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WEEKLY HANSARD

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51ST PARLIAMENT

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Tuesday, 28 March 2006

BY AUTHORITY
L.J. OSMOND, CHIEF HANSARD REPORTER—2006

TUESDAY, 28 MARCH 2006

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

16 March 2006

The Honourable A. McGrady, MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

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

Date of Assent: 15 March

"A Bill for An Act to amend the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000, and for other purposes."

"A Bill for An Act to provide for the freeholding and divestment of perpetual leases under the Housing Act 2003 in the Inala Shopping Centre."

"A Bill for An Act to amend the Breakwater Island Casino Agreement Act 1984, and for another purpose."

"A Bill for An Act to make various amendments of Queensland legislation relating to qualifications of persons performing audits, and for other purposes."

"A Bill for An Act to amend the Retirement Villages Act 1999."

"A Bill for An Act to amend the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Act 2000 and Drugs Misuse Act 1986, and for other purposes."

The Bills are hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

Governor

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received correspondence dated 8 and 9 March 2006 from the Minister for Health alleging that the member for Moggill deliberately misled the House in a personal explanation on 28 February 2006. I have considered the minister's correspondence, including an attached briefing note from Queensland Health, and the member for Moggill's personal explanation and a further personal explanation on 9 March 2006. I have decided to refer the matter to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee for its consideration.

LOAN OF TABLED DOCUMENTS TO MUSEUM OF BRISBANE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that, under standing order 19, I have approved a loan of tabled documents to the Museum of Brisbane for its display from 27 February 2006 to 15 September 2006.

PHOTOGRAPHS IN CHAMBER

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I also advise that a photographer from the *Courier-Mail* has received permission to take some photographs from the public gallery.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Sir Wallace Alexander Ramsay Rae

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.33 am): I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this state by the late Sir Wallace Alexander Ramsay Rae, a former member of the parliament of Queensland.
2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the parliament of Queensland, in the loss they have sustained.

Sir Wallace Alexander Ramsay Rae, or Sir Wally Rae as he was better known, was born on 13 March 1913 at Lindfield in New South Wales. He was educated in New South Wales at Lindfield Public School and Sydney Technical College. Following his move to Queensland, Sir Wally Rae commenced work as a jackaroo and progressed to the roles of overseer and manager with the Australian Pastoral Company at Noondoo, Dirranbandi. He later worked as a pastoral inspector, a stock and station agent and a grazier at Ramsay Park in Blackall.

Sir Wally Rae served with the Royal Australian Air Force from March 1940 to August 1946, reaching the rank of flight lieutenant. He was a coastal command pilot in England, Africa and Gibraltar until his return to Australia where he received a commendation for meritorious service. Following his discharge from the Royal Australian Air Force in 1946, Sir Wally Rae returned to his work and personal interests in outback Queensland.

On 5 October 1957, Sir Wally Rae was elected as the state member for Gregory at a by-election representing the Country/National Party. In his maiden speech in this House on 12 November 1957 Sir Wally Rae confirmed his dedication and commitment to the electorate of Gregory. He highlighted the pressing issues faced by outback Queensland towns, in particular education, lack of appropriate housing and poor living conditions.

In 1969, Sir Wally Rae was appointed minister for local government and electricity. This was a position he held until 1972, when he was appointed minister for lands and forestry. Sir Wally Rae resigned as a member of parliament in December 1974 and was appointed Agent-General for Queensland in London. On 12 June 1976, he received the honour of Knight Bachelor, and in 1978 he was made Freeman of the City of London. Sir Wally Rae held the position of Agent-General until 1980.

A private funeral for Sir Wallace Alexander Ramsay Rae was held in Port Macquarie, New South Wales. I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy and that of the House, and particularly my government, to his siblings and their families.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.36 am): I rise to join the Premier in passing on the condolences of the opposition to the family of Sir Wally Rae. Sir Wally Rae was born on 13 March 1913 in Lindfield, New South Wales. He died at the Garden Village Retirement Home in Port Macquarie on 18 March 2006. He was the son of George Ramsay Rae and Alice Evelyn Haseldean. Sir Wally did not marry. He was educated at Lindfield Public School and Sydney Technical College. After completing his education, Wally worked as a jackaroo, quickly gaining promotion to overseer and then manager with the Australian Pastoral Company at Noondoo, Dirranbandi, Queensland. Wally harboured a keen interest in grazing and he was a first-class horseman. Utilising both interests and skills, he went on to work as a pastoral inspector, a stock and station agent and eventually acquired his own grazing property, Ramsay Park, at Blackall.

In March of 1940, Wally Rae joined the RAAF and served admirably until 1946. He attained the rank of flight lieutenant and received a commendation for meritorious service. Wally Rae served as a coastal command pilot in England, Africa and Gibraltar, and returned to Australia, where he worked as a test pilot at the Amberley RAAF base in Queensland.

Wally's first parliamentary election campaign in the seat of Barcoo was unsuccessful. However, his second attempt in a by-election on 5 October 1957 saw him successfully elected as the Country Party member for the seat of Gregory—a seat which previously had been held comfortably by the Labor Party. Wally remained a colourful, popular and effective member for Gregory for the ensuing 17 years. As a parliamentarian, he was well known for speaking his mind, particularly for and on behalf of his constituents. To the people of the west in centres such as Birdsville, Bedourie, Boulia, Windorah, Winton and Longreach, Wally Rae was best known for the work he had done for them personally during his 17 years in parliament. Wally was popular with supporters of all political persuasions and never allowed political differences to stand in his way of helping people. His name will remain synonymous with progress throughout western Queensland.

In 1969, Wally was elevated to the cabinet as the 14th minister in the coalition cabinet after the parliament approved legislation to increase the cabinet strength from 13 to 14 members. Wally proudly took on the role of minister for local government and electricity—a position he held until June 1972. He is accredited with introducing sound anti-pollution laws such as the state's first litter act and legislation which provided heavy penalties for polluting the state's rivers and streams.

In June 1972 Wally was sworn in as the Minister for Lands and Forestry, a role he filled until his retirement in December 1974. Following the death of Sir Peter Delamothe, Wally Rae was appointed to the role of Queensland Agent-General in London in December 1974. He was assisted by his widowed sister, Mrs Blackborrow, and was quickly regarded as an excellent host with extraordinary geniality. In 1976 Wally was awarded Knight Bachelor and in 1979 Sir Wally became the first Queensland representative in London to be made a Freeman of the City.

Upon his retirement in 1980, Sir Wally Rae returned to Queensland and settled into an apartment overlooking the city botanical gardens in Brisbane. He took on the honorary role of chairman of the Brisbane Forest Park advisory planning board. Later Sir Wally moved to Mount Tambourine before settling into the Garden Village Retirement Home at Port Macquarie.

Sir Wallace Rae's professional profile is as interesting as the character himself—a rigid, western jackeroo who became a campdraft champion, a test pilot, a grazier, politician, cabinet minister, diplomat and knight. Such an eclectic career would seem fanciful for any other person except for the gentleman known as Sir Wallace Alexander Ramsay Rae.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (9.40 am): On behalf of the Liberal Party I rise today to pass on to the family and friends of the late Sir Wallace Rae our sympathies and condolences. Wallace Alexander Ramsay Rae was born in Lindfield, New South Wales on 13 March 1913. His parents were George Ramsay Rae and Alice Evelyn, nee Haseldean. Wally, as he was affectionately known, was educated at Lindfield Public School and Sydney Technical College.

At the age of 16 he moved to Dirranbandi, Queensland as a jackeroo with the Australian Pastoral Company. Wally became an overseer and a station manager, was an enthusiastic participant in rodeos and became Queensland's campdrafting champion. Wally continued to work in outback Queensland in many different roles. He eventually settled as a grazier near Blackall.

During World War II Wally served in the RAAF as a coastal command pilot in Africa, Gibraltar and England. He reached the rank of flight lieutenant and received a commendation for meritorious service. Wally returned to Australia in 1944 to the Amberley RAAF base to work as a test pilot.

When the war was over he returned to work as a grazier. He loved rodeos. He qualified as a show riding judge and travelled to rodeos and agricultural shows around Queensland and in Sydney. In 1956 he unsuccessfully stood for the seat of Barcoo as a Country Liberal candidate. In 1957 he won the by-election for the seat of Gregory for the Country Party, which had been comfortably held until that time by Labor. In his maiden speech Wally commented, 'I feel somewhat like a lad who has arrived late at school—nervous and quite worried about everybody. However, I am here at last. The electors of Gregory seemed to think that I was rather an important person and no doubt would be able to do much for them.' The residents continued to think highly of their state member as Wally travelled endlessly throughout the electorate of Gregory and worked tirelessly in a seat which, in those days, covered about 20 per cent of the entire land mass of Queensland.

Despite his propensity for speaking bluntly—once describing public servants as tall poppies needing a swift, hard kick in the pants—Wally was made the minister for local government and electricity in 1969. As minister he was responsible for the environment. He brought in Queensland's first litter act as well as legislation providing heavy penalties for the pollution of rivers and streams. Wally shifted to lands and forestry in 1973 and left parliament in 1974 to become Queensland's Agent-General in London. Wally was awarded a knighthood in 1976 and in 1979 became the first Queensland representative in London to be made a Freeman of the City. He left London in 1980 and moved back to Brisbane as honorary chairman of the Brisbane Forest Park advisory planning board.

Sir Wally Rae worked his heart out for Queensland as a member of parliament, minister and representative overseas. He was no stranger to controversy, a diplomat renowned for his warmth and hospitality and a man well respected by his peers. Wally retired to the Gold Coast and then to Port Macquarie where he passed away on 18 March this year. My colleagues and the Liberal Party organisation join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in extending our sympathies to his family and friends during this difficult time.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (9.44 am): It gives me great pleasure this morning to rise to speak to the motion moved by the Premier relating to the late Sir Wallace Alexander Ramsay Rae. The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party have also spoken to this motion. I say from the outset that Wally Rae was one of those legendary people. He was a colourful character. He epitomises what western Queenslanders are all about. He was a champion of the people. He cared about people, regardless of their political persuasion or their standing in life. Wally Rae was their man. I am very proud to be able to stand here today and speak of the life and some of the happenings in the life of Sir Wallace Alexander Ramsay Rae.

Wally Rae was born in Sydney on 13 March 1913. There have been conflicting reports about the date of his birth but I have checked it with his nephew this morning. He was born at Lindfield. His father and mother were George and Alice Rae. He was one of five children. He is predeceased by a brother who also had extensive military service and is survived by his sisters—Alice, Dorothy and Bette—and five nieces and nephews.

As previous speakers have said today, Wally Rae's name became synonymous with western Queensland in the 1930s when he went to Warrnambool station at Winton. He was a jackeroo and later became the overseer. His life as a pastoral worker carried on from there. He became heavily involved in stock work and as a pastoral inspector for the pastoral company Winchombe Carson. In later years Wally became a stock dealer and worked more extensively with stock himself.

In 1957 he was elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly as the member for Gregory on the death of the then member for Gregory, Mr George Devries. With the split in the ALP in those years the electorate of Gregory became a seat held by the Country Liberal Party. As we know, politics is a funny business. From 1899 to 1957 that was a Labor held seat. In those days it did not matter who held the seat; it was about representing the people.

As the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier said today, when Wally became a minister in 1969 he quickly became very instrumental and active in seeing that western Queensland took advantage of power electrification. He was involved with people like Sir James Walker in Longreach who was on the electricity commission at that time. It was people of that calibre and with that vision that enabled that part of the world to be on an equal footing with the rest of Queensland today.

Wally Rae served in the RAAF from March 1940 to August 1946 as a flight lieutenant. He gained commendations for meritorious service as a coastal command pilot in England, Africa and Gibraltar. He returned to Australia in 1944 as a test pilot at Amberley RAAF base.

One of the funny stories that his nephew David Heath recited to me this morning was when Wally became a test pilot at Amberley he said to the blokes who were assembling a plane one day, 'Who are the blokes who put this plane back together?' A couple of fellows very gingerly put their hands up and said, 'We did, Sir.' He said, 'You blokes can come with me for a test flight.' As a result of that Wally reckons he had quality control forever after. That was just the character of the man.

Another of his great feats was that he was a renowned horseman—a horseman of absolute quality. He had a beautiful seat on a horse. As a young person I can remember Wally Rae riding at shows and seeing him in action. He was very highly regarded in western Queensland for his equestrian riding, campdrafting and rodeos. He was able to do an exhibition campdraft for the Queen Mother in Sydney. He was riding his famous horse Sandy Mac. This was a horse that he had great love and affection for. In later years he did a lot of equestrian riding and his favourite horse then was a horse called Alibi. His life revolved around livestock, horses and people. I think that is a reflection of the quality and calibre of the man.

David Heath told me the story this morning about when David first came out to Blackall 40-odd years ago. He came with Wally. Wally said to him, 'Son, get your gear together; we're leaving early in the morning.' They left Sydney about 6 o'clock in the morning. I think it took them 10 days to get to western Queensland. Wally pulled up at every pub on the way and had a drink and David said that he sat in the car. I had a session with Wally at the Commercial Hotel in Longreach about 10 or 12 years ago. I have to say that he had a cast iron constitution. He loved a drink. He loved a scotch. There are probably many people in this House here today who knew the old gentleman.

Unfortunately, after Wally Rae broke his hip just before Christmas last year, we saw the run-down of his life. He certainly really enjoyed life to the full. One of the great things of his life was that he drew the Ramsay Park property at Blackall in a land ballot in 1959. He loved that property. His nephew David Heath and his wife, Helen, reside at Ramsay Park today. I want to say this on behalf of the people of the Gregory electorate and the people of rural and remote Queensland, for that matter: Queensland is a better place because of people of the likes of Sir Wally Rae. Wally Rae is a legend. Many of us aspire to be of that nature, but we never will be. Thanks for the memories, Wally. Thanks for the fun. Thanks for the larrikinism and thanks for just being you. He was a champion of all of the people—regardless of their political persuasion, regardless of their colour or their creed. We all loved you, Wally. You are an absolute champion bloke. Thanks for the memories.

Mr SPEAKER: I was going to say, honourable members, that it is amazing how certain habits go from one member representing an electorate to another.

Motion agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

PHOTOGRAPHS IN CHAMBER

Mr SPEAKER: I have had a request from a photographer to take some photographs of honourable members and approval has been given.

PETITIONS

The following honourable member has lodged a paper petition for presentation—

Caboolture Hospital

Mr Premier from 76 petitioners requesting the House to ensure the government employs adequate medical practitioners at the Caboolture Hospital to enable this important facility to remain open and operational and to guarantee that decisions on patient care will be taken by qualified health professionals rather than by bureaucrats.

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

Home Sound Systems, Excessive Noise

Mr Caltabiano from 330 petitioners requesting the House to create a campaign that will bring public awareness to the issue of excessive noise from home stereos and home theatre systems and to make people aware of their rights and obligations.

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—

13 March 2006—

- Response from the Minister for Emergency Services (Mr Purcell) to a paper petition presented by Mr English from 89 petitioners requesting the House to urgently consider placing a fire station in the southern part of the Redland Shire

15 March 2006—

- Response from the Minister for Child Safety (Mr Reynolds) to a paper petition presented by Mrs Menkens from 109 petitioners requesting the House to review the Department of Child Safety's handling of a matter
- Response from the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development, Trade and Innovation (Ms Bligh) to a paper petition presented by Mrs Scott from 25 petitioners requesting the appointment of an inspector from the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation to investigate allegations of impropriety in the administration of the Logan and Districts Services Club Inc.

16 March 2006—

- Response from the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Water (Mr Palaszczuk) to an E-petition sponsored by Mr English from 1,184 petitioners regarding a proposed and existing quarry at Mt Cotton

17 March 2006—

- Response from the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Water (Mr Palaszczuk) to a paper petition presented by Mr Hobbs from 1,546 petitioners regarding freehold land rights and the Vegetation Management Act 1999

20 March 2006—

- Response from the Minister for Health (Mr Robertson) to a paper petition presented by Dr Flegg from 9,786 petitioners and an E-petition sponsored by Dr Flegg from 37 petitioners regarding medical services at Caboolture Hospital
- Letter, dated 17 March 2006, from the Premier (Mr Beattie) to the Clerk of the Parliament enclosing a copy of a letter from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties listing the proposed international treaty actions tabled in both houses of the Federal Parliament on 28 February 2006 and the National Interest Analyses for the proposed treaty actions listed
- Response from the Minister for Health (Mr Robertson) to a paper petition presented by Mr Rowell from 878 petitioners regarding dental services at Ingham Hospital

22 March 2006—

- Response from the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women (Ms Boyle) to a paper petition presented by Mr Roberts from 19 petitioners regarding fossicking in Queensland's State forest areas
- Response from the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General (Mrs Lavarch) to an E-petition sponsored by Mr Finn from 740 petitioners regarding the age of consent for anal intercourse
- Response from the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women (Ms Boyle) to a paper petition presented by Mr Rowell from 240 petitioners regarding erosion on the beach at Cardwell, north of Sheridan Street

24 March 2006—

- Queensland Treasury Corporation—Half Yearly Report July to December 2005

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991—

- Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2006, No. 32

Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991—

- Queensland Building Services Authority Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2006, No. 33

State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999—

- State Penalties Enforcement Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2006, No. 34

Lotteries Act 1997—

- Lotteries Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2006, No. 35

Wagering Act 1998—

- Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2006, No. 36

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2006, No. 37

Retail Shop Leases Amendment Act 2006—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 38

Retail Shop Leases Act 1994—

- Retail Shop Leases Regulation 2006, No. 39

Marine Parks Act 1982—

- Marine Parks Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2006, No. 40

Health Legislation Amendment Act 2005—

- Health Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2006, No. 41

Water and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2005—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 42

Southern Moreton Bay Islands Development Entitlements Protection Act 2004—

- Southern Moreton Bay Islands Development Entitlements Protection Regulation 2006, No. 43

Succession Amendment Act 2006—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 44

Disaster Management Act 2003—

- Disaster Management (Extension of Disaster Situation-Cairns, Innisfail, Mareeba, Townsville, Mount Isa and Mackay) Regulation 2006, No. 45

REPORT TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following report was tabled by the Clerk—

Report pursuant to Standing Order 158 (Clerical errors or formal changes to any bill) detailing amendments to certain Bills, made by the Clerk, prior to assent by Her Excellency the Governor, viz—

Drug Legislation Amendment Bill 2005

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title, amended—

omit—

'2005'

insert—

'2006'.

Audit Legislation Amendment Bill 2005

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title, amended—

omit—

'2005'

insert—

'2006'.

Property Agents and Motor Dealers and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2005

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title, amended—

omit—

'2005'

insert—

'2006'.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Larry

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.53 am): This afternoon I will be returning to Innisfail for another important milestone as we begin the long process of providing relief to and begin the rebuilding of communities devastated by Tropical Cyclone Larry. This milestone is the first meeting of the task force appointed to oversee Operation Recovery and will be held at 3 pm at the Johnstone Shire Council. As we know, we are still in a state of disaster in the affected areas but we do need to start the recovery, and Operation Recovery is starting the planning for it. General Peter Cosgrove, Sandy Hollway, Terry Mackenroth, Ross Rolfe and I will meet to begin the formal planning for the rebuilding of the 12,500 square kilometres affected by the cyclone, which crossed the far north Queensland coast at approximately 7.30 am last Monday, 20 March.

I have prepared a report for members, but there are a couple of things I want to highlight. For example, in relation to power, progress has been significant. Just a week later, when we initially had 140,000 consumers without power, around 10 per cent of customers—that is, about 14,500—remain without power. So we have gone from 140,000 consumers without power down to 14,500 after a week. Ergon, Powerlink and Energex have worked together with hundreds of people in the field in the biggest deployment ever held for a single event to restore power to tens of thousands of homes and businesses. Water is flowing again. The sewerage system is operating. In the first week of the relief effort, some $1 million in cash assistance has been distributed to those in need. People have been fed, watered, accommodated and provided with dry clothes. The effort has had its frustrations of course but all tiers of government—state, Commonwealth and local—have joined together to meet people's immediate needs.

The role of the local mayors has been vital. I want to single out the Mayor of Johnstone Shire Council, Neil Clarke, who has worked tirelessly for his community during these dire times. I also want to thank the Prime Minister for his visit and for the joint program we have announced together to assist people. I also want to thank the Governor-General for his visit. I have spoken to the Governor-General

this morning. He has reported that the work on the ground is continuing effectively, and he acknowledged the contribution of the federal government, the councils and of course the state government. He has also sent to me a message from Her Majesty the Queen. She says—

I was greatly concerned to learn of the terrible damage caused by last week's cyclone in north Queensland. I should be grateful if you would convey my sympathy to all those whose lives have been affected by this disaster, together with my admiration for the emergency services and all those many others who are and have been working so hard to alleviate the suffering.

That is signed by Her Majesty the Queen.

In terms of other matters, I wish to acknowledge a range of people who have given their all to support this community: Queensland emergency services, counterdisaster and rescue services, the SES and fire services, ambulance officers, the Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland police, Queensland Health, the Department of Communities, the department of transport, the Department of Public Works, the department of primary industries, State Development and my own department. I also wish to acknowledge the Army, which has been invaluable, and the many and varied volunteers who have come forward. I table the communication from the Governor-General's office and Her Majesty the Queen. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard* so that all members have an update on what is happening and the history of the event.

Leave granted.

The State Disaster Coordination Committee says the area of impact and damage stretches from Mareeba in the North to the south of Tully and to the west of Mt Garnet. Significant damage occurred to houses and infrastructure, and to crops and state forest assets.

At its peak the wind speeds are thought to have reached 290 kilometres per hour.

Tropical Cyclone Larry travelled some 450 kilometres inland over 13 hours—reaching as far as Croydon before it was downgraded to a rain depression.

The Bureau of Meteorology officially designated Cyclone Larry at 4am on Saturday March 18, when it was approximately 1200 kms East North East of Innisfail.

It took 51 hours before the eye crossed the coast.

The Queensland Government's preparation had begun two days before when the Executive Director of Queensland's Counter Disaster and Rescue Service, Frank Pagano informed the State Disaster Coordination Group that the cyclone had formed.

That group met for the first time on Sunday at 9 am to begin detailed preparation for the relief effort. That same afternoon the State Disaster Management Committee held an extraordinary meeting at the Mackay Community Cabinet.

At 1.45 that afternoon the State Emergency Service began contacting its members to put them alert and to check their availability.

Warnings began to be disseminated to residents throughout Sunday as it became clear that Cyclone Larry was on track to cross the Queensland Coast and was growing in intensity.

At approximately 4.45pm that afternoon the Minister for Emergency Services and I signed the Disaster Declaration which enabled Qld Police to begin moving people from low-lying areas along areas of the Far North which were judged to be at risk from extreme winds and possible tidal flooding. The declaration covers the districts of Cairns, Innisfail, Mareeba, Townsville, Mount Isa, and Mackay. This declaration remains active—having been extended on Saturday for a further seven days.

Effective long-term planning and pre-emptive action in the days before the cyclone meant that there was no loss of life and minimal injuries.

This is something we can all be grateful for, particularly considering the intensity of Cyclone Larry.

Unfortunately the severity of the cyclone meant that buildings across the impact zone took a battering.

When I arrived in the area at around 4pm on Monday the 20th the extent of the damage was already clear.

It is now estimated that 226 homes in the Innisfail area alone have been made uninhabitable—many other homes across the affected area have also been deemed unsafe and it is thought more will be identified in coming days as the Urban Search And Rescue teams continue with their assessments.

Centrelink reports that it has received 3000 applications for ex gratia payments due to houses being uninhabitable for two weeks or longer.

Confirmation of this damage is still being carried out.

In the Mareeba area 126 homes have sustained minor and structural damage.

Our emergency crews were out on the streets on Monday the 20th as soon as the winds abated enough to allow people to leave cover.

As of yesterday those crews, assisted by the Australian Defence Force have tarped 1600 houses—it's thought only another 100 remain to be attended to.

Mr Speaker, Australians should be proud of the efforts made to protect and relieve the suffering of the communities affected by this disaster.

In the hours before the Cyclone crossed the Coast emergency sandbags had been shifted into position. The Australian Defence Force had carried out reconnaissance.

In the hours immediately after the Cyclone moved across our Far North, food and water supplies were pouring in

Crews from the SES were on the streets. The Australian Defence Force began to operate in the area—helping to provide food, water and shelter to people who found themselves suddenly homeless and left with just the clothes they were standing in.

The scale of this disaster is difficult to demonstrate—for as far as the eye can see a once lush and productive part of our State has been decimated—whole forests snapped off and browning, square kilometre after kilometre of vital produce destroyed. People's homes mangled.

Given the severity and scope of the damage the relief effort was made extremely difficult—basic infrastructure—water, power, sewerage and telecommunications were all disabled.

These of course have been our priority and I want to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the men and women who have worked tirelessly to restore these vital services as quickly as possible.

The efforts by our power workers are a fantastic demonstration—in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Larry it is estimated that around 140,000 consumers were without power.

Just a week later around 10% of customers (around 14,500 consumers) remain without power. Ergon, Powerlink and Energex have worked together—with hundreds of people in the field—in the biggest deployment ever made for a single event to restore powers to tens of thousands of homes and businesses.

Water is flowing again. The sewerage system operating.

In the first week of the relief effort some $1M in cash assistance has been distributed to those in need.

People have been fed, watered, found accommodation and dry clothes. The effort has had its frustrations for some but all tiers of government—state, commonwealth and local have joined together to meet people's immediate needs.

The role of local mayors has been vital—I want to single out the Mayor of Johnstone Shire Council, Neil Clarke—who has worked tirelessly for his community during these dire times.

The Prime Minister and I announced $100M in relief package on Wednesday March 22nd.

It delivers:

- An initial advance of $40M to Queensland for Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements;
- $200,000 concessional loans to help farmers and small business re-establish. These will be available for nine years with deferred repayment and the first 25% will be given as a grant;
- One-off income support program for farmers and small business (for up to six months with no assets test);
- The Commonwealth and Queensland Government have made $1.1M grants to the Cyclone Larry Relief appeal.
- One-off grants for business assistance of $10,000 tax free for existing small and home-based businesses including farmers and tourist operators;

The package is an indicator of the destruction wreaked upon the sugar, fruit, nut, dairy and meat industries in the region. For many it will take years to return to full production.

We will continue to work with industry groups and the farmers they represent to keep this vital part of our economy funded until they can again be self sufficient.

The Queensland Government is spending millions each day to bring respite to the Far North. Many hundreds of millions of dollars will be spent in the coming months as we work to rebuild our communities.

The people of Australia, individuals and big and small business have worked together to help out. They've made donations, offered their skills and their hard work—and we will continue to rely on that generosity for many months to come.

Already the Appeal has raised more $8 Million dollars. I expect to shortly announce the first call for applications for grants.

Individual Australians have responded wonderfully, with 7,449 people ringing the hotline number of 1800 150 411 to make donations through their credit cards or online and 17,026 people making contributions through bank branches.

No donation is too small and all contributions of more than $2 are tax deductible.

Major donors are:

Queensland Government $1,100,000
Commonwealth Government $1,100,000
Commonwealth Bank $1,000,000
Westpac $500,000 (plus infrastructure worth $500,000)
BHP Billiton $350,000
National Australia Bank $25,000—with $ for $ donations up to $250,000

Donors of $100,000:

ANZ
Rio Tinto
Tabcorp
Victorian Government
Visy Industries
XStrata Queensland

Donors over $35,000 up to $60,000:

Bank of Queensland
Qld Newspapers
Stanwell Corporation
Suncorp

Donors over $10,000 up to $35,000:

Reef Hotel Casino
Townsville RSL
Australian Stock Exchange
Hyne Timber
Muslim Community

In the medium term plans—and relief packages—are already in place. Long-term planning for the rebuilding is now underway.

Operation Recovery is underway.

I am pleased to be able to table the first report from General Cosgrove.

Finally I want to thank the people of the Far North for their courage and stoicism.

I also want to pay tribute to the staff and volunteers from the Queensland Government who have worked extraordinary hours in extremely difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions.

In no particular order I want to acknowledge the work and commitment of:

Qld Emergency Services
Counter Disaster and Rescue Services—the SES, the Fire Services
Queensland Police
Queensland Ambulance Service
Queensland Health
The Department of Communities
The Department of Transport
Department of Public Works
DPI
State Development
And Premier and Cabinet.

Finally, I want to say to the people whose lives have been thrown into turmoil—we will not forget. We will not cease in our efforts to set you right.

We will work with you, with governments at all levels, private industry and peak groups to rebuild and renew your communities and your livelihoods.

Mr BEATTIE: I have also received a report from General Cosgrove this morning, whom I have appointed to coordinate the disaster relief. He has made a number of recommendations in his first report. He says—

I have formed an Operation Recovery Consultative Committee comprising myself as Chair and each of the Mayors of affected Shires and Councils ...

As I said he made a number of recommendations.

He says—

In relation to housing, I am inviting all insurers with insured interests in the housing and construction sectors of the affected area to convene in the region early next week, to review with Q Build and other experts the implications and options for housing rehabilitation.

As we know, for the long term there are two issues. The first issue is housing rehabilitation and housing construction. The second issue is getting the economy going. On other matters, General Cosgrove goes on to say—

In regard to the economy I am commissioning a number of industry sector impact studies for urgent completion, to be able to present to you the scope of the problem and some options for the way ahead. In doing so I propose to incorporate and capitalise on a study entitled the Tropical Cyclone Impact Assessment (a joint venture to conduct a social environmental and economic assessment between James Cook University and CSIRO). Inevitably any of the options presented will involve significant outlays over time but will also demand early commitment and expenditure to accelerate recovery.

He goes on and says—

My concern is that industries without planned income over the near term will be forced either to cut their cost base or even to suspend or terminate their businesses entirely. In order to mitigate against this, I propose for your consideration an urgent and confidential review of business indebtedness in the Cyclone area, to be conducted by an independent and highly reputable and capable accounting practice, to inform the Government without attribution on the general level of financial pressure within affected industries. In order to obviate any undesired outcomes in the interim I propose you consider negotiating a moratorium on business-related loan repayments for industries in the area affected, for a period of not less than three months.

I accept that recommendation from General Cosgrove and I publicly ask the various banking and financial institutions to implement that in the interests of supporting the cyclone affected area. I will be pursuing that in a more formal way with my ministers.

The report states further—

Finally, I recommend that the removal of collected Disaster (building) waste from properties to dumps be conducted by councils and shires and where this is done it be accepted as a charge against relief/recovery funds.

In conclusion, much remains to be done to restore this part of Far North Queensland to its former beauty and vibrancy but judging by the spirit of the people of the north, they deserve the assistance of all their fellow Australians.

I have read only part of the general's report, but, because of its importance, I seek leave to incorporate it in full in *Hansard* for the information of all members.

Leave granted.

OPERATION RECOVERY TASK FORCE
OVERVIEW REPORT 1

28 MARCH 2006

Dear Premier

I have the honour to present my first overview report to you on the situation in Far North Queensland in the aftermath of Cyclone Larry eight days ago. Since arriving with you on Friday last week I have been a keen observer of the men and women of the community and those many volunteers and corporate, State and Commonwealth government personnel working on disaster relief. In a word they are all magnificent. The courage, cohesion, determination and energy of all of them are inspiring in the extreme. Ingenuity and initiative are commonplace. Selflessness characterises victims from youngsters through to the infirm, as much as it does the host of relief workers. Exhausted people keep returning to the fray because fellow Australians are still needy. May I particularly mention the great work of those I have observed in leadership positions. Both elected and ad hoc community leaders

have been pillars of strength and a source of inspiration and community resolve and pride. Their leadership has been crucial in resolving the most urgent challenges of disaster relief. It is also most appropriate to mention the leadership of Queensland's uniformed services: the Police, Fire and Ambulance Services and the great permanent and volunteer leaders of the SES. They have been indefatigable. The community loves them for it. The Queensland public service agencies' leadership has also been tremendous: it is a proud moment in the history of these Departments. Finally I have noted with quiet pride the extreme professionalism and unstinting efforts of the Australian Defence Force and their leaders deserve our commendation.

Cyclone Larry was a natural disaster of enormous proportions both in span and violence. It would have been understandable if it had caused many deaths and injuries. That it did not is greatly to the credit of counter disaster planners and the men and women involved in the detailed preparation of the threatened community for the Cyclone's onset. This minor miracle was an outcome of some good fortune but a lot of excellent planning and preparation. Lessons are always learnt in the aftermath of such calamities but on this occasion they should be viewed in this light. Yet the Cyclone caused enormous damage. Many people were rendered homeless. A large number of homes suffered significant damage. Many important community amenities and utilities were damaged or destroyed. Massive damage occurred to power distribution links and water supplies were put at high risk. Perhaps worst of all in this regard, the key economic drivers of the disaster area were devastated. The Banana crop has effectively been destroyed. The likely Sugar Cane yield has been severely degraded. Industries such as Avocado, Macadamia Nuts, Nursery, Tropical fruits and Meat processing have been badly affected. Sugar milling and Dairy production have similarly been damaged. The timber industry and tourism are also casualties of the Cyclone.

The disaster relief operation continues with power restoration and shelter being the immediate and ongoing priorities. Power Link and ERGON are playing a very significant role in restoring power to affected areas but some outlying smaller settlements and properties will require generator power for some time before grid power is restored. In many other respects, the ingredients of the disaster status of the region are rapidly being resolved.

Turning now to recovery programmes, herein I will report the heads of issues only, together with some initiatives I have launched and some recommendations for your consideration. I have formed an Operation Recovery Consultative Committee comprising myself as Chair and each of the Mayors of affected Shires and Councils as members and relevant CEOs attending as advisers. We met yesterday and my initiatives and recommendations have the endorsement of that group.

