manners of the people and businesses are an example to all. But I do question the use of what are apparently scarce resources and the cost incurred when the state is suffering turmoil in health, ambulance, police, teaching, energy and many other areas. It is irresponsible to say the least. I do support the principle of regional sittings—and the possibility that the people will feel a connection with the government and that the children also get an opportunity to connect—if this parliament is to work realistically and not as a popularity exercise and a stage show, as it was for most of this morning.

At a time when the Premier is stating publicly that he does not have the funds to fix the public hospital system and is talking about introducing new taxes, and in so doing breaking an election promise, when he does not have sufficient funds to scholarship sufficient Queensland students to rural

areas, when doctors will not stay long enough in our public hospitals because the conditions in those hospitals are so bad, when the average age of a nurse is 42 years of age, when patients are finding it difficult to get a foot in the door of our hospitals, when hospitals are actually bypassed and beds closed, when waiting lists are so long anyone on them could be involved in a game of life-and-death roulette, when half the maternity wards in Queensland are closed down, when specialists are a scarcity—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mrs PRATT:** Members opposite only have to look at their own figures. I am told by the member for Tablelands that Townsville Hospital is actually 27 doctors short. Patients have to wait in ambulances in places like Cairns because of bed shortages. Public dentists are so scarce that patients qualify to be seen based on how bad their toothache actually is, when we all know that that is relative. Public liability insurance is still so expensive that it is closing down many longstanding community events, while red tape is such a disincentive to volunteers that many organisations are struggling for workers.

When all the responsibilities of a government are brought up to scratch—when the power infrastructure, water, health and everything else that the people pay taxes for are addressed and supply is reliable and readily available—then and only then should governments be forcing unnecessary costs on the people of Queensland. When government responsibilities are addressed and brought up to what is a reasonable level—and I do not say perfect, but a reasonable level—then I and everybody else will not stand in the way of this government hosting regional parliaments. But whilst people are suffering, dying, living on our streets, suffering lack of mental health facilities and we are losing jobs to overseas, I will continue to voice an objection to money being frivolously spent. I am not saying that the people and businesses in Rockhampton have not benefited—

**A government member** interjected.

**Mrs PRATT:** I am not saying that the people in Townsville have not benefited, but there are other priorities this government must face. There are other issues confronting rural land-holders which are potentially devastating. For instance, rabbits are running rampant and breeding in areas and DNRM is failing to act in a responsible time frame. We have rail infrastructure which is asking for 30 days notice from graziers before they will transport their livestock. This is a ridiculous situation which has seen cattle taken by road and which will ultimately allow Queensland Rail to say that no-one is using the rail system. Well, whacko! Of course they would not use it if they have to have a 30-day lead time. 'We might as well as close it down,' is what will be said about Queensland Rail. It is happening. It is happening on the Kingaroy-Theebine line.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mrs PRATT:** Those opposite can yell and scream and carry on. The only time they yell and carry on is when we start to hit the nail on the head. Members opposite are just being totally rude. The thing to do is start spending the \$3 billion surplus and get things back on track. It is not the place of governments to have huge surpluses; it is the place of government to get things back on track. All these ludicrous situations affecting Queenslanders on a daily basis are just the tip of the iceberg of this government's failure to address the substance of Queensland's economy and the issues confronting rural and urban residents alike. Instead, we have a government determined to play a game of smoke and mirrors with the people of Queensland and use the people of Rockhampton as their pawns and as extras in this propaganda show.

Rockhampton is known as the beef capital of Queensland, but the people of Rockhampton and Queensland can see through the pretence and showmanship. The truth is that, although there is a lot of bull outside these rooms this week, I have to wonder if there is not more bull going on inside. The people of Rockhampton can be justly proud of their city. The people have been nothing but hospitable, as is befitting regional Queenslanders.

We want our police to be replaced when they go on leave such as recreation, long service, maternity, paternity, stress leave and so on. At any given time there are only about half the police officers on duty that should be on duty because they are not replaced. Is it any wonder that so many of them go off on stress leave? The pressure is so great, just as it is with doctors in the public health system and with many other portfolios the government has under its control. Our farmers and graziers continue to cop it in the teeth, over and over again, with little or no assistance from the Beattie government. When the government says that it is here for all Queenslanders, that is just a blatant misrepresentation of the truth.

A good example has been the recent forced introduction of NLIS tags, which are costing graziers a huge amount of money, not to mention inconvenience. The Beattie government has refused to assist them in any way, shape or form. Graziers have still not received their tags that were ordered in July, meaning that they are grazing animals that should have gone off to market long ago and as a result pastures are getting shorter and shorter. These are just simple examples of how this government is letting down Queenslanders as a whole. The cost of this regional sittings has been announced as \$400,000. That is not necessarily the true amount. I remember that when we went to Townsville I tried to obtain the actual cost of the sittings, not the reported cost—the parts which were picked up by the

Speaker's office, the Premier's office and the other various departments. The question by the previous Speaker was ruled out of order. I question publicly the announced figure. I have little confidence that we will ever actually know the true cost involved in these sittings.

I would suggest that we do a lot more in civics education in schools so that at the very least the children who do come to parliament know what is going on. The truth is that most people do not really care where parliament sits but they do care about their services, and it is the responsibility of government to bring them up to scratch. While Townsville and Rockhampton hopefully have benefited and will benefit from the visits, there are many communities that will never see a travelling parliament.

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (3.56 pm): Our country parliament in Townsville was a great success. I am proud that the National Party gave bipartisan support to the legislation that was necessary to enable us to hold a sittings of parliament in a regional area once each term. I believe that this will be a great success, too, and we will support this motion.

Regional Queensland is so important. Rockhampton is a very important part of regional Queensland. I think there are some great lessons for members of parliament here—to see some of the history of economic development in this part of the state. I ask members to cast their minds back to the sixties and the brigalow ballots. All of that wonderful cattle country that has been sensibly and sustainably developed is now under buffel grass, producing cattle and employing some of the 28,000 Queenslanders who work in the cattle industry—providing work for meatworkers, transport operators, agents, saleyard staff, exporters and all the rest of them. It is a great way to understand how balanced, sustainable development enabled this state of ours to be developed and provide jobs and prosperity. The story of the brigalow settlers—they lived in sheds, had babies and raised kids in sheds and gradually developed their places from the raw blocks that they were to areas where some scrub was retained and there is buffel grass, dams, water and everything else—is one of the great stories of the development of Queensland. At the same time we should remember how in the period of the Nationals' government, right up to 1989, the railway lines and the ports went in and provided the basic infrastructure that is the veritable coathanger on which all the mines and mining associated development hangs and makes this part of the state so important when it comes to mining and contributing to our export economy.

One of the important issues of parliament in going to regional Queensland is to enable people, particularly the children who have visited during school hours today and who will visit over the next couple of days, to witness democracy. It can be a strange thing sometimes. We have seen a lot of cheap shots. We have seen some snide remarks. We have seen some robust debate. We have seen some good debate at times. Debate can be boring. When we are in parliament in Brisbane, we can be talking at midnight and there is not one single soul there watching proceedings. That is democracy. We are the pressure cooker of society. We have differing views. We represent different electorates—from way up the top of Queensland, down to the south and out to the west and everywhere in between. So we do have differing views because of our political affiliations. We do have different views even within our own organisations because of the areas that we represent placing importance on different things. So this democracy of ours is very important. I hope that by bringing parliament here to Rockhampton, as we did to Townsville, we give everybody a chance to look into the prism of our political system and our parliament to see how we work.

I hope that one thing that the people, particularly the schoolchildren, can come to understand is that here in Australia we formed our system on a ballot, not a bullet. There are only two countries in the world that did that and we are one of them. We are very lucky and it is something we should treasure and never, ever lose. Even if we have to be veritable cannon fodder, with harsh words across the table at each other, we should always remember the peace and the democracy that we have. In 1996 I had the privilege to move into government with no margin: the Labor Party had 44 seats and the coalition had 44 seats and there was one Independent. We had a smooth transition into government. Where could that happen in any other part of the world? Like it or not like it, that is how it is and we are so very fortunate to have that.

One of the important things to remember about having a regional parliament is that we do govern for all of Queensland. This parliament will no doubt have an emphasis on Rockhampton and central Queensland. I think the people should come to understand that there are some things that happen that are not done in the right way. I refer in particular to the money that has been provided to the NLIS which is three months late. I have no doubt at all that the Labor government has staged that to coincide with this parliament. In the meantime three months have gone by during which thousands of cattle producers in Queensland, particularly in central Queensland, have had to buy thousands or tens of thousands of tags at \$3.70, and they did not have the benefit of any reduction in price like the other states had because this government was waiting and waiting for the right PR media opportunity of coming to the beef capital of Queensland to make the announcement. They are the sorts of things that make people cynical about politics.

That \$800,000 should have gone in before 30 June so that people could have got their tags on time instead of waiting for seven weeks. People could have got them for \$1.70 like they get them in Victoria and other states, and people could have got a decent go at a decent price with the availability of

tags. That \$800,000 will add to the \$690,000. It still means that Queensland has one of the lowest levels of support for the NLIS system of all the Australian states, despite the fact that in Queensland we have the greatest cattle population—we are in the beef capital of Queensland—and despite the fact that we export 70 per cent of the cattle where NLIS and traceback are so important. Despite all of that, we had the most pathetic response to the support of this very important industry. Belatedly, some three months after the introduction of NLIS in order to capitalise on being here, the government has callously seen cattle producers having to buy their tags for the maximum price and wait the maximum time. It is pathetic that a state government of the major capital-producing state in Australia should be so pathetic and so slow in the support that is provided to the industry. It goes to show, as I have always said, that when it comes to rural industries in Queensland under a Labor government they simply get the crumbs off the table.

I am going to talk now about the next regional parliament and the need for that to be, as the opposition leader has said, in Toowoomba. Toowoomba is the centre of that south-western part of Queensland. If we have had one regional parliament servicing the far north and one servicing central Queensland it is only logical that the next one should go over the Great Dividing Range, go inland to the garden city of Toowoomba—the biggest inland city in Australia after Canberra—which services all that area from Warwick out to St George, from Dalby out to Charleville and Quilpie, and out to Birdsville. It also serves, in part, the South Burnett. It is time to go there, and I have no doubt that if we win the next election that is where it will be. So for those who want to have the next regional parliament in Toowoomba, they should vote National-Liberal coalition and they will get the parliament there for sure.

I would like to thank the people of Rockhampton and central Queensland for their hospitality. I hope this works well. I also congratulate our members for Callide, Mirani and Gregory and also the Independent member for Gladstone on what they do for central Queensland.

**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (4.04 pm): I fully support the Premier and this government in taking parliament to the regions. Regional parliaments are good for democracy, good for people living outside the capital city and good for all MPs. More specifically, it is good for all MPs who care for more than just their electorate. Fortunately, most MPs on both sides of the chamber, including all Labor MPs, take seriously their responsibility to care for all Queenslanders.

When I entered parliament more than 14 years ago as the 'new boy' in a by-election, my Labor colleagues gave me lots of advice. One of the most common pieces of advice was to remember that Queensland is the most decentralised state and that Queensland was much more than just Brisbane and the south-east corner. So even though I have a huge urban hospital, the Prince Charles Hospital, a world-class tertiary level cardio-thoracic facility in my area, I have visited health facilities all over the state, from the small community health centre at Windorah, to Alpha and Barcaldine hospitals, to the South Burnett, Townsville, Cairns, the Torres Strait and the cape. That is why, as an ALP member from Brisbane with no farms in my electorate, I have visited primary producers at Birdsville, Tanbar Station, Warwick, Richmond, the Fitzroy area, Mirani and Gordonvale. That is why, even though I have four large high schools in my electorate, I have represented the minister at the isolated children's parents conference in Winton, visited one-teacher schools and met with education department officers all over the state.

Like the rest of my Labor colleagues, I recognise that Queensland is more than just Brisbane and the south-east corner. Like the rest of my Labor colleagues, I am prepared to say to my city based constituents that we should pay a small bit extra for our electricity so that our regional cousins can get electricity at the same price as those in the metropolitan area. Like the rest of my Labor colleagues, I believe that the money spent to bring the parliament to the Capricorn area is worth every cent if it will help the 3,000 schoolchildren from central Queensland gain a better understanding of how our parliament works—an opportunity that they would never otherwise have had. Like the rest of my Labor colleagues, I am prepared to say that we should put up with the small inconveniences of moving parliament to a regional centre like Rocky if it will help the good people of central Queensland experience something that we take for granted in the south-east corner. Like the rest of my Labor colleagues, I condemn the member for Moggill for his careless and callous remarks about the regional parliament being a waste of time and a waste of money. He stands condemned by his own words.

The member for Moggill, typical of the urban yuppies that the Liberals are becoming, may be used to the good things of life in his western suburbs postcode area that has one of the highest average incomes per household in Queensland. But he has chosen to ignore more than 50 per cent of the Queensland population—the people in the regions and remote areas who are struggling with the very basics of life.

What does this debate say about the new coalition—the coalition that is really not a new coalition? We have the Leader of the Liberal Party saying one thing, contradicting his deputy. We have internally poor discipline within the opposition or the coalition—whatever name you want to call it. What we have here is one of the best resourced but laziest oppositions in Australia, and this debate has shown it.

**Mr Hobbs:** You're a grub.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Male): Order! You will withdraw that remark. Stand and withdraw the remark.

**Mr HOBBS:** I withdraw.

**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is not surprising coming from the member opposite. He has a record in that regard.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Would the member kindly go back to the speech.

**Mr HOBBS:** I rise to a point of order. I find the words offensive and I ask that the member withdraw them.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member will withdraw.

**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN:** I withdraw whatever the member finds offensive. The *Hansard* stands—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Stafford, you will withdraw.

**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN:** I withdraw unreservedly. In my final plea to the people of central Queensland, I say this: just as you do not want us from the urban areas of metropolitan Brisbane to treat all of regional Queensland as the same—you want us to recognise the differences in the small communities all over the state—would you, too, recognise that Brisbane and the south-east corner are not the same area, that there are differences within our metropolitan and urban areas as well? There is as great a difference between suburbs in Brisbane as there is between Mackay and Gladstone or Winton and Kowanyama. Even within my own electorate, which is a very small electorate, people of Wavell Heights do not see themselves as belonging to the same community as the people of Stafford Heights. Sometimes the major urban areas amalgamate into one and sometimes people from the regional areas think that Brisbane is just one area. It is not. We have diversity, just as you have diversity. We ask for that same tolerance. In conclusion, I say to the people of central Queensland: we are pleased to have come here, thanks for the welcome and we will continue these regional parliaments.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (4.09 pm): I rise to speak to this motion and again thank the people of Rockhampton, and previously the people of Townsville, for the hospitality that they have shown us when the parliament has visited. It would be dishonest of me not to say that there are those in my electorate who have concerns about the regional parliaments, and those concerns are based solely on cost. That was expressed to me overwhelmingly when the parliament went to Townsville. The opposition from the community was on the basis of all the furniture that went up and the cost involved in that. I believe we are becoming much more practical in the way that we relocate parliament, in this instance to Rockhampton.

However, overwhelmingly there is support for bringing parliament to regional Queensland for a lot of the reasons already articulated. We are a diverse state. Members in rural and regional Queensland face the tyranny of distance on a constant basis. More recently that tyranny was brought into sharp focus with the fuel price rises, and we discussed here in Rockhampton only yesterday morning that the ability of people to commute is being impacted by the excessive price of fuel. So it is important for those people who live in the south-east corner, where services are reasonably readily available to them, to come and see that for a patient in Gladstone to get to Rocky is an hour and a half with no public transport. Therefore, the dynamics of living in rural and regional Queensland are different to living in the south-east corner, where it might be an hour to the hospital but there is a regular train and bus service.

I think it gives an opportunity for people in the community who may never be able to commute to Brisbane to arrange appointments with relevant ministers, parliamentary secretaries et cetera. That has happened in my electorate. I have a number of people coming to meet with the ministers, and I thank them for their availability. We are a diverse community. There is a cost to these parliaments being brought out from Brisbane. There is a cost on the staff and on the people who set us up technically. However, until my electorate shows more strong opposition to the regional parliaments, I certainly will be supporting the principle of regional parliaments, bearing in mind the concern about cost and the fact that in developing the relocation policy it will be refined and become more cost effective. I believe it is an opportunity to bring democracy to Queensland and to give people who live in the outer areas of this state an opportunity to access that democracy.

**Mr HOPPER** (Darling Downs—NPA) (4.12 pm): I rise to contribute to this motion moved by the Premier. I would like to put on the record that I sincerely congratulate the Premier for bringing parliament to Rockhampton. Contrary to what the member for Ipswich said, I think it is absolutely wonderful. Being a country member from the Darling Downs, I see the children who come down to parliament and the effort that they have to make to drive the 3½ to four hours that it takes me to drive home. They usually have to stay overnight and I think it is absolutely wonderful that the 3½ thousand children who live up here can come and see democracy in action. That is what this is about. I just had to get that on the record.

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (4.13 pm), in reply: I want to say two things in response. I have noticed some of the arguments from Dr Flegg, the member for Moggill, who seems to want to say one thing in Brisbane and another in Rockhampton. You do not get



away with that. You cannot have two bob each way. Let us look at the issue. A number of people have opposed this, suggesting that we should look at the issue of cost. Sure, cost is a factor, but let us be realistic. The net costs are around \$340,000. I said \$430,000 yesterday, but the Clerk tells me that about \$90,000 are costs that would be incurred anyway.