As a principle, the population of the affected region should be provided all encouragement to remain. Viable major industries will depend on skilled labour and service industries and levels of community amenities and utilities will depend on a critical mass of population. Housing, industry rehabilitation and employment opportunities and/or 'tiding over' programmes in relation to the work force are thus a very high priority.

In relation to housing, I am inviting all insurers with insured interests in the housing and construction sectors of the affected area to convene in the region early next week, to review with Q Build and other experts the implications and options for housing rehabilitation.

In regard to the economy I am commissioning a number of industry sector impact studies for urgent completion, to be able to present to you the scope of the problem and some options for the way ahead. In doing so I propose to incorporate and capitalise on a study entitled the Tropical Cyclone Impact Assessment (a joint venture to conduct a social environmental and economic assessment between James Cook University and CSIRO). Inevitably any of the options presented will involve significant outlays over time but will also demand early commitment and expenditure to accelerate recovery.

My concern is that industries without planned income over the near term will be forced either to cut their cost base or even to suspend or terminate their businesses entirely. In order to mitigate against this, I propose for your consideration an urgent and confidential review of business indebtedness in the Cyclone area, to be conducted by an independent and highly reputable and capable accounting practice, to inform the Government without attribution on the general level of financial pressure within affected industries. In order to obviate any undesired outcomes in the interim I propose you consider negotiating a moratorium on business-related loan repayments for industries in the affected area, for a period of not less than three months.

Finally, I recommend that the removal of collected Disaster (building) waste from properties to dumps be conducted by councils and shires and where this is done it be accepted as a charge against relief/recovery funds.

In conclusion, much remains to be done to restore this part of Far North Queensland to its former beauty and vibrancy but judging by the spirit of the people of the north, they deserve the assistance of all their fellow Australians.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Cosgrove
Head Operation Recovery Task Force

28 March 2006

I thank my ministerial colleagues who have worked very hard with me to do what we can to support this community. So far, the public response to the request for donations is in the vicinity of $8 million. I thank everyone for that. In my ministerial statement I have incorporated the names of those who have made a contribution but, as members would understand, although $8 million is a significant amount it is still not enough. I appeal to all Australians to continue to donate to the appeal. We are changing the name of the appeal to the Premier and Prime Minister's appeal to ensure that it has broad application around Australia. At today's task force meeting one of the things we will discuss is the early distribution of that money as well as the other matters that have been referred to. We need more money and I appeal to all Australians to dig deep to contribute to this community.

Although many things can be done very quickly, such as restoring power—and Ergon and Powerlink need to be thanked for their work—water and sewerage, the tragedy is that the process of rebuilding homes and the economy will take months, if not years. I know the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries as well as the Minister for Emergency Services would share my view on this. The macadamia nut growers and the avocado growers have lost trees. In some cases it will be eight or nine years before they return to productivity. With the banana growers, although they have lost this crop, depending on the shoots it could be 10 to 12 months before they return to productivity. With the sugar industry, it could well be 18 months to two years. It could even be a little longer. At this point those farmers are saying that 60 per cent of the sugar cane has been damaged and they simply will not be productive. So we are not going to resolve this situation overnight.

We need a good partnership between the state government and the federal government. We will collectively be spending tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, of dollars together. We need a good partnership with the council. All of that exists, but I do not think that any member of this parliament or anyone else should be under any illusions. This is not a quick fix. It will take a lot of hard work and a lot of commitment. We have the determination, we have the people and we have the commitment to do it. But it will take a long time.

General Cosgrove will be reporting to me on a regular basis. If parliament is sitting, I will share the reports with members, as I have done on this occasion. I have invited the general at some future occasion, when a lot of work has been done, to come to the bar of the parliament and address the parliament—as he did on one other occasion when he returned from East Timor. I think that would be an appropriate way in which to report to this parliament on the progress. General Cosgrove will also report to cabinet from time to time.

I mentioned my ministers who have worked incredibly hard, including Warren Pitt, the local member. I acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Hinchinbrook and the member for Mirani who also visited the region. As we all know, this is not a time for partisan politics. I think we have bipartisan support. We will continue to work with both sides of parliament to make sure that this region is given the support it deserves. I should acknowledge the member for Tablelands who attended the meeting we held in Atherton. About 300-plus people were there. As I said, my government will do everything it can to assist this community.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Safe Youth Parties Task Force

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (10.03 am): Like many Queenslanders, I am concerned about reports of parties involving young people which adversely impact on law-abiding Queenslanders and which lead to dangerous behaviours by young people that require a police response. Last year the police minister, Judy Spence, set up the Safe Youth Parties Task Force to look at ways in which to reduce the harmful effects of youth gatherings and parties. Since May 2005, this committee of seven members of parliament has consulted widely with police, youth, stakeholders and the community in putting together its report. The task force analysed police data during the period June to October last year from across the state—Brisbane, Cairns, the Gold and Sunshine coasts, Logan, Townsville, Rockhampton and Warwick.

I want to stress that the issues that can be associated with youth gatherings is not phenomena unique to Queensland. The task force found that the prevalence of out-of-control parties was less than expected. Police data used by the task force shows that fewer than two per cent of the total calls to the Police Service related to young people at either parties or gatherings. The task force also found that the main reason parties went out of control was the excessive consumption of alcohol.

Gatecrashing was a secondary issue. Police data used by the task force showed that 82 per cent of parties where police were required to attend did not involve gatecrashing. From a survey, two-thirds of respondents said that they had never gatecrashed a party or gone uninvited. Therefore, any proposal to change the law to address gatecrashing is not based on evidence and will not solve the problems. The problems lie in the supply of alcohol to minors and parental responsibility. These problems are at the heart of the issue.

The task force also surveyed 293 people aged between 15 and 24 and found that 69 per cent of parties held in public spaces were unsupervised; only 43 per cent of parties in private houses were supervised by parents or other adults; 55 per cent of respondents said that excessive alcohol consumption occurred at parties most or all of the time; and 53 per cent of respondents said that drug use was never or rarely occurring.

As a result, the task force has put together 14 recommendations. The government has accepted all 14 recommendations. The minister for police will table a report in her ministerial statement shortly. This is an issue of the need for parental responsibility. You cannot simply have unsupervised parties. Having had three teenage children who have now just gone into their 20s, I understand how difficult this issue is, but parental responsibility is something that has to be reinforced and encouraged when young people are having parties. Frankly, we have to do something about tackling the consumption of alcohol. Alcohol abuse is at the heart of this issue. We cannot simply talk about this problem without addressing the hard issue of alcohol abuse.

The government will expand move-on powers to provide police with the ability to move on individuals or groups of young people who have spilled into public areas. So the police will have the legal sanction to move on these young people. The report highlights the issue of parental responsibility and increasing the awareness of parents about the activities of their children. The report reflects concerns about inadequate parental responsibility or the lack of parental responsibility surrounding

youth parties; the number of parents supplying under-age children with alcohol—and that is a serious issue; the number of parents who showed little interest in their children when police notified them that their child was intoxicated—and, frankly, that is unforgivable; the fact that many parents are unaware of their child's social activities; and the failure of some parents to establish boundaries.

As the task force report points out on page 23, if a minor does not pay the fine for a liquor offence, it is unable to be enforced. It might result in no action being taken. That is hardly a desirable outcome. I am pleased to accept the recommendation that my government examine amending the Juvenile Justice Act 1992 to ensure that fines for liquor offences issued to people under 18 are enforceable, including having the parents or guardians of juveniles pay the fine. That makes people accountable. We will also implement the recommendation that police report any child protection concerns associated with parental neglect of children who are repeatedly drinking to the Department of Child Safety.

Another recommendation has been to expand and further promote the Queensland Police Service's safe parties initiative in which people register their party with their local police station. Recently, the Police Service has reviewed and further resourced this initiative. The government will now look at promoting it more widely with options such as radio advertising.

The report also recommends specific campaigns to target school based alcohol and drug abuse. As a result, we will review and enhance our existing public information and education strategies in relation to this. While there are already various school based alcohol and drug education and awareness programs, we will establish a cross-agency initiative to develop and implement a coordinated communication campaign that will target both parents and young people.

I want to thank the seven members of parliament who made up this committee—the chair and member for Mount Ommaney, the member for Broadwater, the member for Redlands, the member for Keppel, the member for Glass House, the member for Burleigh and the member for Springwood and, of course, I also thank the police minister for commissioning this committee.

This is groundbreaking research in an area where there was not previously any research available. I believe that this report will inform the public debate, and I encourage those who would put forward shallow, quick-fix policy solutions to what clearly are complicated issues to have a thorough read.

My government is committed to implementing the recommendations and doing all we can to ensure that young Queenslanders are safe and that their activities do not have adverse impacts on the quality of life of others.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mr Speaker

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (10.10 am): I note, Mr Speaker, the issues pertaining to your health. I am sure that all members of this House wish you well, and for whatever is required in the future I know you will have the support of all members of this parliament. So good luck, Mr Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Member for Bundaberg

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (10.11 am): The member for Bundaberg, Nita Cunningham, is a tireless advocate of the people of Bundaberg in this House, and she delivers strong representation for her constituents and the wider region. Members would be aware that Nita has recently undergone surgery to treat skin cancer.

I further advise members that Nita will now be undergoing radium treatment as follow-up to that surgery. The radium treatment will begin this Wednesday and will last for five weeks. During that time Nita will continue to actively represent the people of Bundaberg. While in Brisbane for treatment she will work out of her office here, and while in Bundaberg she will continue her duties on the ground as normal. I should also point out that, while the treatment begins this week, she will still be here for each day of this sitting.

I know all members will join me in wishing Nita the best for her treatment, and I can assure the people of Bundaberg that she will continue to work tirelessly on their behalf. If the member for Bundaberg does need some time off for this treatment, she will have my blessing and my support. I spoke to the Leader of the Opposition about this. We all agree that anyone who has a fair dinkum need for medical treatment should be excused from the House or any other duties if the need arises. Nita, I wish you well. Good luck.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Water Management Charges

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (10.11 am): At the community cabinet meeting in Mackay last Sunday I announced the immediate suspension of new water management charges for farmers, industry and local government and charges for stock and domestic use. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The charges had been set at $4 per megalitre for agricultural users, $10 per megalitre for industrial users, $15 per megalitre for local authorities and $100 per annum for licensees accessing the Great Artesian Basin for stock and domestic purposes.

To date no charges have been collected.

Our farmers and representatives of the agricultural industry have raised a number of issues in relation to the new charges and their implementation.

In response to these concerns, my Government has decided to suspend the charges pending the completion of an updated independent analysis of the State's water planning and management costs and consultation with key stakeholders.

These groups include AgForce, the Queensland Farmers' Federation and the Local Government Association of Queensland.

Terms of reference for this study have already been developed in consultation with representatives of these groups and I expect the report will be completed within the next few months.

I look forward to the continued cooperation of AgForce, QFF and the LGAQ throughout this process.

Mr Speaker,

The Government's water charges policy was developed to be compliant with the National Water Initiative, which was signed by the Prime Minister and Premiers in June 2004.

This intergovernmental agreement requires States and Territories to develop consistent approaches to pricing and attributing costs of water planning and management by 2006.

The Queensland Government's water charges are intended to deliver the outcomes of this agreement.

However, the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, recently made confusing comments about the National Water Initiative.

Minister McGauran acknowledged that full cost recovery is a principle of the agreement. But he then seemed to suggest that recovery of water planning and management costs does not apply to some commercial users.

These statements put implementation of water reform in this country at risk.

My Government is serious about its National Water Initiative commitments, and I have written to the Prime Minister to clarify the requirements of this national arrangement, to ensure Queensland has continued support in the implementation of the Initiative.

I would like to express to the House my disappointment that the Federal Government has not yet initiated the development of a consistent national approach to water charges.

I will be asking the Prime Minister to address this issue through the Council of Australian Governments.

Mr Speaker,

Water security and supply is a national issue that needs national solutions.

I don't want our farmers and industry disadvantaged by a water pricing system that isn't competitive with other States and territories.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

South East Queensland Regional Plan

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (10.12 am): Earlier this month I tabled and also released for public consultation a copy of the South East Queensland Regional Plan Draft Amendment No. 1. This is the first major amendment to the South East Queensland Regional Plan, which my government released last year in partnership with the south-east Queensland councils. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Although significant amendments to the South East Queensland Regional Plan will not be considered until its review in 2009-2010, some amendments were required to incorporate the Mt Lindesay/North Beaudesert Study Report.

This Study Report, also released on 2 March and tabled in the House, outlines a preferred development option for the Mt Lindesay/North Beaudesert area over the coming 50 to 60 years.

Modified to meet the 20 year planning horizon of the South East Queensland Regional Plan, the Study Report anticipates around 25,800 new dwellings in this area of South East Queensland, or 70,000 additional people, bringing the total population to around 107,000 people by 2026.

This is around 6,000 dwellings more than the notional numbers originally released in the South East Queensland Regional Plan.

The Queensland Government, through the Office of Urban Management, has worked hard over the past eight months to ensure the South East Queensland Regional Plan is the most workable document it can be.

We have reviewed the operation of the Plan and have made minor amendments to ensure it meets its objectives in the most practical way possible.

As a result, the Draft Amendment No. 1 will also make minor changes to the Regulatory Maps to reflect existing committed urban designations in local government planning schemes, and will amend the Regulatory Provisions to improve the workability of the South East Queensland Regional Plan.

I am pleased to report to the House that consultation on the Draft Amendment No. 1 is proceeding well, with many people already providing feedback on the document.

As the majority of the Draft Amendment No. 1 mainly affects the Mt Lindesay/North Beaudesert area, we recently held four community open houses in Jimboomba, Park Ridge, Chambers Flat and Flagstone.

Around 1,100 people attended these open houses, taking the opportunity to visit information stands, view maps and speak directly to planning staff.

I thank those people for taking the time to find out more about the planning for their area, and also the hundreds of other people across South East Queensland who have called the Office of Urban Management to talk through any concerns they have.

Mr Speaker, feedback on the Draft Amendment No. 1 closes on Thursday 13 April 2006.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ideas Festival

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (10.12 am): I am delighted to be opening the 2006 Ideas Festival this Wednesday, 29 March. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This four-day event presented by the Queensland Government attracts audiences from far and wide, and from a range of disciplines, professions and communities.

On top of 75 public lectures and debates, the Festival features a new Ideas for Schools program giving secondary school students the opportunity to hear the work of leading local, national, and international thinkers.

There's also a Kids' Ideas program, with free activities for young children.

Many taking part in the 2006 Ideas Festival are successful Queenslanders who work in our communities, government, and in business. Through the Festival they will showcase their achievements, provide new insights, and inspire our budding innovators of the future.

The Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries and Water's new work on devising salt resistant and low water use turf-grasses, and the Queensland Police Service's road safety initiatives, are among the projects to be profiled.

There will also be speaker-and-panel sessions, all of which are open to the public—and most of these are free. Sessions include education, law, urban development, resource management, parenting, working life, economics, international affairs, and much more.

Two of the Smart State's very own inventors are also joining the judging panel of the ABC's free, New Inventors session which will be held on Sunday, April 2nd.

In fact, much of the Festival program will be heard by audiences around Australia, as well as internationally, ensuring the Smart State is further acknowledged as being forward thinking, innovative and supportive of open public debate.

The Queensland Government, through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, has invested $560,000 in this year's Ideas Festival, with the Department of Education and Arts contributing a further $100,000.

The Festival has secured another $500,000 through corporate sponsorships, which has allowed us to increase the scope of the Festival's program and to present most of it for free.

The Ideas Festival is about the public discussion of ideas for our future, engaging with our communities, and inspiring the future leaders in whose hands we entrust the Smart State.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Larry

Hon. FW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors) (10.12 am): The Queensland government has responded quickly, decisively and comprehensively to support the Innisfail district and Atherton Tableland communities in rebuilding their lives and livelihoods after the devastation of Cyclone Larry.

Staff from my department were on the scene immediately the initial cyclone danger had passed to coordinate the state government response in assisting people recover from the cyclone. Department of Communities staff play a crucial role in providing disaster victims with emergency help, and I am pleased to report that on this occasion they did so with competence, compassion and justified acclaim.

As the local member, I spend a lot of time in Innisfail, Babinda and other communities in the disaster zone, and I am personally acquainted with many people in the area. I know personally many of the people who lost their houses and possessions, and I empathise with the sense of loss they are feeling.

The marvel of modern television can convey a sense of the devastation from a natural disaster, but it cannot portray the depth of despair and loss victims feel. To walk with these people as they sort through the debris which used to be their lives is a totally different experience to watching images on television. To share with victims the joy of rediscovering a missing personal effect or the despair of realising that a part of their life is gone forever is an experience one does not easily discard.

It is not just the immediate damage and disruption that occurred during the tense few hours when the storm hit but also the long-term effects on the community from such a calamity that will impact on those who live in the area. Damage to infrastructure and the loss of crops such as bananas, sugar cane and various fruits will have long-term economic and social consequences for the district. People have lost their jobs, their property and, in many cases, a sense of security about how they will provide for themselves and their families in the immediate future.

The Queensland government is providing substantial assistance and services to cyclone victims. The Department of Communities, through Smart Service Queensland, operates the state government 1800 phone service, which enabled people to access immediate help and advice. Residents whose households had been damaged or destroyed by Cyclone Larry might be eligible for financial aid, and personal and family support services. Personal hardship assistance is available for emergency food, clothing, accommodation and medical supplies; the replacement and repair of uninsured essential household contents damaged or destroyed by the cyclone; and help in returning owner-occupied, uninsured homes damaged by the disaster to a safe, habitable and secure state.

Almost 100 Department of Communities staff were flown into the devastated area to assist dozens of local staff meet the demand for support and assistance. Queensland government one-stop shops were established in the Cyclone Larry devastation zone to assist affected residents access government assistance and support services. The shops were established in Innisfail, Babinda, Edmonton, Atherton, Millaa Millaa, Malanda, Ravenshoe, Tully and Mount Garnet. The one-stop shops included staff from support organisations including the Department of Communities, the Department of Child Safety, the Insurance Council, Centrelink, the Department of Housing and counsellors from Lifeline and Centrecare. Additionally, two mobile units were established to service small, outlying communities within the disaster area. I wish to place on record my thanks to the Queensland Police Service and Minister Judy Spence for making available the RBT buses from Cairns and Townsville.

Experienced staff have been on hand at all locations to provide people with the support and assistance they need. The focus of these services is to provide immediate advice and assistance to people who are worst affected by Cyclone Larry. As of close of business yesterday, more than $3 million had been provided to cyclone victims in emergency relief funding. For some people, financial assistance will be what they need; for others, counselling and advocacy might be required to help them overcome the devastating consequences of the cyclone.

My department continues to work in tandem with other state government agencies such as Emergency Services, the Police Service, Public Works, Housing and electricity authorities, the Johnstone Shire Council and the Army to assist the community to repair as quickly as possible the physical damage caused by Cyclone Larry. Infrastructure in the townships of Innisfail, Babinda, Mourilyan, Atherton, Mission Beach and others can be rebuilt within a reasonable time. However, it will take longer to rebuild the lives of so many people affected so severely by the catastrophe of Cyclone Larry.

Thankfully, the one thing which does not need rebuilding is the community spirit of the affected communities, because that spirit stood resolute and undamaged against the worst Cyclone Larry could produce.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Larry

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.17 am): I would like to inform the House about the speed of the response by the Department of Emergency Services to Tropical Cyclone Larry. The department started preparing for this tropical cyclone on Friday, 17 March, when it was tracked as a tropical depression well off the eastern coast of Queensland—some 1,400 kilometres away. Indeed, the department was tracking this cyclone well before Larry was Larry! On Saturday, 18 March, plans were finalised on how the department would lead and coordinate the state's response.

On the following day, the Sunday, we deployed specialist crews from Brisbane and were liaising with other regional departmental offices, local councils, other Queensland government departments and agencies, and the Australian Defence Force. The Defence Force went onto a 12-hour response cycle.

By early Sunday afternoon, it was obvious that Cyclone Larry—then a category 4—was intensifying and was likely to hit the coast between Innisfail and Cardwell early the following morning. At 5 o'clock on Sunday, the Premier and I signed the declaration of disaster, which gave police and authorised counterdisaster personnel the authority to require residents to evacuate, particularly in coastal areas. Evacuations had already begun, and that evening the department distributed safety messages to communities across the region through radio and television announcements.

I want to thank the emergency services department for its coordination efforts from north of Cairns down to Townsville before Cyclone Larry struck. This planning ensured that the response, once the cyclone had struck, was immediate. Within hours of the cyclone hitting Queensland in all its violence, Department of Emergency Services crews were on the scene starting to assess the damage, braving dangerous conditions that included fallen powerlines, shaky buildings and debris everywhere. Quickly, staff from the Counter Disaster and Rescue Service, State Emergency Service, Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland Fire and Rescue Service took up their well-practised roles.

On Monday, the Premier and I went to Innisfail where the Premier chaired a local disaster committee meeting and set priorities for re-establishing water, sewerage, power to supermarkets, the provision of fuel and food and the opening of three dump sites. By Tuesday, the Department of Emergency Services had established central points for residents to access the basic necessities, including accommodation. Evacuation centres were established to accommodate residents whose homes were badly damaged. By this time, approximately 1,100 department personnel were in action in the relief effort.

From day one, the Executive Director of the Counter Disaster and Rescue Services, Frank Pagano, was in charge of the planning and response to Tropical Cyclone Larry. Frank's dad cut cane in the area, so he has a very special interest in this area of Queensland. On Thursday, 23 March the Beattie government moved quickly to appoint General Peter Cosgrove, the former head of the Australian Defence Force and a man praised for leading the Australian relief effort in East Timor, to lead the long-term recovery effort.

I can confidently say this morning that the response to Tropical Cyclone Larry has been a shining example of an immediate, coordinated and effective response to an extraordinary natural disaster. The excellent response by the department is demonstrated by the fact that the public was alerted early, specific plans to respond to the cyclone were implemented in good time and, thankfully, no Queensland lives were lost. All our prayers have been answered. Nevertheless, it must be said that the manner in which rescue crews, police, the State Emergency Service, firefighters and paramedics were moved into the affected areas was a major reason for this successful outcome.

Much remains to be done as a result of this catastrophic event that has made so many people homeless and hit jobs and livelihoods. I will have more to tell the parliament in coming weeks as the government focuses its energy and resources into easing this misery and tackling the immense longer term challenges of reconstruction. However, I would like to thank every single person who has contributed to the response and the recovery effort to this stage. The community has warmed to their hard work and compassion and they have gained many new friends in these stricken communities.

I would like to thank the Premier for the lead he gave in regards to all the other departments, particularly the departments of community, transport and police which responded very quickly to relieve suffering in the affected areas.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Larry; Safe Youth Parties Task Force

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (10.22 am): I would like to thank our north Queensland police and corrective services officers for their efforts in north Queensland to assist with those affected by Cyclone Larry. Before the cyclone even crossed the coastline, police had activated an assistance line to relay vital information relating to evacuations. This line took 4,000 calls on the first day and a total of 6,672 calls in the past week. My thanks goes to the 40 Red Cross volunteers who helped police staff this line and provide assistance that was vital to the immediate relief effort.

I saw first-hand Larry's trail of devastation when I visited Innisfail the day after the cyclone struck. When I arrived police and emergency services personnel were already providing emergency assistance to those who had lost their homes and their livelihoods. Some of these police had lost everything themselves yet worked around the clock to provide a strong police presence, manage traffic and support other agencies. More than 500 police, recruited from across the state, have been deployed to cyclone affected areas to coordinate information and support emergency efforts. Extra security and police patrols have been conducted during the night around the Innisfail CBD to ensure community safety. Police have supplied two mobile police RBTs for use by Department of Communities staff as mobile 'one-stop shops'. I would like to thank all of these officers for this work. It has been tiring and emotional. They have been working in wet conditions and without the comforts of home.

Corrective Services is also playing a role in the clean-up. Yesterday, 16 low security prisoners from the Work Outreach Camp program left the Darling Downs Correctional Centre and headed for Innisfail to help get basic infrastructure up and running. The WORC teams will be overseen by two Corrective Services field supervisors who have builder's licenses. The prisoners have been selected

because of their trade skills in carpentry, electrical, plumbing and general labouring. While it is envisaged that these teams will play a role in the initial clean-up of affected areas, as things settle they will also be able to help with construction and repair work. These WORC teams are self-sufficient and they will not place any strain on accommodation or emergency relief in the area.

In addition, a team of prisoners from the Lotus Glen prison farm are going to Herberton to help with the clean-up efforts in that town. We are all aware of the long history of the WORC program. It started after the Charleville floods and people in this program are continuing to help in northern Queensland.

Times of crises do bring out the best in people. Cyclone Larry's trail of destruction has touched many Queenslanders, including staff of my department, who are continuing to work hard in north Queensland. I would particularly like to acknowledge the incredible efforts of our police commissioner, Bob Atkinson, who spent most of last week in the north supporting his officers and that agency.

Finally I would like to table the report of the Safe Youth Parties Task Force to which the Premier referred today. I thank the members of parliament who worked very hard on this report. It is a very good document that will inform the public debate. The report will be available on the Queensland Police Service web site later today.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Larry; Serial and High-Range Drink Drivers

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.25 am): I very briefly would like to thank Main Roads, RoadTek, Queensland Transport, our port authorities and the Queensland Rail people for their wonderful work in the cyclone area, and I will say more about that in the future.

Serial and high-range drink drivers are the scourge of our roads. These reckless louts should be stopped in their tracks before any more lives are wasted. To this end, yesterday state cabinet approved a number of tough new measures. Serial and high-range drink drivers will immediately face licence suspension. These drivers who are caught and charged by police will not be allowed back behind the wheel until the matter is dealt with by the courts. I am sick to death of hearing about charged drink drivers who are back on the booze and behind the wheel while their court matter is still pending. I make no apology for taking tough action.

These reckless fools are putting innocent people's lives at risk. If people are charged with a breaking and entering offence, and they get charged again a week later, their bail is likely to be revoked. The same rule should apply to repeat drink drivers. If they have a drink-driving charge pending and they are charged again, putting aside the penalty for the ultimate charge, they will face immediate suspension of their licence until the court decides the matter. Additionally, if they are booked for drink driving and their reading is .15 and above, they will now face immediate suspension until the court determines the matter. People with readings of .15 or more are 20 times more likely to be at risk of a crash.

As the law stands at the moment, the licence of any driver charged with a drink-driving offence is automatically suspended for 24 hours, after which time they can resume driving until the charge is finalised by the courts. The changes will apply to drivers charged with a blood or breath alcohol content of .15 or more, anyone who refuses to provide a breath specimen and anyone who is charged with driving dangerously with alcohol involved. There will be a very limited right of appeal pending the court considering the disqualification at the final hearing, but this will not apply to the serial drink driver.

State cabinet also approved a tough new measure relating to the supervision of learner drivers. These supervisors, who must hold open licences, will for the first time be subject to normal drink-driving restrictions, except of course driver training instructors, who must have a zero blood alcohol content. If a person is supervising a learner driver, such as a parent, at the very least, they should be sober and not over the limit themselves. I remind parents that supervising a learner driver means proper supervision, not using them to drive them home from a party on their L plates because the parents have had a few too many. The new drink-driving laws will take effect mid year. These tough measures are in addition to a recent Beattie government decision to confiscate the keys and cars of repeat drink drivers.

We will do whatever it takes to make our roads safer for everyone. The recent road safety summit held here at Parliament House highlighted community concerns about the impact of alcohol on road safety. We are deadly serious about these concerns. If we have to take tough action, then we will.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (10.28 am): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 3 of 2006*.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Cyclone Larry

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.28 am): At the outset, on behalf of the coalition, I indicate our support for the efforts of people who have been engaged in overcoming the aftermath of the destructive Cyclone Larry. I, the deputy leader of the coalition Bob Quinn, and my colleagues Marc Rowell and Ted Malone had the opportunity to travel through there last week. We saw the damage to the structures and the industry. We saw the damage to bananas, sugar and tropical fruits. We also learned of the problems with the dairy industry as well as the massive environmental destruction that will cause ongoing concern to the timber industry and the environment for years to come.

I pass on our appreciation for the efforts of the volunteers and agencies and the commitment and work of all those people who were involved. We also thank very much the government at all three levels, whether it be local, state or Commonwealth, for its interest and empathy with those people who require the support and assistance of the state at this particular time.

One of the real issues, of course, will be what happens in the future to ensure that the programs do filter through to make sure that the ongoing recovery effort is given the emphasis and the support necessary. If that is the case then I am sure that it will work out to everyone's best interests.

Mr SPEAKER: I welcome into the public gallery the staff and students of Woodridge State High School in the electorate of Woodridge, which is represented in this parliament by Desley Scott.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Prince Charles Hospital; Haas, Dr N

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.30 am): My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the matter of Dr Nikolaus Haas, specialist paediatrician, who was deemed a paediatric intensive care specialist and ask: did Queensland Health refer concerns about this doctor to the Medical Board and, if so, what was the reason for this referral?

Mr ROBERTSON: As members would be aware, there are a number of issues surrounding paediatric and cardiac services at the Prince Charles Hospital that have been raised in the media recently, including issues relating to Dr Haas. Much of the information concerning Dr Haas reported in the media is incorrect and it is appropriate that I use this opportunity to correct some of those errors that have been published in various media over the last couple of weeks.

The first thing that needs to be understood is that Dr Haas is not a surgeon. He has never performed operations at the Prince Charles Hospital, let alone the Norwood procedure which has received some attention over the last couple of weeks. During the majority of 2005 Dr Haas was undertaking additional training at other hospitals and was therefore not working as the director of the paediatric intensive care unit at the Prince Charles Hospital except for a short period in midyear. Dr Haas was recognised as a deemed specialist by both the Medical Board of Queensland and the Joint Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine in paediatric intensive care while he progressed towards an Australian recognised qualification in intensive care. He is a specialist in paediatric cardiology, assessed and recognised by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians.

Dr Haas was supervised by specialists in intensive care medicine and cardiology during the period he was employed at the Prince Charles Hospital. Those supervisors were nominated by their respective colleges. The Medical Board of Queensland accepted undertakings from Dr Haas in December 2005 that he would not practise as an intensive care specialist. Dr Haas notified the Prince Charles Hospital of his undertakings to the Medical Board of Queensland immediately after the decision. His credentials and privileges were awarded and constantly reviewed in accordance with Queensland Health policy.

Prince Charles Hospital; Haas, Dr N

Mr SPRINGBORG: I have a further question to the Minister for Health. I refer again to the matter of deemed paediatric intensivist Dr Nikolaus Haas, who, until his recent resignation, was director of the Prince Charles Hospital's intensive care unit. As the Medical Board accepted undertakings from Dr Haas that he would not practise as an intensive care specialist and prohibited him from practising as an intensive care specialist in Queensland, will the minister please explain how Dr Haas was able to continue in his position as director of the paediatric intensive care unit at Prince Charles Hospital?

Mr ROBERTSON: Having just outlined the circumstances with respect to Dr Haas, it also needs to be understood that a review was conducted into the procedure that was being undertaken at the Prince Charles Hospital known as the Norwood procedure. It is centred around the deaths of seven babies at Prince Charles Hospital. It needs to be understood that only one of the deaths of those seven babies occurred in the intensive care unit. The other deaths, as tragic as they are, occurred either during the operation or a significant period after they were taken out of intensive care and taken home.

It needs to be understood that we are talking about very sick little babies. In terms of what is wrong with these babies, Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome, these are very sick little children. The procedure that is undertaken on these little children is basically the last chance that they have at life. It is a palliative operation, as no doubt the member for Moggill would agree.

In terms of the issues surrounding Dr Haas, it is important to note that he was not a surgeon and that whilst he was in charge of the intensive care unit only one of the seven deaths that have been investigated as a result of the Norwood procedure—I am happy to check, but I recall that it was only one of them—occurred in the intensive care unit.

All necessary checks, as I understand it, were made with respect to Dr Haas. He has, in fact, returned or is returning to Germany to take up a very senior position in a major German hospital. In terms of the checks that have been made, there are, as I understand it, no issues with respect to this particular doctor's competence and all necessary supervision that needed to be undertaken, given the level of his qualifications, was, in fact, undertaken as I outlined in the previous answer.

Cyclone Larry

Dr LESLEY CLARK: I would like to express my appreciation to the Premier for his leadership in response to the cyclone devastation in far-north Queensland and I ask: could the Premier please spell out the range of assistance that is available to the people of far-north Queensland who are victims of Cyclone Larry?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the member for Barron River for her question. I note for the record that she has provided a deal of assistance, from Babinda to Innisfail and other places, as a volunteer and I acknowledge the work that she has put in. I also should have mentioned earlier the contribution made by the minister for Q-Build and housing, of course, Robert Schwarten.

Both the state and the federal governments have contributed $1,100,000 to the Cyclone Larry relief appeal. We did that, obviously, to try to encourage the corporate sector to contribute. That has worked in part. This money will be made directly available to the victims of the cyclone to help them rebuild their lives. Personal hardship assistance available from the Queensland Department of Communities, for example, includes emergency help available in the immediate aftermath for food, clothing, accommodation and medical supplies, essential household contents available for the replacement and repair of uninsured essential household contents damaged or destroyed by the cyclone, and structural repairs to help return owner-occupied, uninsured premises damaged by the disaster to a safe, habitable and secure state. Our toll-free disaster relief number for emergency financial relief and referrals to counselling, advocacy and similar support services is 1800440074.

The Queensland government will provide additional assistance to small businesses and primary producers hit by Cyclone Larry. Normally concessional loans of up to $100,000 are available depending on certain checks at an interest rate of four per cent to disaster-affected primary producers and small businesses so that they can carry on their business. Subsidies of up to 50 per cent up to a maximum of $5,000 are available to primary producers for freight, food, building materials, stock, fodder or machinery. Also available are personal hardship payments, including emergency financial assistance of up to $150 per person and $700 for each family; means-tested grants for essential household contents of up to $1,500 for each individual and $4,500 for a family; and repairs to homes of up to $9,300 for each individual and $12,500 for a family.