Out of that \$340,000 we have had people suggest that we could fund the health system and the road network. Let us wake up to ourselves. \$340,000 is hardly going to produce a huge number of roads around this state. Yes, it is an amount of money, but democracy costs money. We have had politics involved in these decisions right from the beginning. I table some comments made by the then leader of the opposition when we were going to Townsville.

This is really an issue of leadership. It is no good for the Liberal Party, as I said, to say one thing in Rockhampton and another here. For Dr Flegg, the member for Moggill, to suggest that we were going to fund the whole hospital system in Queensland and change the whole nature of all sorts of other funding with \$340,000 alone is fanciful. Yes, it is a reasonable amount of money, but we did a deal the other day with the VMOs and our in-house doctors that will cost \$700 million over the next four years. Health is incredibly expensive. It is not the sort of thing that can be funded with a piddling amount of money.

The main extra costs of the \$340,000 are venue hire and allowances to members. I look forward to the member for Gympie and the member for Moggill not taking up their allowances to make sure that they are in fact returned to the taxpayer so there is no extra cost. I give them this pledge: if they do not use their allowances, I will use it on the health system, I will use it on roads and I will use it on all the other areas that they want to outline. Let us not have any more nonsense about this. This is about leadership and we have had no leadership from the Liberal Party on it. At least the National Party have had the fortitude to stand here today, even though there was a little bit of difference—and, Mike, I will not relive the past of Townsville. I have tabled what he said for the record because I heard what the honourable Leader of the Opposition said earlier and it was not quite right.

**Mr Horan** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I know, but we converted him on the way to Damascus and that is not a bad thing. It did not do Saul or Paul any harm—well, they are both the same person—and they are better for having done it. I am pleased that we now have a unanimous view about the importance of regional parliaments and we will not move away from them.

The other thing I want to say is this: we will continue to do the things we have to do as a government, to fund things like roads and regional parliaments appropriately, but we will fund health more. There is more than just funding health. Health is vitally important but so are education, roads and other issues. I thank all honourable members for their support.

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

Resolved in the **affirmative** under standing order 108.

## **POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES (MOTORBIKE NOISE) AMENDMENT BILL**

### **First Reading**

**Hon. JC SPENCE** (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (4.21 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, and for other purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

### **Second Reading**

**Hon. JC SPENCE** (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (4.21 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Police Powers and Responsibilities (Motorbike Noise) Amendment Bill 2005 amends the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 to enable police to take enforcement action against nuisance trail bike riders who operate these motorbikes on places that are not a road. The impetus for the formation of the Police and Corrective Services Portfolio Subcommittee on Trail Bikes, the subcommittee, was the debate of the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Another Act Amendment Act 2003, the road hoon legislation. During that debate various members raised issues surrounding the use of trail bikes and the nuisance that can be caused by some riders. Members suggested that the hooning regime be extended to cover offences caused by nuisance trail bike riders.

The purpose of the subcommittee was to develop punitive measures to use against trail bike riders who cause nuisance problems. However, the scope of the subcommittee was extended to develop a broader solution following the identification of a range of benefits, issues, problems and consequences that are produced by this type of recreational activity. The report entitled *Police and Corrective Services Portfolio Subcommittee on Trail Bikes—Final Report, 19 August 2003* was produced by the subcommittee and is the culmination of research and information obtained from sources ranging from motorcycle clubs and their members, manufacturers, local governments and state government agencies such as the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Transport, Sport and Recreation Queensland, the EPA, Office of Youth Affairs, Natural Resources and Mines, and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The final report identifies:

Recreational trail bike usage, particularly in bushland areas near private residences, presents a range of interrelated problems for participants, adjoining landholders, Local Governments and State Government agencies in Queensland.

The problems associated with trail bikes will not simply go away. Trail bikes do cause impacts (especially noise, dust and erosion).

Trail bike noise continues to be a major issue that councils and police are required to deal with throughout Queensland. The noise issue has divided local communities and a minority of irresponsible riders is eroding the reputation of the majority of responsible riders. Very little planning has gone into providing opportunities for trail bike riding in the past.

Now solving the problem of trying to fit trail bikes into the landscape has become a major headache for local government recreation planners. It is increasingly difficult for trail bike riders to find legal places to ride that won't disturb the peace and quiet of local residents.

In reality, the task of creating trail bike opportunities is difficult because sites that provide riders with a worthwhile recreation experience, but are far enough away from homes so as not to disturb the residents with noise, are almost impossible to find.

On 25 January 2004 the Premier, in a ministerial media statement, released the government policy commitment in relation to trail bikes. The ministerial media statement provided in part that the proposed laws will:

- allow police to seek a court ordered permanent confiscation of motorbikes against repeat offending riders;
- enable courts to impose restrictions on the use of trail bikes including the times, place and manner in which they can be used;
- give police the power to issue 48-hour noise abatement orders;
- enable police to seize bikes for 48 hours if noise orders are breached;
- give police the power under the PPRA to act on a complaint about nuisance trail bike riding;
- give police the power to enter properties in order to properly investigate complaints;
- protect the identity of complainants and empower police to act immediately on complaints without having to first visit the complainant; and
- consider introducing new penalties for trail bike riders trespassing on private, council or state owned land.

The bill implements this commitment. The legislative approach also provides for the regulation of the unlawful driving of a motorbike on public land. While this approach creates an offence for unlawful driving of a motorbike on public land, a regulation will be developed to regulate and enable the declaration of identified public land along with the type of approval that must be carried by a person who is found by a police officer driving a motorbike on the land. I intend writing to the Local Government Association of Queensland and to all members of parliament for them to nominate public land that could be included in the regulation.

The State Penalties Enforcement Regulation will also be amended to enable police to issue an infringement notice to the person if the person does not have a reasonable excuse to drive the motorbike on the declared public land or cannot produce the stated authority to a police officer on request. The infringement notice offence penalty will be two penalty units, which is currently \$150. Additionally, if people take photographs or videotape a person in the act of illegal motorbike riding and this material is presented to the police, as long as the police are able to identify the offender and prove the circumstances of the offence then they can commence proceedings and take action against the trail bike rider.

Addressing noise nuisance caused by motorbikes is a complex issue which is fraught with complexity. Simply developing punitive measures to use against trail bike riders who cause nuisance problems is not a complete solution to this problem. Broader solutions are required. Consequently, this legislative approach is one aspect of the government response to this problem. The Beattie government is also considering other non-legislative options to address nuisance caused by motorbikes. Those options include providing places to ride and establishing frameworks for cooperation, consultation and collaboration with organisations in the motorcycling industry and government. A joint interdepartmental working group has been formed to consider these options. This group will provide a comprehensive report and recommendations to cabinet that outlines a range of potential non-legislative strategies.

The reforms in this bill are not aimed at stopping a person's enjoyment of riding trail bikes for recreational purposes; they are aimed at achieving a responsible attitude in riders and reducing unnecessary noise levels.

I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my speech in *Hansard*, given my failing voice.

Leave granted.

The Bill contains the motorbike noise scheme. This scheme enables police officers to take enforcement action against drivers of motorbikes who create excessive noise on places other than roads by:

First complaint

- Following investigation of the first noise complaint, giving a motorbike noise direction requiring the person to stop the noise for 48 hours;

Second complaint

- If a second noise complaint is received about the same motorbike at the same place within the 48 hours and following the investigation of the complaint, impounding the motorbike for 48 hours, if the driver of the motorbike breaches the initial direction within the 48 hour period;
- Making an application for a motorbike noise abatement order to regulate the use of the motorbike. A motorbike noise abatement order may also be made if the person is given two noise abatement directions within a period of one month in relation to excessive noise emitted by a motorbike and the directions both relate to the driving of the motorbike on the same place which is not a road;
- Commencing proceedings, or for a child considering alternatives to instituting proceedings in accordance with the Juvenile Justice Act 1992, against the person who has committed the motorbike noise direction offence;

Third or subsequent complaint

- If a further noise complaint is received about the same rider and motorbike and following the investigation of the complaint, impounding the motorbike for 48 hours following the first breach of the motorbike noise order;
- Commencing proceedings, or for a child considering alternatives to instituting proceedings in accordance with the Juvenile Justice Act 1992, against the person who has committed the motorbike noise order offence;
- Within 48 hours of charging the person, making an application for a three-month impoundment order;
- If a further noise complaint is received about the same rider and motorbike and following the investigation of the complaint, impounding the motorbike for 48 hours following the second breach of the motorbike noise order by the driver of the motorbike;
- Commencing proceedings, or for a child considering alternatives to instituting proceedings in accordance with the Juvenile Justice Act 1992, against the person who has committed the second motorbike noise order offence; and
- Within 48 hours of charging the person, making an application for a forfeiture order.

The motorbike noise scheme applies to adults and children who create or permit excessive noise being made by a motorbike and is consistent with the object and principles of the Juvenile Justice Act. For example, if a child is detected committing a motorbike noise order offence, police must consider alternatives to instituting proceedings as required by the Juvenile Justice Act. If police determine, based on the circumstances of the matter, that the child should be cautioned or referred to a youth justice conference for the purpose of making an agreement about the offence, then no application for a three-month impoundment or forfeiture order may be made. This determination does not prevent the impounding of the motorbike immediately following the detection of the breach of the offence.

A person who is found guilty of a motorbike noise direction offence or a motorbike noise order offence will be liable to pay the costs of impounding and the keeping the motorbike.

Additionally, if a court determines that a child does not have the capacity to pay the costs associated with impoundment and storage, the court may issue a show cause notice to a parent or guardian of the child to show cause why the parent or guardian should not pay the costs.

This Bill also makes a number of amendments and structural improvements to the existing vehicle impounding scheme and noise provisions within the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000.

The amendments to the existing scheme resolve identified ambiguity, and apply the object and principles of the Juvenile Justice Act to the existing "road hoon" impounding scheme and address emerging policing issues.

For example, this Bill creates an offence for the removal of an engine or gearbox from a vehicle that is subject to an impoundment or forfeiture order, so that hooners who may have their vehicles permanently impounded cannot strip their vehicles and simply provide police with a "shell" of a car. This was not the original intent of the legislation and people who attempt to do this will be punished with a hefty fine of \$3000.

This Bill also addresses the return by police of an impounded vehicle.

If a vehicle or motorbike is impounded for 48 hours at 2 am, then it will not be returned at 2 am, 2 days later, but during business hours at the next possible opportunity. This is because hooners who had their cars confiscated after hours were turning up at police stations and holding yards at all hours of the night to retrieve their vehicles. These people must now wait until business hours to collect their vehicle.

The Bill reflects current drafting practices, restructures and restates existing police powers relating to vehicles and animals by creating separate Chapters concerning vehicles, vehicle impounding and animals.

The motorbike noise scheme provides for a balance between community enjoyment of an area and a person's right to ride a motorbike in a public place or land and on private property.

While it has the potential to affect the drivers of noisy motorbikes, the rights of these motorbike drivers must be balanced against the competing interests of the wider community in ensuring there is no noise nuisance associated with the use of motorbikes.

The scheme is a reasonable, legitimate, and a balanced extension of the law to an area of growing community concern.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Johnson, adjourned.

## HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 23 August (see p. 2583).

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (4.28 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, with your indulgence, being on stage here in 'Rock Vegas' takes me back to grade 10 at Sunnybank State High School when we did the musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*. Here we have the Speaker and his amazing technicolour ties, a different title, different scripts, a different set and definitely different players.

I am very happy to speak on the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill. In doing so, I welcome all those in the public gallery who have come to watch the proceedings today. It really is a wonderful opportunity for the people of Rockhampton to come here and be a part of the legislative process, to see exactly what goes on in the House and to see that a great deal of the time there is consensus between the government and the opposition, and that we want the best outcomes for all Queenslanders.

I digress for a moment to thank all of the parliamentary staff who have travelled here for the sitting week as well as all of the people who have made this week logistically possible. It is a wonderful initiative. In a state as diverse and as decentralised as Queensland, for parliament to sit in regional centres is tremendous. I spoke to our education services officer, Graeme Kinnear, at lunchtime and he pointed out to me that they had had seven groups of 150 students in this morning. That is 1,050 students, which is fantastic.

This is my first response to a bill as the shadow minister for public works, housing and racing. I want to thank the minister for his goodwill since my elevation to the shadow ministry and indeed since my election. I must be frank and say that, of the 10 portfolios and five ministers that I was shadowing as a shadow shadow, my main efforts over the last 18 months have been in the areas of education and the arts and police and corrective services. However, I have been to some public housing functions with the minister and acknowledge his strongly held views about the vexatious issues of public housing and the changing demands of Queensland's population.

I will endeavour to get across the issues in public housing and will vigorously prosecute any arguments for alternative policies but will support policies such as this bill to help Queenslanders climb the ladder of opportunity, to use a well-worn phrase. I take this opportunity to note that, as the new shadow minister for public works, housing and racing, there will be many times when I am on the other side of the chamber to the honourable minister. I place on the public record that I will endeavour to work with him to make the department and the organs of that department a fluent, efficient machine that delivers the best outcomes for the people of Queensland. After all, as a parliament we are elected to try to deliver the best deal for Queenslanders.

I would like to thank Johnathon Don from the Department of Housing and Bruce Picard, the minister's adviser, for the briefing last week in Brisbane. This was a meeting held at short notice, hurriedly organised and that I later forgot about. I kept them waiting while I was in another meeting.

I will not be obstructionist for the sake of being obstructionist. I will take every opportunity to commend the work of the department where it is warranted. In saying that, this is also a house of debate and I will not hesitate to point out and place on the public record my dismay and objection to actions of the department should they not be providing Queenslanders with the service they deserve in a minister's area of responsibility. I have a number of issues that have lingered for many years and not been resolved. I intend to take these up with the minister with a view to having them resolved.

But today we are here to debate the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill. From the outset, I indicate to the minister that the opposition will support this legislation. This bill seeks to amend two acts for the purposes of accelerating the divestment of perpetual town leases and to facilitate the process by which perpetual lessees become freehold owners of land. The two acts that are amended are the Housing Act 2003 and the Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act 1957.

A perpetual lease, as the name suggests, is a lease that is granted in perpetuity. In this respect it is much like a freehold of land, at least in terms of security, as there is no expiry date. This becomes a more important factor later when we discuss the movement from a perpetual lease to a freehold of land. It is imperative to keep in mind that perpetual leases have been a product of legislation since they were contained in the Land Act 1987. However, perpetual town leases have been issued since 1924.

In the period of time between 1924 and 1985 over 7,000 residential perpetual town leases were granted. From 1930 a lessee could transfer their lease to freehold by having what was known as a freeholding on terms. The method by which the house would be paid for was for the new freehold owner to have extra repayments added to their existing rent. All of this was done to encourage working families to own a home and to make that a reality.

This is one of the wonderful parts of this legislation and the result of transferring leases into freehold title. There have been 7,000 residential perpetual town leases and every one of them has given a Queensland family the opportunity to fulfil the great Australian dream of owning a home. This

continues today. With the market for houses now so difficult to enter for so many young and struggling Queenslanders, it is vitally important that the government helps those that it can under this regime, to help them realise their dreams of being home owners.

In this legislation there are great incentives to transfer from being a leaseholder to having one's own home. It is also in the interests of the state to facilitate this. With these perpetual leases being a time-intensive thing to maintain and therefore costly, it is important for the state to do what it can to reduce their number and let them run their intended course. It is indeed a win-win situation. We have the opportunity to help Queensland families and, at the same time, we have the opportunity to reduce the cost and main expense of running the department. Whenever that situation arises there will always be my support.

The number of loans increased greatly after World War II. This underscores the intention of these leases and the program in general—that is, to facilitate a betterment of the quality of life of Queenslanders. In the period after the war, it is no wonder that, in a time of extended need, the number of leases being given out increased dramatically. As of July this year there were 262 of those original 7,000 granted leases left. As all of the original loan arrangements have been finalised, the current leases will only continue until the current lessees choose to freehold.

The essence of the bill is to try to get the remaining lessees to change from their current lease arrangements to freehold. There are two ways in which this can be done: either voluntarily or automatically. For a lease to be transferred voluntarily the lessee must apply to the chief executive and as soon as practicable the chief executive must outline a number of requirements to be set out as terms to transfer the lease into freehold. The automatic transfer of leases will occur on a date that has now been designated by the amendment as circulated by the minister this morning—that is, 1 July 2009. That will have the same effect as a voluntary transfer.

The aim of the bill is to accelerate the divestment of perpetual leases. To facilitate this the bill contains a mixture of incentives to do so and disincentives not to transfer a lease. This is a very good way of encouraging those who are still leaseholders to change to being freehold owners of their property. If it were the case that there were only incentives and no disincentives then some people may not be encouraged to change as there would be no difference, relative to their current position and their quality of life, if they simply did nothing.

Similarly, if it was that the legislation only provided for disincentives or punishments for not transferring a lease then the legislation would not be as good as the bill that is currently before the House. It would not be fair to force people, with the threat of the stick, into doing something that may not be convenient for them at that point in time. Partly for that reason the legislation does not contain disincentives on their own.

There are three main incentives for current leaseholders to transfer their lease over and become freehold owners. Firstly, they can purchase the land based on a percentage of unimproved capital value of the land. Secondly, there are extra discounts, including a length-of-occupancy concession and a cost-of-conversion grant of up to \$500 for a limited period. Thirdly, the application process will be streamlined for those who want to transfer their lease.

I will deal with the first incentive—that is, that the purchase of land will happen at a percentage of unimproved capital value. We realise that this is indeed the most significant incentive for a lessee to transfer their lease. If the lessee was to transfer their lease they would be receiving the property for 75 per cent of the unimproved value of the place. This has major benefits that are not confined just to the 25 per cent discount off unimproved capital value.

At the moment, as we are all aware, the price of houses has gone through the roof. As I alluded to before, it is difficult for young Queenslanders to enter the property market because of the skyrocketing prices for houses and apartments. Even though the market has cooled off a little, it is still a difficult climate.

Under this legislation, if a person wanted to transfer their lease the price would be based on the unimproved capital value of the land and not the market price. This is a major difference and one that significantly advantages those who are in these situations and thinking about transferring their leases over. Moreover, it is a further significant starting advantage to have the price calculated at just 75 per cent of the UCV. This really is a wonderful incentive for those currently on a lease to transfer it over to freehold. I commend the drafters of this legislation for putting into this bill such a significant incentive for those contemplating changing their lease over.

The price of the house will be well below market value. This provides the family that this scheme seeks to reach with a great base on which to end their perpetual lease and own their own home. After all, that was the intent of the legislation when it was implemented in its early form back in 1915. It is very good to see that a similar opportunity is being presented here.

However, this is not the only incentive to have people transfer their lease from a perpetual town lease into freehold title. If a lessee transfers their lease over they will also receive some discounts. One of these—it is a very significant discount—is a cost-of-conversion grant of up to \$500.

There is a detailed process involved in the price and payment of the conversion of the lease. The bill goes in depth into the provisions relating to that activity. Proposed new section 6 defines the conversion costs and states that the cost must be paid within a certain period of time. There are consequences for not paying within that period of time. That includes the chief executive's right to take recourse to have the property sold. To do so, however, the chief executive must provide written notice to the registered owner of the land stating the unpaid conversion cost and that the land may be sold within a period of time no less than 14 days of that notice should payment of the conversion not be received.

Again, this is a good and fair provision. There is plenty of time to pay the conversion costs and, with the added incentive of a grant for those who find themselves eligible, the cost becomes easier to bear. There is also, for those who wish to transfer their lease over, an option to have the process for application and acceptance streamlined. This is always very much an added bonus and makes the whole process just that little bit easier. As can be seen from this non-exhaustive list of incentives, there is a real carrot being offered by this legislation to lessees to have their perpetual town leases transferred over to freehold title. In particular, as I have mentioned before, having the property sold at 75 per cent of UCV as opposed to the full market price will certainly provide a massive incentive for those thinking of changing to do so.

As I mentioned before, though, this legislation works in those incentives to change with some not harsh, yet significant disincentives to stay on the perpetual lease. As I said, this is a very good aspect of this bill in the sense that it really does look to guide lessees into fulfilling the intended purpose of the original lease, and that is that they will voluntarily choose to become freehold owners of the land. The first and most significant of these disincentives is a rent increase from three per cent to five per cent of UCV. This does provide a disincentive for people to continue on with their lease if the rent that they will be paying will be so significantly higher. In saying that, though, the rent increase is not morbidly oppressive and, while significant, does not have the effect of being a penalty so much as a disincentive. Other disincentives include transfer conditions that will restrict transfers and limit the leases to existing lessees, automatic conversion of the lease where a transfer causes a change of ownership, exclusions to the conversion requirement and measures that provide warning to prospective lease buyers of the conversion requirement. All of these provide a disincentive for a leaseholder to maintain their current position and it is hoped that, together with the incentives, these will provide enough ammunition to have leaseholders change their lease to freehold in the near future.

With regard to the disincentives, though, there are some reservations, and there were similar reservations raised by some members when a similar bill was presented to the South Australian parliament in 2003. First, this bill has the effect of changing the rights of leaseholders. As I mentioned before, relative to their current positions, leaseholders will be either better off taking the freehold title that is available or, relative to their current position, worse off if they do not convert their lease. That is the whole point of putting both incentives and disincentives into the bill. However, by doing so, the rights of leaseholders are altered. This is significant because, as I mentioned before, these are perpetual leases and, as the name suggests, they are leases that are granted in perpetuity. That means that the rights contained in those leases will be active in perpetuity. However, because of the changes to this legislation made by this bill and the disincentives that are provided for under this bill, the rights of leaseholders will be altered and indeed diminished. The problem lies in the fact that these are rights that the leaseholders thought they did have as the leases were granted in perpetuity. Indeed, they are rights that the leaseholders thought they would always have. To strip them of some rights or to downgrade the rights they do have is a big step, considering that these leases were granted in perpetuity and the problem that will be faced is trying to tell those affected people that there is a justified reason for their rights being stripped from them.

Moreover, there is the added problem of disincentives that are being provided for in this legislation. The most significant disincentive is an increase in rent to the leaseholders. It would appear that this increase, as much as being a disincentive to those currently holding a lease to continue to do so, is justified in part by saying that the increase is to cover the costs of administering the leases that will continue. This may be the case. However, it seems as though a rent increase for these purposes may be seen as not appropriately adapted when one considers that the families affected will suffer a great detriment.

It is good to see that from the South Australian legislation a number of amendments went to the select committee and were made, and they have also been made in this piece of legislation. There are also a number of safeguards in this legislation that protect some of the more vulnerable leaseholders from the possibility of rough treatment under these new provisions. Most notably, the two that I want to point out are that there are appropriate exclusions to the conversion requirement that are provided for and other exclusions may be added if required. Also, and very importantly, there will be rent remission to be provided for lessees experiencing hardship. Again, this is very important and in the spirit of the original bill. It helps those who are struggling under fast-rising house prices and rents increasing for dwellings around the state.

Even though the minister's amendment has dealt with it, I also note the concern of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. It expressed concerns about the unusually long period of time that was going to

elapse between assent and commencement of the bill. Originally, second-phase provisions under this bill would commence on a date to be set by regulation but at a date no earlier than 1 July 2009. I note now that that date has been made specifically 1 July 2009. Originally I was prepared to say that the Acts Interpretation Act allowed for the commencement of an act to be extended for up to two years, and I thought that that was fair enough with struggling Queensland families who might want to own a home. The fact that they were given an extra year could help them to organise themselves to be in a better position, but by bringing the amendment in as the minister has—

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Yes, exactly. The amendment has dealt with the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's concerns.

I respect the reservations and I could not envisage that there would be too many instances where the provisions in the Acts Interpretation Act could be overlooked. It is a very significant bill. The effects of the legislation are very far-reaching for the individuals involved and there was a strong case that a longer period of time would be required between assent and commencement of the provisions, because we are talking about the reversal of rights under leases and other significant housing considerations. In conclusion, I congratulate the minister and his department on this bill, and I commend it to the House.

**Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (4.45 pm): At the outset in rising to speak to this bill, I want to thank the minister for introducing the bill. I know the hard work that he puts into maintaining public housing and affordable housing in Queensland. I am really surprised that his hair is not as grey as mine for all of the worries that he suffers from it. Originally, this scheme was to target low-income home loan applicants. It was a method of allowing people to have land on which to erect a house and then they would pay the house off by way of rental. It was really designed as basic Labor Party policy to give working families a step up into home ownership. I am also very pleased to speak to the bill because my grandparents own WHPTL104. Sadly it is no longer in their name, but it still stands next to my parent's home in Longreach. Most of the leases that had been issued, as we have heard from the shadow minister, have been converted to freehold and today there are around 260 of the original leases remaining. The bill provides for conversion of these leases to freehold, and it does this in the first instance by providing incentives to lessees to convert. It is then followed by a requirement for a lease to automatically convert when there is a change of ownership.

It is common for leased land to change hands. Under the existing provisions of the Housing Act 2003 and the Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act 1957, there are no situations where a change of ownership requires a lease to be converted to freehold. I am informed by the Department of Housing that less than 30 per cent of the remaining leases are held by original lessees or their descendants. Basically, there are people who are paying rent on land—that is, three per cent of the unimproved capital value—but they own all of the structures and improvements on it, and I will deal with that later in my speech. The remaining leases do continue on a land rent only basis, because all of the original home loan agreements have been finalised—many of them finalised years ago.

The department advises me that the value of the leased land, if it was as freehold, is over \$21 million. The unimproved value as of 31 August 2005 was approximately \$14 million. Allowing lessees to convert on a percentage of the unimproved value of the leased land establishes a significant incentive to freehold. I am aware the state does not normally part with assets for anything below market value. However, I think this situation is unusual and in this case an exception is justified. The scheme was, in reality, a subsidised home ownership program where, aside from the initial loan repayments, a lessee's only obligation to the state was the payment of the annual land rental. Even before they freehold, a lessee has a substantial interest in the land. As I said previously, they own the house and all of the other improvements on the land and they are the registered owners of the lease. A key incentive for a lessee to freehold is removing the obligation to pay an annual land rental, and I will deal with land rental shortly.

Considering these factors, I think it appropriate for a lessee to freehold at a reduced price. However, if they choose not to convert it is also appropriate, at 1 July 2009 or after that date, for the lease to automatically convert to freehold when the ownership changes. The bill provides important safeguards in relation to this automatic conversion requirement. It includes the ability of a lessee to remain a leaseholder. It is important for a lessee who cannot afford to convert or who for other reasons decides not to freehold. I am advised that approximately one-fifth of remaining lessees have their rent remitted on hardship grounds. The department is committed to maintaining a system of rent remission for these lessees. The present criteria for rent remission include: one, the leased property must be the lessee's principal place of residence; two, the lessee must be in possession of a pensioner concession card; three, the lessee must be undergoing hardship of a significant or permanent nature; and, four, the rent remission is reviewed at least every two years.

In my experience, a lot of these leases are in rural and regional areas, and some of the houses on the properties are worth less than the land, in any event. At the end of the day, the lessee is a home owner and they will make their own choices. The department has committed to providing lessees with the information they require to make an informed decision.

I am satisfied that the bill provides a most attractive incentive for lessees to achieve outright ownership, which is the dream of every Australian. I am also satisfied that the interests of a lessee who chooses not to freehold are protected.

The Beattie government has continued to improve the way in which it delivers housing solutions for Queenslanders who are on low incomes. I know of the hard work and dedication of the minister to delivering those solutions. Since elected, the government has more than doubled the Housing budget. This year, it has allocated \$668 million throughout the state. I am proud that \$22 million has been spent on affordable housing by this government in my electorate. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr HOPPER** (Darling Downs—NPA) (4.51 pm): I rise in support of the Housing and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2005. While lending support to this bill, I will nevertheless bring to the minister's attention areas of concern to the opposition, to which my colleague the member for Surfers Paradise and shadow minister for public works and housing has already alluded.

The bill amends the Housing Act 2003, which repealed the State Housing Act 1945 and dissolved the Queensland Housing Commission. The objectives are considerable and include the repeal of the Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement (Service Personnel) Act 1991, which governs the handover arrangements of defence housing from the state to the Commonwealth Defence Housing Authority. These arrangements were finalised in 1993-94 and the act is no longer required.

It amends the Building and Construction Industry Payments Act 2004 to correct a drafting error, to clarify what constitutes a building contract under part 4A of the Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991. The purpose of the amendment is clarification.

I shall deal with aspects of the Housing Act amendments in the first instance. According to the explanatory notes, several issues have emerged since the commencement of the Housing Act 2003 on 1 January 2004 which have led to the significant amendments to this bill. Those amendments will empower the chief executive to appoint an interim manager to funded housing services operated—

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I rise to a point of order. I think the member is speaking to the wrong bill.

**Mr HOPPER:** I have used the wrong speech. I will sit down.

**Ms STRUTHERS** (Algester—ALP) (4.54 pm): I am very pleased to be in Rockhampton for this very important sitting of parliament and to speak on a very important bill, the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill. I am pleased to support this bill, which is part of the comprehensive measures this government has been implementing to house more and more Queenslanders. As we all know, one of our basic needs is to have a secure and affordable roof over our heads.

This bill amends the Housing Act 2003 and the Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act 1957. These provisions go back a long way. It provides for the accelerated divestment of residential perpetual town leases administered by the Department of Housing. It will assist the remaining families with these residential leases to achieve outright home ownership. That was the original intent of TJ Ryan as premier when he introduced these provisions into the Housing Act way back in 1890. He wanted to give battlers—particularly battlers in rural and regional Queensland—the opportunity to own their own homes. It was important legislation then, but it is probably outdated now and it is time to make some changes. However, it is very important to ensure, as the Minister for Housing is trying to do, that the remaining lessees in these houses have the opportunity to own their own home. It is very important that we continue to consider opportunities for people to have affordable housing. The efforts that we are making at the state level, by doubling our Housing budget, stand in stark contrast to those of the federal government, which is focusing on private assistance in the rental market, which keeps going up and up, making it more and more unaffordable for people to own their own home.

It is certainly very difficult now for people. For instance, figures released earlier this year show that the gap between the median Brisbane weekly rent and the maximum rent assistance available from the Commonwealth for a single person in a one-bedroom unit had grown from \$79.70 to \$126.10. Single people have to try and find another \$126 to meet their rent. For a couple with children, the gap had increased from \$157.30 to \$193.20.

People in the audience here at the parliament and people throughout central Queensland know that these gaps are comparable in their own region. The rents are going up, particularly where there is a shortage of private rental housing. How will people on low incomes afford that rent? That policy of rent assistance is outdated.

I see my colleague the member for Gregory shaking his head. He knows how tough it is in rural and regional Queensland to find houses for people. He has been a strong advocate for public housing. I urge all opposition members to call on the federal government to give a fair go to rural and regional Queenslanders—in fact, to give a fair go to all Queenslanders. We need a national affordable housing action plan and we need it now. We need a plan that considers why we have a housing shortage and why we have a big gap in rent assistance such that people cannot afford, even with some rent assistance from the Commonwealth, to own their own home. We need to know why the Commonwealth is focusing on rent assistance rather than capital grants to the state. Our own state minister has been a great champion, not only for central Queensland but also for the whole state, in getting more capital money out of the Commonwealth.



I urge opposition members to do something good for central Queensland today. Housing is a most important issue. It gets lost off the radar and no-one really thinks about it too much. We are focused on a lot of other issues, including water and health. However, housing has to be amongst the top five issues that we need to turn our attention to. I call on them today to ask John Howard to set up a national affordable housing action plan. Let us look at taxation arrangements and let us look at capital assistance so that we can build more public housing—more of those great studio apartments and boarding houses that we are seeing built in Rockhampton. I urge members to support this bill.

Debate, on motion of Ms Struthers, adjourned.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Forster Report

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Treasurer) (5.00 pm), by leave: This morning I said to the House that I would make public the draft submission of the *Queensland Health systems review* by The Consultancy Bureau. I now table the draft report. I do this now against my own desire in the sense of courtesy to Peter Forster and his organisation who were against the tabling of this, and I want that noted.

I put on record what has been happening here. On Friday, Mr Forster offered the opposition a private briefing on the draft submission to detail the key differences, if any, between the two versions of the report. Did the Leader of the Opposition accept the offer? Did the Leader of the Liberal Party take up the offer? The answer is no. Has anyone from the opposition expressed any genuine interest in understanding what Peter Forster has taken the time to do in undertaking his review? The answer is simply no, no and no.

The Leader of the Opposition stood up this morning and tried to score the usual cheap political points—schoolboy politics. The Leader of the Opposition's only interest in the Queensland health system is what it can do for his political profile. Mr Deputy Speaker, Peter Forster is above all of this, and so am I. He is an honourable man, and I am told that Peter Forster has contacted the Leader of the Opposition since this morning, since the Leader of the Opposition made his comments in parliament, to offer him a copy of his confidential draft of the report. He has also been in contact with the Leader of the Liberal Party to offer him a copy of the draft report. But I do not see either of them in the House and I have waited until now to give them a chance to come in here and explain their position. Of course, they have not done that.

This has gone far enough, so I am tabling the draft report. For those members who are genuinely interested in and committed to rebuilding health in this state, I believe I should commend, in particular, some of the changes that Peter Forster made between the draft and final versions of his report. I asked some of my staff to have a look at it to identify changes, and here they are. This is the sort of political nonsense that the opposition has been going on with.

There has been an increase in the recommended number of nurses needed in the long term by Queensland Health. The number went up from 1,000 in the draft report to 1,500—hardly the sort of dumbing down of the report the opposition has been suggesting. So that change has made it harder for the government; it did not make it easier. We really got to this bloke. He said, 'I'll do what you want,' and bashed us with another 500 nurses. That made it a lot easier! The number of doctors needed is now set at 280 as part of immediate relief instead of being unspecified—hardly the result of any attempt to soften the report as suggested by the opposition.

The number of allied health workers went from 1,780 in the body of the draft report to 2,000 as a recommendation of the final report. That hardly did us any favours—more costs, of course necessary, but hardly the result of arm-twisting by the government as suggested by the opposition.

Another change was stronger articulation of potential co-payment and funding strategies to ensure that health services remain accessible to all and affordable to taxpayers—and so it goes on. Costings for the recommended programs are now recommended in the report. That was not in the draft. The number of positions recommended for transfer from central office to area health services has increased from 640 to 679—more pain and more difficult for the government to do it—and consequently reduced the number of positions to be abolished from 204 to 162.