I have outlined the normal concessional loans and I now want to highlight what we have done in partnership with the Commonwealth is double the concessional loan to a maximum of $200,000 for each applicant. We have also made it possible for up to a quarter of the money, up to $50,000, to be provided as a grant, this arrangement being subject to the usual eligibility criteria. The loans and any grants will be subject to the assistance required to return the enterprise to financial viability. This will complement Commonwealth income support arrangements. Applications should be made through the

Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority. There is also a grant opportunity for $10,000. The Prime Minister authorised additional Australian government support in the form of ex gratia payments for those who have lost their homes or whose principal place of residence has been rendered uninhabitable. The additional relief amounts to $1,000 for each eligible adult and $400 for each eligible child. I table the full program of assistance for the information of members, because we are doing everything we can, in partnership, to help this community.

Prince Charles Hospital, Norwood Procedure

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. I refer to the investigation into, amongst other things, the deaths of a number of infants following a Norwood operation at the Prince Charles Hospital, and I ask: will the minister release the report so that parents can try to understand the circumstances that led to the deaths of their children?

Mr ROBERTSON: In relation to the investigation into the deaths of those babies who had the Norwood procedure undertaken, I am happy to have that report released. The parents of the children—I am just trying to remember the name; the HeartKids group, I think it is called—at Prince Charles Hospital have been involved every step of the way in terms of the review of the services of Prince Charles Hospital and the use of the Norwood procedure. As the member would be aware, a clinical investigation was undertaken which resulted in the suspension of the use of that particular procedure at Prince Charles. As I said, I am happy to have that report released, but I am under the impression that that report may have already been provided to that particular group of parents who have indicated their support—again, I am just going on recollection—for the suspension of those services.

Dr Flegg interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: Well, if they have not, I will make sure that they do have access to that report, because I think they do have a right to understand what led to the decision to be taken to suspend the use of the Norwood procedure at the Prince Charles Hospital.

Cyclone Larry

Mr O'BRIEN: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. I want to join with the member for Barron River in congratulating the Premier on the leadership he has shown in response to Cyclone Larry. My wife's parents are from Innisfail and they have certainly appreciated the personal intervention of the Premier with regard to Cyclone Larry. I know that the Premier has been to Innisfail a number of times over the last week, and I ask him how work on the recovery and rebuilding is progressing.

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the member for Cook for his question. He, like other members from the north, has a keen interest in what is happening there. The first meeting of the task force appointed to oversee Operation Recovery will be held at 3 pm at the Johnstone Shire Council today. As I indicated before, I will be leaving parliament straight after question time to attend that meeting. General Peter Cosgrove, Sandy Hollway, Terry Mackenroth and Ross Rolfe and I will meet to begin the formal planning for the rebuilding of the 12½ thousand square kilometres affected by the cyclone.

I want to thank a whole range of people for the amazing work that they have performed since last Monday. They include the police commissioner, Bob Atkinson, Centrelink workers and the Australian Defence Force. Ergon, Powerlink and Energex have all worked together to restore power. The role of the local mayors, as I said before, is absolutely vital. I want to single out the Mayor of Johnstone Shire Council, Neil Clarke, who has worked tirelessly for his community during these dire times. Councillors and council workers have all worked very hard.

In no particular order, I want to acknowledge the work and commitment of the Queensland Public Service staff and an army of volunteers, the Executive Director of the Queensland Counter Disaster and Rescue Service, Frank Pagano; the Queensland Emergency Services, the Counter Disaster and Rescue Service, the SES, the fire services, Queensland police, the Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Health, the departments of communities, transport, public works, state development and my department.

I mentioned earlier the amount of $8 million. I want to take this opportunity again to appeal to corporate Australia to contribute to this disaster relief fund, because it will make a significant difference. I also want to thank the tradespeople who volunteered to give their skills to the reconstruction. I want to thank all those people who have given food, drink and goods to the victims. I apologise if I have left anyone out, but the people of north Queensland certainly value the contribution that people who have assisted have made.

There will be a number of things happening in relation to power for which I ask the support of the community. The Minister for Energy has advised me that on Sunday it is possible that there may be some shutdown of power in parts of the community, particularly in Innisfail, to permit the northern circuit to be reconnected as two separate circuits. It is still to be finalised as to whether that work will be on Sunday, but I know that if Ergon gives them notice or the minister advises them the community will understand and work with us.

Four towers were knocked over. Those huge towers cannot just be replaced very quickly. We need cranes to do that. A prefabricated tower was built in Townsville and flown in by Army helicopter. That meant that they could reconnect the northern link into Innisfail and they restored power to the heart of the city. But the southern link is yet to be completed. They lost three towers in the southern link, so it has been quite a difficult job trying to rebuild it. I know the Minister for Energy is very keen to ensure that in the future, because of some of the issues that have taken place about where these powerlines should go, there is a bit more certainty. Perhaps it is fair for me to say on this occasion that we should not ignore that opportunity, but everyone is working very hard and a lot of progress is being made.

Mr SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Moggill, I welcome to the public gallery year 11 legal studies students from Emmanuel College in the electorate of Rockhampton, which is represented in this parliament by Robert Schwarten.

Prince Charles Hospital; Haas, Dr N

Dr FLEGG: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. In reference to the deemed paediatric intensivist Dr Nikolaus Haas, I ask what incident or incidents occurred while Dr Haas worked for Queensland Health that prompted the necessity for Dr Haas to give undertakings to the Medical Board not to practice paediatric intensive care?

Mr ROBERTSON: I think it is important to place on record the contents of a recent letter sent by a number of surgeons, cardiologists and anaesthetists from Prince Charles Hospital with respect to services at Prince Charles but, in particular, with respect to Dr Haas. I have already outlined in answer to the first question the circumstances with respect to the interaction between Dr Haas and the Medical Board and the ongoing issues with respect to supervision. But I will read into the record these paragraphs of a letter to the *Courier-Mail* dated 23 March. The letter states—

There are also a significant number of babies who survive the first operation who do not reach the second stage because of the quality of the heart muscle or lung vessels that they are born with. The staff in the paediatric cardiac service at TPCH explain these issues to parents openly and support them through these difficult times in a human, caring way.

Thirdly, Dr Haas conducted and supervised the paediatric intensive care management of all these patients with congenital heart disease during his appointment as Director of Paediatric Intensive Care at TPCH. The outcomes in terms of hospital survival were equal to the years preceding his appointment. He had the full support of all the paediatric surgeons, intensive care nursing staff, and the majority of paediatric cardiologists during that time. His energy, enthusiasm, communication with parents and staff, teaching and research, instilled great confidence in his area of responsibility. We have lost a significant contributor to the service with his departure.

Finally, we the under-signed continue to fully support the paediatric cardiac service at TPCH in its planned redevelopment as a state-wide distinct entity during 2006-2007.

Yours sincerely

Let's stop playing games here. If the opposition has evidence of something untoward with respect to Dr Haas, then it has a responsibility to table it. It has a responsibility to make it known so that it can be fully investigated. If it has any issue of concern that requires further investigation, that will occur, but until the opposition provides such evidence it is difficult to do so. The public interest is served by the opposition tabling today any information or any evidence that it has against Dr Haas so that it can be fully investigated, and that will be done.

Queensland Coalition

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. I have heard that in theory there are two parties comprising the Queensland opposition and coalition. Minister, does that mean that there is one united view emanating from the other side of the chamber?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a good question. I think that Queenslanders are becoming so used to a disunited and squabbling coalition that they regularly expect to see two views on any issue.

Mr Copeland interjected.

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

Ms BLIGH: But there are a number of areas emerging where for the coalition two views are simply not enough. Let me take members to some of the current views on daylight saving. It is well known that the Leader of the National Party, coalition leader and Leader of the Opposition says, 'Hell will freeze over before there is daylight saving in Queensland.' But what does the leader of the Liberal Party think? The Leader of the Liberal Party thinks it is a sensible solution to have a two-year trial of a zonal system for daylight saving. What does the coalition candidate for Gaven have to say? The National Party candidate for Gaven says that he has an open mind on daylight saving. So we have one view that hell will freeze over. Then we have another view that we could do it in part of the state for part of the time. Now we have a completely open mind from the Nationals coalition candidate for Gaven. But it does not end there.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Callide, there will be something I can do if you carry on like that.

Ms BLIGH: As members will be aware—

Mr Johnson: You haven't got it, Anna.

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

Ms BLIGH: Don't I wish I had it like you do, Vaughan! I am very glad I don't.

People will be aware that the issue of the location of a cruise ship terminal on the Gold Coast has attracted a lot of comments during the by-election campaign, and quite appropriately so. Where do those opposite stand on this issue? The Leader of the National Party and coalition leader, Mr Springborg, is not opposed to a cruise ship terminal but he cannot name a location other than the current one. The Liberal local member, Mr Langbroek, says, 'I do want it in my backyard and that backyard is on the Southport bank of the western side of the Broadwater.' So the Liberal local member wants it in the Broadwater.

He is not the only Liberal who wants it. The federal member, Mr Ciobo, also wants it in the Broadwater. What does the former National Party candidate for the seat of Broadwater say? 'I am completely opposed to a cruise ship terminal. I want them to maintain the Broadwater and leave the Broadwater alone.' What does the candidate for Gaven say? The National Party candidate for Gaven says, 'The party will not support any development of The Spit.' He is opposed to a cruise ship terminal anywhere on The Spit or in the Broadwater.

Montville, Development Application

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is directed to the Premier. Late last year the Premier announced that he had taken over the role of deciding the future of the controversial Links development application initially approved by the Maroochy Shire Council. There have now been allegations raised by both sides involved in this development proposal that the other side has not acted properly in the collection of signatures for petitions. Has the Premier had a chance to consider the issues relevant to the development application? If so, when does the Premier anticipate he will be able to announce his decision?

Mr BEATTIE: The answer to that is soon.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This matter concerns a petition which I have referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. I am waiting on its deliberations so just be careful with the answer, please.

Mr BEATTIE: Perhaps I could talk more broadly about this. I know that the member for Nicklin has a particular interest in this. He has raised it with me directly and we have met with a group of people. The current status of the project is as follows. The Montville application was called in by me on 1 December 2005 in my capacity as the relevant planning minister. In calling the application in I became the development assessment manager for the application and commenced reassessing the proposal.

In December 2005 all submitters and relevant agencies were notified of the call-in. Maroochy Shire Council provided all files for the application to the Office of Urban Management in January this year. A detailed assessment of the proposal started when these files were received. I could not start it until I had the files. The review coordinated by the Office of Urban Management has been completed and a draft planning report is being prepared for me now. It is expected that upon review of the information provided I will be able to make a decision next month.

What I wanted to do here is take into account all the details. The member for Nicklin would appreciate that there is always some impatience concerning these types of issues. People would like the decision made yesterday. When one takes on the responsibility of bringing it in, one has to actually read all the information and assess it properly so that at the end of the process one can make an informed decision. This is exactly what is happening. It is now 28 March; I am saying that there will be a decision in April. I will naturally ensure that the member for Nicklin is notified of that decision.

I want to say more broadly that I am aware of both sides of the argument. I know that a million and one people have wanted to see me individually about these things. I have tried to be even-handed. I cannot see everybody. I think people understand that. It is also important for probity reasons that I keep an appropriate distance. I will look at this objectively and fairly.

This is one of the real struggles that any community has—the need to have sensible development versus the need to protect the environment and protect the community. For a state which is going to have an extra million people in the not-too-distant future, we have to get those things right. I know that at the end of this—and the member for Nicklin is in the middle of this so he will understand this, too—whatever decision I make will mean I am unpopular with a significant group of people. I will be given appropriate criticism and get beaten up for it.

The reality is that I will make a decision that I am very confident to go out and defend. When I make that decision I will stand and defend it. But I say to the community: please understand that there is no point having a 20-year infrastructure plan—the SEQ regional plan—if in the end we do not stick to the general principles of what we are trying to do. If we walk away from the general principles of what we are trying to do then we may as well not have a plan.

I want to make the point that no-one should interpret that to mean anything in particular in relation to the Montville Links project. I want everyone to understand that one of the reasons we ensured the plan needed the approval of parliament was to ensure that we did this properly and in an open and transparent way. No plan has ever before needed the approval of the parliament.

That is why this morning I incorporated, in the interests of time, what was happening with the SEQ plan. I refer that to the member for Nicklin and others to read. I am doing that because it is part of the reporting requirement and part of transparency. I would have liked to read it all out loud, but it is all in *Hansard*. People will be able to see exactly what changes are considered. When the decision is made I will make sure that the member is informed immediately.

Caboolture Hospital, Aspen Medical

Mr REEVES: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer to comments on ABC Radio yesterday made by the Nationals candidate for Gaven. He called the agreement with Aspen Medical to restore Caboolture's emergency department to 24-hour service 'the most terrible decision the government has made'. Are these comments consistent with the coalition health spokesman's views about the Caboolture emergency department?

Mr ROBERTSON: No, they are not. I was very interested to hear the comments of the Nationals candidate on Madonna King's program yesterday, particularly when he referred to Caboolture emergency department. This is what the Nationals candidate for Gaven had to say about the state government's Aspen Medical contract to restore the emergency department to an around-the-clock service. He said—

Look, I think it's the most terrible decision the government has made.

He went on to say—

I think the precedent is ridiculous. Reality is that if you have to use private accident and emergencies for public places you will run those into chronic bypass as well.'

In other words, the Nationals candidate for Gaven does not want us to reopen Caboolture's emergency department. He is against it. As all members of the House will recall, we promised to do whatever was necessary to restore around-the-clock services. That is exactly what we have done.

His view flies in the face of the position taken by none other the opposition health spokesperson, the Liberal member for Moggill. The member for Moggill said on 16 January—perhaps we need some reminding—

... immediate action must be taken to reopen the emergency department by employing where necessary emergency locums to plug the exodus of doctors not only at Caboolture but also at other hospitals. This may be expensive but the loss of these vital services cannot be allowed to continue no matter what the monetary cost.

The Nationals candidate does not agree with the Liberal member for Moggill. The question I have is: will the member for Moggill now pull the candidate into line? They are completely at odds with one another on this vitally important issue. The member for Moggill might want to tell his candidate that perhaps it is not such a good idea to criticise an agreement which will deliver a 24-hour emergency service to the people of Caboolture. Finally—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: I take that interjection, because finally I want to correct some inaccurate statements made by the opposition about the Aspen contract. In recent days it has been reported that the head of Caboolture's emergency department under Aspen would be paid more than twice as much as Queensland Health's packages for similar positions in other hospitals. This is absolute rubbish, and I note that the opposition has continued to fuel it in the media. Let us be very clear about this: Aspen is offering the new director of emergency medicine at Caboolture a package consistent with Queensland Health's new award rates. That means remuneration packages factoring in expected overtime and penalties are at the same level. For instance, Queensland Health now offers packages of up to $445,000. If Aspen was to more than double that package, it would be offering the head of ED nearly $1 million a year. The Caboolture package, which Aspen has provided to Queensland Health, confirms that it is at the same level as other public hospital heads of emergency departments. Aspen's advertisements of $500,000—

Time expired.

Prince Charles Hospital; Haas, Dr N

Mr SEENEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister tell the parliament what went wrong while Dr Haas was working at Queensland Health that forced Dr Haas to give an undertaking not to practise as a paediatric intensive care specialist?

Mr ROBERTSON: I have answered this question already earlier today. As I have said, if the opposition has any information that would be of interest to the medical registration board or to Queensland Health or me as minister, in the public interest it should be tabled immediately. Its failure to do so indicates that this could well be just another fishing expedition. But if it has information beyond which I have had access to, then it should table it. That is what the public interest demands. As I said, let us have no more games here. If it has information or evidence that there is something untoward with respect to Dr Haas, bring it to this parliament or bring it to the medical registration board. That would be the responsible thing to do.

Cyclone Larry

Mr HOOLIHAN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. Minister, Q-Build, like many government agencies, has worked extremely hard in the aftermath of Cyclone Larry. Can the minister please provide an update of how Q-Build and other business units in the Department of Public Works have been able to assist the recovery effort?

Mr SCHWARTEN: In 1944 on this day in Liverpool a wonderful event happened: you were born. Happy birthday!

I table and seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard* a list of names of people from Q-Build and the Department of Housing who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in trying to assist the recovery of Innisfail and other areas of the north affected by Cyclone Larry. This highlights our capacity to put a day labour force together in a very rapid period of time—to drag them out of the Whitsundays, Rockhampton, Townsville and other parts of the state—to put them to work to help in the recovery after disasters.

Over 2,500 properties have been inspected by Q-Build and about 420 people have been housed by the Department of Housing as a result of those efforts. Through the efforts of Q-Build and Housing working together, the houses that have become unroofed in Hudson in Innisfail, for example, are well on the way to getting their roofs replaced. That highlights again the wonderful effort that these individuals have put in. On top of that we have Q-Fleet of course, which has made available 50 vehicles at the drop of a hat. It is purchasing some of them in Cairns and Townsville, as I understand it, as well as getting them on car movers to get them up there as soon as possible to assist in that regard. SDS has worked around the clock to get a couple of classrooms worth of furniture ready to go on site into Innisfail.

Again, this highlights the value of us having a day labour force. It is very timely that we ask what the coalition's position is on this. What would it have done if it had got its way—privatised Q-Build and privatised Q-Fleet? Where would it have got that list of people overnight to go and put their shoulders to the wheel in Innisfail? Where would it have got them from? I tell members what would have happened: there would have been no response. The fact is that the alternative government of the day—that lot over there; heaven forbid that they ever get over to this side—would have had no capacity whatsoever to deal with this disaster. I say to members opposite: where is your policy? We know the Liberal Party wants to privatise it. The National Party is astride the barbed wire fence in policy on this because it says one thing in one part of the state and a different thing in another part. The reality is that we stand firm, like the member for Keppel—

Leave granted.

Department of Housing Staff

The following staff from the Far North Queensland been working in teams at the One Stop Shops in Innisfail, Babinda and the Tablelands accepting applications for emergency accommodation, arranging transport to Cairns and door knocking departmental tenants, including community housing:

Brian Sheehan, Regional Director Northern
Steve Fenton, Senior Client Service Manager
Des Lee, Area Manager
Jackie Oddie, Client Service Manager
Rory Macleod, Housing Officer
Bob Labinsky, Client Service Manager
Dan Lins, Senior Housing Officer
Natalie Price, Administration Officer
Di Evans, Occupational Therapist

The following staff have travelled to the region from other Area Offices and have also been working on the ground either in the teams at One Stop Shops or door knocking all departmental tenants:

Dennis Leicht, Mackay/Whitsunday
Michael Doggett, Brisbane North
Kevin Stevens, Bayside

Garry Parkes, Logan
Kim Morrow, Brisbane South
Eric Iwanicki, North Queensland
Damien Holmes, North Queensland
Renae Cunneen, Central Queensland
Matt Hogan, Redcliffe
Paul Crouch, Sunshine Coast
Peita Canning, Maryborough

The following staff worked in the Area Office (including the weekend processing applications for crisis accommodation and assisting people into emergency accommodation arranging furniture and white goods and preparing information on longer term housing needs:

Robyn Hausler, Senior Housing Officer
Ellie Martin, Senior Housing Officer
Nellie Swain, Trainee
Ashleigh Singleton, Trainee
Kareena Nealon, Housing Officer
Theresa Hoessinger, Housing Officer
Sheree McMillan, Housing Officer
Jodi Smith, Housing Officer
Angela Grahan, Housing Officer
Razmie-Jane Collyer, Trainee
Sherry Willians, Housing Officer
Meaghan Mackenzie, Senior Housing Officer
Louise Klease, Housing Officer
Carmel Ryan, Housing Officer
Hans Lang, Housing Officer
Win Clark, Housing Officer
Robyn Teis, Housing Officer
Daphne Mcgrath, Senior Housing Officer
Josh Hyde, Housing Officer
Peter Schmidt, Program Officer
Lency Wasiu, Team Leader
Sonya Gattera, Housing Officer
Robyn Mye, Housing Officer
Dianne Sykes, Housing Officer
Sally Watson, Community Capacity & Participation Coordinator
Nerelle Nicol, Cairns Community Networking Resource Officer
Loretta Lazzarin, Project Support Officer

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Chatsworth, I welcome into the public gallery students of the Woodridge State School in the electorate of Woodridge, which is represented in this parliament by Mrs Desley Scott. I also welcome students and teachers from Emmanuel College's year 11 legal studies class in the electorate of Rockhampton, which is represented in this parliament by Robert Schwarten.

Prince Charles Hospital; Haas, Dr N

Mr CALTABIANO: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister advise what was the specific matter that was referred to the Medical Board concerning Dr Haas?

Mr ROBERTSON: I refer to answers already provided to two previous questions.

Bruce Highway Upgrade

Mr WALLACE: My question without notice is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Can the minister please tell the House about planned upgrades to the Bruce Highway between Townsville and Cairns, particularly the timing of the upgrades and their funding?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for his question. He is one of the most assiduous workers for north Queensland that those people could ever have represent them in this parliament. Cyclone Larry showed the importance of our road links, in particular the importance of the Bruce Highway for people in north and far-north Queensland. I sometimes think that people south of Queensland generally do not understand that this great state exists north of Caboolture, and the very heavy reliance on road and rail links in north and far-north Queensland is something that has again come into focus.

Last Thursday the federal roads minister, Jim Lloyd, and I announced details of the $80 million upgrade to the Bruce Highway south of Tully to reduce flooding impacts. The Bruce Highway is part of the National Highway and is funded entirely by the federal government. In 2004 I set about a strategy to make sure that, no matter what happened, this important project would come to fruition. I set about a situation where, no matter who was elected to federal government, we got the promise. On 1 August 2004 the federal Labor opposition promised $80 million for Tully roadworks. On 15 September 2004 the federal government committed to match that funding promise for the Bruce Highway at Tully. I table both of those media releases.

This project will upgrade a 15-kilometre section of the Bruce Highway south of Tully between Corduroy Creek and the Tully High School, including the Tully River bridge and Murray Flats, the sections that were closed to flooding last week. We expect the detailed design work to begin within the next few months, allowing construction to begin mid-2007. Just under 18 months ago Minister Jim Lloyd and I announced that Maunsell's was appointed to do the planning study for this very complex issue. Members in that part of the world would know that, when there is such severe flooding, if a road or a bridge is built in the wrong place that can have catastrophic consequences on the local community. It is not a political issue. I am not being political about it. We have had very good cooperation from the local community in terms of that study, and it was very keen to have it progressed. The timing we had announced with Minister Jim Lloyd about 18 months ago was that by June we were to announce the route. I was pleased to announce the other day that we have actually decided it now. The next thing to do, of course, is to let the contracts for the detailed design and then the construction of it.

This is a very important project. During 2005 we worked with nearby landowners and local stakeholders, particularly the Cardwell Shire Council, the Tully canegrowers and the Tully mill board. The local member has also been supportive. We have had no problems whatsoever. This is an important project and everyone is supportive of it. I make no apology for taking on the federal government when I need to. The argument about getting the money for Tully took place in 2004. We got the money. We now have to spend it. We have been working very cooperatively with the people involved. In fact, the project is running a little bit ahead of schedule. We need to criticise the federal government when we need to. We need to work with them when we need to. I will do both and I make no apology for that.

Freedom of Religion

Mr CHRIS FOLEY: My question without notice is to the minister for small business and multicultural affairs. Last week I had the privilege of speaking on the Christian faith at a multifaith Harmony Day function at Maryborough's Brolga theatre. Before the function I enjoyed having dinner with Dr Mohamad Abdalla and his delightful wife, Peta. As the minister knows, Dr Abdalla is an Islamic scholar and the Imam of the Kuraby Mosque and represents the very moderate face of Islam. In stark contrast comes the appalling story of Abdul Rahman, who has been sentenced to death in Afghanistan for converting—

Mr SPEAKER: Could the member come to the question.

Mr CHRIS FOLEY: Yes—from Islam to Christianity. One could be forgiven for thinking that there are two Islamic faiths. What are the minister's views on freedom of speech and religion? What is the minister doing to ensure that, as the minister for multicultural affairs, these fundamental Australian values are protected in Queensland?

Mr CUMMINS: I would like to sincerely thank the member for the question. When it comes to international affairs, I do not think that it is right for a minister of the state to comment. I will not make any mention about what is happening overseas; I will leave that to the foreign affairs minister, Alexander Downer.

Within the state of Queensland multiculturalism is alive and well. We have people from 200 different birthplaces throughout the world.

Mr Caltabiano interjected.

Mr CUMMINS: The shadow minister just interjected. I am quite happy to stand up and say that the Labor caucus fully supports its multicultural affairs policy. I would like the opposition to come clean with its multicultural affairs policy. We find quickly that, like most of its policies, there is a vacuum. If the member is going to interject, he should put on that web site that is spoken about so well the coalition's policy on multicultural affairs.

We on this side of the House are very proud to stand up for multiculturalism. The shadow minister has not asked a question about multiculturalism. I again commend the member for Maryborough on raising very—

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr CUMMINS: That is right; the member sought National Party candidacy to stand for the seat in a by-election, but the National Party did not endorse him and he became an Independent member. That shows how out of touch the other side is.

We have a great working relationship with not only the Muslim community but all the ethnic communities across Queensland. We are committed to making sure Queensland is a cohesive and a multicultural society—one that we can all be proud of. It does not matter from where you come once you call Australia home and once you call Queensland home. People should be very proud of not only their heritage but also this country.

Gun Laws

Mr LEE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. Last month the opposition claimed the current gun laws are not sufficient, despite a report showing that the laws are working. What changes have been made to gun laws in recent years to protect community safety and how do these compare to National Party policy?

Ms SPENCE: Our Queensland gun laws are working. In fact, last year in this state robberies involving firearms fell by 11 per cent. That followed a statewide drop in armed robberies of three per cent the year before and a decrease in that number of 17 per cent the year before that. As well, the number of abductions involving weapons has decreased by 43 per cent, the number of firearm murders has decreased by 72 per cent—from 11 cases to three—and the number of attempted murders involving firearms has decreased by 62 per cent. So the good news is that our firearm laws are working.

The member for Indooroopilly asked me to comment on the coalition's stance on firearm laws. We all know where the Liberal Party stands on firearm laws. I believe that it supports the Labor Party and endorses tough gun legislation. Of course, the unknown is where the National Party stands these days on firearm laws. We know that, for example, the Leader of the Opposition is a well-known critic of our gun laws. He initially opposed gun registration. In the past couple of years he has criticised me twice in the media. He did not like our gun amnesty during which gun owners who had unlicensed firearms were able to give them back without facing prosecution because he thought we should be paying these unlicensed firearm owners for their guns.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Gregory!

Ms SPENCE: The amnesty worked. Over 96,000 unlicensed and licensed firearms and parts were surrendered during that gun amnesty.

Last month, we released data that showed more people had registered firearms in this state than ever before. The Leader of the Opposition did not like that. He criticised that as well.

Mr Johnson: What about bikie gangs?

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Gregory, it is my birthday today. You are a good bloke, but if you do that once more you will be going for a little walk.

Ms SPENCE: Mr Speaker, I would like to say happy birthday to you today. When the voters in Gaven cast their vote this Saturday, we know that most of them would like to vote for a Liberal candidate rather than for a National Party candidate. We know that most of them support our tough gun laws in this state, but they have a National Party candidate who does not support these tough gun laws. We do not know where the parties opposite in coalition stand on gun laws in Queensland. We want the coalition to tell Queenslanders where they stand on gun laws before people are forced to vote for them this weekend.

Moreton Bay Marine Park

Mr HORAN: My question without notice is to the honourable minister for the environment. I refer to the review of the Moreton Bay Marine Park and a push by the Greens to lock out recreational fishers from up to 50 per cent of the bay. With the review due to be finalised just after the state election, is the grubby preference deal between the Greens and Labor for the Gaven by-election based on the Beattie Labor government delivering on Moreton Bay lock-out zones?

Ms BOYLE: There is no such deal. The question should not be dignified by a further answer.

Cyclone Larry

Ms JARRATT: Mr Speaker, I also wish you a very happy birthday today. My question without notice is to the Minister for Emergency Services. The government's response to Tropical Cyclone Larry has involved all levels of government and the Australian Defence Force. Can the minister outline how the Department of Emergency Services coordinates this huge task, employing well-planned and rehearsed procedures involving a multitude of other agencies?

Mr PURCELL: I thank the member for the question. I also thank her for her continuing support for the emergency services in her area and the effort that has been made in her area since the cyclone zone has been declared a disaster area.

The State Disaster Management Group, the operational leadership of which is provided by the head of the Counter Disaster and Rescue Services, coordinated a response to this cyclone that struck on 20 March. Can I say categorically that the level of leadership, liaison and coordination achieved by the department was exceptional.

The department's state disaster coordination section swung into action three days before Cyclone Larry arrived, setting up crucial planning meetings. As its name implies, the centre has the specific role

of coordinating the response by all three tiers of government, other support agencies and the Australian Defence Force. The centre liaised with the Australian Defence Force to engage the crucial and specialist help of the military on the ground; the Queensland Police Service, which has a district coordination role and which made a marvellous effort; local councils and their mayors, who also made a marvellous effort; Emergency Management Australia; and Queensland's departments of communities, energy, transport, health, public works and other government agencies. I must say that every one of those agencies has performed superbly.

While this might sound like a logistical nightmare, Emergency Services coordinated the planning and relief effort very well. There was very little duplication and overlap in the areas where the department's specially trained people took the lead—in planning logistics, transportation and communication. That has meant that the department's people on the ground and behind the scenes have received the greatest possible cooperation.

I am talking about staff from the Counter Disaster and Rescue Services, which includes the SES volunteers; the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, including auxiliary firefighters and rural firefighters; the Queensland Ambulance Service, including paramedics and the Special Operations Unit from Cannon Hill; disaster operations specialists and urban search and rescue experts—just to name a few.

The way in which so many different agencies have joined forces demonstrates that Queensland has a very effective disaster management system. Three years ago the Beattie government put through the Disaster Management Act, which sets out a clear and logical framework for all tiers of government as to how they should cooperate in disaster situations. For any level of disaster now, Emergency Services has a response plan that is continually reviewed by its partners. Through training and exercises such as simulated cyclone disasters, its staff build up practical skills and experience that are now coming into play.

A number of members of the media and others have commented on how well the different agencies mesh their efforts. Yesterday, for example, the Governor-General paid tribute to people and was impressed by the coordinated effort by a 'cast of thousands'.

Gold Coast, Oncology Services

Mrs STUCKEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. As the minister knows, the opposition has raised with him here in parliament concerns about his closure of the oncology unit at the Gold Coast Hospital. That begs the question whether the minister has received similar concerns from Labor members from the Gold Coast. If six Labor members from the Gold Coast have failed to get this much-needed service reopened, why should the people of Gaven return yet another Labor member?

Mr ROBERTSON: Labor's commitment to restore oncology services at the Gold Coast Hospital should never be questioned. I know it has escaped the attention of members opposite that there is an Australia-wide and, indeed, international shortage of doctors. I know it has escaped their attention that, whilst we had a shortage of specialist trained nurses for oncology some months ago, we have been able to recruit and restore those nursing levels to what they were. But we are now faced with a shortage of oncology doctors—the same shortage that is impacting on the ability of hospitals in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne, to name but three cities that are also suffering vacancies for oncology specialists and doctors in their hospitals. The fact is that we do remain committed to restoring those services at the Gold Coast Hospital as soon as possible.

The decision to downgrade services was made in the interests of patient safety due to a shortage of staff. However, a full-time oncologist specialist position has been filled and that specialist will commence work at the hospital in September or October this year. The specialist is currently overseas on leave. That will mean that services will be restored close to normal levels by the latter part of this year. In the meantime, Gold Coast Health Service District management continues to actively recruit for the medical positions.

The important thing that the people of Gaven and, indeed, the Gold Coast need to understand is that it is not a lack of money that has resulted in changes to the oncology services on the Gold Coast. It is not a lack of money; the money is there. We are paying our doctors better than ever before. As evidence of that, where has the majority of the increases in the number of doctors and nurses Queensland wide since June last year gone? The majority has gone to the Gold Coast. Compared to June 2005, there are now 45 more doctors working at the Gold Coast Hospital than ever before. In relation to nursing staff, there are 122 extra nurses working at the Gold Coast Hospital today than in June 2005. No other part of Queensland has received the increases in nurses and doctors that the Gold Coast has. That is our commitment to the Gold Coast. That is our commitment to the people of Gaven. We will continue to recruit doctors and we will continue to recruit nurses and allied health professionals for the benefit of the people of the Gold Coast.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Clayfield, I recognise and welcome into the public gallery students of the Woodridge State School from the electorate of Woodridge, which is represented in this parliament by Mrs Desley Scott.

Film and Television Industry

Ms LIDDY CLARK: My question is to the Minister for Education and Minister for the Arts. The film and television industry makes an important contribution to the Queensland economy, with an average of $100 million a year being spent on production in the state over the past three years. I ask the minister: does the government have any new initiatives to attract filmmakers to Queensland?

Mr WELFORD: I thank the honourable member for her question and her interest in this important industry. I know she has been a key participant in the past. Our government offers a range of incentives to encourage filmmakers to shoot in Queensland. The worldwide movie industry is big business, and there is a lot of competition among film commissions across the globe to attract films to their shores. That is why our government, through the Pacific Film and Television Commission, is offering a new 12½ per cent state labour incentive as part of a plan to lure more big-budget films to Queensland. This is a major initiative to attract these big-budget productions to our state and to generate local jobs in the film and television industry. This new incentive will replace the cast and crew salary incentive, which was introduced in 1992 to attract international productions.