The next change was the 'Clinical Excellence Commission' as referred to in the draft report has been developed into a broader 'Health Commission' to also encapsulate the existing role of the Health Rights Commission in the final report. 'Universal service obligations', with the Commonwealth, for towns of less than 5,000 people has moved from being discussed in the text of the draft report to being the subject of a recommendation in the final report. Chapter 7 includes a whole range of new or sharper recommendations, with much more guidance for government about how to deal with waiting lists and surgical throughput.

That is what I am advised by my key staff. They are the key changes. No doubt there are others but, frankly, I am not going to waste any more time going through nit-picking about any more differences. No doubt there are some, but I am not wasting my time or the time of my staff to go through and find them. These changes are hardly the revelations of anything that is going to shake the world.

They are just a few of the prominent changes Peter Forster makes in progressing from his draft report to the final report. It should be clear from this that there was no conspiracy. As usual, we acted honestly and decently, as we always do. It should be clear from this that the reason the draft report was not published was the fact that it was a draft—a work in progress. I ask the media to take note of the fact that once again the opposition has been found out making unsubstantiated allegations.

I say to the people of Queensland that they cannot trust this opposition or its leaders. The opposition say and do anything to try to win office. They have no regard for the truth or decency or integrity. The opposition will say anything to try to win a vote. This is absolute proof. When we were in opposition we never made allegations unless we had proof of what we were saying. It is time the present opposition returned to facts and figures instead of the falsehoods which they peddle all too frequently.

Most importantly, the opposite owes an apology to Peter Forster, an honourable man whose reputation the opposition has unjustly attacked. Last Friday, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition made references, in my view, in a disparaging way to Peter Forster. We had the same thing from the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party all over the weekend trying to insinuate that there was something wrong with Peter Forster. Dr Flegg should come in here and apologise. There is no excuse for trying to undermine a man who has tried to do a decent job on behalf of the taxpayers of Queensland.

I have put on record exactly what is in the draft report. I hope you will spend the next few nights getting insomnia reading it. The fact is that you will find nothing in there of any substance that differs beyond—

**Mr Hobbs:** You're angry about it.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am angry because I believe a man's reputation is important and country people like Mr Hobbs used to believe that honesty and those sorts of things were important but he does not any more.

**Mr Hobbs** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** No, you do not. I make this point and I want to make it really clear: it is all very well to play party politics, but when you ask a man or woman to do a job you do not set out to character assassinate the individual when it is done. Pick on the recommendations if you want, but do not go out and try to character assassinate the individual who did the job, because that to me is un-Australian. That is why I table this and, frankly, this should now put the record at rest. Yet again we will have more nonsense.

The other thing I want to make clear is that I have written to the Hon. Geoffrey Davies AO this afternoon. I will read the letter. The letter states—

Dear Commissioner

During Question Time in Parliament today (4 October 2005) the Leader of the Opposition requested that I make available the 'data from various hospitals' upon which Dr Gerry FitzGerald says he formed his views about matters relating to Dr Jayant Patel and subsequently gave those views in evidence to the Queensland Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry.

As the data forms part of the evidence provided to the Commission of Inquiry, I am of the view that a decision on the appropriateness of its release should be for your determination. I have no objections to the information being released if, in your view, it is appropriate to do so.

I have attached a copy of the relevant excerpt from Hansard detailing the exact question asked by the Leader of the Opposition.

Should you require any further information—

And it goes on. I table that letter and the annexures with it. As usual, we have provided a complete answer to this House. I have to say that I am disappointed that we still continue to have schoolboy politics played on these issues.

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.06 pm): A moment ago the Premier offered me the opportunity to stand here and explain the reasons—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Copeland): Order! The Premier did not move a motion. It is not open for debate.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** The Premier would not be misleading the House? He quite clearly said that he has been waiting for an hour for me to come in here and explain the reason.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** He said that. Is the Premier trying to mislead this place and the people in the gallery and have them believe that there was opportunity for the opposition when there is not?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier did not move a motion for the statement to be noted, so there is no opportunity to respond.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** There is no opportunity, so he is misleading people.

## HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Debate resumed.

**Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—NPA) (5.07 pm): I rise to speak to the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2005, which we hope is the correct bill. I am pleased to be able to lend support to a bill that will assist more Queenslanders to realise the great Australian dream of owning your own home. The introduction in Queensland in 1919 of perpetual town leases was to assist homeless workers to 'establish themselves in homes of which they will have some chance of becoming proprietors'. The Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2005 builds on that legislation and remains true to its original intent.

The Workers' Homes Act 1919 enabled lowered home ownership costs and effectively gives the same security of ownership as freehold leases. However, the lessees are required to obtain ministerial consent to transfer the lease or to change the land use, and perpetual town leases are also unable to be subdivided. These provisions can effectively bar a lessee from benefiting fully from the appreciating capital value of their home and also from taking advantage of the benefits of subdivision.

As noted in the minister's executive summary of the bill, only 262 leases of the more than 7,000 leases originally issued are still to be converted, and this bill provides considerable incentives for the remaining lessees to convert the property to freehold. It is the fundamental right of all Queenslanders to own freehold property, to own their own freehold home. And, of course, it is the right of all Queenslanders to own freehold land for farming enterprises, for industry or whatever. It is an underlying fundamental principle of free enterprise, which we certainly support.

Incentives for converting existing lessees to freehold are contained within the bill including basing the purchase price on the unimproved capital value rather than market value and providing rent credit. The application process would also be simplified. The passing of the bill would also lower the cost of administration for the Department of Housing and would be an added bonus but still, I believe, secondary to the primary goal of giving more Queenslanders this chance of owning their homes outright.

Disincentives to keep a perpetual lease after the specified date include a rent increase from three per cent to five per cent of the unimproved capital value protection, restricting transfers and limiting leases to existing lessees, and an automatic conversion to freehold with a change of ownership balanced by safeguards for the existing lessees. These safeguards are also contained within the bill and its provisions and include remission of rent being available for those experiencing hardship and that existing lessees may continue as leaseholders with a change of ownership necessary to trigger the conversion to freehold.

There has been some concern raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee about the relatively long time between the assent and the commencement of the bill, but perhaps that would give struggling families more time to be able to take advantage of the offer. The length of time does not have any undue effect on either the department or the lessees and should not be an issue.

Home ownership is often taken for granted by many who do not have to manage every cent and who do not live from pay to pay. The benefits of owning one's home are well known and every financial advice column ever written extols its virtues. With the emphasis today on superannuation and people being able to provide adequately for themselves and for their family post retirement, now more than ever we really should be doing everything possible to assist Queenslanders in this regard. The cost of living and of housing, in particular, continues to rise and by passing this bill we should give another 236 families the chance to plan for their future. They will not be disadvantaged, and incentives are in place to simplify and streamline the process. The only concern that I have about the bill is if it puts any financial impost on some of our retired seniors—elderly folk who have worked very hard all their lives and are now age pensioners. However, an investment in one's future is imperative, and particularly as the number of our senior population in Queensland escalates and with the numbers further escalating—

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Yes, they will; that is exactly right.

**Mr Schwarten:** The pensioners can stay there as long as they like.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Excellent. The numbers are further escalating here in Queensland, too, with all these people coming from the southern states to our wonderful state of Queensland, and why shouldn't they?

There has been no adverse reaction to the bill's introduction, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that its implementation will be supported by all concerned. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (5.13 pm): I rise to support the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill. Firstly, I would like to commend the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing for his hard work in delivering better housing solutions to people on low incomes in Queensland. Since he has been the minister, the Beattie government has spent more than \$61 million on new housing and housing related

services in Mackay. This financial year a further \$7 million will be spent to upgrade housing properties and deliver an additional 28 dwellings. This bill provides for the divestment of residential perpetual town leases administered by the Department of Housing. Over 7,000 of these leases were issued from 1924 to 1958 to eligible home loan clients, and there are a number in Mackay. Only 252 leases remain at 31 August. In Mackay I think there are seven, mainly in Macrossan Street, Stevenson Street, Sands Terrace, Dalrymple Street, Hoey Street, around that area of Mackay.

The perpetual lease scheme was designed to improve living conditions for working families by extending their access to affordable home ownership. A lease was issued with a loan for the construction of the home. The home buyer made an annual land rental payment for the leased state land and paid off the home loan. Initially a lease could not be converted to freehold. However, a 1930 amendment to the Workers' Homes Act 1919 enabled a lessee to buy the land from the state. Once the original home loan was paid, a lessee was required only to pay the annual land rental, as conversion of the leases has occurred on a voluntary basis only.

The architects of the scheme saw the lease as giving working families a step up into home ownership. The intention was for applicants to use the dwelling as a home for their family. They must not be the owner of a dwelling house elsewhere in Queensland; they must be a homeless worker. However, the reality is that the scheme did not remain targeted. The state effectively ceased to have control over a lease when the home loan was paid. A lessee could sell the lease to a buyer or transfer their interest to a beneficiary. This has meant that an unconverted lease may be bought and sold in much the same way as freehold land.

In the early 1890s the state initiated the divestment agenda for the leases. Other loan products delivering outright home ownership were now more popular with applicants. The State Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act 1957 was also amended to provide an incentive for the remaining leases to convert. This involved a rent concession on the freehold purchase price. Shortly after this amendment was introduced, the Queensland Housing Commission ceased issuing any more leases. This has greatly reduced the lease numbers over time. However, the existing approach to freeholding is no longer adequate to secure the divestment of the remaining leases in the short to medium term. The main reason for this has been the growth in land values across Queensland regions in the last 10 years. The situation has arisen where the cost of remaining a lessee is now low in comparison to the cost of converting to freehold. This means there is no incentive for many lessees to convert.

Presently the purchase price for conversion is worked out on a market value—what a person would be willing to pay for the land as if it were freehold. The bill seeks to ensure that all lessees have an incentive to freehold. It does this by providing for the conversion of the lease on a percentage of the unimproved value of land—the unimproved capital value. Further concessions as prescribed by regulation may be added to this reduced purchase price to establish an even greater incentive to convert. However, while these incentives are the key to encouraging lessees to secure outright ownership, the bill seeks to introduce from 1 July 2009 conditions that limit the leases with some exceptions to the existing leases. These provisions ensure that the leases will not continue indefinitely, particularly after they leave the hands of the existing leaseholders.

Following a change in ownership, the lease will automatically convert to freehold and the new owners—a lease buyer or a beneficiary—will have a period of time to pay the cost of conversion. The bill places appropriate safeguards around this conversionary requirement. It ensures that the existing leaseholders may continue as a lessee or choose when to convert as long as there is no change in ownership. This combined strategy of incentives to convert and a requirement for the lease to be converted following a change in ownership provided lessees with the option of becoming outright owners themselves or leaving the decision to a future buyer or beneficiary. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—NPA) (5.18 pm): I am pleased to speak to the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. This bill seeks to amend two acts and to secure the accelerated divestment of perpetual town leases and to facilitate the process by which perpetual lessees become freehold owners of land. The bill's amendments will give lessees a greater incentive to convert their leases to freehold and gain outright ownership while also lowering the cost of the administration and running of the leasehold system.

It is important that I run through exactly what this bill does. Other members have outlined the provisions of the bill, but I think it is important that I also go through it. In summary, the bill provides effective freeholding incentives. It establishes disincentives to remaining a lessee in the longer term and requires lease buyers and beneficiaries to convert when ownership changes. There is also a purchase price for the land based on a percentage of unimproved capital value, not market value. What we have here is a special discount, which is good. I agree with it. The shadow minister spoke on this as well, and he agrees that this system should work.

The extra payments that people would make—I presume that they can pay this off—would no doubt reflect the lease payments they are paying now. Therefore, there would not be a lot of difference to what they are paying now. Even if that is not the case, it does not really matter. It simply means that

there is a good deal; there is a special discount. There are extra discounts including the length of occupancy concession. There are concession grants of up to \$500 for a limited period. There is also a more streamlined application and acceptance process. That is also good. There are also disincentives to keep the lease after that period. Therefore, this government is encouraging the freeholding of this land. That is quite good.

However, it is important to recognise and remember that this government is very hypocritical on the issue of freeholding. Let me give members a couple of quotes and see if they can pick who said this. This is one quote—

Let us be very clear about what this motion means. If one examines the legislation—  
that is freeholding—

one will see that it gives us a selected few—a very tiny number of Queenslanders—the opportunity to upgrade their leases to freehold. We are talking about a privileged few. We are not talking about legislation that applies to the whole community.

Here is another quote—

Ordinary Queenslanders are not given interest-free loans. Ordinary Queenslanders are not given a 25% discount for paying cash for land. This legislation refers to a very tiny number of privileged Queenslanders.

That, members of parliament, was the now Premier and then Leader of the Opposition speaking against freeholding for those select few. That is what he said. This legislation provides a bigger discount than the legislation that I brought into the House as minister in 1997 to allow freeholding. We are very hypocritical around this chamber.

I have another quote from Mr Beattie, who was the Leader of the Opposition in those days. He said—

All it is about is looking after the Government's mates. All the Government is interested in is looking after itself and its mates. It is turning back the clock to the bad old days, and the Government does not understand.

I happened to say by way of an interjection—

You don't understand a thing about the land.

Mr Beattie then said—

The Minister says, "You don't understand a thing about the land." We on this side of the House understand a land grab when we see one.

This is the antifreeholding attitude of the Labor government. The government is doing exactly the same thing now. It should be done; people should have freehold land. It does not matter whether it is a house block or whether it is grazing land. It does not make any difference; it should be freehold land.

I have a few more beautiful quotes. Mr Beattie, when he was Leader of the Opposition, said—

The people of Queensland will make a very clear judgment about this Government. They will not support a Government that gives interest-free loans to its mates; they will not support a Government that gives a 25% discount to its mates if they pay cash;...

Guess what the government is doing? It is doing that now. It is doing better than that.

**Mr Schwarten:** There are no interest-free loans.

**Mr HOBBS:** I know, that is right, because there are none.

**Mr Schwarten:** No, there are none.

**Mr HOBBS:** They are actually getting a discount.

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Mr HOBBS:** But there is no interest on what is owing.

**Mr Schwarten:** There will be if they pay it out if they borrowed from a bank.

**Mr HOBBS:** What the government is doing is offering a better deal than we offered at the time. It says—

There is only one person in the chamber who is sick, and the minister does not understand a conflict of interest.

The member at the time was also trying to make something out of the fact that I had leasehold land and implied that I had some sort of a conflict of interest. Of course I have leasehold land; I make that quite clear to everybody. It has been on the pecuniary interests register for years. The definition by the Clerk in relation to a conflict of interest is quite clear. If there is an interest in common with the people it is not a conflict of interest. We did not have a conflict of interest. There was never a conflict of interest in that particular instance.

The anti-Labor attitude to freehold land was further evidenced by the member for Inala who, at that time, was the shadow minister for agriculture or whatever it was in those days. He said—

... I could not have been angrier than when I read the tone of this legislation that was introduced by the Minister for Natural Resources—angry because this is definitely a sell-out of the family farm.

Labor was trying to stop freeholding, but it is giving a better deal now than we were offering then. The member for Inala also said—

This country belongs to Queensland; it belongs to Queenslanders—all Queenslanders, not just the chosen few.

It is marvellous how attitudes do change. The value of owning freehold land is important; whether it is ownership of a home or of land, people should have that right. Their home is their castle and they should be able to have that and look after it, manage it, keep it and pass it on to their families. I do not see anything wrong with making sure that people have freehold title to their land, no matter where it is.

The government virtually stopped freeholding of land at the time. If members cast their minds back, even to the Wayne Goss days, a freeze was put on freeholding because of the attitude of the Labor government. They just did not like freeholding at all. What Labor basically did was make freeholding, particularly of grazing land, so expensive that virtually no-one does it. The government has reduced the benefits that freehold land gives, but it is still better to have freehold land. People will argue that there is not much difference between leasehold and freehold because property rights have been eroded so much that having freehold land is a really only of marginal benefit.

I call on the Labor government to allow freeholding of land in genuine circumstances. Quite clearly, for instance, if there is a native title claim over an area, it cannot be freeholded. Land can only be freeholded if it is not the subject of a native title claim. But the situation in this state now is that this government has virtually frozen the ability of people to freehold grazing land. I think it is pretty hypocritical for the government to be now giving people a better deal than we offered. With those few words, I support the legislation but point out the hypocrisy of it.

**Ms JARRATT** (Whitsunday—ALP) (5.28 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise in this special House today to support the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. I begin by congratulating the minister not just for bringing this bill to the House but for being a great champion for low-income people, working-class people in this state in regard to their rights to affordable housing. We could only wish that we had such a champion at the federal level of government in this country. Then we would begin to see a little more equity and fairness in regard to housing right across this country.

Today we are here to debate a bill that provides a package of incentives encouraging lessees to convert to freehold. These incentives result in a reduced purchase price and are the basis of the voluntary conversion process.

The bill also provides for the automatic conversion of a lease to freehold. These provisions apply from a date to be prescribed by regulation. The application date will be 1 July 2009, three years after the freeholding incentives commence. The voluntary and automatic conversion processes establish clear choices for a lessee. They may choose to freehold on the basis of the incentives or they may sell or otherwise transfer their lease interest. However, once the automatic conversion provisions take effect, the lease will, apart from some exceptions, not continue after the ownership of the lease changes.

Concessions on the freehold purchase price were first applied in the 1980s to encourage lessees to convert. These concessions have significantly reduced the lease numbers. However, due to the reasons already presented, including the growth in the land values, the present approach to freeholding is unlikely to secure divestment of the leases for the Department of Housing or outright ownership for the remaining lessees. While it is desirable for all the remaining lessees to convert on the basis of the voluntary conversion process, it is not realistic to assume all lessees will choose to freehold. Twenty years after the last lease was issued there are still some 250 leases remaining.

The automatic conversion provisions are required so a lease does not continue indefinitely. In the absence of such a measure an unconverted lease could simply continue to be sold and otherwise transferred. The automatic conversion provisions will, with some exceptions, limit the lease to the existing lessee.

When a transferee, such as a lease buyer or beneficiary, takes ownership of the lease they will do so as the registered owners of the freehold land. This change of ownership will cause the lease to automatically convert to freehold. To secure the costs of converting the lease, a change in favour of the chief executive of the Department of Housing will be registered over this freehold title. These conversion costs are payable within two years for ordinary transfers, for example the sale of a lease, and five years where the registered owner is a beneficiary of a deceased lessee.

Exceptions to this automatic conversion requirement are provided in the bill. These ensure that the automatic conversion provisions do not apply where one joint tenant dies and there is merely a recording of the surviving joint tenant as the lessee, a lessee dies and the lease is transferred to his or her personal representative, a lessee becomes an insolvent under administration and the lease transfers to the person's trustee or from the trustee back to the lessee or as otherwise prescribed by regulation.

The established exclusions are changes in lease ownership which currently do not require ministerial consent. They are appropriately limited and can be applied within existing processes for registering and recording changes of ownership under the Land Act 1994 and the Land Titles Act 1994. The bill also provides for the conversion requirements to be disclosed to a lease buyer. If the requirement to convert is not disclosed in a sale contract the buyer may cancel the contract. A notification on the appropriate Land Act 1994 register will also alert a prospective buyer to the requirement. These provisions encourage fair trading of a lease.

As a charge for the cost of conversion is raised when a lease automatically converts to freehold, there is a need to provide for the recovery of unpaid amounts as a debt to the state. The bill sets out detailed provisions.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Ms JARRATT:** I take the interjection. I am just so glad the opposition is still enthralled with the content of this bill as it is a very important bill.

**A government member** interjected.

**Ms JARRATT:** At least I am speaking on the right bill. There is a need to provide for the recovery of unpaid amounts as a debt to the state. The bill sets out detailed provisions that must be followed if the registered owner of the freehold land fails to pay the cost of conversion within the period provided. This includes the possible sale of land by the chief executive.

There are sufficient safeguards around this power to ensure that it is only ever used when the owner of the land has been extended every reasonable opportunity to pay. These include that the chief executive may receive a lesser amount or defer enforcing payment where there are special circumstances involved. The automatic conversion requirement is a necessary component of this divestment strategy. Having first provided incentives that are taken up voluntarily, there is a need to ensure any remaining unconverted leases will not continue indefinitely. The obvious trigger for this is a change of ownership in the lease. These provisions ensure that a lessee may continue as a leaseholder; however, it also provides that the lease will not continue when it ceases to be held in the existing ownership.

This is a very important bill. It is a shame that we do not have more people in our public gallery to witness the debate on such an important milestone. That is fantastic. The word has gone out about the importance of this bill. I am sure that at any moment now the people of Rockhampton will be flocking to the Pilbeam Theatre to hear the contributions of the remaining speakers on the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.35 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to this debate on the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill. I will speak on a couple of issues. The first is the broad issue of public housing, especially in one of the towns that I represent—that is, Biloela. I have written to the minister a number of times about the housing crisis in Biloela and the role that public housing has to play in addressing that crisis. It is a real issue for me and my electorate staff. One of the biggest issues that we have to deal with is people coming into my office with the idea that somehow or other I can get them access to a public housing option.

These people are in dire straits because Biloela is certainly facing a great shortage of housing. It stems from the development that is happening in the area due to coalmining operations. Coalmines are both increasing production and starting up in areas where they have not existed before. Biloela is a very vibrant community. It has the power stations. The Teys Bros meatworks is also expanding.

We are going through a period of expansion that has put enormous pressure on the housing market right throughout the Callide Valley. People are prepared to travel and look for other options in other areas. The whole issue of public housing in this community and in the neighbouring areas of Theodore and Moura has been the subject of some focus.

While I appreciate that the minister's department cannot produce extra housing in those sorts of circumstances, I think there is a management issue involved with respect to the housing stock that already exists. It is certainly difficult to explain to people who come into my office why they cannot find anywhere to live when they can identify a number of public houses that are empty and have been empty for some considerable time. I have done a fair bit of work in trying to identify why this happens. It would appear to me that it is processes involved in the management of that housing stock that causes these extraordinary delays. Houses stand empty for a period of time. In those sorts of circumstances the department has a responsibility to try to ensure that the housing stock that it has is used to maximum efficiency. Unfortunately, that does not happen in Biloela.

I think the council also has a role to play in terms of these housing shortages. Housing is critically important for people in those developing communities.

**Mr Schwarten:** There is a shortage of land.

**Mr SEENEY:** I take the minister's interjection. There is a shortage of land. But I think there are things that the council can do that it has not done up until now. I think the council has been slow. There are some issues that the council needs to address to ensure that the housing crisis can be addressed.

It is difficult given the lead time. I know it is difficult unless we can accurately predict these things. The challenge for us all is to ensure that we make the best use of the housing stock that is available. I hope that the minister's department can do something about that. I appreciate that this issue is a bit wide of the mark as far as the bill is concerned. I do not think I could allow a housing bill to come before the House without making those comments on behalf of my constituents. I thank Mr Deputy Speaker for the leniency in allowing me to do that.

The other issue about which I want to make a contribution relates to freeholding land, and the bill does allow an opportunity for land-holders who have these perpetual leases to freehold those blocks of land. Freeholding land is a great concept. Members in this parliament have heard me speak many times about property rights and the value of secure property rights not just to people who hold those property rights but to the community at large and to the administration and welfare of those areas of land. It is a great concept that is encapsulated in this bill. I listened to the member for Warrego's contribution, in which he said that the government's response to the proposition that he put forward was so different from what it is putting forward itself.

I hope that this enlightenment lasts. I hope that the concept that is encapsulated in this bill—encouraging and providing incentives for people to freehold their land—is carried through in a range of other areas. It ensures that people are able to accumulate equity in an asset and, with a secure property right, know that there is some value to them and their families and those who will come after them in terms of accumulating equity in that asset, whether that asset be a house block, as it is in this case, or other areas of land. There is a particular need to ensure that there are opportunities for people to do that.

The model that is encapsulated in this bill—that is, the idea of making that freeholding available as a percentage of the unimproved capital value rather than the market value—I think is a great one. It is a good one. It is something that can be used in other places to ensure that land-holders are able to achieve the secure property rights that they deserve and that they need to ensure that their stewardship of those areas is sufficiently appropriate to ensure that in the long term those values are protected on behalf of us. The people who own that freehold land still manage it and protect it and look after it on behalf of all of us. The way to encourage people to do that is to give them secure property rights. I look forward to the precedent being set in this bill being extended by this government hopefully and by governments in the future to encourage the freehold ownership of land to ensure that, by so doing, people have a secure property right that gives them the incentive to accumulate equity in that property right for their own benefit and for the benefit of the state.

**Mr PEARCE** (Fitzroy—ALP) (5.42 pm): I rise to join other honourable members on both sides of the House in supporting this historic amendment bill. It is historic in that the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2005 is the first legislation to be debated by the parliament in Rockhampton. The minister responsible for the administration of the legislation, the minister for housing, is the local member for Rockhampton. Given the contributions made by members opposite, it will be the first bill passed in Rockhampton, with the support of the opposition parties. I get to be part of this historic occasion as not only a member of parliament meeting in Rockhampton but also a member of the government participating in a debate in which Labor Party principles are enshrined in legislation.

The amendments contained in the bill amend the Housing Act 2003 and the Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act 1957 and will provide for the accelerated divestment of residential perpetual town leases administered by the Department of Housing. Residential perpetual town leases came into play in 1924 and continued until 1985. The leases were a means of reducing costs of home ownership for working families. I was not around at that time, but it was a great incentive. I can remember times when my family lived in woolsheds and caravan parks and grain sheds. It would have been wonderful if my dad had been able to get this sort of help to get us into a home a lot earlier than he did. That is why as a Labor member it is good to be supporting this legislation, because it is about looking after the battlers in life. I feel very humble about my background and also very proud of my family in that my parents were able to get through difficult times and raise four boys and a girl who grew up to have a lot of respect for people as a whole and a good understanding of what life is like when things are tough.

The leases were issued to eligible home loan applicants. They were usually working families who at the time had the means to meet the costs of regular loan repayments but for whom the additional cost of purchasing land would have forced them to give up hope of ever having a dream home. Residential perpetual town leases allowed families to build their homes on land that required only a minimal fee to be paid to the government. The scheme was a good one. Families got to live in their own homes and government collected on annual rents.

More than 7,000 families benefited from the scheme. As of 30 June this year there were some 262 leases ongoing. The home loans for most of those—in fact, as far as I understand, for all of those leases—have been paid out and these people can continue living on that land and the leases can continue in perpetuity on a land rent only basis until the lessees choose to change to freehold. It might be a cheap way of retaining land, but there is no security over the family home because it stands on land that is the property of the state. Ownership of the land would provide for absolute security of the home and an ability on the part of the owners to determine their own future and not be restricted because the land is not a freehold stature.

What has happened? In June this year the Department of Housing notified lessees that a strategy for completing the original objectives of the perpetual town lease program was under development. The notice advised lessees that the strategy was expected to include changes promoting the conversion of the leases to freehold. The package of incentives provided by the bill is the key to divesting the leases



and assisting remaining lessees to retain outright ownership. Sale proceeds from the conversion of the leased state land are to be returned to the Queensland housing fund, and that means that we are going to have money available to build more houses and repair and maintain other houses that are the stock of the state.

In responding to the department about the proposed changes, lessees overwhelmingly indicated that they had not previously freeholded because the cost of conversion was too high. This is consistent with financial modelling undertaken by the department. This established that there is a disincentive for lessees to freehold where the cost of conversion, including any rent concession a lessee may have accumulated, is higher than what the lessees would expect to pay if they remained a leaseholder in the longer term and continued to pay the annual rent. So what they were saying is that they were better off, unless there were some concessions, continuing to pay the annual rent forever.

The bill seeks to remove this disincentive by establishing a lower base purchase price for the conversion of the lease. This means that a lessee will be provided with a purchase price that compares more favourably with the anticipated cost of remaining a lessee—that is, their future land rental obligation. The bill proposes a new way of calculating the conversion costs. This involves working out the purchase price on a percentage of the unimproved value of the land contained in that lease. The unimproved value is that which is commonly referred to as unimproved capital value, and this form of valuation is undertaken by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines to establish the rateable value of land and is used by local governments to calculate rates and to set the annual land rental for the leases. The unimproved value is generally substantially lower than a market valuation.

There is one point of the bill that I ask the minister to explain in simple terms in his summing-up. I just find it a little bit difficult to understand what it all means. I would appreciate it if the minister would spend a couple of minutes explaining it. It is the part of the bill that provides that the percentage of unimproved value for working out the purchase price must be less than 100 per cent, and a declared percentage rate is set by the chief executive in accordance with the requirements to be prescribed by regulation. If the minister could explain that a little more, I think it would be very helpful to everybody.

**Mr Schwarten:** It simply means that it has to be discounted by a percentage which will be set by regulation—so it will not be 100 per cent. It cannot be. It has to be less than 100 per cent.

**Mr PEARCE:** The bill enables concessions to be applied to the purchase price. These are to be prescribed by regulation. Their purpose is to provide a package of incentives. They include a grant to assist with the cost of conversion; that is, the Land Act and the Land Title Act fees and other associated expenses that come with the conversion of the leases to freehold. Also, there will be a further percentage discount based on a lessee's length of occupancy. The number of years that they have been paying rent will be taken into consideration. These incentives are to be made available to lessees who choose to freehold through the new approach.

The bill also provides for a conversion-in-progress lease. This is a lease where a lessee has applied to convert before 1 July 2006 through the existing process. A limited window of opportunity exists which provides for a lessee who has started on the existing process and wishes to continue rather than start again when the new system commences. This indicates to me that the minister is going out of his way, as much as he can, to ensure that the process is easy and gives everybody an equal opportunity to take up what is offered through this legislation.

The package of incentives is the basis of a good deal for lessees. It recognises their significant interest in the land and the fact that they already own the dwelling house. They already own the dwelling but they do not own the land and they need to own both. The state is winding up a program by encouraging lessees to get into outright ownership of the land.

This is good legislation. It is legislation for the battlers. It is legislation that we, as a Labor government, should be proud of. I commend the minister for bringing the bill before the House. I commend all honourable members for supporting the legislation.

**Ms LEE LONG** (Tablelands—ONP) (5.51 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. A number of types of perpetual leases have existed in Queensland since the 1800s, for example, perpetual lease selections, grazing homestead perpetual leases, perpetual town leases, perpetual suburban leases and perpetual country leases. In addition, I know that mining homestead perpetual leases existed because I owned some of them, which I converted to freehold in the 1980s. When I first owned them, around the early 1970s, the rent per year was something like a peppercorn rent of, say, a few dollars a year. That was paid in addition to the normal local government rates. By the 1980s, those rents had risen astronomically to about the same as I was paying in local government rates, so I decided to freehold. Back then, it was a considerable amount of money for me to find after my husband had passed away and I had three young children to rear. I wish this proposal had been around back in those days.

Around that time, there were also warning signs that to freehold in future years might become more difficult. That was the case after native title came into existence in the early nineties. In the early seventies, I asked the then Clerk of the Court about freeholding the miners homestead perpetual leases

that we owned. His reply was that there was no good reason to do it, as perpetual leases were as good as freehold. He did not see any good point in doing it at that time. How times have changed.

This amendment is focused on one particular type of perpetual lease called the perpetual town lease. These leases were issued from 1924 to low-income earners during a time of housing shortage and eventually around 7,000 or so were held in Queensland. They ceased to be issued in 1985. Over time, most of them have been made freehold and, as of 30 June 2005, only 262 remain, of which only 78, or 30 per cent, are held by original lessees or their descendants.

The Beattie government now wants to be rid of these residential leases. To enable this to happen, it is offering incentives to the current owners. In the first instance, the owners will have a choice to freehold at a discount rate from 1 July 2006 to 1 July 2009. This will be done by basing the purchase price on a percentage of the unimproved value of the leased land, as opposed to the market value, which is the normal process these days. There are other incentives to encourage owners to freehold and to streamline the process.

From July 2009, the choices and incentives will disappear and automatic conversion provisions will apply. That will mean higher costs and forced conversions when property changes hands. There will be only a few exceptions, for example, one, where there are joint tenants and one dies and there is just a recording of a surviving joint tenant or tenants as the lessee; two, where the lessee dies and the lease is transferred to a personal representative; three, under certain insolvency situations; and, four, as the explanatory notes say, where otherwise prescribed by legislation.

This is certainly a golden opportunity for any lessees who are in a position to avail themselves of the discount rates during the three-year period of 2006 to 2009. It is not often that the government gives anything away but, in this case, there is a method to its madness. However, there will be some who are unable to afford to freehold during this time, for example, pensioners of one kind or another, earners of very low incomes, single mothers perhaps, and so on. Those owners who are unable to afford to freehold will be able to continue to pay the lease rent but, on eventual sale, the new owner will be forced to freehold at the current higher rate, which may make a sale unattractive to a potential buyer, unless of course the sale price is reduced.

Some of the locations of these properties may now be in prime real estate areas. That might mean that to freehold, even at the discount rate, may still cost quite an amount of money. While most of the current perpetual town leases are in rural areas, they are scattered right across the state. For example, there are 12 in the Tablelands electorate, which are valued at some \$333,500 and paying rent of \$9,224.

There is a great lack of available public housing in my electorate. At the moment, not only is there a lack of public housing but the private rental market is very tight. As a result, people are being forced into almost any accommodation that they can get simply for the sake of having a roof over their own heads and over the heads of their children and families. The staff of the Department of Housing have been helpful and responsive at all times. However, there are simply not enough houses available. In conclusion, I urge the minister and the Beattie government to move urgently to address the pressing need for public housing, both on the tablelands and across the state.

**Mr LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (5.57 pm): I will be brief in my support of the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. It amends the Housing Act 2003 and the Housing Freeholding of Land Act 1957, which allows the speedy divestment of residential perpetual town leases administered by the Department of Housing. Residential perpetual town leases were issued between 1924 and 1985 in order to reduce the cost of home ownership for working families. Over 7,000 families benefited from this home ownership scheme over this time.

There was always an ability to convert the leases to freehold title and, over time, all but 262 were converted. Fewer than 80 of those remaining leases are held by the original lessees or their descendants. All of the original home loan agreements have been finalised and, therefore, the remaining leases continue in perpetuity on a land rental only basis. Actually, only one of these types of leases in the Southport electorate will benefit from this legislation. However, there used to be quite a number of these residential perpetual town leases on the Gold Coast, particularly in the area of Main Beach. Ironically, this system was brought in to enable working families to own a home, and some of those converted leases in Main Beach would now be worth in excess of a million dollars.

The administrative costs of running the system for 262 leases cannot be justified, and these amendments will assist the 262 lessees achieve outright home ownership. There will be incentives provided for remaining lessees to convert their land to freehold. There will also be disincentives, as has already been mentioned by numerous other speakers, to remain a lessee in the long term. Effectively, these amendments give effect to the original intent of the scheme, and that is to make home ownership easier for working people. From 1 July 2009, any remaining leases will automatically convert to freehold upon a change of ownership. That date will give lessees plenty of time to consider their options.