Since it was introduced, Queensland's film and television production industry has grown from an annual average of $10 million to more than $100 million over the past three years. The aim of this initiative is to get more of the bigger budget films like *Aquamarine*, *The Proposition* and *House of Wax* made here in Queensland. The 12½ per cent labour incentive now proposed is aimed at those higher end productions, which have bigger budgets and, in turn, have bigger flow-on benefits to the communities where they are filmed. This new incentive will make us more competitive with the incentives now being offered by other film commissions around the world.

As part of a campaign to let filmmakers around the world know about this new incentive, representatives from our state's film commission are heading to the United States next week for meetings with the major Hollywood studios. They will also be attending the Locations Expo in Los Angeles, which is one of the world's largest film marketing events. This new incentive, combined with the federal government's 12½ per cent refundable tax offset for international films, makes our state highly competitive domestically and internationally. I look forward to reporting to the House soon on some new major productions for our state.

QVAX

Mrs PRATT: My question is to the Minister for Health. With the likelihood of QVAX being unavailable after May 2006 due to a shortage of funding and the closure of the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, how will the minister guarantee all new employees requiring vaccination against Q fever will be vaccinated when to expose them to a known health hazard constitutes a breach of workplace health and safety obligations, which require employers to provide a safe workplace?

Mr ROBERTSON: I do not have the details that the member would be seeking in relation to that question. I am happy to get back to the honourable member with a response.

Schoolteachers

Mr BRISKEY: My question is to the Premier. What is the government doing to ensure that the high standard of Queensland teachers is maintained?

Mr BEATTIE: One of the important things we need to do is ensure that we do look after our teachers. That is one of the reasons why yesterday the Minister for Education and I announced that Queensland teachers would get a 12 per cent pay rise over the next three years, there would be a provision for improved career structures and we will create 300 new leadership positions in the state's primary schools.

With our recent EBAs we have made sure that we look after our workforce. We have seen it in the offer we have made to nurses—over 25 per cent over the period of that agreement. We have also ensured that we have paid our doctors properly. But let us talk about education because in the Smart State education is central.

It will cost Queensland about $776 million over the next three years, but it will produce great benefits to both teachers and students. Our teachers are worth every dollar. The creation of 300 new positions as heads of curriculum in our primary schools will provide new career opportunities for teachers and, importantly, will provide a stronger focus on programs for students. These positions will be placed in selected primary and special schools where there is most need—the smaller primary schools of between 225 and 324 students being allocated 100 of those positions. The Minister for Education, Minister Welford, said yesterday that the agreement would also ensure that principals and

deputy principals are given appropriate recognition for their important role. As the minister went on to say, 'A separate classification of school leader will be created in recognition of the key role that school leaders play in delivering improved results for students.'

Not only will next year be the year that prep becomes universal; we are actually paying our teachers properly so that we can ensure quality in the classroom. Today I want to thank our teachers for the brilliant job that they do. They are paving the way for the Smart State. I know that the Minister for Education will continue to pursue the prep year, on behalf of the government, so that every young Queenslander will reach their full potential for literacy and numeracy.

Mr SPEAKER: The time allocated for questions has expired.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Prince Charles Hospital; Haas, Dr N

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): The Minister for Health failed the basic test of accountability in this parliament. The Minister for Health has failed to tell this parliament what he knows. We have seven dead babies, and this government refuses to come clean.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: That is what we have. This government does not want to come clean on what is the most important issue of public interest in the community. We have heard a lot in recent times about the concerns of parents over the Norwood procedure. We have heard a lot recently about concerns over the treatment and the referral of Dr Nikolaus Haas to the Medical Board and the circumstances by which he was referred and the matters for which he was referred—except for the facts. Today in this parliament the minister refused to come clean. That is the real issue. What has this government got to hide? What has this minister got to hide? I say again that there are seven dead babies, and this government refuses to come clean.

What did we hear from this minister in parliament today when we asked him about the circumstances and the facts surrounding the reference of Dr Nikolaus Haas to the Medical Board of Queensland? Very little. We know that the government's response again is just a continuation of its culture of cover-up—the culture of cover-up which has dominated this government. Why would the minister not come clean on the facts under intensive questioning this morning? It is our job in this place to ask the question. It is the government's obligation to be open and accountable to the people of Queensland and to tell the truth. It has not done that.

It was quite obvious today that the minister was being slippery. It was quite obvious today that the minister was withholding information. This is information that the people of Queensland are demanding. What was wrong with the minister standing there and saying, 'This is the incident that was referred to the Medical Board of Queensland. This was the incident which ultimately led to the resignation of Dr Nikolaus Haas.' But we heard absolutely none of that. We saw the minister go on the defensive. We saw the minister go into an attack on those who were questioning and pursuing him. In a most galling display we saw from the minister exactly what we saw from his predecessor when we questioned him about Dr Patel in Bundaberg. We saw exactly the same thing: first of all deny it, then accuse the accusers and then go into testimonials about how brilliant the surgeon or the specialist was. We heard all of that in relation to Dr Patel. When this matter was raised in the parliament what was the government's response? Denial, accusations against the accusers and then testimonials. In the case of Dr Patel we saw members of this government—from the local member for Bundaberg, to the departed minister Gordon Nuttall through to a cabal of Labor Party members coming in here day after day saying, 'He was a great doctor, a great surgeon. We have lost a great surgeon.' Then they had the testimonials. Not only that, when they gave him a one-way air ticket out of Australia they also gave him a reference.

What did we see today? The most compelling defence from the Minister for Health was to read some testimonials from some other doctors. That does not answer the question. It also raises the opposition's concerns and our antenna because we saw that strategy when the government retreated behind some testimonials and refused to come clean in the case of Dr Patel in Bundaberg.

I simply say that the minister has a duty to this parliament. The minister should come into this place and stand there and say what the incident was. He is not prepared to do that. Today he basically said, 'This bloke was a good bloke. He was a good doctor. He was a great paediatric intensivist. He was doing a good job. It was all false media reports.' Did we not hear that in the case of Dr Patel in Bundaberg? It was the media's fault then, too—it was all false reporting and the matter should not have been referred. The reality is that the Medical Board of Queensland did receive information, that matters of concern were reported to the Medical Board of Queensland and that Dr Haas did have to give undertakings about what he could and what he could not do. One would imagine that, when such matters of concern are referred to the Medical Board of Queensland and undertakings are given, some substantial facts and some substantial concerns would be behind that.

Mr Caltabiano: The minister would know.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The minister should know.

Mr Caltabiano: He would know.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The minister would know. The minister would have briefing notes which would say what that is all about. Why are this minister and this government continuing the culture of cover-up, denial, counteraccusation and false testimonial which we have seen as the hallmark of their damage mitigation strategy, particularly when they have been challenged on the matter of their failure to properly administer the health system in Queensland for the people of this state?

This minister is not going to get away with this. His excuses this morning were extremely flimsy. A number of parents out there are demanding answers. We will keep pursuing this on their behalf. The coalition in parliament will keep pursuing this on behalf of those parents until we get the answers to which those parents are entitled. We also need to hear from this minister a clear undertaking that, in releasing that report into the failed Norwood procedure, the report will be made available publicly and in full. The report should not be made available by way of closed briefing to some people, even to those parents who do not have the opportunity to fully understand it and to fully appreciate it because of the significant medical terms and the chance for the government and their apparatchiks and operatives to bamboozle those parents. We want to see it released in full and publicly.

What we saw in this parliament today was another demonstration of the lack of accountability of this government—a government that is failing to get the priorities right; a government that is failing when it comes to the basics; a government that is failing in the priorities of accountability to this parliament, accountability to those parents who have those concerns and accountability to the media and to the people of Queensland who are asking extremely serious questions which they deserve to have answered. We have a government in this place that is so bereft of ideas and so bereft of a track record that it cannot even tell us today what its plan is for the electorate of Gaven in the upcoming by-election. We have a government that is stuck in a whingeing, knocking, carping, negative mode when it comes to its plan for Gaven.

Mr O'Brien: Ha, ha!

Mr SPRINGBORG: Can the honourable member for Cook tell me what his plan is for Gaven? He cannot. The honourable member for Cook can tell us as little about his plan for Gaven as he can about his plan for Cook. That is what we see from this government.

What we have been doing in the electorate of Gaven through our excellent coalition candidate, Alex Douglas, is laying out a clear plan for the people of Gaven. What do we have from the Labor Party? Stupid, negative ads because they have no track record in Gaven other than a track record of neglect and failure; a Labor member of parliament who was more interested in being the member for Thailand than the member for Gaven; a Premier and a Labor Party who were complicit and oversaw that member's neglect of the electorate of Gaven; and a Labor Party government that promised an ambulance station three years ago and was not prepared to build it or even call tenders until Bob Quinn, Alex Douglas and I stood on the site two weeks ago and challenged them. Then they called tenders that very day.

Mr PURCELL: I rise to point of order. What the opposition leader is saying—

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point or order, Minister. Resume your seat.

Mr SPRINGBORG: It must have been a great coincidence that as we stood there on that day the government called for tenders—the greatest coincidence in the history of the universe. A Labor Party candidate, when challenged on whether we needed a new police station at Helensvale—

Mr Purcell: That police station was in preparation long before that.

Mr SPRINGBORG: It is not happening. A Labor Party candidate, who was asked about whether we needed a new police station at Helensvale, said—

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Minister, you are being quite disorderly.

Mr SPRINGBORG: A Labor Party candidate who was challenged about whether we needed a new police station at Helensvale said, 'No, we don't; we need less criminals. We do not need more police; we need less criminals.' A Labor Party member, when challenged on the issue of a new fire station for Nerang said, 'We don't need one.' Maybe we need fewer fires! This is the sort of stuff that is going on in the electorate of Gaven. The coalition, by contrast, has a clear plan for a new fire station, for a new police station, for oncology services on the Gold Coast, to make sure that we have an ambulance station, to make sure that we have appropriate public transport—issues that are important to the people of Gaven.

Safe Youth Parties Task Force

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.40 am): The Safe Youth Parties Task Force, established by the Minister for Police and Corrective Services in May last year, has worked hard to ensure that community views have been heard with regard to out-of-control youth parties.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my parliamentary colleagues who worked so hard on this important issue and also criminal justice review for its wonderful assistance. Many of the negative consequences of youth parties are tied up with broader social issues such as parental responsibility, drug and alcohol abuse by young people, social and economic development for young people, juvenile justice, the role of security advisers and the list goes on.

The broader problem of out-of-control youth parties warrants a longer term, multifaceted, flexible and more cooperative approach to produce a safer social environment which can deal with all these issues that lead to these gatherings getting out of control in the first place. The report of the Safe Youth Parties Task Force is just the first step towards better social and criminal justice systems. Resulting changes and programs will be an enormous task for government and the community.

Parties, celebrations and get-togethers are part of our normal social interaction with relatives, friends and neighbours. While most parties are held without incident and without intervention from the police, when parties do get out of control negative consequences are apparent. To most of us it is reasonable to expect high noise levels and increased traffic in the neighbourhood when a neighbour is hosting a party. However, when party activities escalate to a point where the peace and safety of the community and young people is compromised, the community is less likely to accept disruption such as massive overflows of guests onto properties or public areas such as parks and streets, property damage, graffiti, littering and physical and verbal abuse.

The broad scope of the task force was to examine the nature and extent of disruptive youth parties and how their effects on community safety and amenity could be addressed. The task force gathered information from a wide range of sources to establish a comprehensive understanding of the nature and extent of youth parties and to ensure that multiple perspectives were considered. These sources included QPS 'calls for service' data, a youth survey, public submissions—written, oral and online—QPS assistant commissioner submissions, stakeholder consultations and interviews and media reports.

The task force conducted a public submission process between 10 June and 31 October 2005. A discussion paper was also released which introduced some preliminary issues relating to out-of-control parties and identified the goals of the consultation process. The task force accepted submissions from the public and key stakeholders via phone, post or email. Additionally, an online consultation was conducted at the Queensland government's Get Involved web site to enable submissions to be made over the internet. There were 94 submissions received in total. Of these, 47 were made online, 22 were emailed, 15 were posted and 10 were made over the phone directly to task force members.

The youth survey targeted young people aged between 15 and 24 years currently attending school, TAFE, university and/or in employment and assessed their perceptions of youth parties in the general community. The task force conducted a community and stakeholder forum in a number of areas to undertake a more intensive investigation of the issues surrounding out-of-control youth parties. These areas were identified by a preliminary review of police data as experiencing higher numbers of out-of-control youth parties and were areas which received a lot of media coverage of parties causing significant disruption in the local community.

Forums were conducted at Redland Bay, Gold Coast—north and south—Sunshine Coast, Rockhampton and Warwick. Representation at the forums included representatives from the QPS, Queensland Health, local government, community and youth organisations, public and private high schools, school principals, school captains and teaching staff and members of the public.

Despite media reports, police receive very few calls to attend out-of-control youth parties. In the nine areas of the state that were studied in this review, and which comprised a large proportion of Queensland's youth population, fewer than two per cent of calls for police service related to young people—parties or gatherings. Of these 1,490 calls for service, 38 per cent related to youth parties. This is less than one per cent of all calls for police assistance.

Notwithstanding the fact that most parties occur in private homes, feedback from the youth survey, submissions and community forums indicated that a small number of youth parties are occurring in public spaces, in particular parks and beaches. Consequently the task force believes it is important that local governments ensure that public facilities and parks are safe for everyone to use by considering improvements that will reduce opportunities for criminal activities.

The task force identified a number of factors that contribute to youth parties getting out of control. These factors include under-age alcohol consumption, gatecrashers, electronic communication, youth boredom and parental responsibility or lack of supervision. The task force acknowledges the negative health and social consequences—

Time expired.

Cyclone Larry

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.45 am): On Saturday morning, 18 March, communities of north and far-north Queensland went about their lives as usual without any thoughts of an impending disaster. Most were vaguely aware of something brewing out in the Coral Sea, but I doubt that very many people were especially concerned. In the words of a song made popular by singer Dinah Washington—

What a difference a day makes; 24 little hours.

On Saturday night there was growing cause for alarm and by Sunday morning we were in no doubt that a massive cyclone was bearing down. Panic buying in Townsville supermarkets and elsewhere in the north during all of Sunday was testimony to that fact.

Apart from its intensity, what made Larry remarkable was the speed and directness of its approach. North Queenslanders have become used to cyclones dithering around and not being able to make up their minds when and where to head in. While Townsville and other northern communities thank their lucky stars that the category 5 cyclone had spared them, feelings of relief were quickly replaced by overwhelming concern for the people of Innisfail, Mourilyan, Babinda, Silkwood, Kurrimine, Mission Beach and all other locations that were hit full-on by Larry's fury.

I am greatly encouraged by all those residents in the Townsville region who quickly came forward wanting to be of assistance on the ground or to donate items and money. One example is the Housing Industry Association in Townsville which offered a list of tradespeople who could go to the zone if called on by the SES. Another example is the Townsville RSL and its president, Rod McLeod, who last Friday presented me with a cheque for $11,500 for the Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal.

The local media, too, deserves accolades. All facets of media in north Queensland have demonstrated yet again how vital they are in supporting and informing the community in a time of natural disaster. Speaking for the Townsville media, the local radio and television coverage was unsurpassed during the frightening period over Sunday night and Monday morning, as was the *Townsville Bulletin*'s all-embracing reporting and photo coverage of Cyclone Larry and its consequences.

I must make special mention, too, of the teams at radio station 4TO FM and the local ABC. They were fantastic in their tireless efforts right through Sunday night and Monday. The teams on both stations lifted our spirits through frightening and worrying hours. 4T0 is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, and what a way to mark such a memorable occasion.

Traditionally, whenever a cyclone has hit the north Queensland coast in modern times local communities have drawn comfort from wonderful radio, television and newspaper support. As I said in a media statement last week, I have no doubt that north Queenslanders would be of the one voice in praising the dedication of all local media people—radio, television and newspaper—for keeping us up to the minute in the best possible way on Larry's progress and aftermath. In fact, letters to the editor in the *Townsville Bulletin* and calls to talkback radio left no doubt as to how much the efforts of the media were appreciated during and after the cyclone crisis.

Before leaving the subject of media, I can only say that it was sour grapes on the part of a few journalists, in particular some working for the *Australian* newspaper, when they attacked the presence of politicians in Innisfail after the cyclone and accused them of only being there for photo opportunities. Had they not been seen at the heart of things, in particular the Premier and the Prime Minister, one can just imagine the fallout then.

Like everyone in this House I feel for all those families and individuals whose lives and economic circumstances have been so cruelly dislocated by Cyclone Larry. I know it has been said many times in the past week, but it is incredible that while the cyclone caused destruction likened to a war zone it did not result in any fatalities and we must be very, very thankful for that. Tourism to north and far-north Queensland will most likely be affected in the short term. There only needs to be a sniff of a cyclone, let alone the one just experienced, to put people off coming. It is vital that we get the message across that the Townsville region escaped unscathed, as did Cairns and Port Douglas. As for Townsville, Magnetic Island and all points west to Charters Towers and beyond, it is business as usual, and holiday-makers must be reassured of that fact.

Regardless of the cyclone, a steady stream of tourists from the southern states will no doubt head north again as soon as they start feeling the chill of winter, but it is right here and now that we need to let everyone know that, for most of the north, everything is fine. As for Mission Beach and all other destinations in the region, after the big clean-up they will be just as great to go to as they ever were. It would be tragic if tourists stopped coming because of Cyclone Larry. As a government, we must do all that we can to help ensure that does not happen.

Cyclone Larry

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (11.50 am): Severe Tropical Cyclone Larry's path of over 200 kilometres in width affected areas of far-north Queensland centred on Innisfail. Apart from a range of precautionary measures when a cyclone is evident, there is no defensive preparation for wind speeds of 290 kilometres per hour. From well before dawn last Monday, 20 March, Severe Tropical Cyclone Larry devastated the coastal region from Cairns to Cardwell and then made its way to the Atherton Tableland and beyond, where it severely damaged a range of crops and property.

Miraculously, there was no loss of life, but the effects of Cyclone Larry have seriously disrupted the lives of many people. Property damage to centres such as Innisfail and Babinda was catastrophic. So, too, was the damage in Silkwood, Kurrimine Beach, Mission Beach and, to a lesser degree, El Arish. On Saturday, I drove around this area to see residents cleaning up roofing iron, timber from damaged buildings and a range of vegetation. Sometimes trees were tangled up with powerlines, as the dedicated Ergon crews worked relentlessly to install power. In some cases, the force of the wind snapped power poles. It had been impossible to contact people in isolated communities, as mobile and fixed line reception was not available. Due to the lack of power, exchanges could not function and the backup batteries at the exchanges were flat and exhausted. Many people had small petrol generators to provide emergency power for refrigeration and minimum lighting, but, because electricity was not available at service stations, people had to queue up at bowsers that had generator power to pump fuel. In some cases where trees had fallen across the road, people were prevented from going into town centres.

The Army and emergency services personnel worked long hours with limited sleep last week to assist in the restoration of services. A fleet of Army helicopters and planes such as Hercules and Carabou flew mission after mission to bring essentials into the region. To compound the difficulties with road transport, the infamous Tully River rose to 800 millimetres over the highway on Wednesday morning, preventing the supply of large six-tonne generators and many other goods destined for small towns. The highway was closed for some two days.

From Bingil Bay north, trees were stripped of their foliage. The exposed areas on the hillsides felt the true force of Larry. Had Severe Tropical Cyclone Larry's lateral movement of 290-kilometre winds been slower, the effect would have been beyond doubt the most serious disaster to have struck the coast of far-north Queensland. Larry made its way west on its very destructive course and was still recording wind speeds of 200 kilometres an hour 100 kilometres away from Innisfail.

Over 85 per cent of Australia's commercial bananas are grown in the path of this severe tropical cyclone. The crop in the region is valued at $380 million, but the flow-on effect is worth $870 million to the community. Well in excess of 90 per cent of the crop has been destroyed. Four thousand people are employed. Growers say that 3,000 workers will have to be laid off, many of whom will have homes that have been damaged by Cyclone Larry. The sugar crops have been badly damaged, with a higher degree of loss close to the cyclone's centre. Tully Mill, which is 50 kilometres from the cyclone centre, estimates the loss to growers and the miller to be $35 million. Innisfail and Babinda suffered more destructive winds, with tops broken off and cane uprooted. Sheets of iron and debris are scattered around the fields, creating a nightmare for mechanical harvesting. The flow-on effect is of major concern. Towns, businesses, trucking companies and those they employ have serious consideration for their immediate future.

Prime Minister John Howard, Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile and Premier Peter Beattie visited Babinda and Innisfail on Wednesday to assess the destruction and to hear the problems the cyclone created for people in those centres. At Innisfail, mayors and affected industries were given a brief opportunity to present preliminary assessments of their losses. Federal agricultural minister Peter McGauran and state primary industries minister Tim Mulherin also attended a growers' meeting to gain an understanding of the losses. Whilst a recovery package has been presented to the community, there will need to be further considerations.

Time expired.

Cyclone Larry

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (11.55 am): I would also like to talk about Cyclone Larry, following the contributions of the member for Hinchinbrook and the member for Mundingburra. It certainly affected my family in Cairns. I live in Bungalow in Cairns and the wind gusts at the height of the cyclone were very strong. In Cairns, however, the damage has been mostly superficial. A few roofs were blown off and there is some minor structural damage, but at the same time many trees have been blown down. I estimate there are well over a thousand trees down in Cairns alone.

I have been through a few cyclones over the years, and even though this one was not a direct hit on Cairns we certainly had a bit of a blow. Usually there is a lot of rain leading up to a cyclone, but that was not the case on this occasion. The wind gusts started picking up a little after midnight and by 3 o'clock were consistently howling down my street. What happens is that you get strong gusts that

gradually build up into what we had at around 8 or 9 am, which is an intense blow. I cannot imagine how much more powerful it was in Innisfail and surrounds. Certainly, though, at the height of the cyclone with trees swaying uncontrollably and the awful sound of the relentless wind, I started to worry about the safety of my family. As I said earlier today, my in-laws are from Innisfail and I will talk a little bit about their experience in a minute.

The reality is that Cairns is not the focus of relief efforts. The focus has rightly been 80 kilometres to the south, in Innisfail. The reason I start with Cairns, besides the fact that that is where I live, is to highlight how broad the destructive front of this cyclone was. The second reason I start with Cairns and not Innisfail is that everybody knows these places and how the events of the last week or so have unfolded. Unfortunately, not every town and place that has been affected by the cyclone has received media attention. There are a number of small communities in the Innisfail district that have been severely affected, and we are not hearing enough about the plight of people in those small country towns. I am talking about places mentioned by the member for Hinchinbrook such as El Arish, Silkwood, Miriwinni, Mission Beach and Bramston Beach. It is important that people in these very small communities are also receiving attention from the relief agencies. The Atherton Tableland, as the Premier indicated earlier, was also affected by the cyclone. It would be easy for people on the tablelands to be complacent about cyclones. Normally, when a cyclone hits the tropical north Queensland coast, the tablelands get lots of rain but not necessarily the associated wind—until now, that is. I expect that the member for Tablelands will talk more about how the cyclone has affected the individual communities in her electorate today.

Overall, the response from government agencies to the cyclone has been fantastic. Never mind the couple of whingers that the media love to pick up on, Ergon workers, the State Emergency Service, council workers, staff from the Department of Communities and a host of others have been working tirelessly to bring order back to these shattered communities. They should all be congratulated. We have to realise that an incident like this, however, has a deep psychological impact on people. Certainly my wife's parents, even though their house was fine following the cyclone, were shaken up by its ferocious nature and the possibility of harm.

Some people will no doubt need counselling to deal with the emotional trauma of the event even if they were not physically harmed. Often people become angry when dealing with the roller-coaster of emotions that are experienced during such events. This is compounded by a lack of services, particularly power and water.

I started to get angry calls from constituents in the northern beaches of my electorate after two days without power. While that might not be totally reasonable it just goes to show that people on the outskirts of the areas affected by the cyclone and destructive winds have a low threshold when it comes to when they want their power and other services back. Members can imagine what the people of Innisfail are going to be like after a month without power and longer periods without water.

There has been widespread destruction to the power network. It is a logistical nightmare to get it back up and running. I am particularly concerned about some of the problems that may occur down the track. With a lack of hygiene due to no sewerage system and hot water it is easier for disease to spread. In north Queensland at the moment there are a lot of mozzies around which adds to the risk of dengue fever, Ross River fever and other diseases of that nature.

I think the Premier has picked the right man in Peter Cosgrove. He certainly has the confidence of the community up there in leading the recovery work. I acknowledge the leadership the Premier has shown. It has come from the top down.

Bus Industry

Mr CALTABIANO (Chatsworth—Lib) (12.01 pm): Across Queensland bus services play an important role in all communities. In the urbanised south-east corner buses are essential in the provision of public transport. In regional and remote communities bus transport services are fundamental to their existence. Presently there are 1,328 school bus contracts and 59 performance based urban bus contracts across Queensland and more than 44,000 authorised drivers servicing the public transport sector. In addition, there are 10 long distance bus contracts.

Throughout Queensland buses not only provide an effective mode of transport but also provide social value. Some 59 rural and remote communities are directly supported by subsidised air and long distance bus services. In 2004-05, $12 million in subsidies was made available for long distance and regional public transport with $1.88 million allocated to keeping 11 bus routes operating to over 45 regional and remote communities. This is a subsidy level the Queensland coalition supports.

One of the biggest challenges for the bus industry is to renew its fleet. Two schemes currently operating to bring new buses into the fleet are the school bus upgrade scheme and the steep bus upgrade scheme. Both schemes have had up to $3 million a year committed to them by the current government over a 25-year period on a 40 per cent subsidy basis for the purchase of buses up to five years of age.

The coalition is aware of the impact that the appalling condition of Queensland roads is having on buses and is aware of the increasing need to upgrade bus fleets. As a result, the coalition commits to increase the school bus and steep bus program subsidies to at least 50 per cent of the purchase price. The coalition is committed to increasing the school bus and steep bus subsidy funding by 33 per cent from $3 million to at least $4 million a year and also increasing the age of the buses that qualify for these programs from five years to 10 years to make upgrading more affordable for bus operators.

This increase in funding to upgrade bus fleets across the state will unquestionably have a positive impact on the operation of bus services, particularly on public transport bus patronage. In all, there are 136 million passenger trips made on all modes of public transport each year. Interestingly, in Brisbane, Brisbane Transport patronage for 2004-05 increased by 10½ per cent and is on track in 2005-06 to increase by 12½ per cent. This is remarkable given the previous decade of almost zero growth in public transport patronage in the Brisbane city bus system.

The introduction of TransLink integrated ticketing in July 2004 has made transport easier and more affordable and, together with the south-east Queensland busway and the purchase of new gas buses, the air conditioning of the council's old bus fleet has no doubt been largely responsible for the increase in patronage of public transport services around Brisbane. TransLink was a system that was long overdue. I congratulate Queensland Transport for its implementation of this.

There are two key implications that the introduction of TransLink has had on the bus industry. Bus fares for commuters are up to 40 per cent lower than fares approved in the rest of the state. This lower fare structure has created situations where some bus services in and around TransLink areas that are not under TransLink contract are significantly disadvantaged. The coalition recognises the need to rectify these inequities and is committed to providing an additional $2 million in funding to address this problem. We are committed to fare equalisation across Queensland in our first term of government so that all operators can share the benefits of increased patronage.

The most serious criticism the coalition has of the Labor government relates to its failure to invest in infrastructure, particularly during the term of the Beattie government. This failure to invest has stemmed from the failure to adequately plan for the massive growth it encouraged. It does not matter whether one looks at our health system, our energy sector, our water storage or our roads, a failure to plan and a failure to invest has unfortunately allowed Queensland infrastructure to fall into its current parlous state.

Over the last eight years a failure by this government to adequately invest in this state's road infrastructure has had massive ramifications for road based industry. When the last eight years budget allocations for statewide infrastructure are accumulated there has been a massive underspend of $2.53 billion. This has resulted in Queensland's roads being in desperate need of upgrade and repair. The demand for the use of these roads is increasing at a rapid rate.

With the population of Queensland increasing by half a million people over the last eight years there are now tens of thousands of new cars on our roads. Congestion is one of the many consequences of not providing the infrastructure needed for this growth. Every year there is increased congestion and the condition and quality of our roads progressively declines. As a result, bus operators, particularly in the south-east corner, are finding themselves less efficient and less competitive. They cannot deliver a predictable, reliable service. That is counterproductive to increasing bus patronage. If a bus is going slower than the rest of the traffic people are going to move away from buses and back to their private motor vehicles which will simply exacerbate the situation. It is a core responsibility of the Queensland government to provide the necessary infrastructure to allow our public transport to get ahead of the growth and minimise the congestion on our road network.

Cyclone Larry

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (12.06 pm): In the past few days we have all seen the terrible devastation caused to communities in north Queensland by Cyclone Larry. Lives have been turned upside down by the fury of this cyclone. This morning in this parliament many local MPs have highlighted the suffering of many people in the region. Often when these natural disasters occur they are in other parts of the world. When Cyclone Larry occurred the reality was brought home. The question still remains: what can an individual do to ease the suffering? We all seem so powerless.

I know of a great example of people in south-east Queensland willingly giving support to affected people in the north. In my electorate of Kallangur, the Jinibara State School at Narangba has mobilised in support of a cyclone affected state primary school. What is so exciting about this support is that the idea came from the school's student council. Now that mobilisation involves the parents, staff and students of the school and the community of Narangba.

At Jinibara State School one of the levels of self responsibility is service. This challenge will put that word into action. There are no doubt many state primary schools in the cyclone ravaged region that have been damaged or destroyed. Jinibara State School will raise the necessary money to fund and support the learning needs of all primary aged students at a state school before the start of term 2.

The facts of the situation are that many cyclone affected families have lost their homes and livelihoods. The timing of this cyclone is such that all of those families would have paid for and been provided with book packs and materials for their children to start the 2006 school year. That family investment has now gone and with it the school resources and materials. What is also significant is that the school family at the Jinibara State School recognises the essential building block of a primary education. A primary education provides the foundation for future successful learning and learning development. The school recognises the investment that parents make in their children's education and the Jinibara State School family want to assist these children and their families through donations so that the critical aspect of family life, a primary education, can be materially supported and the school life of a child at a state school in the cyclone affected area can return to some sense of normality as soon as possible.

The student council has arranged to make a gold coin collection and is organising fundraising activities. Those funds raised will be used to purchase basic essential student items from pencil cases, rulers, biros to general stationery. Business has joined in. Firefly Press has committed to donating an English and maths text for each student, together with all teacher resource packs to support those text books.

Teachers Union Health has committed 60 computers for classrooms. Local business Kangaroo Bus Lines has been very generous with its support. Items both bought and donated will be stored at the Jinibara State School until the end of the term and then transported to the new state school for the start of term 2. Senators Joseph Ludwig and John Hogg are organising the freight and there is no charge of course from the Jinibara State School. I am proud that the Jinibara State School Student Council has come up with this idea and the school family has put together a plan.

I am sure that there are plenty of other individuals, organisations, charities and businesses doing all sorts of things to help in this crisis. But the activities of the Jinibara State School are my unashamed focus. This project has the total support of the whole school community, the student body, the teaching and administrative staff and the P&C Association. The local newspaper, the *Caboolture Shire Herald*, has visited the school and enthusiastically reported the project. The school is grateful to our local newspaper for its support. This is a project which is growing daily, a project which teaches students the value of service to the community. I welcome the student initiative and strongly support the project.

Cyclone Larry

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (12.10 pm): A little over eight days ago Cyclone Larry, a category 5 cyclone, hit the north Queensland coast. It was perhaps the strongest cyclone that has hit the Queensland coast, certainly in recent years, in terms of its scope of 150 kilometres on the coastline and up to 150 to 200 kilometres inland with devastating winds. I was fortunate to be able to join with the member for Hinchinbrook and the Leader of the Opposition, Lawrence Springborg, in endeavouring to drive through the devastated areas of north Queensland. However, on Tuesday night we were held up in Ingham because of torrential rain on the highway. Indeed, on Tuesday night more than 300 millimetres—or 12 inches—of rain fell at Tully and varying amounts north of that. As a consequence, the highway was cut from Tuesday night until early Friday. That alone caused greater inconvenience in terms of the movement of heavy vehicles, food, generators, provisions et cetera into north Queensland. In fact, heavy vehicles in Tully that were carrying perishable commodities were turning around and going back to Townsville to hook into electricity to maintain those supplies.

I have a personal contact in the fact that my wife and her family have lived in Babinda for many years. I was fortunate to be married to my wife at the hall in Babinda which is currently a devastated wreck, as is a lot of Babinda. I am fortunate also to have many friends in Babinda that I was able to make contact with. It is heartening to see that people in Queensland, particularly in north Queensland, can deal effectively with an issue like this and still have great spirits. It really was heartening to walk up the main street of Babinda with the Premier, the Prime Minister, Mark Vaile, our Leader of the Opposition, the minister and the member for Hinchinbrook to see people still working hard to make things happen along with all of the emergency services people and the Army and Air Force.

The ups and downs that people go through in terms of that sort of devastation have to be seen to be believed. I do not believe that the footage that was coming out of north Queensland in the media was a true reflection of what was actually happening on the ground, and I think the Minister for Emergency Services would agree with that. Out of the areas that we visited, Babinda was probably one of the worst. However, the scope of the damage to communities from just north of Ingham to Cairns—it is a huge area with many small communities, as others have mentioned—really did not make the news but in terms of devastation were just as bad and, in some cases, even worse.