Lessees have been notified that the perpetual town lease system was under review, and this bill will give effect to the original intent of the scheme, as I have mentioned. Lessees are able to contact the department if they have any concerns with the proposed legislation. Voluntary freeholding before the prescribed date will be at a reduced purchase price—that is, based on a percentage of UCV and not on the market price, as is presently the case. This bill effectively winds up a scheme which has outlived its original purpose but which has been of critical importance in assisting working Queenslanders to achieve their dream of home ownership. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (6.00 pm): I rise to speak to the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. The thrust of this legislation has been highlighted here this afternoon by various speakers. While it affects only 262 of the remaining 7,000 people, it is fair. The minister and I have had serious discussions about housing over a period of time. In Queensland the one thing that we all aim for for all the people out there who do not have their own homes is to see them in their own homes, and that is probably the Australian dream.

I have heard the member for Callide talk this afternoon about housing in Biloela and what is happening there in relation to the mining boom. The same is happening in Emerald in relation to rent. To rent a three-bedroom home in Emerald costs around \$300 a week. To rent a four-bedroom home costs probably \$350 or closer to \$400 a week. To purchase a three-bedroom home costs probably \$300,000. To purchase a four-bedroom home costs probably \$350,000 to \$400,000. That is out of the reach of ordinary people on a very basic wage. If they are bringing home \$500 or \$600 a week, they do not have a hope in hell of being able to own their own home.

This legislation addresses an issue that affects only a minute number of people, but through the years people have been affected by home ownership. I think we have to take a collective look at that, and not just as a state operation. Federal and state jurisdictions both have to look very closely at this. As a result of the housing boom of recent years, a lot of people are now not able to afford a home. We have seen what has happened with real estate values in Brisbane in recent years. They are out of the reach of ordinary people. Senator Barnaby Joyce explained it in this way—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr JOHNSON:** It is worth listening to what he had to say. Let us be fair dinkum about this.

**Mr Reeves:** 'Backdown Barnaby'!

**Mr JOHNSON:** Do you want to be fair dinkum or do you want to have a go? Are you going to listen to what I have to say?

A home in St Lucia in Brisbane might be worth \$600,000 at the beginning of the week and at the end of that week that house might be worth \$601,000. The values are going up in Brisbane. But in Quilpie, Cunnamulla and places like that, that same house might be worth only \$30,000 at the beginning of the week and at the end of the week it would still be worth \$30,000. That person in Brisbane is probably bringing home \$1,000 or \$1,200 a week, but that person in Quilpie or Cunnamulla is probably bringing home only \$500 a week. So that is the differentiation. There is no fairness in that when we talk about trying to get people into homes.

I say to the minister that this is a good piece of legislation in that it will enhance the opportunity for some people to freehold those properties in question and get an asset of their own. I see members here today who were part of the Palm Island Select Committee, which I was a member of. One of things that people on Palm Island were saying was that they wanted to own their own home. Regardless of where people live in Queensland, owning our own homes is sacred to us as Queenslanders, and it is the same for the rest of Australians.

It is an unfortunate situation in places like Emerald. I will use Emerald as a classic example, with the mining boom and the big money that is earned by many of those people who work within the mines. Many of them do not live in Emerald; they live in Mackay, Rockhampton, Yeppoon or wherever and they fly in and fly out. We have police officers and teachers—professional people—going to those places and not being able to afford the rent. This is a crisis situation within this region. I think that is something we have to look at collectively whether we are in government or opposition. We have to take a holistic and genuine approach so that we can see how we can address this inequity.

This legislation talks about freeholding. The amendments will give lessees a greater incentive to convert their leases to freehold and thereby achieve outright home ownership. The amendments will also reduce the administrative costs to government in maintaining the leasehold system. That is very important, but it is more important to those people who are in those properties.

This afternoon I heard the member for Tablelands speak about losing her husband and being left with three little children. How many people are out there in that situation? There are social implications of this. If we are not going to be realistic about the social fallout of what is happening to people out there in their everyday lives, we are not fair dinkum about being members of parliament, representing people and trying to give them a fair go.

I know that I do not have to say this to the minister because I know that he is fair dinkum about it. We have to have a real hard look at housing throughout this state, whether it is housing in remote Queensland, Indigenous housing or rental housing for government employees—such as police housing or teacher housing—in the central west, the south-west and the north-west. It comes back to trying to get people to go to those places so that we can provide—

**Mr Schwarten:** Stability.

**Mr JOHNSON:**—stability, as the minister says, and a quality of life for those people in question. I call on both the federal government and state governments right around this nation to have a summit on housing. Housing is reaching a crisis point in this state and in this nation. There are many people living in virtually Third World conditions because they cannot afford to pay rent, let alone pay a deposit to buy a home. This is a situation that frightens me and upsets me greatly.

Fair is fair. At the end of the day, this is about us putting in place legislation or policies that will create an environment of equality and fairness—enhancing opportunities for those people less fortunate to buy their homes. Let us look at my own electorate and a place like Windorah. There are no high schools there. There is a primary school. It is 158 miles from Quilpie and another 180 miles from Longreach. A lot of people work on councils or on stations. They might be contractors or whatever. They do not earn big dollars. At the end of the day, they have to educate their kids, too. What do they have to do? They probably have to send them to a hostel in Longreach or somewhere like that. It is about depriving people of what a lot of us take for granted. That is one thing I will fight for. I think trying to address the housing needs of people right across this state, regardless of who they are or where they live, should be a genuine concern of each and every one of us, regardless of what side of the House we are on.

**Ms STONE** (Springwood—ALP) (6.09 pm): Firstly, I would like to say thank you to the people of Rockhampton for their hospitality so far. It has been wonderful and I am sure that will continue. I went to my first bull sale this week, so that was a very good experience for me. I really appreciate the hospitality.

In the past the state issued perpetual leases under the Workers' Homes Act 1919. The loan and repayments were based on the cost of the dwelling only, while rent was payable on the state land only. From 1924 to 1985 over 7,000 residential perpetual town leases were issued, and since 1930 there has been a range of products offered by the state to deliver outright ownership that many public housing clients have taken up and continue to take up today.

In reference to this bill, I would like to speak about the automatic conversion process. This bill provides a package of incentives encouraging lessees to convert to freehold. These incentives result in a reduced purchase price and are the basis of the voluntary conversion process. The bill also provides for the automatic conversion of lease to freehold. These provisions apply from a date to be prescribed by regulation. The application date must not be before 1 July 2009, three years after the freeholding incentives commence.

The voluntary and automatic conversion processes establish clear choices for the lessee. They may choose to freehold on the basis of the incentives or they may sell or otherwise transfer their lease interest. However, once the automatic conversion provisions take effect, the lease will, apart from some exceptions, not continue after the ownership of the lease changes. Concessions on the freehold purchase price were first applied in the 1980s to encourage lessees to convert. These concessions have significantly reduced lease numbers. However, due to the reasons already presented, including the growth in land values, the present approach to freeholding is unlikely to secure divestment of the leases for the Department of Housing or outright ownership for remaining lessees.

While it is desirable for all the remaining leases to convert on the basis of the voluntary conversion process, it is not realistic to assume all lessees will choose to freehold. Twenty years after the last lease was issued, there are still some 250 leases remaining. The automatic conversion provisions are required so a lease does not continue indefinitely. In the absence of such a measure, unconverted leases could simply continue to be sold or otherwise transferred. The automatic conversion provisions will, with some exceptions, limit the lease to the existing lessee. When a transferee such as a lease buyer or beneficiary takes ownership of the lease, they will do so as the registered owners of freehold land. This change of ownership will cause the lease to automatically convert to freehold.

To secure the costs of converting the lease, a charge in favour of the chief executive, Department of Housing will be registered over the freehold title. These conversion costs are payable within two years for ordinary transfers—for example, the sale of a lease—and five years where the registered owner is the beneficiary of a deceased lessee. Exceptions to this automatic conversion requirement are provided in the bill.

These ensure that the automatic conversion provisions do not apply where one joint tenant dies and there is merely a recording of the surviving joint tenant or tenants as the lessee; a lessee dies and the lease is transferred to his or her personal representative; a lessee becomes an insolvent under administration and the lease transfers to the person's trustee or from the trustee back to the lessee; or as otherwise prescribed by regulation. The established exclusions are changes in lease ownership

which currently do not require ministerial consent. They are appropriately limited and can be applied within existing processes for registering and recording changes of ownership under the Land Act 1994 and the Land Titles Act 1994.

The bill also provides for the conversion requirement to be disclosed to a lease buyer. If the requirement to convert is not disclosed in the sale contract, the buyer may cancel the contract. A notification on the appropriate Land Act 1994 register will also alert a prospective buyer to the requirement. These provisions encourage fair trading of a lease.

As a charge for the costs of conversion is raised when a lease automatically converts to freehold, there is a need to provide for the recovery of unpaid amounts as a debt to the state. The bill sets out detailed provisions that must be followed if the registered owner of the freehold land fails to pay the costs of conversion within the period provided. This includes the possible sale of land by the chief executive. There are sufficient safeguards around this power to ensure that it is only ever used when the owner of the land has been extended every reasonable opportunity to pay. These include that the chief executive may accept a lesser amount or defer enforcing payment when there are special circumstances involved.

The automatic conversion requirement is a necessary component of this divestment strategy. Having first provided incentives that are taken up voluntarily, there is a need to ensure any remaining unconverted leases will not continue indefinitely. The obvious trigger for this is a change of ownership in the lease. These provisions ensure that a lessee may continue as a leaseholder. However, they also provide that the lease will not continue when it ceases to be held in the existing ownership.

Perpetual town leases were introduced to improve the living conditions of workers, and the security of a roof over your head is something that people throughout the world want. It is something that Labor governments in Australia value highly. Perpetual town leases have done their job and today's services are more appropriate for our times. This bill sees the interests of lessees being considered while the state is divesting underperforming services to benefit their clients and to benefit our state.

The people of Springwood have raised concerns with me regarding home ownership for their children. I have heard previous speakers all talk about affordable housing and people having problems accessing housing now. Owning a home and land is what many Australians aspire to and this legislation will allow more Australians to do just that. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (6.15 pm): In rising to support the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill, I want to commend the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing, because I have always found him to have a heart for people who find affordable housing a challenge and I look forward to working with him on those issues in the future.

Perpetual leases were described by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries as having a level of security equivalent to that of freehold because they do not expire and have been issued under various statutes since the 1800s. Probably the most frequent title in my electorate would be the miners homestead perpetual leases. However, there are 25 perpetual town leases that will be dealt with under this legislation. These leases were issued under the Land Act 1897, the Closer Settlement Act 1906, the Land Act 1910, the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act 1917, the Workers' Homes Act 1919, the Tully Sugar Works Area Land Regulations Ratification Act 1924, the Irrigation Acts Amendment Act 1933, the State Housing Act 1945, the Irrigation Areas (Land Settlement) Act 1962 and the Land Act 1962. I would like to commend the Parliamentary Library and Mary Westcott for her research brief on this which gave us not only a lot of history but also the history of other jurisdictions and their handling of similar circumstances.

The minister for housing is aware of problems that have been faced in my electorate in recent times and raised by other members in terms of escalating housing prices outstripping incomes or at least outstripping the affordability of portions of the community. In the mining areas we have had circumstances in Gladstone where certain sectors are on construction money which far outstrips a fixed-income person and yet those people on a fixed income—council workers and workers in retail, those who do not have the benefit of accelerated incomes because of the development boom—are still being asked to pay the prices that are set on usually the inflated incomes. So we had a period of stress during the construction of the Boyne smelter, where quite a lot of people, unfortunately, left our region. Those who had invested 10 or 15 years of their lives into our social infrastructure and their families as well had to leave because rents outstripped their affordability. I believe that, even though these particular leases are being phased out, the need for governments to support people who find themselves in those circumstances will never go away.

I think in the future at both the state and federal level another area of need will emerge. It will be, more particularly, in the major centres but it will also be in developing centres and that is where housing prices are escalating. Gladstone is much dearer than it used to be. Brisbane is dear for a capital city but it does not compare to Sydney or Melbourne. However, those prices are escalating, and we have this increased casualisation of the work force. I wonder how my children and their children are going to be able to afford (a) to accumulate a deposit and (b) the really high payments that are required, because layered on top of that—

**Mr Schwarten:** How are people going to be able to sell their houses—that is the other thing—if they had some bad kids in it?

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** That is right. So the idea of paying quite a significant mortgage, plus the other inflated costs of living, will bring with it another problem for governments, both state and federal, to have to address perhaps in a new format.

**Mr Schwarten:** If you increase wages by four per cent and housing by 25 per cent it does not work.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** No, that is right; there is a gap that emerges.

As I said, there are 25 houses identified for my electorate with a total unimproved capital value of \$1.274 million. I did a quick calculation as to what that might work out at per house, but it is only an average. It is not enormously expensive. However, consideration has to be given to those who have a lack of ability to raise a mortgage—people on disability pensions, people who are on age pensions and people who have a limited income and are on other sorts of family support. There are also those who, for various reasons, would like to freehold, as is being required, and cannot afford it at this time.

There have been sufficient contributions from other members to indicate that there are some options that are being offered with this legislation. However, I would seek an undertaking from the minister that where there are individuals who fall outside of all of the elements that have been prescribed they will be able to be considered by the minister—

**Mr Schwarten:** Yes.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:**—and I am sure, through a submission from the local member, irrespective of who that is, he will give consideration to it.

**Mr Schwarten:** The final stage stays with the minister and there is discretion to allow that to occur.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** I thank the minister for that.

I would also commend the final trigger for enforcement being the change of ownership. The benefit of that, from what I can see—and my constituents certainly have not had time to raise any concerns that they have with this particular part of the legislation—is that at least a person coming in to purchase that property would come into it knowing the liability that they are adopting. At the moment people who have lived there have done so on the basis of it being a perpetual lease and maybe have never accrued sufficient funds to freehold. This trigger at least has that protection—that a new buyer, whether it is within the family or a change of ownership externally, has all those factors to consider prior to them making a commitment. I look forward to working with the minister in solving the problems of affordable housing in my electorate. I support the legislation.

**Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (6.22 pm):** It gives me a great deal of pleasure to participate in the debate on the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. I will also be supporting this bill. I note that one of the acts that this bill amends is the 1957—yes, members, the 1957—Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act. As other speakers to this bill have identified, one of the purposes of this bill is to speed up the opportunity for people to undertake a transfer of an existing residential perpetual lease administered by the Department of Housing to freehold land. I congratulate the minister on undertaking a review and for questioning the relevance of current valid laws that were passed many, many years ago, just like one of the acts that we are referring to tonight, that is, the act that was passed in 1957.

Often when we pass new laws in parliament we include a requirement for the relevant minister to undertake a review of the effectiveness of that new act in one, three or five years. Sometimes the review requirement is actually contained in the new legislation while on other occasions it is undertaken as a result of a commitment given by the minister to parliament. I accordingly take this opportunity to urge all ministers to undertake a review not just of the new laws passed by this the 51st Parliament of Queensland, but, just as importantly, to undertake a review of old laws just like the 1957 Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act that we are referring to tonight.

I believe that we always need to focus on ensuring the relevance of all existing Queensland laws, irrespective of when those laws were passed by the Queensland parliament. I believe it is the responsibility of all elected members of parliament, not just the responsibility of the relevant ministers of the government. I believe that all Queenslanders want all of the state politicians, be they Labor, National, Liberal, Independent or One Nation, to bring bills before the parliament if there is a concern or a belief in the community that the existing law may no longer have relevance to the current community expectations and may need some minor amendments or perhaps some major amendments and review.

Before resuming my seat I would also like to put on the public record that I am very proud to be here for this historic sittings of the 51st Parliament of Queensland in Rockhampton. Unfortunately, I was not able to participate in the earlier debate because of time constraints on the speaking list. But I want to make it clear on the record that I support the government and that I support the Premier 100 per cent in his attempts to take parliament to regional Queensland because I believe, more than anything else, that it is most important that parliament is relevant and that parliament has an opportunity to connect with the people of regional Queensland.

The last thing we want to see is concern on the part of Queenslanders far away from the capital of Brisbane who feel they are no longer relevant or who feel that they need to secede. I believe one of the greatest aspects of taking parliament to regional Queensland is the ability to reassure north Queenslanders and Queenslanders who reside away from Brisbane that there is no need to secede. They can certainly take their message clearly to the government. I believe regional parliament is a great success.

I would like to take the opportunity, as other members have, to talk about the housing pressures that are being experienced. We on the Sunshine Coast are experiencing enormous pressure on public housing. We need to ensure that housing is affordable for all Queenslanders.

I would like to put on the public record my appreciation to the minister for his support in trying to ensure that a lot of the public housing and emergency housing requirements on the Sunshine Coast are met. I also thank him for his financial support in meeting some of the requests that we have brought to his attention. Without further ado, I commend the bill to the House. It is great to see the support from all members of parliament for this very important legislation.

**Mr KNUTH** (Charters Towers—NPA) (6.26 pm): The Housing Legislation Amendment Bill will give current tenants with residential perpetual leases the option to purchase their properties. While supporting the bill, I have grave concerns about the distinct lack of public housing currently available to the people in the Charters Towers electorate. There have been a few significant gains in the public housing that is available. However, many public properties have been sold. The consequence of this has been a lack of suitable housing for single parents, the elderly, the victims of domestic violence, apprentices, workers and people in the low-income brackets. The obvious example of this is in Moranbah, where the minister has recently called in a housing development that could have potentially assisted many workers to keep their families intact. Currently workers are seeking accommodation outside the town and are commuting to work. Following a 12-hour shift, who feels like driving more than 100 kilometres home only to turn around to drive back the following day?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Jarratt): Order! Member for Charters Towers, I do ask you to try to confine your speech to something about the bill.