I send my great thanks and support to the volunteer workers, the emergency services people, QAS, QFRS, Ergon, Energex and Telstra. We are becoming a new society with the availability of mobile phones. While mobile phones were working, they were a great asset to the people of that region. It just goes to show that we really need to ensure that that communication medium stays in place under those sorts of circumstances and we need to strengthen the ways in which that can happen. We also have to

be aware of the hard work that has been done and is being done by the mayors of the region, council workers and CEOs who have put their shoulders to the wheel. Neil Clarke from Innisfail has done a tremendous job, but there are others throughout the region. The ADF with its Hercules has been flying in tarpaulins and machinery from all over Australia. Black Hawk helicopters and Chinooks have also been assisting in the region. Most importantly, the ADF personnel on the ground with their heavy Army vehicles and earthmoving equipment were cleaning up. They work with a quiet professionalism that distinguishes our people in the ADF. Many houses and properties were destroyed, many beyond repair. Industries affected are the banana industry, the sugar industry and the dairy industry. However, nobody has said much about the timber industry.

Time expired.

Fraser Coast Mental Health Services

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (12.16 pm): I am delighted to inform the House that mental health services across the Fraser Coast are back to full strength. The mental health service has successfully recruited two new psychiatrists, a locum principal health officer and four new mental health nurses. Among the new recruits is a new clinical director of mental health who will start work in April. Beds in the Maryborough mental health in-patient unit had been reduced to 10 in November as a result of the departure of a number of key medical staff. However, as a result of the successful recruitment of new staff, the in-patient unit has now reopened with its full complement of 14 beds. I am delighted that a boost in funding has in fact allowed the Fraser Coast Health Service District to upgrade its senior medical staff to now include four psychiatrists, up from two psychiatrists and two senior medical officers last year. This increase in services and staff means that facilities at the village in Torquay Road will be expanded and refurbished to house extra staff and provide more interview rooms.

I also want to inform the House of the scale of the outpatient metal health services provided in Hervey Bay via the service at the village. I was very surprised recently when a journalist phoned me to ask me to comment on a suggestion that there was a complete lack of mental health services in Hervey Bay. Let me assure the House that nothing could be further from the truth. There are in fact about 50 people directly working in the Fraser Coast mental health service and they share a budget in excess of $6 million annually. The Acting Director/Manager of the Fraser Coast mental health service, Mr Graham Mahaffey, is part of 13 clinical staff who are based at the village in Hervey Bay. They include two psychiatrists; one public health medical officer, who is a doctor; a team leader for the acute and in-patient service who is supported by two full-time and one part-time intake officers who are a psychologist, a nurse and an occupational therapist; three case managers being two psych nurses and a social worker; and two child and youth workers who are both psychologists. That is just the staff at the village in Hervey Bay.

As members will appreciate, this is a very substantial mental health service which offers a multidisciplinary focus for the people of Maryborough and Hervey Bay. It is worth noting that the Fraser Coast Health Service District in 1998 employed three—I repeat, three—people to provide mental health services. It now employs around 50. As I mentioned, the annual budget for mental health services for the Fraser Coast is now in excess of $6 million. Indeed, there is growth money available at the start of the next financial year, and I have been informed in discussions with hospital management that the service will again be expanded.

The growth in mental health services on the Fraser Coast in circumstances of the well-documented medical workforce shortage during the period of the Beattie government is something of which I am very proud. Mental health is a vital area within regional communities such as mine. It has a major impact on the daily lives of many local people and their families. The Fraser Coast mental health service sees 200 people a month who are referred or who present to the service. There are a further 350 people who are receiving care through one of the mental health services provided in the district. The service offers the full range of short-term acute treatment, longer term rehabilitation, and mental health care for the aged, for children and for adolescents.

When one considers the social impact of mental illness, it is difficult to overstate the importance of having access to good local mental health care. I want to place on record my thanks to both Graham Mahaffey and the Fraser Coast Health Service District Manager, Kerry Winsor, for their ongoing and successful efforts at recruiting highly qualified staff in this vital area. It is because of the wide range of mental health services offered that the Fraser Coast Health Service District has been able to recruit so successfully.

Mental health professionals want the challenge that comes from providing such a depth of services. The fact that mental health services are again at full strength and at record levels with more growth to come is great news for everyone on the Fraser Coast and needs to be understood by everyone with a genuine interest in the facts about health services, particularly mental health services.

Police Service

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (12.20 pm): It is with a great deal of concern that I met with local constituents who expressed a high level of frustration and resentment in relation to the processes currently in place to investigate complaints against commissioned officers in the Queensland Police Service. Those concerns were not in relation to the Gladstone police district specifically but were complaints about the statewide procedures and were more broadly based complaints.

These constituents outlined the experiences they had themselves or were aware of—stories that demonstrated a difference in the process and attention paid to complaints against commissioned officers versus the treatment of complaints against rank and file officers. As a general example, it was outlined to me that in almost all instances of complaints against general duties officers such complaints meant that the relevant officer was impeded in the progression of any applications for transfer or promotion until the complaint had been fully dealt with. Conversely, these people advised me of several commissioned officers against whom internal complaints had been made who not only were successful in their application for transfer but also experienced no impediments to their promotional opportunities. These people were not asking that the investigation of complaints against general duties officers be less stringent. That did not rate a mention. They want equity and transparency in the investigation of complaints, irrespective of whom the complaint is made against: general duties, plain-clothed or commissioned officers.

Since the time of Fitzgerald a number of investigative bodies have been established: the Criminal Justice Commission, the Queensland Crime Commission and now the Crime and Misconduct Commission. Each of these bodies at the time of their establishment was responsible for investigating misconduct or corruption allegations within government departments.

I acknowledge that the complaints and allegations I have received must be tested. However, in the discussions I have had recently there is clearly an increasing level of scepticism about the willingness of senior police officers, the CMC and the Ethical Standards Command to address at times quite serious allegations of misconduct, maladministration and victimisation within the Police Service where those allegations involve commissioned officers.

In most cases the current complaints process for officers is an internal one in which an officer makes a complaint to their senior officer with an expectation and an obligation on senior officers, where those complaints relate to corruption or misconduct, to refer those matters to the Crime and Misconduct Commission. The commission then determines whether the investigation is done by commissioned officers or is referred back to the unit of public administration, or in the case of the Police Service the Ethical Standards Command, for an internal investigation.

With a deteriorating level of confidence in the process, it would be dangerously easy to have a deterioration in the standards of the Police Service as the attitudes and confidence of lower ranked officers are directly determined and influenced by the conduct and attitude of senior officers. I make an offer to any officers in the Police Service who know of or who have experienced a real or perceived lack of proper investigation of internal police complaints to contact my office by email or letter either to outline their experiences or provide other information to enable those allegations to be properly investigated and, where necessary, new procedures put in place to ensure an open, transparent and fair investigation of concerns.

I have written to the minister for police in relation to these matters. I thank her for her response to the media requesting that specific incidents be given to her for investigation. Although the minister indicated that she intended to pass on those complaints to the CMC for its attention, I believe that police officers want to see the minister's personal interest and oversight of these investigations as the officers themselves have lost confidence in the current process, which includes the CMC process.

It would be possible to audit the process over the past several years by looking at the complaints made against general duties officers and determine how they were investigated and compare that process to the process used for complaints made against commissioned officers and by making a comparison of the thoroughness of the investigation implemented. Additionally, it would be important to audit local police district records to determine how many complaints against general duties officers were rightly referred to the CMC and what complaints against commissioned officers were not referred to the CMC for investigation.

It is imperative that police officers and the community have the highest level of confidence in the integrity of our Police Service. It is equally important for police officers to have confidence in the probity of the investigation of complaints made against them or made by them against another officers, commissioned or not. It is generally the officers at the coalface who do the bulk of the legwork that is needed to keep our communities safe. Those officers need to know that they are treated with fairness and equity. I look forward to that confidence being rebuilt for the benefit of the officers, their families and the community generally.

Gold Coast University Hospital

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (12.25 pm): Two weeks ago the Beattie government launched the largest hospital construction and health plan that the Gold Coast region has ever seen with an indicative funding commitment of half a billion dollars. Central to the master plan for health is the construction of a new major health facility, a new tertiary hospital to be co-located with Griffith University's Gold Coast campus.

The development of the new Gold Coast university hospital will rival existing university hospitals around the world and undoubtedly make the Gold Coast the first choice for both practising health professionals and those who want to study medicine or other related fields. But this new facility is just one part of a master plan that will respond comprehensively to the future needs of this rapidly growing region. The draft master plan also includes an expanded Robina Hospital, where work is already underway on the new accident and emergency and critical care unit. In fact, this morning the health minister, Stephen Robertson, and the member for Mudgeeraba, Di Reilly, are currently on their way to the Robina site to inspect the start of works.

The Queensland government established the Robina campus of the Gold Coast Hospital on the site of the former St Vincent's Private Hospital in 2001. This $42 million investment has added significantly to the range of public health services available on the Gold Coast. The Beattie Labor government is serious about addressing the future healthcare needs of Queenslanders and is rising to the challenge—planning for future growth and making the financial commitment that is required to meet the challenges ahead. Since coming to office we have more than doubled the Gold Coast's health budget—from $142 million in 1998-99 to a record $292 million in 2005-06.

The master plan will take into account changing models of care with emerging trends and a greater focus on treating patients with chronic illnesses in community settings. To this end, health hubs will be established in key strategic locations across the region in areas such as Southport on the current hospital site, Nerang, Robina, Palm Beach, Helensvale and Coomera. These hubs will provide, and in some locations they currently provide, day services that do not require admission to hospital such as day rehabilitation, renal therapy and diabetes care.

Queensland is the fastest growing state in Australia, and the Gold Coast is growing at twice the state average rate of growth. By 2016 the Gold Coast is expected to have a population of 640,000 and by 2026 a population of 740,000 as well as a significant tourist and transient population. The highest demand for health services will be from the ageing population, which is expected to represent the single largest demographic group in our community.

From the current data there are a number of things that we know or can expect to help us plan for our future health needs. By 2021 the Gold Coast will need a total of 1,343 beds—979 at Southport and 364 at Robina. Hundreds of extra qualified health professionals, doctors in a range of specialist disciplines, nurses and community health workers will be needed to meet the growing demand for health care and to staff the expanded services on the Gold Coast. So it makes sense to co-locate the new hospital next to a medical school.

The availability of a greenfield site on vacant land adjacent to the Griffith University's campus at Southport represents a unique opportunity to establish a super health precinct, giving our Gold Coast medical students a world-class training ground right on their doorstep.

To ensure that we meet the future demand for health services we need doctors and, to that end, this government is funding 235 doctor training places at Griffith University on the Gold Coast at a cost of $60 million over eight years. The first 35 places under this initiative became available this year. An additional $4.5 million has been allocated to Bond University's medical school building and its new multimillion-dollar health sciences and medicine faculty to train more doctors.

The people of the Gold Coast now have the opportunity to have their say on how this new world-class hospital will be built and operated. The Premier, Peter Beattie, and Minister for Health, Stephen Robertson, launched the public consultation on 17 March to help develop the master plan for health services in the region. The consultation will be for a period of three months and includes formal and detailed consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

Initial consultation, expected to take about three months, will be wide ranging and include a series of public forums at different venues in the next couple of months. A second phase involving a draft master plan will follow, and we expect to finalise the master plan before the end of the year. I encourage all Gold Coast residents and anyone with an interest in the future of our health system in the region to have a look at the draft master plan and to have their say now so we can get it right for the future.

RACING AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (12.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Racing Act 2002. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (12.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Racing Amendment Bill 2006 is one of the final steps in moving the Queensland racing industry into the 21st century. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Racing Act 2002 to give effect to the transition of Queensland Racing from a statutory body to a company limited by guarantee and to extend the Queensland Harness Racing Board and the Greyhound Racing Authority as statutory authorities for a further limited period pending their transition to a company structure.

This is the final phase in the reform of the thoroughbred code in Queensland and implements the provisions of the Racing Act that provide for the transition of control bodies from statutory authorities to corporations. These transitional provisions were passed by this parliament on 30 October 2002. It was recognised at that time that to be competitive in this modern privatised wagering environment control bodies must be provided with the flexibility to operate with a strong commercial focus, which can only be achieved through a company structure.

On 19 October 2005, Queensland Racing Ltd, a company limited by guarantee, formed by the current members of the statutory authority, the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board, applied for approval under the Racing Act as the control body for the thoroughbred code of racing. Following a detailed assessment process, on 22 December 2005 Queensland Racing Ltd was granted an approval as the control body for the thoroughbred code of racing, to be effective from 1 July 2006. This approval was given subject to the condition that Queensland Racing Ltd further consult with the proposed members of the company in relation to an alternative draft constitution proposed to be adopted by the company and referred to in the approval notice and that it report to me on the results of this consultation.

Queensland Racing Ltd conducted extensive consultation with the members of the company and has reported on the results of this consultation. The company has recommended changes to the draft constitution as a result of the consultation process, and my department is in the final stages of review of those changes prior to it being submitted to me for consideration of giving final approval.

Of the 123 racing clubs and associations representing industry participants, only the Queensland Turf Club continues to express concerns in relation to the membership structure and voting rights of members of the company. While I acknowledge the Queensland Turf Club's position, I consider that the draft constitution of Queensland Racing Ltd, which requires directors to be suitably qualified and elected through a democratic process involving racing industry representatives and members of the board who are not standing for election, is the most appropriate model for a modern control body with key regulatory functions. An essential element of the model, and the cornerstone of protecting the integrity of the Queensland racing industry is that members are not directly nominated by race clubs to represent the vested interests of that stakeholder group.

The constitution of Queensland Racing Ltd, as amended through the consultation process, will allow industry participation without undermining the independence required to effectively carry out the company's functions as a control body under the Racing Act. From 1 July 2006, Queensland Racing Ltd will be the control body for thoroughbred racing in Queensland, and its principal object is to exercise the powers and perform the functions of a control body under the Racing Act. The current members of the board of Queensland Racing will serve as the inaugural board of the company for a period of three years following which they will progressively be required to stand for re-election.

Queensland Racing Ltd is a company limited by guarantee. The income and property of the company must be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects of the company, and no portion of it can be paid or transferred directly or indirectly to the members by way of dividend, bonus or profit.

The amendments to the Racing Act will transfer the assets and liabilities and ongoing responsibilities of the statutory authority, the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board, to the company Queensland Racing Ltd, with effect from 1 July 2006. The amendments will also transfer the staff of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board to Queensland Racing Ltd on terms and conditions at least equivalent to those applying immediately prior to their transfer on 1 July 2006.

While the thoroughbred code of racing has sufficient capability and resources to successfully transition from a statutory body to a corporate structure, the Queensland Harness Racing Board and the Greyhound Racing Authority are much smaller bodies with fewer assets and are not currently prepared for the transition to a corporate structure. In order to enable further consideration as to the structure and operations of these control bodies within a corporate environment, the bill extends the operation of these control bodies as statutory authorities until 30 June 2008.

In closing, this bill provides the thoroughbred code with the opportunity to operate effectively within the dynamic and constantly changing privatised wagering environment. Neither Queensland nor Australia are isolated from threats to the viability of our racing product. What this government has done is to position our control bodies not only to respond to current challenges but also to ensure they are equipped to face future challenges. This government has provided the framework to ensure the control bodies are best equipped to meet these challenges. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Langbroek, adjourned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lee): Before calling the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, I would like to acknowledge in the public gallery the principal, the year coordinator and the school captains of Ferny Grove State High School in the electorate of Ferny Grove, represented in this parliament by Geoff Wilson. Honourable members, it is also the school my little sister goes to.

PROSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (12.37 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Prostitution Act 1999, 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) (12.37 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I introduce a bill today that reflects the Beattie government's continued commitment to prostitution law reform. Prostitution law reform has been ongoing since the Fitzgerald inquiry in 1989.

The Beattie government believes that Queensland prostitution laws provide an appropriate balance between the need for strict legislation and the need to address the social factors that arise from prostitution. Following the change in government in 1998, and based on the results of public consultation and significant research into approaches in other jurisdictions, the prostitution legislation reform proposal for Queensland was developed. The proposal outlined five principles that guided the development of the framework for the regulation of prostitution in Queensland: ensuring quality of life for local communities; safeguarding against corruption and organised crime; addressing social factors which contribute to involvement in the sex industry; ensuring a healthy society; and promoting safety.

In July 1999, following the release of the prostitution legislation reform proposal, the Prostitution Act 1999 was developed and passed by parliament in December 1999. Section 141 of the act required that the Crime and Misconduct Commission must, as soon as practicable after the end of three years after the commencement of the act, review the effectiveness of the act and give a report on the review to the Speaker for tabling in the Legislative Assembly.

In December 2004, the CMC released its report of the regulation of the prostitution industry in Queensland, *Regulating prostitution: an evaluation of the Prostitution Act 1999*. Key findings of the evaluation report include that Queensland now has a safe and effective legal brothel industry; there is no evidence of corruption or organised crime within the legal industry; and the impact of legal brothels on the community appears to have been minimal. Nevertheless, the evaluation report recommended a number of amendments to the act and Prostitution Regulation 2000 to ensure the legal industry's continued viability and to reduce incentives for an illegal industry.

Of the 29 recommendations, this bill implements 17 through legislative means. With respect to extending the testing regime for sex workers in licensed brothels, complaints-handling processes for client service issues and processing advertising requests, a regulation will be developed for cabinet approval within the next six months. I will now address the specifics of this bill.

Clarifying brothel licensees may operate under corporate structure

Section 81 (Licensee not to operate brothel in partnership or in association with unlicensed person) of the act creates an offence where the licensee operates a brothel in partnership with, or otherwise in association with, a person who is not also licensed to operate the brothel. A person operates a brothel in association with another person if the person directly receives income from the brothel. This provision was designed to minimise the opportunities for licensees to have 'hidden' associates who may try to operate illegally. Given the existing governance and probity measures in place to safeguard the legal industry against organised crime, it is appropriate that licensees be allowed to undertake normal management of their business operations through a legitimate corporate structure that provides the benefits available to any other industry. This bill will provide legislative amendments to the act to remove any uncertainty on this issue and that a licensed brothel may operate under a corporate structure while still retaining the current accountability and transparency requirements.

Prostitute offering to provide sexual intercourse or oral sex without a prophylactic

Previously, section 91 of the act provided that a prostitute at a licensed brothel must not engage in sexual intercourse or oral sex without using a prophylactic. The provision was designed to minimise the risk of spreading sexually transmitted diseases. The Police Powers and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2003 amended and renumbered section 91 as section 77A. In addition, the amendment extended the application of section 77A to all prostitutes, including prostitutes working in contravention of the act.

On 12 June 2004 a police officer of the Queensland Police Service Prostitution Enforcement Task Force contacted a male by telephone as a result of a number advertised in the *Courier-Mail* 'Adult Services' section. An arrangement was subsequently made for the officer to obtain sex for money at the male's address. The male indicated that he would provide oral sex without the use of a prophylactic. The male was subsequently charged with breaching the act.

On 12 July 2004 the matter was listed for summary hearing in the Brisbane Magistrates Court. On 18 October 2004 the magistrate found the defendant not guilty, highlighting the inadequacies of the wording of the current provision. The male argued that, although an offer to engage in prostitution was made, section 77A of the act requires an actual act of sexual intercourse or oral sex. In outlining the reasons for the verdict in relation to this matter, the magistrate identified difficulty in reading the definition of 'prostitution' contained in section 229E (Meaning of prostitution) of the Criminal Code together with the elements of section 77A of the act. In light of this decision, the bill amends section 77A to ensure that the offence applies in circumstances where a prostitute offers to provide intercourse or oral sex without a prophylactic.

Increase number of sex workers permitted on brothel premises

Section 78 (Brothel offences) of the act creates offences for a person who is a licensee or an approved manager of a brothel. The provision includes an offence for a licensee or approved manager of a brothel to have more prostitutes, at any one time, at the brothel than the total number of rooms that have been permitted to be used for providing prostitution under the application for the brothel. The evaluation report highlighted that licensees, managers and key government informants consider that workers must have the opportunity to rest during a shift, or even stop work altogether should an incident occur that requires them to seek urgent medical attention such as a condom break or spill. They have indicated that on a busy night there could be eight to 10 clients in the waiting room and that sex workers may work continuously throughout their shift. Although licensees and managers do not require them to work continuously, sex workers may feel obliged to do so when it is busy. If more workers were available, it is considered likely that they would be able to take more regular breaks.

It is believed that enabling more sex workers to be rostered on than the number of rooms available may solve some of the licensees' organisational problems and lessen some of the workplace health and safety problems of the sex workers. The bill addresses this issue by enabling eight sex workers to be rostered on at any one time at a five-room brothel and proportionately fewer sex workers for smaller brothels. However, the act will still limit the number of rooms for prostitution in a brothel to five or fewer. It is the view of the Beattie government that the amendment is consistent with the spirit of the act, which is to draw as many of the illegal operators and workers as possible into the legal industry. Although there is a risk that there will be too many workers for the number of clients available on less busy nights, it is likely the increase in staff will address staffing problems in the long term.

Mr Speaker, my speech is lengthy. I seek leave to have the rest of it incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Display of licence number at premises

Mr Speaker, the evaluation report indicated that all licensed brothels appear to have significant security measures in place to protect staff and clients, such as security cameras, visitor recording information, duress alarms and managers on site.

A number of licensed brothels also have systems in place to provide a confidential and supportive environment in which workers can report incidents that could compromise their safety. While the evaluation report did not highlight any significant concerns within the legal industry concerning safety of staff and clients, it did highlight that many licensees are concerned about the ready availability of this information.

In particular, licensees are concerned that disgruntled clients who may have been refused entry, or illegal operators may obtain personal information about the licensees and put the safety of the licensees, their families and their employees at risk.

Mr Speaker, to allow this issue to be addressed, the Bill will amend the Act to allow licensees to display a licence number, address of the brothel and expiry date of the licence rather than the personal details of the licensee as currently required under the provision.

Licensee's particulars required by the Authority will be maintained within their records only, which are currently unavailable to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 1992.

Section 64K (Appeals by applicants)

Mr Speaker, to overcome concerns about the capacity of local councils to override code assessed brothel applications, the Prostitution Amendment Act 2001 amended the Act to establish the Office of the Independent Assessor.

Section 64K of the Act created a right of appeal to the Independent Assessor about the decisions of an assessment manager or a local authority with respect to development applications for a material change of use of premises for a licensed brothel, where the application is code assessable.

The task of the Independent Assessor is to provide ease of accessibility, informality and efficiency while maintaining quality of decision making, particularly in terms of fairness. Before the creation of the Independent Assessor, appeals from decisions about development applications were heard and determined by the Planning and Environment Court, a body comprised of judges of the District Courts.

The CMC, through the evaluation report, recommended that the jurisdiction of the Independent Assessor should be extended to include the capacity to hear appeals against the initial decisions of assessment managers about whether premises should be 'impact' or 'code' assessed.

Even though the Independent Assessor has worked well to date, local authorities have sometimes overridden the process by deeming the premises to be impact assessable, when it is clearly a code assessable premise. The current planning framework in the Act does not allow the applicant to appeal this decision.

Furthermore, the evaluation report raises issues of concern about applications to make additional changes to brothel premises, such as adding a number of toilets, after a local authority has provided approval for development. Additional approvals are required and if the local authority refuses to grant the approval, the applicant is limited in their rights of appeal to the Planning and Environment Court rather than the Independent Assessor.

The Authority noted that in 2003–04, an appeal was lodged to the Independent Assessor in relation to a council's refusal to amend plans for a site already approved as a brothel. In that matter, the assessor wrote that he had no jurisdiction in any matters involving appeals against refusals to change or cancel conditions for code assessable brothels.

Mr Speaker, the Bill will amend the Act to allow the Independent Assessor's jurisdiction to be extended to include: the actual decision of the assessment manager as to whether the premises should be subject to impact or code assessment; and the jurisdiction to hear appeals in respect of all development applications from brothel owners, including applications to change or cancel conditions contained in the original development approval or undertake development work after the building has been completed.

Section 7 (Meaning of "Interest in a brothel")

Mr Speaker, the Authority has expressed concern about the wording of section 7 of the Act. The evaluation report stated that the Authority suggests that section 7(1), paragraphs (i), (j) and (k), are somewhat ambiguous.

It may be argued for example, that a sex worker is a person having an interest in a brothel because he or she has entered into a business arrangement or relationship with another for the provision of prostitution at the brothel.

However, subsection (2) excludes a mortgagee from the definition of a person having an interest in a brothel.

The Bill will amend section 7 of the Act to clarify that a prostitute is not to be regarded as being involved in a brothel when entitled by way of remuneration to a proportion of the payments made for sexual services provided by the prostitute.

Enabling brothel licences to be granted for a three year period

Mr Speaker. it is the view of the CMC that there are benefits associated with extending the brothel licence period from one year to three years.

Licensees will benefit through reduced administrative burdens and greater predictability, which will have tangible benefits for sustainability of the legal brothel industry.

The Authority will benefit from reduced administrative demands while allowing it to maintain adequate control over the industry.

Section 19 (The licence) of the Act limits the term of a brothel licence to a period of one year unless it is sooner surrendered, suspended or cancelled. It has been suggested that limiting brothel licences to one year creates difficulty for licensees to obtain the necessary financial support required to establish a legal brothel.

It is considered unlikely that a three-year licence period for brothel licensees would compromise safeguards implemented in the Act for the protection against organised crime. Consequently, the Bill amends the Act to allow a brothel licence, including the renewal of a licence, to be granted for a period of three years.

Allowing annual payment of licence fees and confirmation of relevant information details of licensees

Mr Speaker, brothel licensees are subject to annual assessments and compliance procedures. It is believed that allowing a brothel licence to be valid for a three-year period should be subject to annual confirmation processes and the annual payment of licence fees.

Brothel licensees are currently subject to annual assessments through the application process as well as compliance procedures through provisions contained within the Act.

Section 20 (Requirement to notify changes in information given) of the Act requires a licensee who becomes aware of a change in the information given in relation to an application for the licence to disclose such information within 10 days of the change.

A licensee who fails to comply with this provision commits an offence.

The proposed confirmation of information by the Authority during the period of the licence will still require the Authority and QPS to conduct probity checks. It is believed that the introduction of an annual process to complement the three-year validity period will continue to safeguard the legal industry from organised crime.

Accordingly, the Bill amends the Act to require a licensee, who is issued a brothel licence for a period of three years, to provide annual confirmation of relevant details provided in the application for a brothel licence and that such confirmation be accompanied by a fee prescribed in regulation.

Extending the Regulation-making power—Prostitution advertising

Mr Speaker, the Act provides that the advertising of prostitution must not describe the sexual services offered, or induce a person to seek employment as a sex worker, or state, directly or indirectly, that the business supplying the service provides or is connected with massage services.

The Authority must approve all advertising and has developed policies for advertising by sole operators and licensed brothels that are displayed on its website. The Act allows regulations to be made about a range of matters including advertising in relation to licensed brothels. While this head of power exists, the Prostitution Regulation 2000 does not currently outline any advertising requirements, including timeframes for approval, or monitoring function.

The report indicated that sex workers are critical of current advertising restrictions which appear excessive in comparison to other industries, and have had a significant impact on the ability of licensed brothels to encourage business from the illegal industry. Concerns have also been raised about the lengthy amount of time taken by the Authority to approve advertising in relation to licensed brothels.

In contrast, the report also highlighted arguments against a relaxation of current advertising requirements. For example, the assertion that relaxing bans would shift the illegal workforce into legal brothels lacks evidence and a relaxation may provide scope for sex workers to provide a one-sided view of the industry to minimise the negative consequences of sex work and encourage potential workers to the industry.

The report also recognised that the current advertising restrictions present a considerable enforcement challenge for the QPS and the Authority. The policing of advertising is onerous as it includes the activities of sole operators, licensed brothels and publishers.

Mr Speaker, the Bill will address this issue by amending the Act to provide a regulation-making power regarding advertising by sole operators (in addition to licensed brothels). To give effect to the CMC's recommendation to make efforts to expedite the advertising request process, it is proposed that a regulation be developed for Governor-in-Council approval within the next six months, outlining that where advertising for licensed brothels and sole operators meets requirements outlined in the regulation (similar to those currently displayed on the Authorities website), the approval of the Authority is not required.

However, where an advertisement does not meet the requirements the licensed brothel or sole operator will be liable to a fine equivalent to approximately 70 penalty units ($5,250).

This streamlined process will allow licensed brothels and sole operators to advertise in a timely manner and addresses enforcement issues for QPS and the Authority.

Mr Speaker, there are many aspects to the Bill and I do not intend to address each and every part of the Bill as the explanation of them is provided in the Explanatory notes.

However, all members of this House will agree this legislation is consistent with the five principles that guided development of the framework for the regulation of prostitution in Queensland.

The Beattie Government has, and will continue its commitment to prostitution law reform in Queensland.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Johnson, adjourned.

CONSUMER CREDIT AND TRADE MEASUREMENT AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development) (12.46 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Consumer Credit (Queensland) Act 1994 to make changes to the Consumer Credit Code, and to amend the Trade Measurement Act 1990 and the Trade Measurement Administration Act 1990. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. MM KEECH (Kawana—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development) (12.47 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The bill amends two key pieces of legislation administered by my portfolio—

- the Consumer Credit Code, which is an appendix to the Consumer Credit (Queensland) Act 1994, and
- the Trade Measurement Act 1990.

Queensland administers these acts as a participant in two national uniform legislation schemes regulating consumer credit and trade measurement. Both of the schemes operate under the direction of the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs, of which I am a member, and the amendments in this bill have been endorsed by the council. Subject to the bill being passed by this parliament, the amendments will be mirrored by the other Australian jurisdictions participating in the legislative schemes.

Credit amendments

The Consumer Credit Code applies to most consumer credit products marketed for personal, domestic or household purposes. It establishes rules for credit providers transacting with consumers and thereby provides important consumer protections, including remedies and penalties, when those rules are not followed. The objectives of the bill in relation to credit are to—

- facilitate the application of the electronic transactions legislation to the Consumer Credit Code;
- ensure that consumer protection is not diminished as a result of a debtor transacting in an electronic environment; and
- extend the sunset clause in relation to the mandatory comparison rate regime in the Consumer Credit Code by one year to enable a review of that regime to be completed.

E-commerce

Electronic transactions legislation has been enacted in all jurisdictions in Australia for the purpose of facilitating e-commerce and promoting business and community confidence in this mode of business.

At present, the application of electronic transactions legislation to the Consumer Credit Code is ambiguous. Different legal opinions exist in relation to the extent to which the code, electronic transactions legislation and general law permit the use of electronic communications for credit transactions. The amendments in this bill will give certainty to the application of electronic transactions legislation to the Consumer Credit Code while ensuring that consumer protection is maintained in the electronic environment.

The amendments will exclude the application of Queensland's Electronic Transaction Act where it would compromise the consumer protection objectives of the Consumer Credit Code. In particular, they will not allow rules about the receipt of electronic communication and attribution of documents to be altered.

Mandatory comparison rates

In relation to the mandatory comparison rate amendments, on 1 July 2003 the provision of mandatory comparison rates became compulsory under the credit code for all fixed term consumer credit. The scheme requires:

- all credit advertisements that contain an annual percentage rate to quote a comparison rate; and
- credit providers, linked providers and finance brokers must supply consumers with schedules of comparison rates.

Given the time, I seek leave to have the rest of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs originally sought to review these provisions within three years of operation. Consequently, the provisions were scheduled to sunset on 30 June 2006.

A consultant has been undertaking a national review involving the public release of a consultation paper followed by preparation of a 'decision making' Regulation Impact Statement. While the review is well advanced, a delay in the consultation phase has meant it will not be completed in time for the Ministerial Council to consider before the provisions sunset on 30 June 2006.

The relevant amendments in this Bill are therefore necessary to extend the sunset clause by one year. Otherwise, the mandatory comparison rates regime will expire before conclusion of the review and consideration of any recommendations for further refinement of the scheme.

Trade measurement amendments

In relation to the trade measurement aspects of the Bill, all Honourable Members would be aware of the essential role played by Trade Measurement legislation in the commercial sector. The Trade Measurement Act 1990 provides a basis for determining the value and fair exchange of most goods being traded. Trade measurement standards adopted into legislation enable businesses to compete on an equitable basis, and facilitate fair trading and consumer confidence.

The trade measurement amendments in this Bill will implement recommendations agreed by the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs with the objective of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the legislation. The amendments will:

- clarify the intention of the legislation that a packer is also liable for short measure in the same way as the seller. This will remove any doubt about who is obliged to comply with the requirements for supplying the correct measurement of prepacked articles;
- prescribe how firewood will be measured when it is sold by volume. Establishing a method of calculating the quantity of firewood when it is sold by volume will provide greater certainty about compliance with the legislation and will provide a 'level playing field' for suppliers. The new provision will not restrict firewood sold by mass or per load;
- enable the legislation to address a partnership holding a weighbridge licence. This addresses a business need as until now the provisions have been silent on a licence held by partnership; and
- replace the requirement for a separate 'certificate of suitability' for a trader acting as a public weighbridge, with a suitability statement written on the licence. This will rationalise documentation requirements for business and streamline administrative processes.

Summary

In summary, the amendments have been approved by the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs to improve the operation of these national uniform legislation schemes.

The Consumer Credit Code and the trade measurement legislation play an important role in fostering fair and competitive markets and consumer protection in respective industries.

The amendments will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the legislation, including addressing business and consumer needs and keeping pace with industry developments.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

PERSONAL INJURIES PROCEEDINGS (LEGAL ADVERTISING) AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. LD LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (12.50 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002, 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. LD LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (12.50 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends three different acts within my portfolio—the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002, the Legal Profession Act 2004 and the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003.

The amendments to the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002 are aimed at restricting the activities of so-called claims harvesters. Claims harvesters are non-lawyers who advertise that they provide assistance in commencing personal injuries claims and finding lawyers to complete claims. They attract claimants through advertising which advises the claimant that he or she will not have to pay any fees to the claims harvester. The claims harvester then sells the claim file to a solicitor. The claims harvesters do not charge the claimant a fee for the work they undertake, but do charge the solicitor a fee for the claim file. Anecdotally, this fee may be as high as $8,000 depending upon the action.

The policy intention at the time of the passage of the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002 was to remove the 'no win, no fee' stream of advertising that was prompting unmeritorious claims and allowing unscrupulous lawyers to pressure claimants into making claims where they may not have otherwise ever considered so doing.

The Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002 already restricts advertising of personal injury services by or on behalf of lawyers. Section 66 of the act provides that an advertisement may only state the name of a lawyer or a firm of lawyers together with information as to any area of practice or specialty. Such advertising may only be done in certain specified ways, and must not be in or on a hospital. Advertising for personal injury services may not be made on television or radio. Section 67 of the act prohibits any person from touting for personal injury services at the scene of an incident or at any time. This latter restriction applies to both lawyers and non-lawyers who, in the course of their employment, obtain information about a person suffering an injury.

Advertising by claims harvesters was not a phenomenon at the time of the passage of the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002. However, as a result of the complete banning of advertising for personal injury services in New South Wales, a business called Australian Injury Helpline began advertising in Queensland in a way that was originally proposed to be outlawed by the act.

These amendments will ensure that all lawyers operate on a level playing field when it comes to advertising their services for personal injuries. It will further ensure that claimants will not have to pay the additional hidden and indirect cost of extensive advertising by claims harvesters. It is important that these advertising restrictions and the related prohibitions against touting are adequately enforced. For this reason, the bill amends the Legal Profession Act 2004 to enable the Legal Services Commission to take complaints, investigate and prosecute for breaches of these advertising restrictions and prohibition on touting. This is consistent with the purpose of the Legal Profession Act 2004 to regulate legal practice and, as stated in section 3(b)—

to provide for the protection of consumers of legal services and the public generally.

Where non-lawyers are suspected of breaching the provisions, there will, in most cases, also be a breach by a lawyer. For this reason, and because the same evidence would be needed to prosecute both breaches, it is considered practical and cost-effective for the Legal Services Commission to have the power to investigate and prosecute for breaches of part 1 of chapter 3 of the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002.

There is a further but unrelated amendment to the Legal Profession Act 2004. Certain provisions of the Legal Profession Act 2004 will commence automatically on 31 May 2006. They relate to:

- incorporated legal practices and multidisciplinary practices;
- the registration of foreign lawyers;
- the abolition of the Solicitors Complaints Tribunal and the costs assessment provisions under the Queensland Law Society Act 1952; and
- section 43 which limits the admission rules to one year of supervised training as a prerequisite for admission.

It is desirable that those provisions not commence until certain amendments included in another bill, expected to be introduced in May, also commence. In the event that the other bill is not assented to by 31 May 2006, the bill provides for the commencement of the provisions that would otherwise automatically commence to be further postponed.

The bill also amends the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003 to enable the Supreme Court to impose interim detention pending final determination of an application relating to a contravention of a supervision order.

Given the time, I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my second reading speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Pursuant to the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003, the Supreme Court may make a continuing detention order or a supervision order, if satisfied the prisoner poses an unacceptable risk that he or she will commit a serious sexual offence if released from custody or if released from custody without a supervision order being made.

If a prisoner is on a supervision order and a police officer or corrective services officer reasonably suspects the prisoner is likely to contravene, is contravening, or has contravened, a condition of the supervision order, the officer may apply to a magistrate for a summons requiring the released prisoner to appear before the Supreme Court, or in limited circumstances, a warrant for the prisoner's arrest.

The act then allows me to apply for the rescission of the supervision order and the imposition of a continuing detention order. in considering such an application, the court requires acceptable and cogent evidence that the released prisoner has contravened or is likely to contravene a condition of the supervision order and that the released prisoner is a serious danger to the community.

The preparation of such evidence can take a significant period of time, particularly in relation to the psychiatric examination of the released prisoner and preparation of relevant reports. In the meantime the released prisoner remains in the community, as the act does not allow the court to make an interim detention order in the circumstances.

The amendment will give the court that option.

The act is also amended to provide that when the police or corrective services apply for a summons in relation to a released prisoner, a copy of that summons must be given to me within two business days of the released prisoner being served. This will ensure that I, as Attorney-General, receive timely notification that it is believed the released prisoner is contravening or has contravened a condition of the supervision order.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

FISHERIES AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (12.56 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Fisheries Act 1994. I present the explanatory notes and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (12.56 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill proposes a number of amendments to the Fisheries Act 1994. No amendments to the act were made during 2005, which was a year of consolidation in regard to fisheries management arrangements. However, the need for various amendments has emerged, some of them as a result of detailed stakeholder consultation last year on the new fisheries licensing and fees arrangements.

Firstly, amendments are proposed to formally establish in legislation Queensland's longstanding shark control program. Honourable members will be aware that Queensland has operated a shark control program for bather protection since 1962. The purpose of this very important program is to reduce the possibility of shark attacks on humans in coastal waters used for bathing. I am sure that no honourable member could possibly argue against the need for this program. The recent unfortunate fatality at Amity Point highlights only too well the risk bathers take when entering the water. That attack notwithstanding, the government's shark control program has served this state well.

A central tenet of government is to protect its citizens. This bill broadens the legislative declared purposes of the Fisheries Act to provide an additional specific purpose clause to allow for the establishment and management of the program. The bill also makes it clear that the functions of the chief executive of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries include the administration of this program. Furthermore, section 81 of the act is to be amended to clarify that firearms and powerheads may be used by persons contracted to operate shark control apparatus to deal with sharks caught by authorised shark control equipment.

Secondly, amendments are proposed to clarify the circumstances where compensation is payable. It is proposed to amend the act to clarify the state's liability for compensation where changes are made to fisheries management arrangements by amendments to subordinate legislation. At present, the act is unclear whether compensation can be payable where fisheries management arrangements are set out in the Fisheries Regulation 1995 rather than in a specific management plan. In the case of a management plan, compensation is only payable in the terms provided in the particular plan.

The bill provides for a common process for compensation schemes, regardless of whether the management arrangements are in the regulation or in a formal management plan. The bill defines the circumstances in which compensation is payable and provides a formula to determine the amount of compensation that is payable.

The bill recognises that persons are eligible to claim for compensation if their fishing rights are diminished or removed for the purposes of giving these rights to a non-commercial sector or to protect marine life other than that managed under the act.

In view of the limited time I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my second reading speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Applications for compensation in such circumstances will be based on a formula that takes into account the reduction in market value of fishing entitlements resulting from the management changes, as well as the expected loss of income over a three year period because of the loss of fishing entitlements.

The bill provides a process for applying for compensation and deciding applications, and allows for decisions about compensation to be appealed through the Fisheries Tribunal. This amendment will therefore provide for greater certainty for the fishing industry and the wider community, regarding the circumstances in which compensation may be paid.

Thirdly, amendments are proposed relating to the new fees and licensing regime.

Under the new fisheries licensing and fees system, which will commence on 1 July 2006, licence fees will be paid through payments in arrears. The act needs to be amended to provide for the suspension of authorities if fees remain unpaid for specified periods of time despite a written warning.

When the debt is paid, the authority will be restored. In the case of personal commercial fisher licences, these will be cancelled if fees remain unpaid but the fisher may apply for a commercial fisher licence at any future stage.

Fourthly, amendments are proposed in relation to arrangements for release of information where management plans are proposed to be developed or amended.

It is proposed to remove the current mandatory requirement to release draft legislation during consultation about the development or amendment of fisheries management plans.

At present, the process in the act for making or amending fisheries management plans requires the release of draft legislation for the plan—even at the point when stakeholder consultation is just commencing.

In some instances this has raised stakeholders' expectations about the content of the final plan, or created a false impression that the consultation process is merely a 'token' exercise with the government already having made up its mind on the form the amendments are going to take.

Industry stakeholders have also expressed concerns about the length of time taken to prepare fisheries management plans, and a more streamlined approach would help to resolve this problem.

Under the provisions of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, a Regulatory Impact Statement will always provide stakeholders with comprehensive information about fisheries management arrangements proposed to be included in a new or substantially amended management plan.

The intention is for the RIS to provide, in 'plain English' language, a full description of the proposed provisions or amendments. Where appropriate, draft legislation could still be released as a matter of policy once the consultation process has reached the stage where all the issues have been placed 'on the table' and have been properly debated.

Amendments are also proposed in regard to temporary transfer of fishery quotas.

It is proposed to remove the existing provisions in the act preventing temporary transfer of fisheries quota within the final 28 days of a quota year. This will enable fishers to undertake quota transfers at any time throughout the year.

In addition, I propose to remove the requirement for third party interests and transferees to consent to temporary quota transfers. This will free up quota trading and provide people in the fishing industry with greater flexibility in their business operations. Administrative systems are being developed to enable quota holders to action temporary transfers themselves through the internet.

Additional amendments are proposed to reduce red tape and enhance the administration of the act. These amendments include consolidating into the act various provisions relating to closed waters and closed seasons, regulated fish, fishing method and permitted fishing apparatus, contravening conditions of authorities, and information that must be obtained, kept and reported to the chief executive or given to another specified person.

The proposed consolidation will simplify the provisions, and will promote clearer and more consistent translation of these provisions into the subordinate legislation.

I also propose to amend several definitions to correct ambiguities and deficiencies.

Finally, an amendment is proposed to pick up fisheries management changes at the Commonwealth level.

The bill proposes an amendment to enable the variation of Commonwealth-state fisheries management arrangements under the Offshore Constitutional Settlement. This will complement the Commonwealth's Fisheries Legislation Amendment (Cooperative Fisheries Arrangements and Other Matters) Bill which was initiated in and passed by the Senate on 9 February 2006 and passed by the House of Representatives on 1 March 2006. The bill is currently subject to assent.

The amendments proposed by the Commonwealth will provide a process for varying existing fisheries management arrangements including inter-jurisdictional or 'joint authority' arrangements under the Offshore Constitutional Settlement. Lack of a process for variation has previously necessitated the cancellation and remaking of agreements under the Offshore Constitutional Settlement.

This bill provides that, in line with the amendments proposed under the Commonwealth bill, variations of Queensland-Commonwealth arrangements will be able to be made by ministerial agreement.

These amendments when taken together will enhance the operation of the Fisheries Act. They should not be controversial and have the support of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association which represents commercial fishers.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

INTEGRATED PLANNING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 7 March (see p. 585).

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (2.30 pm): I am pleased to rise today to speak to the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. There are a number of issues in this bill that need to be covered. Integrated planning has had a very long and chequered history in Queensland, right back to the days when not a lot of planning was done. We have had various examples of that over the years with Russell Island and others places of note. All around Australia we have had ad hoc approaches to development approvals. This is a progressive step towards the improvement of the Integrated Planning Act in Queensland.

I will provide a little history particularly about the Integrated Planning Act itself. A number of years ago when Minister Mackenroth was the minister for local government he started putting together an integrated planning system. A change of government came along and Minister McCauley introduced the Integrated Planning Act into Queensland. That was supposed to have brought immense changes. It really was supposed to be the silver bullet for planning in Queensland, and it probably was to a certain degree. It is just a very slow bullet. We have since found numerous problems with interpretation and the process. Some reviews have been undertaken and some improvements have been made. This bill is one more step in that chain of events.

Both sides of the House have given strong support all the way through for an integrated planning system. I still indicate our support today. However, the system needs improvement, and we need to address where those improvements should be made and how to achieve those improvements.

Local government is also trying to improve the operations of the Integrated Planning Act. The LGAQ has introduced a planning assessment course and is participating in the Regulation Reduction Incentive Fund, which the federal government initiated and which is supported by everybody to try to reduce the amount of red tape and process that is involved in developing here in Queensland. The LGAQ is also developing a planning course for councillors. This is very important. Every four years we have a changeover of councillors. Planning is complicated; there is no doubt about that. It is very hard for new councillors to get a really good handle on where planning is going in their particular region and how it is done. So that will definitely be of benefit.

An issue with the Integrated Planning Act is delays in approvals. That has been an ongoing problem—in some cases perceived or not. Everyone's case is different. Everyone hears about the worst case. Like everything, when things go wrong we hear about the worst cases and not the good cases. We need to drill down to find out how serious these issues are and see whether we can fix them. Most delays relate to overinvolvement or inaction by state agencies. That was a real problem, particularly with the EPA. We felt that in a lot of instances it did not have the processes in place to manage certain issues. If the EPA ticked off on it, would it get into trouble? Some of those things are improving, and that is great to see.

The removal, for instance, of the referral planning coordinator in this bill will help. That is one more step in the direction of improving planning. The second stage state interest review gets bogged down with requests for additional issues beyond those identified in the first state interest review. That has been happening for quite some time. I do not know whether that has been resolved in some departments. If I recall correctly, the second state review was originally aimed at being able to accurately reflect what the state interest was in the original plan. That is what it should have been. I think some of those agencies are going a bit over and above their charter. We have to pull them back a little to ensure that we have a streamlined process. So more work needs to be done to improve this process.

There is of course a severe shortage of planners. Look at what has happened in north Queensland with Cyclone Larry. We have had a wonderful response by skilled workers who have gone up there to help, but at the end of the day there will be a shortage when they leave. Local government is finding that there is not only a shortage of planners but also a shortage of qualified administrative officers and professional people. I understand that the department presently has a program which assists, encourages and upskills officers in the administration and planning field. Whether it is the LGAQ or whether it is the department—

Ms Boyle: It is the LGAQ.

Mr HOBBS: That is right; it is the LGAQ. That is great, but perhaps that can be rolled out further. I do not necessarily know how that will be done. The minister, I am sure, will have the answers to that. If we can roll that out further, that might help in the administration side of things. We also need to encourage the take-up of planning graduates by local government.

The administrative burdens of IDAS are significant. Staff are spending more time on administration and monitoring, which takes away valuable time from analysing the merits of proposed developments. As developments get more complicated, I suppose they will get harder. But we still have to work towards improving them. Delays in assessing development applications can cause great frustration, and state agencies in the past were ignoring the time frames and taking advantage of time frames. I think that has improved as well and that is good to see. While we can bring in legislative changes to improve it, we cannot make the other departments work faster. That is one of the complications that we have. We have more of a chance where one minister is responsible for local government and the environment, but to try to make the other departments respond quickly is a bit difficult. Having been a minister, I understand the problems that ministers have in that regard, but we have to improve the framework of the legislation to make it easier for those people to respond. If that all fails, we probably have to do a bit of headbutting. I am sure the minister would be able to organise somebody to do that in some of those other departments.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr HOBBS: The member for Gregory reckons that he will volunteer.

There can sometimes be delays in processing development applications because their quality is fairly poor. That is everyone's fault at the end of the day. People are in a hurry and they want to get things done, so they think the information they have provided is enough, whereas they probably have to then go back and do some more work. It is terribly important that the development applications are of top quality. We need to examine how we can make them better. Maybe we can simplify the applications somehow. We can look at this as we go along.

The costs for dispute resolution are rising rapidly. This needs to be addressed. Maybe an independent tribunal could be established to do this. I am not necessarily saying that that is the answer to the whole problem. It may provide a cheaper and quicker resolution of disputes. I know that we currently have the Planning and Environment Court that is used for that purpose. Perhaps we can look at other ways to speed up the dispute resolution process.

Infrastructure charges have been an issue for some time. There are inconsistencies among state agencies in terms of the advice they provide to councils. It has been difficult to get the right mix. This bill will make some changes in that regard, particularly for smaller councils. Those changes will certainly be welcomed.

Infrastructure plans are complex. The process needs to be improved. There are some changes in this bill that will certainly be beneficial. I wonder whether they really go far enough. The minister might let us know when she thinks the main review of the act is likely to be completed.

There are a number of other issues in this bill which I will cover in a little more detail. The bill before the House today principally amends the Integrated Planning Act but also amends a lot of other acts. It seeks to reform current arrangements for the lapsing of development approvals. Presently, an approved building development application may expire before the building is actually built if the applicant does not seek an extension of the approval. The amendment links the different approvals for a project to allow any lapsing periods for use and subdivision approvals to automatically roll on to line up with later works approved for the same project. It sounds complicated but it is not really. That is certainly going to be of benefit.

I know that local governments are a little concerned about this provision. I understand that there has been consultation with the association in recent times to try to tweak this provision a little more. There are still a few problems. It seems on the surface that we are basically heading in the right direction.

The bill seeks to discontinue the referral coordination process by the chief executive officer for information requests for development application under specific circumstances. This amendment will remove about half a dozen pages of process from the IPA and allow applicants who are now familiar with the system to negotiate directly with agencies. That will improve that process.

The IPA will be changed to include the requirement that assessment managers give reasons for departing from their planning schemes and define conditions on which local governments can depart from their planning schemes. This is designed to improve accountability for decisions. The bill provides that the details of decisions related to a public interest and not a private interest of individual owner or interested party are required to be published on a council web site. Local government has expressed some concern that this would take up a lot more time and may not really benefit the end user. I think it is probably one of those things that they have to wear. At the end of the day it is all about accountability.

If there is some way that we can stop people reading between the lines and enable them to find out for sure why an application was rejected—or more so third parties looking at why an application was approved—then it is a good thing. If those reasons are clearly shown on a council web site then it may help provide a better understanding of the particular development project. Some councils do not have web sites in place at present. I understand from the bill that this is only a requirement for those councils that have the capability to do it. Others will be required to do it as their web sites come on.

There are changes to regional planning and local management strategies and structure plans. Presently, the minister can make a minor amendment to the South East Queensland Regional Plan to cover such things as an explanatory matter, a grammatical or mapping error, a factual matter incorrectly stated or a redundant or outdated term. These matters do not affect the substance of the relevant instrument or otherwise alter its legal effect in a formal way.

It is proposed that clause 13 be expanded so that local government local growth management strategies or structure plans can be included in the South East Queensland Regional Plan by the minister without going through a detailed procedure. I understand that a local growth management strategy is a very expensive process to go through. Of the 18 councils in the region, none has one at this stage. They will be very costly to develop. The ones in the strong growth areas may have them. However, those of us in the south-east corner are all in fairly strong growth areas. If we talk to people in Toowoomba, for instance, they will say that they are in an expanding zone, too, but it is not expanding as much as it is down here. They have the same sorts of problems that we have down here.

One of the concerns I had was with the structure plans. The local growth management strategy is an expensive strategy that is put together over time. I originally had some concerns about the structure plan. However, after the briefing today I do not have as many concerns. I hope I got this right. I understand that the structure plan is something for the future. Only a few councils will be likely to do it. It really flags what is likely to happen in the future. I hope there is no retrospectivity about this. I do not think there is. We will take the provision in good faith.

The amendments provide greater flexibility for local governments in how they set their infrastructure charges based on new developments—that is, local government and state government charges of either a monetary amount or a number of charge units. Charge units must be set by council resolution and stated in the local government's infrastructure charges register. The method of indexing the charge unit and the information to be relied upon must be identified in the relevant infrastructure charges schedule. There are a number of issues in relation to the IPA.

Before I go on to the other aspects of the bill, I want to cover a few areas of concern related to the development assessment process. There have been lots of issues in recent times. We have had an inquiry into the Gold Coast City Council. There have been accusations made in other councils about the convoluted process that local government has to go through. It is almost portrayed as though the councillors are making decisions on every development that goes through, that they are all a bunch of sods and that they are causing problems out there.

The Local Government Association did a statistical survey of Queensland councils' development assessment approval processing. It is interesting that as part of that survey all councils across the state were asked to provide details of all development assessment applications received in March 2005. That month and year were selected to ensure that adequate elapsed time was available to track the overall decision-making process. The survey, which was based on actual public council facts and figures, looked at time for determination, calls for further information, assessment time extensions, referrals of development applications to state government agencies, decision making, and modification of council officer recommendations by elected members. The survey reveals interesting figures. Around 70 per cent of all applications were determined within three months, 44 per cent within eight weeks and just under one-quarter of these were determined under four weeks. There was little difference in processing time between councils around the state, and I thought that was significant.

Councils required further information on 20 per cent of the development applications. It is noteworthy that on average developers took seven weeks to respond to councils' calls for further information. This is one area of great frustration. Even with 70 per cent taking three months, that is still a significant time for someone who is in a hurry. It takes time to assess these developments in a reasonable and thorough manner. However, they are the time frames. It is interesting to note that, in a number of instances where developments were still to be determined, developers had taken as long as 10 months to provide the requested information. Some of them have taken that long; obviously not all took that long. When the time delay in receiving all requested information from the developers was

taken into account, the adjusted average time for determining all applications received by councils was 5.2 weeks. That is still a long time, but it is probably not too bad in relation to the process that has to be gone through.

I will now turn to an area where quite a good improvement has been made. In somewhat of a surprise, the survey found that state government departments and agencies met their statutory time frame requirements for considering referred development applications 92 per cent of the time. Like councils, these bodies are often criticised. While there is room for improvement, the overall result is reasonable. That was quite a significant find in this particular survey, and I commend the Local Government Association for doing it. Councils requested extra time to consider applications for 20 per cent of all applications. On average, these matters were determined within a further five weeks.

Most noteworthy was the fact that the survey showed that only 1.5 per cent of all applications had their council planning officer recommendations overturned by the council itself. There was not, for instance, a lot of input by councillors in making those decisions. I do not doubt that they would have more input for some major developments, but at the end of the day that is the way the process should work. That is the way it was designed to work—a mechanism within councils so that applications come in for processing and if they are run of the mill they go straight through or if they are complicated the council has to get more advice. At the end of the day, the councillors are elected as individuals to uphold the wishes of their particular council and district. It is their right then to be able to change and manage the process in accordance with their particular council boundaries.

Basically, the Local Government Association says that it is satisfied with the survey findings and it puts to bed once and for all some of the nonsense and rhetoric served up as fact by the development industry. It is true that councils can do better, but their performances are nowhere near as bad as developers try to make out. Much of the delay is developer driven because of incomplete development applications in the first instance. The recent survey confirms the detailed analysis contained in the LGAQ's submission to the Gold Coast inquiry in which it was stated that 98 per cent to 99 per cent of all development applications were determined by council officers with no interference or direction from elected members. It is really quite unfair to say that mayors and councillors are always in developers' pockets.

I felt that that was quite a significant survey. The survey has been broken down so members can drill down into particular parts of the survey. It has been broken down into rural, provincial and south-east Queensland. It has gone through and talked about the various different stages such as notification and assessment stages. It has talked about decision making. There is a great deal of information contained in that survey.

Recently I saw an article in the paper—I cannot even think which paper it was—along the lines that the cost of housing is dramatically inflated by council charges and government charges. Maybe it is. We have to try to work out where those charges are. Who is causing those charges? It seems as if not a lot of those charges are local government; probably the federal government has more of a part to play in this. It is interesting to note that a report commissioned by the Property Council was the one that actually criticised the level of council charges. In the lead-up to the passing of the Integrated Planning Act 1997 the development industry lobbied heavily the then Borbidge government in relation to developer charges. Developers wanted all social capital infrastructure removed from that list, and in fact they got that.

Two years ago the Productivity Commission virtually demolished the argument that council charges were a major influence on house affordability. There are council charges and we always hear the horror cases where developments are held up. There will always be those odd cases out there, and they will make the headlines on the front page. Like all costs in the sector, infrastructure charges have gone up. When one thinks about it, there has been a one in 50 year construction boom going on in Australia over the past three years. The general construction index increased by 22 per cent as opposed to the CPI of eight per cent for the same period. Under true cost-reflective pricing for development infrastructure charges, those costs were fully passed on, just as the development industry requested nine or 10 years ago. I thought that was interesting as well. It throws more light and gives more background in relation to exactly where those charges came from and where they are positioned. For those who are always opposing some of these developments and blaming the councils, they might not necessarily have the right person to blame.

I want to cover a couple of other very interesting scenarios in relation to the Integrated Planning Act, and that is in relation to call-ins. We have seen a proliferation of call-ins by this government, and I do have some great concerns. There is quite a conflict with the department having the dual role of the minister for environment and the minister for local government. There is a very severe conflict that has to be managed very carefully. These calls-ins in some ways could reflect a bit of a cross over of those portfolios, and the minister needs to be aware of this. I am raising the matter in good faith because this issue is being talked about in the community. I will refer to a couple of developments that have been called in. One is Montville. For those who do not know, there is a development up near Montville of 142 hectares. It is a site located in the Hidden Valley immediately behind the Montville township. It

comprises several abandoned, weed-infested ex-farms that pollute the Skene Creek valley. The site is above the Kondalilla National Park and comprises 40 per cent of the Kondalilla catchment.

Over a 12-month period EPA recordings showed that E. coli levels at Kondalilla Falls were up to 20 times the Australian and New Zealand standard and it was unsafe for human contact. That was likely due to septic tank systems leaking into Skene Creek and the old, uncontrolled farming and grazing practices that existed in that area.

The Links Group signed a $15 million voluntary infrastructure agreement with the Maroochy Shire Council to deliver otherwise unobtainable funding for infrastructure to the town, particularly for sewerage. That group offered to sewer the whole town! I have seen this development proposal. It would have to be one of the greenest development proposals I have ever seen. The proposal is for 350 solar energy-efficient dwellings. The development will not take one bit of power from the state's power system. The proposal provides for 150 cottages and villas to be provided at the rate of one per week over a 10-year period. These cottages and villas will be architecturally designed to be energy-efficient, subtropical Queensland designs using pole 'touch the earth lightly' construction. This means that two people per week will be added to Montville's population, compared to the 500,000 tourists who drive into Montville each year. The interesting point to make is that currently there is not a lot of infrastructure at Montville such as chemists, doctors surgeries and supermarkets. This project would provide that infrastructure to Montville.

Both the Premier and the minister made speeches in this House in relation to the call-in of the proposal under the Integrated Planning Act. The minister in her contribution stated—

The Montville Links development is clearly contrary to the Maroochy shire plan and not what has been envisaged for the Montville area.

The proposal is not in contravention of the Maroochy shire plan. The Links Group applied for and received consent for a material change of use for the development, although approval for the development was granted by a slim majority of the council. That development would be the envy of many areas and it is now on hold. The minister stated further—

The population of Montville is currently 673. The development, were it to proceed, would double the size and population of Montville. This in turn would generate a need for additional infrastructure for which there is no plan.

But there is a plan for that additional infrastructure. It has also been noted that the town planner disapproved of this development proposal. Originally, he did disapprove of it, but the information upon which he formed his opinion was incorrect. When it was discovered that the information that was provided was incorrect, the correct information was provided and the council made a decision on that new information. So it is not true to say that the town planner was against the development proposal. In the end the town planner was not against it and the council approved it. The minister stated further—

Further, about one-third of the site is identified as good-quality agricultural land. Any development on this land may be in conflict with the state government's planning policy for the conservation of agricultural land.

I have been through that land and I can say that the land is stuffed. All you see in that area is a few old citrus trees. The area resembles a peasant farming area. It is totally unsustainable for farming purposes. So far the minister's speech contains serious errors. The minister stated further—

At no time did the EPA ever indicate support for the Montville Links development as a whole.

The EPA had no objections to the project. First of all it said, 'Let's have a look at this,' but in the end, once it had all the information, it had no objection to the project. So there is no reason at all why this project should have been called in. The minister stated further—

In short, this is a development application that would appear to be in conflict with the SEQ Regional Plan, in conflict with the Maroochy Shire Council's planning scheme—

and as I have stated already, that is incorrect—

and an issue of great community concern.

There were more petitions supporting the application than there were opposing it. I will not refer to those petitions further as there is a matter before a committee of this House in relation to them. But I assure the minister that a lot of people—in fact, the majority of the people—who live in Montville support this development.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr HOBBS: That is true. Surveys were carried out to gauge support for the proposal.

The other point to note is that the application for this development was made before the South East Queensland Regional Plan came into effect. Although there should be some recognition of the requirements of the South East Queensland Regional Plan, the approval for this development should not be called in on the basis of the implementation of that plan.

So there are a number of issues relating to this development that are really quite concerning, particularly when so many people in the region supported the proposal. It is a very green project. When you drive along the road to Montville you cannot see where this development will take place. It will be located in a valley that is lined with trees which will remain. The township of Montville will not see the development because of those trees. Basically, something like 60 per cent of the area in the Montville

development will be open space, anyway. This development would be quite significant. It would be hidden from view and not require government services such as power and water. The developers have offered to provide infrastructure, such as sewerage, to the town as it currently does not have sewerage. That development proposal has been called in and that is just the strangest thing.

It will be very interesting to see what the Premier comes up with in terms of this proposal. I hope he takes into consideration the wishes of all of those people who signed e-petitions in support of the proposal. Unfortunately, matters relating to administrative procedures in relation to those petitions are still with the parliamentary committee.

While I am speaking about the Integrated Planning Act, I also want to talk about the Moranbah call-in. I am sure that was a difficult decision for the minister to make, but at the end of the day in this instance the needs of the people have to take priority. This project for Moranbah was approved in 1995. We know that a mining lease was granted over the area and that the township cannot expand. But we must look after the people who live at Moranbah. I am sure there is plenty more coal out there. Who knows? Maybe down the track new and better ways of extracting that coal may be developed. At this stage, the people of Moranbah want that development proposal to go ahead so that some houses can be built and some sporting areas can be developed. The people of Moranbah want to live like anybody else who lives in a town. They want to be able to buy a block a land. But the people of Moranbah are totally landlocked. They are trying to work out where they can locate the various sporting fields and the other infrastructure that the town needs on the land that is currently available. But they just do not have the area. They are entirely landlocked.

They had a plan. They had an approved, official government plan that ticked off future development in the town. It has been called in, and we have been told that it has been called in because of the royalties that are likely to come from coal mining. I call on the government to reconsider this case. In this instance, I think it is very important that the people come first, and the development projects that were put in place should most certainly be honoured.

I want to talk about particular aspects of this bill that relate to environmental nuisance and erosion and sediment control on developed sites. This small amendment will, in fact, improve the situation for local governments. It will give councils an opportunity to move quickly to address, for instance, some sort of problem on a building site where sediment is running into the river or whatever the case may be, whereas presently they require a show cause notice process, which could take several weeks. That is quite a welcome amendment.

Budget accommodation has been a hoary chestnut for local governments for some time. They were saddled with doing the fire service inspections of budget accommodation. They found that a lot of budget accommodation is in very old buildings and the corridors are very narrow, and the only way to make them meet the standards is to pull them down or make the corridors wider.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr HOBBS: That is right. Just imagine going to Barcaldine or Longreach, where the member for Gregory comes from, and trying to change some of those old hotels. The cost would be enormous. The bill will allow budget accommodation owners to put in place a management plan where staff are trained to check daily that there are no chairs or furniture in the narrow corridors so that if there is a fire people can get out. That is also welcome. The bill also amends the act so that inspections can be done at any time up to three years. That seems to me to be quite reasonable and sensible.

The Plumbing and Drainage Act is also amended in relation to grey water application areas. The current definition suggests that the disposal of grey water in both sewered and unsewered areas must be by subsurface irrigation. In unsewered areas, people have always been able to dispose of grey water by surface irrigation if allowed by their local governments. This amendment ensures that surface irrigation remains an option in unsewered areas, and obviously it should. It is sensible and straightforward. They have been doing it anyway, and this legalises what people have been doing for many years.

The future of the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary has been controversial. The amendment to the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act allows the National Trust to establish a wholly owned subsidiary to operate the sanctuary as a commercial entity at arms-length from the owner, which is the National Trust. We have had a discussion about this. We had a briefing this morning. It appears that, in good faith, this arms-length wholly owned subsidiary will manage the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary with the same philosophy as the National Trust, however, with a more commercial tone which would allow them to perhaps not lose as much money per year and maybe make ends meet a little easier. I suspect one of the reasons for it is that the National Trust probably could not run the sanctuary as commercially as it would like, and this is one way of doing that. We have to make sure that there is no possibility that the assets from the National Trust are transferred to this arms-length wholly owned subsidiary and slowly sold off. I am particularly referring to the land. There was some land that was spoken about previously that was to be sold off. We would not like to see that happen. I ask the minister to give some sort of assurance in her reply that it is not the intention of this bill for that to occur.

The amendment to the Wet Tropics Heritage Protection and Management Act provides for a second rainforest Aboriginal person to be appointed to the seven-member Wet Tropics Management Authority Board of Directors. Environmental legislation, with the introduction of the regional coastal management plans under the Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995, provides that any existing scheme of works approved under the repealed Beach Protection Act will be invalid. However, the amendment to the Coastal Protection and Management Act will ensure the continuation of the Gold Coast scheme of works.

Those comments basically sum up the legislation that we are debating here today. There are a few other aspects, particularly in relation to the Integrated Planning Act, that we need to consider. Philosophically, we need to have a look at some of the rural residential developments. A lot of those developments have been curtailed. I know there is pressure on a lot of those areas. The minister talked about the Montville Links development being called in and she talked about the fact that it was good agricultural land and could not be developed. There are horses for courses. I am sure we can do better. We can do better with a better analysis of good agricultural land. We have to make sure that we do it right. We do not want to see wall-to-wall housing from Tweed Heads to Noosa, but by the same token reasonable and modern development has to occur without it being curtailed by legislation that was put in place many years ago when we did not know enough about planning. We are in a much better situation now to do that. On that basis and from what I understand of this legislation, unless the minister has something else to say, I support this legislation.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hobbs, adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Prince Charles Hospital; Haas, Dr N

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (3.17 pm), by leave: I wish to make a statement about Dr Nikolaus Haas. There have been a number of allegations questioning the competence of Dr Haas, even suggesting that he may be another Dr Patel. The focal point of their allegations relates to Dr Haas's involvement in what is called the Norwood procedure during his time at the Prince Charles Hospital. I will not go into specific details—I believe the procedure was sufficiently explained this morning in this chamber. However, the Prince Charles Hospital has rightly suspended the practice of this procedure after the deaths of seven critically ill babies—infants who would have surely died had the procedure not been carried out in the first place. I am informed that this procedure did not even exist a decade ago. It represents a concerted effort from doctors the save the lives of these very sick children that carries a high degree of risk.