**Mr KNUTH**: Okay, Madam Deputy Speaker. Public housing waiting lists are also a grave concern. Selling public land may be a winner for the government; the losers are those who can least afford to sit and linger on waiting lists with little hope of being offered public housing unless the government commits the funds to future public houses in rural and regional areas, where the majority of perpetual leases currently exist.

There must be assurances that the money gained from the sale of public property will be reinvested in further properties to help those who are most in need of public assistance. I am pleased to be able to lend that support to this bill because it will assist more Queenslanders to realise the great Australian dream of owning their own home and the chance of becoming a proprietor, as the original legislation intended.

As you are aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, owning your own home is the greatest investment. It is not just a financial investment; it is an investment in the future of families as well. It would be wonderful if the funds gained could be used to assist struggling families who are desperately seeking the chance to establish themselves by access to public housing.

**Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—NPA) (6.28 pm): I rise to give a speech on behalf of the honourable member for Darling Downs. I support the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill. The objective of the bill is to amend the Housing Act 2003 and the Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act 1957 to secure the accelerated divestment of residential perpetual town leases and to facilitate the process by which the lessees become freehold owners of the land.

As outlined in the explanatory notes, the residential perpetual town leases were issued from 1924 to provide access to affordable home ownership to low-income Queenslanders. The concept was one of Queensland's original home ownership schemes. Some 7,000 leases were issued between 1924 and 1985. The scheme encouraged the great Australian dream of everyone having the opportunity to own their own home. Of course the disastrous years of the Depression saw many stresses placed on families and home ownership. So, too, have social engineering failures in recent times.

Fortunately, Australia's economic prosperity—going from strength to strength in recent times—has seen the realignment and readjustment of housing policy, particularly with the advent of the first home owners scheme and the rental subsidies. Readjusted housing policy in Queensland is particularly evident when one examines housing affordability programs, in particular the provision of public housing generally.

Under the Beattie government there has been a propensity to divest the government's responsibility for public housing onto the community. Once again I must draw the parliament's attention to the increased arrogance evidenced within the Department of Housing. It is unfortunate that the people who deal with the department on a regular basis are confronted with an unnecessary bureaucratic arrogance. This arrogance was not evident a couple of years ago, but I and others within the community have noticed it and do not like it and consequently have started complaining.

The community does not like what it sees and feels. The minister would have to be well aware that the public will not accept government arrogance. In relation to the bill before the House, at least the government appears to be providing perpetual leaseholders with a fair and reasonable plan to convert to freehold.

Under amendments to the Housing Act lessees may continue as leaseholders or choose when to convert to freehold as long as the lease is retained in existing ownership; are encouraged to convert to freehold and achieve outright ownership through the provision of freehold incentives; and will, with minor exceptions from the date prescribed by the regulations, but not before 1 July 2009, be subject to the requirement for automatic conversion of the lease to freehold upon the change of ownership.

I note that there are two issues concerning conformity with fundamental legislative principles. The opposition expresses its concern over the effect on the rights and liberties of individuals in that any transfer of a lease after commencement of the automatic conversion provisions will result in a requirement for freeholding the lease. The issue of deed of grants may affect the amount a future purchaser is prepared to pay for a lease.

It is important that the rights and liberties of individuals are not diminished. Consequently, I call upon the minister to lead by example and ensure that all clients and applicants of the public housing scheme are treated with the upmost respect. Similarly, I ask the minister to ensure that all employees under his commission and administration treat the public with the greatest respect on all occasions.

I also want to draw the minister's attention to a number of complaints being generated in the broader community in relation to the inaccessibility of public housing. I believe it is time for the minister to stop bleating and blaming the federal government and recognise that he has a political and social obligation to house needy Queenslanders. Recently complaints referred to a directive from the Department of Housing that single people who applied for housing, no matter what their individual circumstances, were deemed by the department to be ineligible for public housing if the department did not have one-bedroom accommodation in the community where the applicant wished to gain accommodation.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I rise to a point of order. I have given the member a fair go to get on to the bill. Other people have managed to. This is just the usual vituperative stuff that we have come to expect from the former shadow minister. I question its relevance.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Wallace): Order! I tend to agree with the minister's statement. I ask the member to return to the subject before the House.

**Mr RICKUSS:** I note that the Department of Housing issues notices to all residential lessees advising them of the government's proposed strategy. Perhaps the minister can outline to the House the results of the consultation program. Did the lessee understand the strategy and did the lessees have any fears or anxieties relating to the freeholding package? I look forward to the minister's response. In the meantime I commend the bill to the House.

**Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (6.33 pm), in reply: Mr Deputy Speaker—

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I will do my best. The member made a very good contribution. I will just deal with the last point raised first. Yes, we have done the consultation on it. It is fair to say that people are very well versed in what we are trying to do. They are not silly. They know exactly what we are trying to do. I think it is a shame that that was the last speech of the day on this bill.

It really highlights the pleasure that I have in getting somebody like the new shadow minister who has put a lot more intellectual discipline into this. I thank him for his thoughtful and very relevant speech. I can assure the member that we will not always agree. The member for Gregory and I know that we will not always agree. That does not mean that we have to abandon respect for people. I certainly will not be doing that in the member's case. As far as I am concerned he is entitled to have the respect that his position earns. He will always have that from me provided that it is reciprocated.

This bill provides the means for remaining perpetual town lessees to achieve outright home ownership. It also provides for the revenue tied up in this program to be returned to the Queensland housing fund. That answers the concerns people had as to where this money may go. It will go back to the Queensland housing fund.

This process for divesting these leases has been going on for some time. The introduction of the Housing Act 2003 has provided the impetus for the Department of Housing to streamline its range of housing assistance products. I take the point of the member for Nicklin. He pointed out that we have had a significant overhaul of the legislation in terms of housing and this pretty well wraps the whole thing up in terms of review.

This home loan product has been winding up since the mid-1980s. Appropriate changes are now made to bring it to a conclusion. The architects of this scheme dreamed of mass perpetual land tenure for workers—a form of home ownership that would be provided in such numbers that it would act as a counterbalance to the speculative private housing market.



Anybody who knows anything about the Ryan government will realise that it went on a path of socialisation of industry and means of distribution and exchange. It bought things like butcher shops. It set up state enterprises in Queensland. It had only one pub and that was in Babinda. It was owned by the manager.

**Mr Lawlor** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I take that interjection. Unfortunately, in its last year of operation it lost 750 quid and the manager went to Brisbane and bought two pubs. The state lost 750 quid. I do not know how that works. It was an enterprise that obviously did not work very well in the interests of the state. Somebody did all right out of it.

That was the philosophy of that government. It is with some sadness that we observe its passing here today. The reality is that the scheme was set up with very good intentions. It worked and stood the test of time for a long time, but time moves on. We have now got to the stage, as the member for Southport said, where there are only 80 of the original leases in place.

Sadly this affordable housing tenure never really materialised in the way that people wanted it to—that is, a counterbalance to what was happening in the private market. The program did provide access to home ownership for thousands of working families who otherwise would never have had the opportunity to own their own homes. That was the point made by the member for Fitzroy.

The Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2005 provides for the divestment of the perpetual town lease scheme which was first offered under the Workers' Homes Act 1919. That was under the Ryan government. In 1924 it was subsequently amended by either the Theodore or Gillies government.

Previously, the state government had provided loans under the Workers' Dwellings Act 1909. The Workers' Homes Act was an attempt to broaden the access to home ownership to lower income working families. The product of those times was home ownership rather than rental. The standard of housing that was built in those days was absolutely fantastic. It did this by subsidising the costs of home ownership by providing a lease over state land at a nominal rent. The lessee then paid off a loan on reasonable terms of five per cent of the cost of the dwelling. The point has been made a number of times today that only 252 leases remain as of 30 August 2005. These are all that remain of some 7,000 leases that were issued since 1924.

More would have been issued had the period of the 1930s known as the Great Depression been kinder to the lessees and the scheme. Low-income workers were hard hit during that time, and the focus of the scheme shifted from taking on new applicants to looking after those who were already paying for their housing. This period and other times when working people have had to contend with unemployment and high interest rates, such as the times mentioned by a number of contributors to the debate, are a reminder of the difficulty of seeking to extend good-quality, affordable housing ownership to low-income people, something that everybody spoke about here today.

The perpetual town lease program is no longer what it was or what it could have been. However, it is a reminder that with some initiative, inspiration and good luck good things can be achieved. The challenge at hand now is to ensure that the scheme is divested in a way that considers the interests of the remaining lessees and the state. The state is accepting a reduced return on the land asset. However, this is offset by savings in administration costs and the benefits derived from applying conversion revenue to targeted housing activities through the Queensland housing fund.

The ability of lessees to convert these leases to freehold is not new. It has been a feature of the program since 1930, and this bill ensures that lessees have an incentive to freehold. It does this by providing a purchase price based on a percentage of the unimproved value of the land, not a market value, which has previously been the case. Additional incentives have been offered to those lessees who freeholded in the first few years. Converting in this period will enable lessees to avoid the automatic conversion requirement and the possibility of an increase in the rental rate after 1 July 2009. So there is the stick and the carrot.

The bill provides significant safeguards for lessees at each stage of the divestment strategy. Lessees will be engaged throughout and the Department of Housing is committed to continually monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the process. The members for Gregory and Fitzroy raised this point, as did a number of other members. This is not about pushing people into home ownership who will become, ultimately, financially distressed and end up back in public housing. This is about getting the best outcome for people who can afford it.

Lessees have already been provided with initial notification of the proposed changes, and once the final form of the bill is known a detailed communications strategy is to be prepared. This will ensure that lessees can make informed decisions about what they want to do with their lease. This is of course dependent on their individual circumstances. The department advises me that lessees are still freeholding after being notified of the possible pending changes, including the package of incentives. There are of course lessees who will struggle to freehold no matter how low the price. This includes those lessees who already struggle to meet their land rental payments and other housing costs. The department has rent remission criteria for eligible lessees, and this will continue.

Finally, the bill provides for a conversion requirement. This will limit the continuation of these leases to the existing ownership. This provides that from a future date where there is a change in ownership the lease will automatically convert to freehold land. So that is when it gets picked up. To make the point I think as the member for Burdekin made, people who are on pensions and so on will not notice a great deal of change because, as I said, that is something that their kids will inherit. Their kids will have to pay out the freeholding costs. This combined strategy of incentives to convert and limits on the continuation of the leases beyond the existing leaseholders is an appropriate way to bring this program to a close.

In terms of the effort made by the member for Warrego—and the member for Callide made reference to this—about seeing this as some window of opportunity to exploit the freeholding of land, let me say that the reason this is being done is twofold. Firstly, it is to encourage people who have the means at their disposal to own the land on which their house is situated to do so. That is a very important cornerstone of this legislation. It is about saying to the people, ‘You’ve had a terrific subsidy from the taxpayer. Now is the time for you to freehold this to give us the cash back so that we can help some other poor person.’

Secondly, it is to the advantage of the state to do this. It is always the reserved right of the state to protect the people who pay the bills, and that is the taxpayer. The taxpayer in this regard is protected in that the money that could otherwise be locked up for many years by way of lease payments will end up being brought forward so that we can spend that money on affordable housing. It is not and should not be seen as a precedent for the sorts of practices that we know have been indulged in in the past in freeholding of agricultural land. It has nothing whatsoever to do with that. It was a nice try by those members.

Finally, I agree with the member for Gregory in that we are overdue to have a national summit on housing. There are so many issues that are around now. When the people put this together in 1924, they did not foresee the set of circumstances that would evolve today. They believed they could intervene in the market and balance it up by the state providing a lease to balance out the private market. We can see now that that is no longer applicable. It is with a degree of sadness, I guess, that I bring to an end legislation that was brought into parliament in my own home town by somebody who worked and lived here, TJ Ryan, and lament its passing. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

### Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—

**Mr SCHWARTEN** (6.45 pm): I move the following amendment—

**1 Clause 14—**

At page 17, lines 5 to 7—

*omit, insert—*

‘This division does not apply to a residential lease until 1 July 2009 (the **application day**).’.

This amendment is in response to the report on this bill, and the shadow minister made mention of it. I have to say that I am a bit with him in this regard. I initially thought that it was better to err on the side of caution, but the fact is that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee in its *Alert Digest No. 10 of 2005* recommended that clause 14 of the bill, which inserts a new section 5C in the Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act 1957, be amended to provide a cut-off date with the provisions of division 3 of the Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act 1957 to automatically commence. As section 5C is currently drafted, the automatic conversion of residential leases to freehold land will commence when prescribed by regulation, which must not be earlier than 1 July 2009. As I say, I agree with the shadow minister in principle and I think that some latitude could be extended, but I will accept the view of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. I also table the explanatory notes.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 15, as read, agreed to.

Clause 16—

**Mr SCHWARTEN** (6.48 pm): I move the following amendment—

**2 Clause 16—**

At page 28, line 19, ‘5C(1)—

*omit, insert—*

‘5C’.

This amendment is a minor consequential amendment renaming the reference to the proposed section 5C of the Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act 1957 resulting from the amendment to clause 14 of the bill as discussed earlier in the debate.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 16, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading

Bill, as amended, read a third time.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (6.49 pm): I move—  
That the House do now adjourn.

### Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (6.49 pm): Approximately 12 months ago, two community based not-for-profit organisations in my electorate of Nicklin on the Sunshine Coast which provide important services to people with a disability were on the verge of shutting their doors and handing the responsibility of caring for their clients to the state government. I invited the minister for disability services, Warren Pitt, to visit my electorate to meet with members and clients of both organisations and to look into our calls for help.

The minister not only visited but was instrumental in ensuring that government support for both organisations continued. Staff from his department were made available to provide important guidance and support to both groups. Twelve months on from that important meeting, I am pleased to report that both organisations are continuing to care for their clients in a real and genuine way with clients' families and staff from the department of disabilities.

I use this opportunity to pass on my constituents' sincere appreciation to the minister for his help and for the extra special effort of one of his staff, Mrs Kerry Ann Haggie, in assisting these organisations and their clients. I understand that Mrs Haggie even turned down an opportunity for a promotion and transfer so that she could continue to work with these two organisations.

The two organisations involved are Teralba and Spiral. I understand that the management of Teralba wrote to the minister only this week to update him on the last 12 months. Recently, I attended the 24th annual general meeting of Spiral. I table for the benefit of the minister and the government a copy of its most recent annual report.

On behalf of my constituents, I thank the minister for finding the time in his very busy schedule to show us how a minister can respond to calls for help and not just leave it up to the bureaucrats to sort out difficulties. We wish the minister well in his recovery from illness.

### Breast Cancer Awareness Month

**Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (6.52 pm): This month of October is internationally known as breast cancer month, which is to increase awareness about breast cancer and the importance of early detection through breast cancer screening. In Australia, a number of campaigns are run by a vast array of community and business associations to raise funds for further research. Most prominent are pink ribbons, worn to represent awareness and support for women with breast cancer, with funds used for breast cancer research. I applaud the organisations and community members who actively support breast cancer awareness campaigns every year.

I would like to hold up for the benefit of the members of the parliament a particular T-shirt which is promoted by Target Australia. It reads 'Fashion Targets Breast Cancer Australia'. I bought this in Rockhampton yesterday. I encourage all members to go out and buy one because the funds will be used for breast cancer research.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, it will fit me, actually.

**An honourable member:** Give us a demo.

**Mrs MILLER:** I would like to give the member a demonstration, but not now.

The Fashion Targets Breast Cancer program is supported by the Australian fashion industry, including designers, media, photographers, hair and make-up artists and models. During the seven-year period of the campaign in Australia it has raised in excess of \$600,000, and the moneys raised go to the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

Breast cancer continues to be the most common cancer diagnosed and the most common cause of cancer death amongst Queensland women. As I have said before in the House, during 2002 more than 2,200 cases of breast cancer were diagnosed among women in Queensland, with 432 Queenslanders dying as a result of the disease. Recent data indicates, however, that there has been a decline in breast cancer death rates of 20.6 per cent during the seven-year period between 1994 to 2002.

The Queensland Health BreastScreen program provides free mammograms at two-yearly intervals for women aged 50 to 69. Women aged 40 to 49 and women over the age of 70 are also encouraged to have mammograms. The program aims to screen 70 per cent of women in the target age group of 50 to 69 years every two years. Research has shown that a reduction in mortality from breast cancer of 25 per cent to 30 per cent is possible if 70 per cent of women aged 50 to 69 years are screened every two years. This is a key strategy of the Queensland Health strategic plan for 2004 to 2010.

During 2003-04, 184,689 women in the state were screened for breast cancer by the BreastScreen Queensland program. That is 506 women per day. The program target for 2004-05 was to screen a total of 194,000 women. By 2008-09, the program will need to increase the number of women screened per year to 248,000 to keep pace with the population growth in this age group.

During breast cancer awareness month I remind all Queensland women aged over 50 to take the time for this important health check. Appointments are required and can be made by telephoning BreastScreen on 132050. Again, the service is free and a doctor's referral is not required.