The Norwood procedure was suspended pending a clinical review of the procedure at the hospital and the deaths of the seven babies involved between November 2002 and February 2005. This is what the community would expect of a public hospital if optimal outcomes are not achieved. Like any organisation, if a particular procedure or process of an organisation does not go according to plan, that organisation would rightly review that procedure or process and suspend it until it is confident that it can get it right. The senior doctors called for this review and that is what has happened. These reviews are done so that our public hospitals can do a better job. It was not a 'name and shame' exercise, and nor should it be because Queensland has some of the best doctors in the world. The clinical review has been completed, and I table a copy of its report in the House for everyone to see.

This report does not accuse Dr Haas of any negligence in relation to the Norwood procedure. He does not even rate a mention in this entire report. As I stated earlier today, he is not a surgeon. He has never performed any operations at the Prince Charles Hospital, let alone the Norwood procedure. He looked after these infants post-operatively in intensive care. His duty of care with his patients began after their operations. A range of reasons behind the infants' deaths were highlighted, all of them highly complex.

Another allegation related to Dr Haas's registration with the Medical Board of Queensland. Let us be clear about this. Dr Haas is a specialist. He is a paediatric cardiologist. He is a fellow of the Royal Australian College of Physicians. He was training to become a second specialist—an intensivist. He was recognised as a deemed specialist by the Medical Board of Queensland on the recommendation of the Joint Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine. He was deemed while he was progressing towards becoming an Australian recognised intensivist in his own right.

Following concerns from the college about his training, in December 2005 the Medical Board accepted undertakings from Dr Haas that he would cease practising as an intensivist. As a result, the board imposed restrictions following college's concerns about incidents during his period of training at the Royal Children's Hospital. I am informed that three cases were reported to the medical superintendent and thoroughly investigated. Case 1 related to a child admitted for blunt abdominal trauma and hot water burns. There is an ongoing criminal investigation into the child's injuries which

were described as catastrophic. This was a complicated case where the review panel identified areas of failure on the part of the team with some criticism made of Dr Haas's care in relation to his case management.

There were no adverse findings about Dr Haas or others in relation to case 2. Case 3 involved a child who was transferred by helicopter with a serious head injury. Dr Haas was told by a consultant to take the child to a paediatric intensive care unit for stabilisation and then arrange a CT scan. Dr Haas, I am informed, met the patient on the way from the heliport and took the child directly to the CT scanner in breach of directions given. Dr Haas says he was pressured to do so by the neurosurgery registrar, and the consultant neurosurgeon subsequently supported his action. The child suffered no adverse outcomes.

I am further informed that conclusions were arrived at that Dr Haas breached his supervision requirement, but there was no adverse outcome and there was support for his actions from the neurosurgery consultant. In addition, it was concluded that patient safety was not seriously breached. However, as a result of these investigations, it was advised that Dr Haas's clinical practice and decision making were not consistent with that required of a specialist medical practitioner in a general tertiary hospital paediatric ICU.

The Medical Board subsequently accepted undertakings from Dr Haas in December 2005 that he would not practise as an intensive care specialist. Contrary to opposition allegations, Dr Haas was not director of the Prince Charles paediatric ICU at the time. It has been alleged that he continued to practise in this capacity after his privileges were withdrawn. I am informed that this was untrue.

This series of events demonstrates that Queensland's training and registration system was working. Dr Haas ceased his employment with Queensland Health in January 2006. Along with the clinical review of the Norwood procedures, I table letters to the *Courier-Mail* signed by medical staff at the Prince Charles Hospital. These letters make it clear that his colleagues thought Dr Haas was a competent doctor and he had their full support.

INTEGRATED PLANNING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 858.

Mr WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (3.23 pm): I begin by thanking my colleagues the member for Gregory and the honourable member for Barron River for allowing me to jump up the speaking list. I have a matter to which I must attend when I leave the chamber. Before I begin, I note that Queensland has just won the Sheffield Shield by an innings and 350-odd runs. I am sure everyone in this place will join me in congratulating the Queensland cricketers.

I congratulate the minister and her staff on bringing this bill together. For some time during my employment at the Townsville City Council I was aware of some of the concerns that both the council and the development community had with the current IPA. They were certainly pushing for some of the changes contained within this bill. That is why it is refreshing to see it come before the House today.

This bill clearly links different approvals for a project by allowing the lapsing periods for use and subdivision approvals to automatically roll forward to line up with the periods for later works approvals for the same project. However, there are also safeguards to ensure that the arrangements are not abused to keep old, inactive approvals alive. For example, an approval will roll forward only if the applicant demonstrates performance by bringing forward each later approval within two years of the last. This is important because it helps to free up the process by not allowing many old and inactive applications to sit on the table. It allows the development community and local governments to get on with the job of planning their communities—planning the development and growth in their communities—in a sensible and sane manner.

The other interesting aspect of this bill which I noted was the change in some of the referrals and referral agencies which oversee applications to local governments. Again, they were being used as a stopgap—for want of a better term—by some state agencies to see development applications that previously they would not have seen. Whilst I understand it is important that state agencies do have an oversight in developments around local government areas, I think it is also important that these rights and privileges are not abused by those state agencies to hold up development in local government areas inordinately. Certainly the changes mooted in this legislation will help address some of those concerns.

This bill contains an important change in relation to accountability and transparency in the decision-making process under IDAS. It means that when councils depart from planning schemes within each local government area, they have to give some reasons, whether it be for public interest, private interest or to benefit an individual. It really makes councils accountable for their decision-making process and asks them, 'Why are you moving away from the planning schemes which your local government has introduced?'

This bill also introduces a number of changes to other legislation within the local government framework. Specifically I would like to mention three of them. The first one is the Building Act 1975. The bill introduces random inspections for fire safety measures in relation to budget accommodation buildings. We all remember the tragic circumstances in Childers a couple of years ago when the backpacker hostel burnt down. I am sure everyone in this place would join with me in expressing their earnest desire that this does not happen again and that our budget accommodation provides not just a cheap place but a safe place for people to stay. I think it is a wise piece of law-making to allow for random inspections of those budget accommodation places to ensure that they keep up with the fire standards that we as a government set. People's lives are just too valuable to leave that to chance.

The other piece of legislation that will be affected by this bill is the amendment to the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 which allowed the disposal of greywater by both subsurface and surface irrigation. That affects those areas that are not sewered where people dispose of their greywater on the surface. That was prohibited under some changes that we had made.

The final point which I want to cover is the recognition of the Townsville City Council (Douglas Land Development) Act. That is a major feature within the Townsville planning scheme. The Douglas land act was a very innovative piece of legislation which allowed the Townsville City Council to develop its own land, in conjunction with the firm Delfin, into an estate in the electorate of the member for Mundingburra which is called Riverside Gardens. I have to admit some conflict of interest here. My wife and I currently reside at Riverside Gardens. I can justly testify to what a great development this is for the people of Townsville. Unfortunately, that development has just about run its course because the land has been taken up so quickly. This legislation gives some certainty to those planning provisions and makes the progress of that development and Townsville City Council's involvement in that development more secure and safe.

It is interesting to see that just across the road from that Delfin development a development called Riverside Ridge is rapidly taking shape which I think will be one of the premier developments within the north. It is again a Townsville City Council joint venture with a group called Glen Alpine, which actually sponsored the Cowboys game on Saturday night, which the Cowboys again emphatically won.

Ms Nelson-Carr: Hear, hear!

Mr WALLACE: I take the member for Mundingburra's interjection. It was a great victory by the Cowboys.

This really is a timely bill. The minister and I have spoken previously about it together and also with a few of the people involved in the IPA process—some of the planners and some of the consultants who practically live IPA—and they certainly welcome these changes. I congratulate the minister and her staff for bringing this bill to the House. It certainly has my full support.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (3.30 pm): In rising to speak to the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006 I continue on from where my colleague the member for Warrego left off. He has canvassed many aspects of this legislation and given the opposition's support. As previous speakers have identified, this legislation amends the Integrated Planning Act.

The minister has referred to currency periods. One aspect that I want to bring to the minister's attention is in relation to automatically rolling forward approvals to line up with the periods for later works approvals for the same project. I hope that we will not see people dragging their feet. Before lunch I spoke to my colleague the member for Warrego about the relativity of developers. We see developers tie up property, and then as the time frame runs out we see that they need more time to put their plans in. This piece of legislation will cover this. The minister goes on to refer to accountability measures, enforcement reforms in relation to environmental issues and so on, but the real issue, as I see it, if we are going to undertake planning, is that two years is a pretty good time frame for anyone to get their plans in and know what they are about.

I have seen it in many areas right across the state. When I was minister for transport I saw it on numerous occasions with developers here in the south-east corner with their planning. The integrated regional transport plan that I launched as minister for transport back in the late nineties was a very important working document that I believe gave credence to many of these planning developments. I refer to Mango Hill on the north side of Brisbane. Road works had to interface with that and there had to be planning for public works, whether it be water pipelines or communication networks, as well as schools, hospitals, police stations and fire stations. There are developers who can see there is a big dollar to be made but do drag their feet when it comes to compliance. In the body of the legislation the minister talks about flexibility. I think flexibility is an important aspect, but at the same time we need genuine people who will be fair dinkum with the local authorities. At the end of the day, this is about getting a genuine outcome. I feel that this is an important aspect of this piece of legislation.

The enforcement reforms for environmental nuisance are a good aspect of the legislation. This is a compliance program. We do not need to see people dragging their feet in relation to this. How we manage the environment is the real issue of the day. The other day I was driving from Longreach to Barcaldine and saw a great deal of rubbish by the side of the road. Which waterway is that going to

finish up in? I am talking about western areas, but it is no different in Brisbane. If one walks along the Brisbane River in the morning one can see coke bottles, plastic bags, car tyres and God knows what else in the waterways. This is environmental vandalism, as far as I am concerned. We have to be more aware and understand how we can correct this problem. As the minister states—

> Councils have, rightly in my view, complained they have not had sufficient immediate enforcement powers to deal with these situations.

This is a situation that we all have responsibility for. No matter where we drive or live in this state, I think we all want to see a clean environment. A place like Singapore does not tolerate or condone this behaviour at all. We have to start looking at ways and means to put in place definite ideas to clean the place up.

My colleague the member for Burnett, our environment spokesman, has talked about the South Australian concept of a levy on bottles. I remember when we were kids one way to get a bit of pocket money was to return the old bottles and get threepence, a penny or whatever it was. It was big money in those days. I think today we would see kids with initiative help clean the place up. These are ideas that are all good and ones that we have to be realistic about.

The member for Warrego also canvassed the issue of inspection of budget accommodation. I like the concept of not having annual inspections anymore but having random inspections. I think that will keep proprietors on their toes. At the same time, I hope we do not see a relaxation of the enforcement of the laws in relation to budget accommodation. As the member for Warrego said a while ago, many of these old buildings—they are all across the state—are old weatherboard buildings that are very fragile and go up like tinder in a fire. We cannot afford to have a relaxation of any fire measures. At the same time, it is very important that the patrons of those buildings be shown which is the way out, especially in those old two-storey buildings. In Longreach in the early nineties when the Commercial Hotel was burnt down one of the proprietors had to jump off the top floor. That would have been a fair old jump. You do not have to fall too far to cause serious damage or even become a fatality.

Highlighting the location of fire escapes is an important measure. When I was in New Zealand earlier in the year I saw on a couple of the old buildings in Christchurch the old ladders that fold down that the old western pubs still have. They are a good measure in many ways. I know that many people panic about going down a ladder, but in a life-and-death situation they will find a way to use it.

As the member for Warrego said, it is important that exits and the corridors leading to them be kept clear at all times. How many times have people gone down a stairwell only to find that the door at the bottom is locked? These are situations we have to be aware of. The business of awareness and efficiency has to be taken into account. I cannot stress that enough.

The amendment to the Plumbing and Drainage Act is a good part of this legislation, especially in areas where there is no sewerage. The amendment will ensure that surface irrigation with greywater remains an option for people in unsewered areas as a way of getting rid of that water. There are many people now putting environmental measures in place to utilise that water on their gardens and lawns. That is precisely where the opposition has been coming from all this time in relation to the greywater issue in Brisbane—getting it up to the downs and getting a utilised value for it. We in this state have to think a little smarter about how we get maximum benefit and potential out of water usage. Regardless of whether we live out in the backblocks of Queensland where it rarely rains, the Wet Tropics or here in the south-east corner, where there is a population explosion, we have to put better management practices in place for water. Whilst water is an element, it is also an element that is a little bit hard to come by.

Local growth management strategies and structure plans are another aspect of this legislation I want to touch on today, especially the preparation and the implementation of the South East Queensland Regional Plan. We are now in the implementation phase of the South East Queensland Regional Plan, the draft regional plan having been released for public comment in 2004.

Again, this comes back to being fair-minded. Whilst I believe that local government has a very big responsibility in the implementation of these plans, there has to be complete harmony and unity between the state government and local government. We need flexibility with the implementation of this legislation so that we get maximum outcomes.

We all want the best. We want the best of everything for our people and for ourselves, for that matter. As I said a while ago with regard to the integrated regional transport plan of the 1990s, when I launched that plan it was a living, working document. It is still a living, working document. I believe this has to be a living, working document so that those 18 shires in the south-east can get maximum benefit from the integrated plan and so we can see maximum benefits in the long term.

I have said in this House before, I remember as a young fellow going to school in Sydney in the late fifties, early sixties a block of flats that had been built at Crows Nest, and within about 12 months they were bulldozed for the Manly-Warrringah freeway. They were barely even opened up with people living in them, and completely new estates were bulldozed. This is the sort of thing we do not want to witness in Brisbane, south-east Queensland or any other part of Queensland. Again, it comes back to fair-mindedness and responsible planning. We need people living in these areas who are going to raise

their families and be a part of those communities without interference from government, local government or a developer who only wants to make an extra dollar here or there. It is very important that we see this working properly. It needs to be defined so that local governments have flexibility in its introduction and operation. The minister in her second reading speech states—

A local growth management strategy will identify for a particular local government area key aspects for implementing the plan, such as transit oriented development sites, greenfield development areas and priority infrastructure areas.

That is precisely where I am coming from. At the same time, we will see these sites spring up all over Queensland, especially along the coastal strip and maybe in Toowoomba—anywhere where there is a larger centre, in the south-east corner in particular. Every time I drive to the Gold Coast or the Sunshine Coast I see another development. It is the same in north Queensland—Townsville and Cairns—for that matter. It makes me wonder where the next piece of land will be cleared and for what development. I was in Gympie the other day and saw how that place has developed and how the strategies there are changing. I hope the department of main roads takes a leaf out of some of those developers' books, with the buildings and structures that are being built. Putting that road in place is certainly the way to utilise that corridor.

That is another part of what I am saying: it is about planning; it is about the utilisation of corridors; it is about the utilisation of land so that we get the maximum value. That is one of the reasons why when we were in government from 1996 to 1998 we built the Pacific Motorway under the existing corridor. We utilised the existing corridor so that we could maximise growth in the area by not tearing up land, real estate or farming estates to put a road through. I think we need to take a leaf out of the Europeans' book. They do not bulldoze their communities and their settlements. They utilise the existing corridors or land in question.

The minister in her second reading speech makes reference to referral coordination and referral assistance. She states—

The government is always looking for ways of further streamlining the development assessment processes under the IPA ...

I think this is a good move. We always need to find better ways of doing things. If at the end of the day we do not find better ways we should not be in government. We should not be putting in place legislation that will not enhance the opportunity for local government to work with people to get genuine outcomes. It is a very important aspect of this legislation.

I know this is a piece of amended legislation, but as the minister says it is about cutting down on red tape. I cannot agree more. Red tape is an issue, regardless of where we are. It always seems to find a way of strangling a project or strangling an initiative. I always say that there is no such word as 'can't'. We have to find a way to cross the 't' off it to make it 'can'. We can do that by genuine negotiation and fair-mindedness to try to get that outcome. I think that is very important. I say to the minister today that it is also very important there is no small print that can stifle some of this development. When I talk about small print, I am not being sarcastic. A lot of times we might not read certain aspects of the legislation at the time but afterwards we find out there is a paragraph or a sentence that could define a different outcome. I urge the minister in her summing-up to guarantee that there is no hidden agenda. As I say, I am not being sarcastic when I say that.

I want to touch on the extension of the currency periods for development approvals. The minister has made reference in her second reading speech to applicants needing to individually seek extensions to their approvals. This is an area I have some concern with. As I said earlier, if people are genuine developers and they know what their mind is, then two years is a fair time to put a planning program in place or to have top-level or realistic talks with local government to show that they are genuine developers or there is a genuine need for what they are trying to achieve. The minister might just explain this. If the two years is up and they seek an extension of time, does this put them into a second time frame of two years, or is it a time frame of weeks or months to get that development going? It is something that I could not clarify, and I checked the second reading speech. The minister might like to clarify that in her summary.

Another issue I want to touch on today is other IPA amendments. The minister in her second reading speech mentions temporary planning. The minister might clarify what is meant by a 'temporary local planning instrument'. In her second reading speech she mentions that this will not affect people's rights to compensation. Again, could the minister also provide clarification on this? There will always be people who find that after a while it is too hard and they pull out three-quarters of the way through. We do not need anything temporary. Temporary is a word that I certainly do not like. I like permanency myself. With regard to these areas where we are talking about compensation, we need clarification as to whether if they are followed they will change a planning scheme. I ask the minister to clarify those issues. That said, I join with my colleague the member for Warrego in supporting the legislation.

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (3.48 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak to the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill because there are a number of important reforms in this legislation that are very welcome by the people in my electorate, and the people in Cairns generally, who are concerned about development and the impact of that development on their lifestyle and environment. The first one I would like to touch on is one which the minister has personally driven

and advocated in this legislation. It is something that is very evident in the Cairns area. When we have rain on hill slopes which are in the process of being developed we have major problems with erosion. The minister, as the member for Cairns, has certainly ensured that that issue is more adequately dealt with in the amendments to this legislation. Councils now have powers to act much more quickly if in fact a problem does develop.

The situation at the present time is that the council must give a show cause notice. Then there is another two weeks before the second step, which is the enforcement notice, can be given. Of course, in that time erosion continues. Erosion in my part of the world ultimately results in siltation on the reef because it gets into our waterways. The two-week period before we actually do something about stopping the erosion is absolutely unacceptable. This is an issue that we have seen a lot of action on in the Cairns area over some years.

I am pleased to say that I welcome the action that the EPA has taken on this issue. Developers such as those developing the Red Peak Forest Estate in my electorate have been fined substantial amounts. This is an ongoing issue. In the last wet season another developer in the northern part of my electorate unfortunately did not have adequate controls in place. As a result there was erosion of the land that Tom Headley is developing behind the Paradise Palms Golf Course. That might be another case where the EPA may have to take action.

I would like to think that the message is getting through to the development industry that this is something that they must take much more seriously. Now that we will, through this legislation, be giving our councils the ability to act very quickly and firmly to give enforcement notices and require a compliance program to be prepared to demonstrate how compliance will be achieved to stop the erosion we can expect an even better record when it comes to this issue.

This does raise the more general question of whether councils should be approving developments in the wet season. We know that January, February and March can be very high rainfall periods. I obviously recognise that to have a blanket ban in that time could be seen as preventing development from proceeding with resultant economic implications for both the developer and the workforce involved in subdivisional work. There may be some way that the councils can require more limited areas of land to be actually stripped of cover during that time so we do not have vast areas of land totally vulnerable to erosion. We need to try to control it in a more systematic way so that we do not have such a high risk of erosion occurring. I think this is a very welcome amendment to IPA. I hope that in the future we will see less erosion and fewer subsequent impacts on the environment.

The other issue I want to touch on is accountability. There is definitely a feeling among residents in my electorate that they would like to see more transparency and accountability in council when it comes to development. The particular issue that is the subject of amendment in this case is where a local council does not in fact abide by its planning scheme. I think there is a view in some quarters that planning schemes are just guidelines; it would be nice to abide by this but we do not really have to. That is certainly not the way that residents see a planning scheme. They want the certainty that a planning scheme gives. They want to know that the land use designated in that planning scheme will remain. I think it is very important that we are actually making some changes to require councils to give the reasons for all departures from the planning scheme, whether the application was approved or refused. At the moment it is in instances where they are approved with no reasons given. To actually have those reasons put up on a council's web site makes the process very transparent. People can see why the particular council has made the decision it has.

In that respect, I am really pleased to see that there will be a clearer definition of planning grounds. It really is a very broad power that councils have—that is, that they can approve a development if there are adequate planning grounds. Planners are like lawyers; there will be as many opinions as there are planners. I think this will really tighten this process up. I welcome the change proposed for the definition of grounds that make it a matter of public interest. That is really the key issue.

No-one minds if there is some flexibility in a planning scheme and a council makes a change as long as it is for the right reasons. To have that clarified is really important. Further, it makes it clear that the grounds do not include the personal circumstances of an applicant, owner or interested party. So no-one is going to be able to benefit personally. To put it in colloquial terms, mates of the council are no longer going to get any deals in terms of changes to the planning scheme that may benefit them. If the scheme is changed in the public interest that is fine. I do not think anybody would have any problems with that.

It is important that people feel there is some certainty with regard to their planning scheme. There are two canal development proposals for two parcels of land bordering the Yorkey's Knob township in my electorate. I am pleased that the mayor has indicated very clearly that that land is currently zoned for rural use. It is in the flood plain of the Barron River. The mayor has made it very clear to Metricon, the developers in question, that he is not inclined to diverge from the planning scheme which makes it clear that that land is rural. It currently grows cane. In my view, it should continue to grow cane.

One of those parcels of land was the subject of the main Rainbow Harbour development in the mid 1990s. That was firmly rejected by both the government and the community. It disappoints me that

Metricon seems determined to pursue this particular development even though there are so many legislative hurdles in the way in that particular location. I believe that what they are proposing for the smaller parcel of land will have an impact on the water quality of Moon River.

At the moment there is a modified new proposal that they have brought back to council. The EPA has not seen that and deliberated on it. Obviously, I want to ensure that that is scrutinised very carefully. I do not believe and the community does not believe that it is an appropriate development for that location. So I am obviously hoping to see that both the state government and the council reject that particular development. I think it is the right thing to do in terms of environmental impact and certainly the right thing to do as far as the community is concerned.

I also want to touch on another matter, different to the IPA planning issues—that is, the amendments to the Building Act contained in this bill. I speak of the inspections of budget accommodation provisions that have been referred to. As members know, the backpacker market is an extremely important one for Cairns. We have to get it right and have all of the necessary provisions so that the fire risk in those hostels is absolutely minimised and we ensure that those accommodation houses do the right thing. Indeed, they are complying now. We need to find the right balance between safety and making sure it does not put undue financial burden on the owners.

For example, where there is a narrow corridor in a boarding house rather than having to actually widen it they can check regularly that there is no obstruction. It is a case of allowing the owners to use management procedures in lieu of building work to manage the situation. They can do that sensibly and safely. The idea that local government does not have to conduct yearly inspections but rather random checks—as long as they go to these places at least once every three years—is a sensible compromise to get the balance right. We need to protect the young backpackers who are coming to have wonderful holidays and spend their money in Cairns and we are mindful of the burden that this might place on both the owners of hostels and the local government.

Another change that is really welcome is the amendment to the Wet Tropics World Heritage act whereby we will be able to ensure that we have two Indigenous representatives on the Wet Tropics board. Currently there is one provided for in the agreement that we have with the Commonwealth, but there was a commitment made when the state and Commonwealth governments signed an agreement with the rainforest's traditional owners representing the Wet Tropics area that we would have a second rainforest Aboriginal person on the WETMA board of directors. I know that is going to be very welcomed by the Indigenous community and they will have yet further opportunities to bring their issues forward to ensure that the management of the World Heritage area is really sensitive to their cultural heritage and concerns.

They are the main issues I wanted to speak about in terms of this legislation. I also want to commend the minister for her ongoing review of IPA and the process that has begun in that regard. I want to mention that we are taking advantage of that opportunity. The new Labor candidate for Barron River, Steve Wettenhall, convened a forum on this weekend of interested community groups in the electorate who came along and spent their Sunday afternoon discussing their concerns and issues about IPA and some of the further matters that might come up during that review. Some of the issues they touched on were this concept of having some particular developments being able to be prohibited in certain areas. Technically at the moment under IPA we can have anything anywhere. A council's planning scheme makes sure, in theory, that that does not happen, but people are looking for greater certainty. There was quite a lot of discussion about the environmental impact studies and having all of that information available in the one place at the one time so that community groups can study it well and understand what has been done to assess the impact that a development may have on the environment.

Not surprisingly, there was some discussion about private certifiers. That is something that the minister is aware of, and I know that we are already reviewing that particular issue and no doubt there will be some changes coming forward. The community regards the IPA scheme and council planning schemes as being very complex. The multilayered nature of them makes it very difficult for the average person to understand what is happening. I do not know what can be done about that, but I know it is something that people struggle with. As we have said before, there is a shortage of planners. There are a lot of young, inexperienced planners coming through. The turnover is high. I suspect even they can find it quite difficult at times to come to grips with it. I worry that we do not have enough experienced planners using all of the tools necessary to make sure that those planning schemes get good outcomes.

One area that I am particularly concerned about is the way they use conservation overlays, and in our planning scheme the wildlife corridor overlays. I have been involved with the development of a wildlife management plan for the northern beaches which has had a lot of development and the habitats of wildlife native species such as wallabies and striped possums have basically been destroyed by development. We are trying to identify more clearly where the key habitats are and where the key wildlife corridors are and inputting that information into the planning scheme, because the council is doing a review of its scheme. It has not been in place that long, but we have identified already some things that need to be changed.

It is a good opportunity to put that additional information in the planning scheme. Unless the council uses that information, obviously we are not going to get the improved outcomes that we want. I certainly look forward to having that information there and for the council to impose additional development conditions where those wildlife corridors need to be strengthened, widened and preserved. Development and council planning schemes will always be of enormous interest to communities. In Barron River there has always been a great interest because of the environmental values in that area. I look forward to IPA being continually refined and reformed such that we get the balance right. In my eyes, that balance should always go towards the community. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.04 pm): I welcome the opportunity to make a contribution to the consideration of the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill before the House and to make some observations with regard to the IPA legislation. I can well remember when the IPA legislation was first introduced. At that time I was a member of a local government. The IPA legislation was introduced with the promise of solving many of the problems that beset local governments and that had bogged down the whole process of development and had clearly frustrated both development proponents and local governments and those local government officers charged with managing that development.

Unfortunately, in the years since the IPA legislation was introduced and has become a reality many of those hopes and promises that the legislation initially held have not been delivered in fact. There is a growing degree of concern about the complexity of the administration of IPA and the extent to which we are actually returning to the situation that IPA sought to resolve in that the development processes and the requirements that are imposed upon development proponents and local authorities are becoming so complex that it is almost impossible in many cases to achieve what most people would consider to be common-sense developments.

This is particularly so in the small shires and regional areas such as the one that I represent, because there is in this instance, as in so many other areas of public administration, a huge difference between what needs to apply in the major metropolitan areas in Brisbane and on the north coast and the south coast and what needs to apply in the smaller shires in regional Queensland. There is no doubt that there are some enormous growth pressures and enormous development pressures in the urbanised south-east corner. There have to be some complex planning mechanisms to control those growth pressures. But in the regional areas, the smaller shires and the smaller communities there is a different set of problems—a different set of considerations—which need to be considered. Unfortunately, I do not think that the IPA legislation at the moment and the whole town planning approach of the Beattie Labor government adequately recognises the difference in those two circumstances and adequately allows for the different requirements of those two very different communities.

I represent an electorate which covers 12 shires. Some 12 different local authorities fall within the Callide electorate boundaries. I obviously have close links with the 12 shire councils that administer those shires, because prior to coming to the state parliament I was for a number of years a member of local government and I have retained those close links. All of those shires have expressed to me at one time or another their frustration with the IPA legislation. There is a growing need to see some major amendments to the IPA legislation to ensure that it does move towards fulfilling that original promise that it had of expediting the development opportunities and the development needs of those regional areas.

Let me use the example of rural residential subdivisions. There is a particular approach within the government's state planning policy towards rural residential subdivisions which are tailored towards the development needs of the south-east corner—the highly urbanised south-east corner that is often said to stretch from Noosa to the border. Obviously there is a particular set of circumstances which need to be considered in relation to rural subdivisions in that area. But when one moves further into regional Queensland, into places like the South Burnett in particular and further north in my electorate, rural subdivisions provide a great opportunity for those communities to expand their economic base. The shires and the councils in those areas want to encourage rural subdivisions and they want to be able to ensure that rural residential subdivisions are done in a way that properly meet the needs of their particular community but, most importantly, they want to be able to approve rural residential subdivisions to allow the populations of their towns and their shires to grow.

The contribution that those people can make to the economy of those small towns is immense. Without doubt, one of the greatest attributes that those areas have to offer to potential residents is their lifestyle. That lifestyle is very attractive to people who seek to move from the overcrowded south-east corner of the state. We see that occurring in the shires in the South Burnett such as Kilkivan, Murgon and Wondai. They have experienced quite extraordinary growth in rural subdivisions. It is of concern to those councils that the state government, through its state planning policy, is making it harder for those rural subdivisions to be made.

Nobody is suggesting that we return to some of the rural subdivision mistakes that were made in the past. Some of those mistakes were made in my electorate. One planning mistake that is often referred to is at Tara, which is in the electorate of Warrego. But there are also historical subdivisions in my electorate that everybody agrees are undesirable and serve as examples of what we should avoid doing in the future.

Subdivisions have been made at a place called Gaeta, which is located between Mount Perry and Gin Gin in the Kolan shire. Those subdivisions were made quite a distance from the services that are available in those towns and there is no road and electricity infrastructure. There are other subdivisions west of Proston that fall into the same category and are also not desirable. But there are ample opportunities for subdivisions to take place in close proximity to almost all of those small, rural communities. People can settle on small blocks of five acres, 10 acres or 20 acres and enjoy the type of lifestyle that they find desirable. In enjoying that lifestyle in those areas they make a very valuable contribution to the economic base of those small towns.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to make those subdivisions. Councils have complained to me that, in getting their new town plans approved, unreasonable restrictions have been placed upon them with regard to the area of land that they can make available for rural residential subdivisions. They have been frustrated by the definition of 'good quality agricultural land' and the areas of land that have been classified as 'good quality agricultural land'.

Once again, no-one is suggesting that prime agricultural land—the type of land that we see further north in the cane country or on the coast near Bundaberg where it is obviously prime agricultural soil—should be subject to subdivision. But the broad definition of 'good quality agricultural land' that currently exists captures too much of the land that those shire councils believe could be more appropriately used to provide lifestyle opportunities for people who want to move to their areas. I think there is a need for the IPA to recognise the growing need that exists for rural residential areas to be made available in those small shires.

There are already some great examples, which I would welcome the opportunity to show to any member of this House but particularly to the minister, of rural residential areas in my electorate. If you travel west from Gympie you come to a little place called Widgee. From Widgee through to the southern end of the Kilkivan shire it is almost all rural residential lifestyle developments. Areas have been subdivided into five-, 10-,15-, 20- or 30-acre blocks and they provide a great lifestyle for the people who have established themselves and built their homes there. They are located close enough to the services that can be provided by the townships of Widgee and Kilkivan, and they are close enough to areas such as Gympie and even Noosa on the north coast to obtain employment. They choose to live in those rural residential areas and find work in the nearby urban areas. It is a desirable outcome for everybody concerned, because it provides an economic base for townships such as Widgee and Kilkivan. Those subdivisions are great examples.

The Kolan shire has dealt with the pressure to plan for rural residential subdivisions for quite some years. Even though some of the historical ones did not produce good outcomes, some great outcomes are being produced now in places such as Mount Perry. The Mount Perry Shire Council has seen that the future for Mount Perry quite rightly rests with providing that type of lifestyle opportunity to an increasing number of people who find the overcrowded areas in the coastal urban centres such as Bundaberg to be less than desirable. Those rural residential subdivisions are close enough for people to be able to use the infrastructure that is provided in Mount Perry and Gin Gin and to find work opportunities that exist not only in those areas but also in the larger area of Bundaberg. I believe that the ability to provide rural residential subdivisions will become increasingly important for my electorate.

Already in a lot of those areas we are seeing increasingly the development of smaller agricultural blocks into lifestyle blocks. In the early days a lot of areas were subdivided into agricultural enterprises. Initially, that land was subdivided into 160-acre blocks. That was ridiculously small for agricultural enterprises. Then there were subdivisions of 320-acre blocks and then later again there were subdivisions of 640-acre blocks—the old square-mile blocks. When that land was subdivided into blocks they were supposed to provide areas on which people could make a living. But those blocks have not been able to provide a living in agricultural terms for many, many years.

Increasingly, those blocks are now being bought up by people who are seeking the lifestyle attributes that usually go with rural residential living. But people are being forced to buy 160 acres or 320 acres, which is more land than they want, because that is all that is available. Those people cannot buy 10 acres or 20 acres, which is the usual size of land that would provide them with the rural residential opportunities that they want. They are being forced to buy those bigger blocks and be confronted with all the land management responsibilities that go with those bigger areas. Increasingly across the South Burnett area that I spoke about before—especially from Wondai across to Proston, where there is a proliferation of 160-acre blocks—more than half of those blocks have become rural residential blocks and are providing the lifestyle opportunities that people desire.

I turn now to the section of the bill that deals with the use of greywater in non-sewered areas as compared to sewered areas. I believe the government has paid lip-service to the encouragement of the use of greywater, because the regulations and the administrative restrictions that have been put in place have certainly not encouraged the uptake of the use of greywater. I believe that the use of greywater on an individual property basis is perhaps the most easily achieved water recycling option. I and the other members of the opposition have a particular focus on water recycling. We certainly intend to drive the water recycling agenda, because the use of greywater on an individual property basis is the most easily achieved water recycling option. I believe that everything needs to be done to facilitate the use of greywater on an individual property basis as a first step towards achieving the much greater use of recycled water.