### **Steggall, Mr P**

**Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—NPA) (6.55 pm): I rise today, frustrated with the support this government has failed to provide to Mr Peter Steggall, a schoolteacher, father and parent from my electorate. I first became aware on 28 September of the problem that Mrs Steggall was having while trying to bring her critically ill husband home. I spoke to the emergency services minister in his parliamentary office on that day. He said that he would look into it and try to fix it. My officers and the minister's officers spoke the next day to try to resolve the issue.

What happened then was a surprise to me. The minister rang me at 5 pm on the 29th and advised me that Dr FitzGerald and another doctor had looked into the matter and spoken to the Canberra Hospital and determined that there was no critical need for Mr Steggall to be transported home by air ambulance. I said to the minister that the information I had received was different to his and that I would look into it further.

I then spoke to Dr McMahon, a senior surgeon at the Canberra Hospital, and to a lecturer at the Australian National University. He advised me that Peter was definitely in need of an air ambulance. He had spent nearly three weeks in intensive care and he had been in acute care for three or four days. He had months, if not years, of rehabilitation ahead of him and he needed that rehabilitation to be done at home. I asked Dr McMahon if he would write a letter of support for the use of the air ambulance for Mr Peter Steggall. He said that he had no problem doing that.

I then came into the House and said to the minister that the surgeon had told me it was a must that Mr Steggall have air ambulance transport so that he would be ready to start his rehabilitation some time after more acute care at the PA. Still, the minister was unmoved. Unfortunately, the fax advice did not come until late on Friday afternoon. I have given a copy to the minister. I have also had my officers enclose a copy of the Canberra surgeon's correspondence in a letter that I sent to the minister, urging him to pay the \$5,000 bill for the air ambulance that Mrs Steggall had to guarantee before her husband could be sent to the PA. This extra pressure is something that Mrs Steggall and her family do not require at this time.

Mr Peter Steggall was on a skiing trip with his family and the school, being a good father to his daughter. Although an experienced skier, he had a terrible accident and our universal ambulance coverage will not support him.

I visited Peter in the PA on Friday afternoon. He is a very sick man. I do not know how the minister and his bureaucrats cannot support this family. They have months, if not years, of rehabilitation ahead of them. Peter will require all the support he can get. This mean-spirited government should pay the \$5,000 air ambulance bill.

### **Nurses, Central Queensland**

**Ms BARRY** (Aspley—ALP) (6.58 pm): It is a great privilege to be back here in Rockhampton as a member of the Queensland parliament. Of course, I spent a fair bit of time in central Queensland during my time as a Queensland Nurses Union professional officer working with Queensland nurses.

I want to speak briefly about the proud history and the important future that belongs to central Queensland nurses. Honourable members would know that before politics I was a registered nurse for a very long time. However, what is less known is that the first trained nurse in my family was, in fact, my great-grandmother, who trained here in central Queensland—in fact, right here in Rockhampton. Emily

Pearson nee Forsdyke, like many young women of central Queensland at the turn of the 20th century, was drawn to the profession of nursing as a rewarding lifetime career and as a means of caring for her local community.

Central Queensland nurses were often daughters of large families. One particular eminent nursing family was the McDonalds. The McDonalds had six of their seven daughters become nurses, most of them training in Rockhampton and Gladstone hospitals. In fact, Sadie McDonald was the first Queensland nurse to be awarded the famous Florence Nightingale medal. Central Queensland nurses have had a reputation for being professional nurses committed to advancing the industrial and professional interests of both nurses and nursing and also committed to quality patient care. My great-grandmother epitomised the central Queensland nurse. I am told that she was tough and tenacious and committed to standing up for those people most in need of care and compassion—children, the poor, the elderly and, in particular, unmarried mothers.

Working as a nurse in the 1890s in Rockhampton, my great-grandmother worked in one of the private hospitals in Rockhampton that were set up for the care of unmarried mothers and their abandoned children. She acquired my grandmother and her brother as a result of her work as a nurse in one of these hospitals. I say 'acquire' because they were never legally adopted. She nursed all of her life, ending it as a matron in a hospital in Stanthorpe caring for the dying. My mother advises me that she is not surprised that I was drawn professionally to being an oncologist palliative care nurse and personally to being a rabid feminist. Central Queensland nurses have been unafraid to speak out for themselves and their patients.

They are strong trade unionists. The first regional branch of the Australian Trained Nurses Association was formed in August 1944, and those nurses set about upsetting the Brisbane matrons immediately by lobbying the Minister for Health to reduce the expectation on nurses' night duty. They were successful in having the terms of night duty reduced from three to two months for all Queenslanders. This has set the scene for central Queensland nurses being known to be tenacious in their pursuit of industrial and professional fairness, regardless of power politics and Brisbane based directives. Central Queensland nurses have a long and proud history and are the backbone of quality health care for central Queensland people. They have birthed their babies, saved their lives, comforted them in their senior years and have been with them at their time of dying. I know that honourable members and all people in central Queensland will join me in thanking them for their years of service and commitment to supporting the people of central Queensland both now and in the future.

### Labor Preselections

**Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—Lib) (7.01 pm): One really has to ask, given recent media reports, who is running the Labor Party—in fact, who is controlling the Labor Party. One person who is not is the Premier. Recent reports make it very clear that both the factions and the unions are in open warfare. We only have to look at the *Courier-Mail* of last Saturday and today to understand very clearly that the war is back on amongst the boys and girls, and all the dirty laundry is being trotted out for everyone to see. Poor old Terry Mackenroth must be sorely missed. He kept everybody working together and the old machine clunking along successfully. He has gone now and it is very clear that the Premier has lost all control. Consider the comments by Brian Courtice, a former federal member for Hinkler, that were reported in the *Courier-Mail* on Saturday. He said—

We're sick and tired of the dirty factional deals done in Brisbane—the party should not overturn the wishes of local members.

He then goes on—

The unions have all the power and the rank and file are totally disenfranchised.

This is from a former federal Labor member. All this commenced when the Labor state conference increased the voting influence of the electoral college from 30 per cent to 50 per cent, thus reducing and clearly almost eliminating the rights of branch members and the concept of democracy that those who achieve the most votes win the day. But should this surprise us? No way in the world. In fact, it is nothing more than we have learnt to expect from the Labor Party as it clunks towards the future.

This is not the end of the matter. In today's *Courier-Mail*, we read that Dick Williams of the ETU called for Labor Party factions to be dismantled saying that they were a 'cancer eating at the soul of an organisation that has lost its way'. I note that Hughie Williams had a few words to say about this, slamming the factions and saying, 'They mean nothing. There is no heart in them and they have crippled the party.' He went on to say, 'Factions at times serve a purpose but they are also killing the Labor Party. There are few voices for the workers any more.'

It is amazing that the Premier and Labor have been able to stand and claim that they understand the free and open processes of the Liberal and National parties but they cannot see the enormous mess their own party wallows in. The Labor Party is riddled with factions and the unions are now reasserting their influence. We are starting to see the real Labor, the old Labor, and the fact that the unions are taking back their ground.

Time expired.

### Peninsula Development Road

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (7.04 pm): It is great to be in Rockhampton and in central Queensland for the regional sittings of parliament. This region is very similar to the area I represent in far-north Queensland in Cook in the sense that it is made up of disparate communities spread over a large geographical area. The cattle industry is an important industry on Cape York Peninsula, as it is in central Queensland. The industry relies heavily on the local, state and national road network to get its product from remote locations to domestic and export markets.

The Peninsula Development Road runs like a spine through the centre of Cape York, connecting it with various community access roads and cattle stations. It is approximately 550 kilometres from Mareeba to Weipa on western Cape York. While the road received considerable additional funding under my predecessor, the former transport and main roads minister, Steve Bredhauer—and this has continued under Minister Lucas—there is still a great deal of work to be done on the road. Much of the 550 kilometres remains unsealed and unpassable between December and May. Clearly this has a detrimental effect on industries like the cattle industry and the growing tourism industry. The road is an important route for freight into the Aboriginal communities and when the road closes during the wet communities have to barge goods in and prices rise considerably.

The Department of Main Roads has a number of projects to improve the condition of the road and, thankfully, two of those projects have received matching funding from the federal government under the Roads of National Importance program. Unfortunately at the end of this financial year, the Commonwealth's commitment to the road, comparatively small as it is, will finish. This is a shame because if we are going to open the region to economic development—and I am determined that we will—then we really are going to need the cooperation of the Commonwealth government.

Another option for road improvements if the Commonwealth is going to walk away from the region is to seek partnerships with private enterprise. Two projects the Beattie Labor government is progressing—the exploitation of bauxite deposits near Aurukun and the PNG gas pipeline—will require improved roads. Perhaps we should seek a partnership to address these matters if the Commonwealth continues its policies of neglect.

Over the next few weeks I will be sitting down with the relevant ministers and seeking an appointment with the Coordinator-General to progress this idea. These projects, along with the growing self-drive tourism markets, are cause for great excitement in the cape and it would be excellent if we could value-add with an improved road. Cape York is going to continue to be a wilderness experience, but there are some important economic projects that are going on in the cape. It is important that the road, which is a key inhibitor to that economic growth, continues to be improved, and it is my No. 1 priority as the member for Cook.

### Labor Preselections

**Mr CALTABIANO** (Chatsworth—Lib) (7.07 pm): After the tabling of documents by the member for Burnett this morning outlining some of the rotting of the ALP in recent times, two recent articles in the *Courier-Mail* that my colleague the member for Caloundra identified came to mind. The people of Queensland should be very concerned about how the Labor government goes about preselecting its candidates from now on. It is very interesting the way in which they have preselected the candidates for Bundaberg and Ashgrove.

**Mrs Miller:** What about Clayfield, Michael?

**Mr CALTABIANO:** The candidate for Clayfield, Councillor Tim Nicholls, is a fine candidate and will be here as the member for Clayfield in the next parliament. I assure the current member for Clayfield that this is her last term. It is very interesting, as the member for Caloundra pointed out, what Mr Courtice said. A very senior Labor identity, Mr Courtice very clearly said—

**Mr Palaszczuk:** That is arrogant.

**Mr CALTABIANO:** With confidence, Minister, I say that the new preselected candidate for Clayfield for the Liberal Party, Councillor Tim Nicholls, will do a very fine job and will be a great asset to this parliament after the next election.

Mr Courtice said that he was sick and tired of the dirty factional deals in the Labor Party. He also went on to talk about the shabby deals favouring the Left faction. I wonder where Minister Bligh is these days with the Socialist Left and how they are all travelling. The most interesting comments are those of the state director. The state director, Milton Dick, yesterday defended the rule change, saying that he was confident that it would deliver quality candidates for the next state and federal elections.

**Mr Reeves:** It will.

**Mr CALTABIANO:** None of those opposite must have seen the federal report completed by the Labor Party. What was in the federal report from the Labor Party after the last federal election? The last report from the Labor Party is almost quoted verbatim by our little ETU state secretary, Dick Williams,

who said, 'The factions have morphed into a form of tribalism and often meant poor quality candidates were placed before experienced grassroots hopefuls in preselections.'

What have we got in Bundaberg? We have a person not supported by the locals but supported by the factional mates in Brisbane—the union power brokers out at Trades Hall. What have we got in Ashgrove? Just another staffer—another staffer to add to the list of staffers on the other side of this chamber. If Milton Dick would like a copy of my version of the ALP federal report, I am happy to give him one. If any member here would like a copy of their own federal report into the last federal election, I am happy to give them a copy so they can understand the poisonous relationship of having staffers not selected by rank and file members trying to represent our community.

Time expired.

### **Birthing Centre, Gold Coast**

**Mrs SMITH** (Burleigh—ALP) (7.10 pm): Tonight I would like to speak about the proposed birthing centre for the Gold Coast. This government is committed to giving women choice in maternity services and, to that end, commissioned a report undertaken by Dr Cheryl Hirst, which is entitled *Rebirthing: report of the review of maternity services in Queensland*. This report highlights concerns across the whole issue of birthing and babies. One of the very clear indicators of this report is that stakeholders are strongly in favour of community birthing centres.

In order to give women this choice, the Beattie government has committed to providing a new birthing centre on the Gold Coast. I am very happy that this option will be available to women on the Gold Coast. Such centres were not available when I was having my babies, but I would have been very happy to have had the choice. The birthing centre will be located at the Southport campus of the Gold Coast Hospital. Initial funding has been announced and an area next to the current maternity ward has been identified. Whilst the centre will be staffed by midwives without the continuous presence of obstetricians—a choice made by the birthing mothers—it is still close enough for intervention should the need arise.

I know that the Minister for Health is currently working on a detailed response and implementation plan in response to this review and has met with a number of key stakeholders including the Maternity Coalition. The advantages of birthing centres over traditional maternity wards are numerous. Primarily, birthing centres can provide a continuity of care which is not always possible in other settings. One of the key findings of the review is that care is more successful if it is integrated and that preconception right through to post birth support and even immunisation should be seen as part of one process rather than a number of separate services.

Pregnancy is not an illness and should not be treated as such. Birthing centres will allow women to make choices concerning their own needs and about what is best for themselves and their babies. This facility is being awaited with much anticipation by young women in my electorate, and I look forward to the opening of the birthing centre on the Gold Coast.

### **Queensland Police Service**

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (7.12 pm): I want to speak this evening about the role of the Queensland Police Service. At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Queensland Police Service on the way it has conducted itself and on the professionalism it has displayed around the parliamentary precincts over the term of this parliament so far. They are a friendly, fantastic crew. I congratulate Assistant Commissioner George Stolz and his team.

One of the issues that I want to talk about this evening is the Queensland Police Service Stock Squad. At the present time, the price of cattle in particular is at a premium and there is an element of society out there that is always looking for ways and means of stealing cattle. We need the Police Service to have the best support and resources possible to make absolutely certain that we can keep the thieves out of the industry.

The other aspect that I want to make mention of is Senior Sergeant Terry Hanly of the Stock Squad based here in Rockhampton. He is the regional operator for the central and greater part of Queensland. Recently at the Agro field days in Emerald he displayed the wares in a tent and explained exactly and precisely what the Stock Squad does. It was the same at the Westech field days in Barcaldine a couple of weeks ago. Whilst Senior Sergeant Hanly conducted those exhibits as such, I call now on the Queensland government, especially the minister—and I will be writing to the minister and the commissioner—to get a police paddock secured at Rockhampton where the Stock Squad can keep their horses.

That is a very important aspect and a very important part of the function of the Stock Squad, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I think you could relate to that yourself, being a former police officer. It is paramount that the resources of the Stock Squad be kept up to date in terms of its surveillance of potential criminals within the cattle industry and other livestock industries of Queensland. At this point in

time it is very important that we see that paddock become a part of the operation of the Rockhampton Stock Squad and the Central Queensland Stock Squad in question. We have officers in the Stock Squad in places like Longreach and other centres throughout Queensland, and their work is very important. Whilst they are also a back-up to the local police in other areas, it is important that we see them providing that protection and that security for our livestock industry, and I call on the government to give the police those resources here in Rockhampton.

### Australian Broadcasting Corporation

**Ms LIDDY CLARK** (Clayfield—ALP) (7.14 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, you may be aware that the federal government has announced a review into the adequacy of funding for the ABC. Similarly, you may be aware that the ABC operates under a charter of obligations and the diminishing funding it faces in real terms makes meeting those obligations an increasingly difficult task. Too often the role of the ABC suffers from politicising and unfounded accusations of bias to the point where conservative governments attempt to shorten the leash and hamstring the national broadcaster as a not-so-subtle form of pre-emptive revenge.

But what this particularly short-sighted attitude actually achieves is to force the ABC to operate vital projects and programs on half a shoestring. Let us not diminish the importance of the ABC in the Australian media landscape. Let us not forget the fact that in some rural areas the ABC is all they have and, operating with a budget smaller than any individual commercial television station, the ABC produces content for four national radio networks, 60 local radio stations, three digital internet radio services, Radio Australia, two television stations and ABC Online. Is it any wonder that its production of local adult drama has been forced down to a mere 20 hours a year?

The ABC's strength has always been its broad range of radio, online and TV services, of which eight out of 10 Australians identify as users. ABC programs such as *Play School*, *SeaChange*, *Brides of Christ*, *Wildside*, *Kath and Kim* and many others are part of our culture. It is, as the marketing campaign tells us, our ABC. ABC funding has been reduced by an estimated 25 per cent in real terms in the past 20 years. Past appeals for increased funding from the federal government have been repeatedly ignored, and the federal government cannot blame global economic conditions for this continued lack of support.

A recent Macquarie Bank report shows that the per capita amount spent on public broadcasting is significantly below the international average. An OECD survey of 17 countries on levels of public broadcasting funding found that Australia comes in at 16 behind Belgium, Ireland and, yes, even New Zealand.

The ABC is vital. As the future continues to open up new directions and new forms of technology in the media, the ABC believes it has a responsibility to keep these advances accessible to all Australians. It was amongst the earliest pioneers in digital TV and online services, but it cannot continue to provide high-quality services and Australian content to a national audience without a realistic funding base.

The continued paranoia displayed by the federal government, which persists in viewing the national broadcaster as an arch nemesis, is in danger of starving the ABC's creativity and capacity to service Australians. Given that this federal government is notorious for its callous disregard for the real needs of Australians, we cannot sit idly by and watch the ABC, our chartered national broadcaster, beaten into submission by petulant federal penny pinching. Therefore, it becomes essential for all Australians, including all members of this House, to make their support for the ABC and its need for realistic funding abundantly clear to this latest review.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.19 pm.