I think there has been an overcautious approach on behalf of the government in requiring that irrigation systems all have to be subterranean. That has provided a disincentive for individual property owners to adopt the practice of using their own greywater. Having said that, I want to emphasise again that I recognise the issues. I recognise the health problems. Nobody wants to see people on 600 square metre blocks using garden sprinklers to spray greywater around and having it spray into their neighbour's yards. I am not advocating that at all, but the government needs to consider moving back to middle ground. There is a range of options for applying greywater that do not require the expense of subterranean irrigation equipment—things like soaker hoses that basically weep water rather than spray water around, and low-pressure dripper type applications where the potential health problems that could occur from garden sprinklers can be avoided. We need to allow, wherever possible, those types of application techniques to avoid the expense that is involved in establishing subterranean irrigation systems in sewered areas.

I welcome the amendments contained in this bill that will certainly provide those people who live in unsewered areas the opportunity to more readily adopt the individual property reuse of greywater. I would seriously encourage the minister and the government to look at moving towards extending those incentives to people who live in sewered areas as well, because I think the regulations as they exist now provide a disincentive. They certainly do not encourage landholders to achieve the outcome that we want.

My vision for water efficiency involves every property owner reusing greywater to some extent. There is no reason why every property owner cannot use their own greywater and substantially save their consumption of fresh water if the incentives are right, if the economic drivers are right and if the regulations are right. This amendment deals with the application of greywater in particular situations, but there is a range of other ways in which greywater can be used.

One of the best examples that I always like to cite when people talk about water efficiency which seems to get lost all the time is using greywater to flush the toilet. If the incentives are put in place, there is absolutely no reason why the millions of toilets across south-east Queensland need to be flushed with fresh water. Technically, it is very easy to have a small tank that captures the water from the shower and the sink and that water is then used to flush the toilet. It is one of the most technically simple things to do, yet there are no encouragement mechanisms or economic drivers to make that possible.

In terms of the provisions in this bill, I welcome this as one small step in the right direction to encouraging the use of greywater on an individual property basis. I hope I can stand in this parliament one day and recognise that we have complete reuse of greywater on an individual property basis. It is my vision, as a shadow minister who hopefully one day will be responsible for the natural resources area, to achieve that. It will take a long time and it will involve a major attitudinal change, but we have to start annunciating that vision if we are ever going to move towards achieving it.

With those comments, I join with the member for Warrego and the shadow minister in acknowledging the opposition's support for this bill. I hope that we see other bills in this House to amend the IPA legislation in the foreseeable future.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (4.24 pm): I welcome the opportunity to speak to the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill before the House today. This bill has come about as a result of obviously extensive consultation but, more importantly, the bill represents a period when the Integrated Planning Act was first introduced in this parliament—and I well remember that. Having had the act for a while, this amendment bill basically tweaks the act and refines it to a much greater degree.

I, as a member of this parliament, have been approached on a number of occasions by businesspeople who have expressed various views about how the Integrated Planning Act, while it had good intentions, at stages does not work really well. These amendments today certainly address those issues that have been raised not only with me but also with various other members of parliament. I congratulate the minister and her department on addressing those concerns.

As previous speakers have said, here in Queensland we are undergoing significant developments, and at times I am sure a number of our councils are under a lot of pressure from the numerous applications that they receive for development. They have to weigh those up against the concerns of some communities that perhaps do not want to see development gallop along at the rapid

rate that it does. Councils have to embark upon a fine balancing act to ensure that they maintain the quality of life for people who live in their various shires. It is never an easy thing. We know for a fact that there is a shortage of quality town-planners. Recently I was at the University of Queensland meeting with some young students and I indicated to one fellow there who was studying town planning that his services will be greatly needed when he finishes his degree.

I want to focus on a couple of areas within the legislation that is before the House today, particularly in relation to regional planning arrangements in the south-east corner. Local governments in south-east Queensland are preparing their own local growth management strategies and structure plans to show how they will implement the South East Queensland Regional Plan in their respective areas. Local growth management strategies and structure plans must be prepared in accordance with the guidelines prepared by the Office of Urban Management, which also specifies the required community consultation that is so important these days in terms of planning.

Whilst it is intended that local growth management strategies and structure plans are replaced by planning scheme amendments, the documents do have an important role in the period up until these amendments are formally adopted by the respective local governments. The bill, of course, consequently contains amendments to allow local growth management strategies and structure plans to be incorporated into the South East Queensland Regional Plan by way of the existing minor amendment processes for the regional plan.

I turn my attention now to the infrastructure charging arrangements which, again, have been a matter of significant importance for councils. Although new infrastructure planning and funding arrangements under IPA started in October 2004, it is recognised that so far only a few local governments have actually progressed the necessary changes to their planning schemes to allow them to use the new arrangements to collect infrastructure charges. This is partly because many local governments are concentrating on completing their first IPA planning schemes, but in south-east Queensland it is also because of the effects of the South East Queensland Regional Plan. So when we combine those, as I said earlier, it does show the significant pressures that our local governments are under.

The IPA contains transitional provisions which allow local governments to continue to charge developers for infrastructure, using the pre IPA amendments. However, these are due to expire on 31 March this year. This bill will extend these arrangements until 30 June 2007. Obviously, that will give local governments longer to prepare their priority infrastructure plans and their infrastructure charging arrangements and to make the transition to the new framework. That is obviously a common-sense approach and one that would be welcomed, I would have thought, by the Local Government Association. Several refinements are also proposed to give local governments more flexibility in how they set their infrastructure charges. An example of that is that they will be able to use a mix of infrastructure charges and more simple schedule charges for different infrastructure networks that they provide. This will, of course, allow many local governments to prepare their arrangements more quickly.

In relation to enforcement reforms, the bill includes several reforms that make it easier for assessment managers or referral agencies to take enforcement action during the development phase of projects or in relation to the ongoing use resulting from the development. These reforms are removing the need for a show cause notice before an enforcement notice when the offence involves environmental nuisance or erosion and sedimentation, allowing an enforcement notice to require preparation of a compliance program and including an offence for giving a false and misleading document similar to existing provisions under the Environmental Protection Act 1993. I am sure that is an area of interest to those who are perhaps not so much involved with the development but concerned about the development. Certainly those new enforcement reforms should address some of the issues about which people have concern when some of these developments get a little bit out of hand. In terms of minor amendments, the bill also includes, as I said, numerous other amendments that will further refine and streamline the operation of the Integrated Development Assessment System to deliver more transparent and accountable decisions in a timely manner.

I will speak briefly to the amendments to other pieces of legislation in the bill before the House today. They include amendments to the Building Act to introduce random inspections for fire safety measures in relation to budget accommodation buildings. After the Childers backpacker hostel fire and, of course, the fire at Sandgate, which also unfortunately took some lives, there was a change in various pieces of legislation to ensure that budget accommodation was far safer for people to live in. I know that the amendments to the Building Act 1975 to allow random inspections for fire safety measures in relation to budget accommodation buildings are very welcome, particularly in regional Queensland. I do not think for one minute that people should feel that this is in any way a watering down of a commitment given by this government to ensure there are significant fire safety measures in these accommodation buildings. It allows for random inspections, and I think the minister touched on that in her second reading speech. Regular inspections have to be done at least once every three years. Of course, that does not preclude more inspections being done on a random basis during that period.

Another act that this bill amends is the Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995 to change the definition and preserve the Gold Coast scheme of beach protection works. We all would be well aware of the erosion problems that the Gold Coast had in the sixties and seventies and the issues around groynes et cetera on our beaches. The amendment to this act allows those beach protection schemes to continue, and that is warmly welcomed.

Most of us who have lived in the south-east corner of Queensland probably visited the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary as children on a number of occasions and perhaps have even taken our own children back there. It is a great part of the Gold Coast with a great history. The amendments to the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act allow the sanctuary to operate as a commercial entity at arm's length from the National Trust. It is a part of the Gold Coast that all of us would like to see maintained and retained.

The other piece of legislation that this bill amends—and it was touched on by the previous speaker—is the Plumbing and Drainage Act to allow the disposal of greywater by both surface and subsurface irrigation. Again, that is something that is probably long overdue. The irony when we talk about water conservation is that it has come full circle. We used to have tanks. Then suddenly tanks went out of favour and no-one had water tanks anymore. Now local governments are encouraging people constructing new buildings and those renovating their homes—or even adding to their existing buildings—to have water tanks in the interests of water conservation. In recent weeks three of my neighbours have installed water tanks and it is something that we are looking at.

Changing the Plumbing and Drainage Act to enable the use of greywater is quite significant and quite important for all Queenslanders. Certainly people in rural and regional Queensland—and rightly so—have always been very mindful about water use. In years gone by, those of us in the south-east corner have been a little bit relaxed about that. However, these days people are very mindful about the use of greywater. I understand that recent surveys have found that people are indicating that even when the dams are filled again—and we hope that that will happen in the not-too-distant future—certain water restrictions should be retained. People should be very mindful about the fact that it is not a commodity that can just be used willy-nilly.

The bill before the House is certainly an important piece of legislation in terms of integrated planning. It also contains important amendments to other pieces of legislation, some of which I have touched on. As I said, obviously significant work has gone into this. Once this legislation is passed, there will be significant changes for all. As I said at the start, both the minister and the department should be congratulated. It is never easy to bring legislation into a parliament and try to get consensus by all parties. All of us as members of parliament should be particularly pleased that we are able to do that with such important legislation as this. I am pleased to commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (4.38 pm): I rise to speak to the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I acknowledge that this type of legislation has to strike a balance between governance, development and cost. It also must extend respect to the developers—who provide Queenslanders with the opportunity, in many instances, to purchase a dream home—to those who are purchasing properties and to those who are affected by subdivision and development in all areas of Queensland.

I noticed in today's *Courier-Mail*—and other media may have referred to it—an article about the price of homes and the developmental costs attaching to new homes, homes in new developments. It states—

New home prices are being driven higher by a dramatic rise in government-related charges and compliance costs, according to a study for the Residential Development Council.

The study, by planning consultants Urbis JHD, found almost a third or $136,000 of the $464,225 cost of a four-bedroom house-and-land package in Redlands was in charges and compliance costs.

New home buyers in Maroochy paid almost a quarter of the $412,475 cost of their houses in the charges.

This compared with 21.5 per cent of the $391,775 cost of a new home on the Gold Coast and 24.9 per cent of a $319,325 house-and-land package in Ipswich.

The RDC estimates the costs are adding between $360 to $1,445 a month to mortgages.

The minister is quoted as stating that 'the new system of charges has raised some criticism' and she agreed to review the system. I commend the minister for that, because wherever a significant problem is raised it is important to review the system.

Obviously, I have not validated the claims of Urbis JHD. However, the Local Government Association of Queensland has stated that it believes it was dishonest of the RDC to claim that local government charges were major determinants of land prices when an alternative report, a Productivity Commission report, has shown that they were not.

Irrespective of which side of the argument has the predominant accuracy, it points to the fact that in all of the considerations—not only of this parliament but also of local councils—there has to be an affordability element put into the charging of costs to consumers. From my perspective, I do not know how an ordinary, working family could afford a $464,000-plus mortgage. It is a considerable debt for a family to accommodate. It certainly puts the onus on all law-makers, irrespective of the sphere of government, to ensure that that affordability mechanism is also considered.

The Gladstone-Calliope area has experienced exponential growth over the last few years and that growth will continue. Therefore, the application of IPA and other planning arrangements will continue to be an important role for local councils. The region has experienced quite significant subdivision. That is borne out when I fly across in the plane, coming and going to Brisbane. It is very important for councils to maintain that balance between cost and benefit.

This legislation covers a number of elements. I have a letter—and I believe that most members of parliament received correspondence from various entities. The group that sent correspondence to me was Gecko, the Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council. However, the several emails that I received all used the same attachment from the Environmental Defenders Office (Qld) Inc. I have had spasmodic contact with the Environmental Defenders Office. At times, it has provided me with some very good information and I appreciate the work of that organisation. It has written to the minister for the environment. I would like to place on record its concerns about this legislation. It states—

The amendments are more than procedural. There are substantive changes contrary to ecological sustainability. The appearance of the IPOLA Bill came as somewhat of a surprise, given the early stages of the IPA review. Whilst a number of amendments proposed in the IPOLA Bill 2006 are procedural, there are some substantive matters of concern to the environment and the community sector. In particular, the removal of referral coordination and the new definition of 'grounds' applicable to sections 3.5.13 and 3.5.14 of the IPA.

In particular, in relation to the referral coordination, it states—

The referral coordination system in IPA provides more than a mere post-box administrative function. Referral coordination provides (i) a process for the coordination of information requests into one document and the resolution of inconsistent requests; and (ii) longer notification periods for submitters.

To do away with referral coordination without introducing a formal EIS process makes it harder to understand big developments. It is not enough to say that removal of referral coordination is offset by an intention to introduce the Commonwealth EIS procedure under the EPBC Act. What will happen in the meantime, and what about state significant developments that do not fall within the EPBC Act?

Referral coordination increases the notification period for a development from 15 business days to 30 business days. The longer time-frame is in recognition of the longer time it takes to access information and respond to larger developments. The notification period is vital in high growth areas, where community members are faced with a large number of developments at any given time. In most cases, development applications are only available during business hours. A 15 business-day time-frame is simply too short for a member of the community who works full-time to obtain information about the development, liaise with other community members and lodge an informed and valid written submission. The problem for the community will be exacerbated by the fact that it will take longer to view and understand individual information requests rather than information provided through referral coordination.

I recognise that the minister has addressed the changes in the coordination procedure in her second reading speech. She stated why it was introduced in the first instance, as follows—

Where there are several concurrent agencies for a development application, an applicant would receive multiple information requests from each agency, as well as the assessment manager. Referral coordination was intended to ensure applicants received only one information request. The process of integrating development approvals into IDAS is now nearly complete, so there is less need to use the referral coordination process in this way.

I am interested in whether the minister will monitor this change of process and whether there is a willingness on her part to reintroduce the referral coordination process if it is shown that this new procedure is less than efficient. The coordination functions that are carried out by the Coordinator-General—in a different set of circumstances, I admit, but they are major projects—have been used very successfully to reduce the amount of duplication that major developers in particular have to go through to answer the questions from all the valid stakeholder groups which may have an interest—a legal interest, as in law-making roles—and those people who may be impacted by the development.

The Coordinator-General's role, which has been in place in one form or another, particularly in major industry in our area, has been very successful in that all of the stakeholder groups—local government, state government and federal government—are given an opportunity to comment, as are the various agencies that attach to those major law-making groups. Also, there is the opportunity for affected landowners, affected farmers and affected businesses to make a coordinated submission on a proposal to ensure timeliness of the processing of the project, and there is fairness, equity and transparency in the way that the application is processed.

I am interested in whether the minister will keep a very close eye on the structure that she proposes to introduce through this legislation and whether, if a return to the coordination process is warranted, that will be forthcoming. The letter from the Environmental Defenders Office continues—

The definition of grounds. Sections 3.5.13 and 3.5.14 of IPA are two of the most important sections in IPA. The sections set out when a development application must be approved or refused. Section 3.5.14 is raised in most planning appeals to the Planning & Environment Court. The Court has discussed this section in detail and decisions highlight the problems associated with applying this section, given inherent conflicts within planning schemes and desired environmental outcomes.

Sections 3.5.13 and 3.5.14 of IPA require careful consideration and submissions during the current review process and must not be rushed through in the IPOLA Bill. The proposed amendments are significant and far from being merely procedural. The proposed amendments are contrary to the principle of ecological sustainability, in that need is placed above ecological sustainability.

The definition of 'grounds', section 2(d)(i), envisages assessment authorities approving a development that conflicts with the planning scheme where the development 'would satisfy an overriding need in the public interest that outweighs any adverse economic, social or environmental effects, and could not reasonably be located elsewhere'.

This section not only elevates need above the planning scheme, but most worryingly of all, it is contrary to the principal of ecological sustainability. The principal of ecological sustainability requires a balance that integrates environmental, economical and social elements. To assess the development in a manner that advances the purpose of ecological sustainability, need must be assessed as part of the integration of the social and/or economical elements of ecological sustainability. Need in the public interest could be argued for almost any development and must not be elevated above ecological sustainability.

For example, a shopping centre could be said to be in the public interest. It is conceivable that in some localities there is only one possible site for a new shopping centre. That site may have been identified in the planning scheme as a significant natural area requiring conservation. The proposed amendment to IPA would allow the shopping centre to go ahead on an environmentally significant site despite conflicting with the planning scheme and without regard to the principal of ecological sustainability.

Environmental considerations are not specifically included in the definition of 'grounds'.

Whilst 'grounds means matters of public interest', environmental considerations are not specifically included in the list of grounds in the definition (section 2). Environmental considerations and ecological sustainability should be included in the definition of grounds.

Codes, laws and policies can be ignored

Part 2(a) of the definition of grounds allows a development to proceed despite a conflict with the planning scheme where 'the applicable code, laws or policies are, in terms of their underlying assumptions, significantly out of date or incorrect'.

This section is far too wide and wrongly downplays the importance and purpose of the planning scheme, codes, laws and policies.

We would be pleased to discuss these issues with you and your department.

Yours sincerely ...

That letter was dated 17 March. It is unclear whether discussions have been held between the minister's office and the Environmental Defenders Office, but I commend its concerns to the minister for her serious consideration.

There are a number of other issues that will be raised with regard to this legislation. One is the requirement on councils to include reasons where a planning scheme is departed from, whether or not that application is approved or refused. I believe that is a very sound new element to be included in the legislation. If the application is approved, then those who disagree with the approval will have clarity in terms of the reasons for the approval and they will know the grounds on which they must form their arguments, if indeed they intend to appeal. If it is refused, the applicant is clear in the reasons that are put forward by the council for the refusal and they, too, can make an informed decision in relation to proceeding.

The legislation will also address issues of sedimentation run-off on development sites. Whilst the minister's second reading speech I think concentrated on erosion control and sediment control, and she cited examples of sediments running into rivers from building sites, I think all of us would have experienced instances where a subdivider has a subdivision on foot and rain occurs, and adjoining landowners are affected. Sometimes that can be from an incomplete cut and fill. Sometimes that can be from an out-of-season downpour that would be very difficult for those developers to predict, foresee and perhaps take steps to avoid. However, it is important that once a danger or an issue is identified there is an ability to immediately respond. I think nothing is more frustrating for a landowner or for anybody in the community than to see a problem and be told, 'We acknowledge that is in breach of the legislation but they have two weeks to process the paperwork before we can do anything.' So the ability to respond in a timely manner to a concern is certainly welcome.

I also commend the minister on the response to the inspections of budget accommodation. Much change occurred after the tragedy of Childers and I think many lessons were learnt. There has to be, too, a balance between the necessary protections for the community and particularly those in the community like backpackers who take the safety of their accommodation for granted and expect that those in authority will ensure that all precautions are taken so that safe evacuation can occur in times of emergency. There also has to be a balance in terms of the affordability of standards. By that I do not mean undermining standards of safety simply because of cost, but a balance has to be struck. The changes in this legislation recognise that yearly inspections are very expensive and at times practically unachievable, particularly in western and rural areas. I think placing a better constraint on those responsible for the inspections—that is, at least three yearly and that they can occur at random—is healthy for all involved.

Finally, I want to comment on the greywater issue. There are those in the community in the electorate of Gladstone who have embraced the use of greywater with great enthusiasm. There are those, particularly in the urban area, who have been ready to implement the reuse of water in this way as soon as they possibly could, and I commend them. I commend the minister for recognising that the use of greywater in unsewered areas, in rural and regional Queensland in particular, has occurred for years. It has been the way that many rural farms have been able to maintain fruit trees and other gardens, in particular. I think the change brought in earlier and the disadvantage in terms of non-sewered areas was an unintended consequence, and I certainly welcome the recognition that the use of greywater in non-sewered areas by surface irrigation is something that has been in place, and in place in a very sound and wise way.

I raise those matters that have been brought to my attention and to the attention of others through the Environmental Defenders Office. As I said, I value the work that that office does, and I look forward to the minister's response.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (4.57 pm): I rise to support the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. This bill is important legislation as it means that the government is continually reviewing and improving the planning legislation. I would like to record my support in particular for the accountability measures contained in the bill. There are, from time to time, perceptions of a lack of transparency and a lack of accountability concerning some development applications made by local authorities. When such decisions contravene or appear to contravene the council's town planning scheme, this leads to the community having some scepticism in local government.

The bill will require reasons to be given for all departures from town planning schemes, and this is so whether the application is approved or refused. The bill will also define the grounds on which local authorities can in fact depart from their town planning schemes. It is important to note that these grounds can only be for a public interest. Grounds cannot be for a private interest of an owner or, indeed, an interested party. The bill also requires details of decisions to be published on a local authority's web site. This is an important accountability measure so that all people in a council area can read for themselves the details of a decision.

It is important to also note the legislative changes in relation to the South East Queensland Regional Plan. This plan has had, and will have, a great impact in my electorate of Bundamba. It is great that the government is now in the implementation phase of this plan, and I know that many people in my electorate, particularly in the areas of Springfield, Springfield Lakes, Brookwater and Augustine Heights, cannot wait for the new railway line to be developed. Only yesterday—and I note that the Minister for Education is in the chamber—Education Queensland started to build the new Springfield Lakes State School. That will be a new P-7 primary school in our area with expenditure of some $15 million. It will be a great community state school.

I am pleased that the framework for the plan will in fact become a bridge whereby the more detailed amendments of a technical nature to those planning schemes can be made at a later date. I understand that that is welcomed by local government.

I am glad that the local government management strategies and structure plans will be the basis for implementing the regional plan in local authority areas and that greenfield development sites, transport development sites and priority infrastructure areas can be identify in this process. These strategies and plans will be developed by local authorities like the Ipswich City Council under guidelines that have been produced by the Office of Urban Management. These should also be developed in consultation with local communities. When planning schemes are well administered, open and accountable to the community the whole community benefits. When there is a problem and a lack of transparency the community suffers.

I turn now to town planning schemes and planning issues generally. I point out that today I wrote to the federal minister for human services, the Hon. Joe Hockey, in relation to the new Goodna Centrelink office located on the corner of William Street and Barram Street, Goodna. This is a new office for Centrelink clients. I have also written to the Mayor of Ipswich about the town planning oversights in relation to this development. Clients from Centrelink are forced to park along Barram Street where there is no kerbing and channelling and where there are weed infested gutters. Clients are also parking in residents' driveways such is the lack of parking and appropriate kerbing and channelling. Elderly clients have complained to me about having to alight from their cars in weeds and also in puddles of water on uneven ground. This causes them great difficulty. Mothers with children in prams have said that it is a nightmare parking in the street, getting the pram out and getting the children out into the pram in a safe manner.

Furthermore, there are no public toilets in this new office so clients are told to go across to the McDonald's restaurant which is a private facility, to St Ives shopping centre which is a private shopping centre or down to the public toilets which means that they have to go into William Street and then turn into Smith Street and walk about a kilometre round trip just to go to the toilet. What is a client of Centrelink supposed to do? Cross their legs or sprint up to the public toilet facilities. It is simply not good enough.

How these plans were developed and approved by Centrelink and also approved by the council's planning officers God only knows. The people want an explanation and they want the situation remedied as soon as possible. Even the local police at Goodna have been called as residents are sick of the parking situation.

Minister Hockey and his department, Centrelink and council planning officers need to investigate these matters quickly before Centrelink clients get injured or develop kidney problems because they cannot get to a toilet. I would have also thought in this day and age that these basic issues would have been dealt with with modern day planning schemes. The reason I am particularly interested in Centrelink is that it was previously located only about 70 metres from my electorate office. A lot of the clients of Centrelink would come into my office, particularly if they were unhappy. I am very pleased to take up their request for my assistance in relation to this planning matter.

I think this is very good legislation. I commend the minister for this legislation and thank the officers of Local Government and Planning and also the officers of the Office of Urban Management for this bill. I know that it took a lot of consultation to get to this stage. I think it is excellent legislation for this parliament to pass. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (5.03 pm): It is a pleasure to contribute to the debate on the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. The objective of this bill is to include a series of technical amendments to the Integrated Planning Act 1997 in the areas of currency periods, referral coordination and referral assistance, infrastructure charges and accountability for assessment managers. The bill also offers changes to a range of other legislation including legislation relating to the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. I say from the outset that the coalition will be supporting this bill. I thank the staff from the minister's department for their briefing this morning. I understand that there was some urgency to debate this legislation due to two time critical amendments.

In the Currumbin electorate there is a genuine feeling of discontent about the number of inappropriate development approvals being passed. It is the view of a significant number of residents that these amendments before us today should remove old approvals and require councils to prohibit development in at-risk areas. Hundreds of residents on Currumbin Hill, who, members of the House may remember, suffered a shocking landslide in the 30 June rains last year, wrote letters to the Gold Coast mayor to this effect. To their horror another development perched either side of a ridge that also suffered a landslide is still proceeding despite significant changes to the landscape. I would ask the minister to hear the pleas of these residents of the Gold Coast who are asking the minister to intervene in some of these approvals.

Other sentiments expressed are that past poor planning and development decisions undermine the credibility of the planning processes of the Gold Coast City Council and the state government. There are strong attitudes that development applications should be classified under code impact rather than code assessable. There are arguments for both ways. However, the example last month of the CoYou/Devine application is a case in point. The application had been changed from the original planning for a golf course and condominiums to now include a large lake and some 530 homes.

Members have already heard from the honourable member for Gladstone about correspondence received via Gecko, which is an active environmental group in my electorate. Gecko acknowledges that homes should never be built in areas of known hazards or where the geotechnical aspects of the land have changed. Yet in the Currumbin electorate we have seen massive landslips put many homes at risk, approved developments allowed to proceed despite the risk of further landslides and residents fighting for an inappropriate development comprising hundreds of homes on a flood prone parcel of land that is supposed to be outside the urban footprint in Mr Mackenroth's South East Queensland Regional Plan. I wonder whether the minister would kindly tell the House how many more areas supposedly outside the urban footprint have applications approved or are waiting for approval.

I might say that these comments are in no way a statement against all residential development. Responsible developments add to our quality of life. They build our community fabric and provide a sense of neighbourhood belonging. I live in a very well planned residential development. However, we all pay and shall continue to pay an ongoing price for progress which is the result of Queensland's popularity. Many of us were drawn from elsewhere to the terrific climate, lifestyle and attributes of south-east Queensland.

In addressing this bill I wish to make some comments specifically about the changes to clause 91 which relates to the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act 1976. This amendment in effect repeals the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act by adding into section 2 of the original act after the words 'the act means the National Trust of Queensland Act 1963' the words 'and any wholly owned subsidiary of it established for the purpose of conducting and operating the Currumbin bird sanctuary'. For clarity, I point out to the House that the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary is the name of this attraction now. It is referred to as the Currumbin bird sanctuary in this act for that is how it was gifted.

While these changes sound innocent enough and they have a certain degree of practicality attached to them, in essence there still lies the uncertainty of what will happen to non-core sanctuary assets, in particular those purchased post 1976. For the interest of members of the House I point out that some 16 months ago an advisory board was set up as an interim measure to help the sanctuary through testing financial times. This board was to become a subsidiary company once this legislation had been through the required processes. There are currently six members on this board which was appointed at a local resident and sanctuary level. Under the new scheme I wonder whether the minister would be able to advise whether it would be up to the minister or another authority to appoint a chairman to this board. Who is in the best position to select board members who can guide the sanctuary, meet the commercial endeavours and access money to do so?

Regardless, the local community would like to see a watchdog looking over their sanctuary. The very future of our beloved sanctuary rests on the quality and ability of this board to deliver sound advice to keep the sanctuary operating as a viable attraction. I would ask the minister whether these non-core sanctuary assets purchased after the deed of gift in 1976 will be transferred into this new entity.

If this is the case, then I further ask the minister: what will the new entity recommend they do with these non-core assets? Concerns aside for the moment, one benefit of this amendment is that the sanctuary would be a little further removed from the National Trust, and I mean no disrespect here. In essence, the National Trust does not specialise in managing this style of business. The financial status of the trust is not especially healthy either, but that is little wonder when one reads the director's message in the latest *Trust News*. I want to share a little bit of that with the House. The director, Penny Cook, says—

In recent years in Queensland, heritage has dropped down the scale of things that the Government thinks are important. There has been no community heritage incentive program for two years, whereas the other big states of Australia have programs in the millions of dollars. Whilst we all recognise that basic community services are an important role of Government, so is a balanced approach to cultural capital and society's sense of well-being.

Public concern about historic heritage in Queensland has, in itself, a long history. The National Trust—

which is a statutory body—

was founded in 1963.

She goes on—

By the mid 1970s heritage picked up substantially with the formation of the Australian Heritage Commission and the Commonwealth National Estate Grant Program. There was money available in Queensland to do heritage surveys and to conserve heritage buildings.

She continues—

We all thought that everything would be alright—State Governments were going to look after heritage as well. But we now have to question whether it is all right. Heritage has become bogged down in non-transparent processes. It is spread over two Acts of Parliament which appears to take away from strong protective measures, and creates a flawed 'one-stop-shop' that in reality does not work well. There are also further changes being made to the Queensland Heritage Act—but there is no public information on what those changes are.

I want to record my dismay to learn that our cultural heritage is at risk of being starved into a distant memory—a memory that will only be captured on a photograph in some modern mausoleum for people to remember how things really were if we continue not to look after the things that do give us our history.

If the Integrated Planning Act amendments are to assist the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary to become more competitive, as it needs to be as its financial statements show, it is vital that the government recognises the enormous value of the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary with regard to conservation, education and research. To date, though, the state government has not assisted Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary with any funding, even though Fleay's, which is just down the road, receives $1.5 million which includes the payment of staff. The Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary is deserving of state government funding and certainly it is reasonable to ask for a share of what Fleay's is given. The sanctuary is unique as an attraction and as a zoo for a host of wildlife. Most zoos in Australia receive recurrent funding for general maintenance and minor new works—unless of course you have a famous character like Steve Irwin of the Australia Zoo who is a wonderful ambassador for our country and its wildlife. Zoos are also able to submit for new projects. I do hope the minister will look upon requests from the sanctuary in a favourable manner.

The local community has in recent years vociferously made its sentiments clear over the selling off of any sanctuary properties or land. We in Currumbin realise just how fortunate we are to have this tranquil oasis in our midst. When Alex Griffiths began feeding those cheeky bright green lorikeets, who used to eat his gladiolus, and subsequently gifted this place of paradise, little did he dream that his actions would attract visitors from all over the world. Gifts such as those of Alex are to be treasured as they are rare indeed, which is why the special act—the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act—was created.

Operationally, the sanctuary works well. It demands to compete against Dreamworld and Sea World, which also have fast rides in addition to animal shows. The sanctuary is under the direction of Michelle Monsour as its CEO and has undergone a metamorphosis in a cultural sense that has allowed this very special piece of paradise a fresh start. Michelle has welcomed the community's contribution of ideas that will make up the master plan for the sanctuary in the years ahead. I do not know if any members have visited the sanctuary of late, but if they had they would find the experience a relaxing, educational and softly adventurous one. They can choose between a free flight bird show, cuddle a koala, take a back-of-house tour or just sit back and literally smell the roses.

With a savvy new marketing campaign and a range of new initiatives in the planning stages, Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary could use some help to improve the park facilities. The reason the crowds stopped coming was mostly due to a lack of new amenities. Exacerbating its woes, in June last year the sanctuary suffered another blow with a massive land slip. We had erosion problems from Currumbin Hill. These created several hundred thousands of dollars worth of damage to western park walls and the crocodile enclosure. Rectification has been slowed whilst various parties determine who is responsible.

The staff of the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, together with local residents, have shown admirable resilience in past years and I am sure, with some help from our state government, that their success and future will remain for many years to come. Sadly, though, with regard to this whole bill, it is a common perception on a large scale that there is currently a lack of accountability and transparency in

decision making with regard to planning and development. It is recognised that current development approvals are very convoluted as all different approvals have different time frames and it is preferable for approvals to line up with works projects.

This legislation does create a degree of frustration amongst council officers who say that private certification is taking control away from the council and issues with compliance are still unresolved, with a backlog of thousands of cases that simply do not get prosecuted. They say that compliance actions are too little too late as they take too long to implement. It is to be hoped the new legislation will resolve some of these matters so irresponsible damage is no longer such a regular occurrence in Currumbin or anywhere else. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (5.16 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I particularly want to speak on the accountability measures that the bill introduces. In a fast-growing area like Logan, there have been and will continue to be in the future development applications that some members of the community will have concerns about. Currently, there is a perception that there is a lack of accountability and transparency in the process of approving development applications. This happens especially when the application appears to contravene the council's planning scheme.

In order to address these concerns, this bill introduces measures such as requiring reasons to be given for all departures from the planning scheme whether the application is approved or refused. It is important to point out that, in both cases—whether approved or refused—there will be reasons given. That certainly will ease some of the concerns that people have, because they certainly do not get enough information on considerations when looking at application approvals. The bill also defines the grounds on which local governments can depart from their planning schemes. These grounds can only be for a public interest and not a private interest of an individual owner or interested party. Once again, this gives more information to the people who are concerned and certainly makes the process more transparent.

The bill also requires details of decisions to be published on the council's web site. Like I said, I believe that these measures will address community concerns and give the public confidence in the process. In my own electorate there was a controversial development that was approved. In many cases it was the lack of readily available information, a lack of communication and a lack of detail given to the public that led to the increase in public concern. I believe that some of those concerns would probably not have arisen had the information as to why the application had been approved been better communicated and readily accessible for these people. When people cannot access this information easily then it does appear that the process is not transparent or accountable, and that of course does create this concern.

The measures I have just mentioned will give more confidence to the public in relation to the decisions that are made. I also want to take this opportunity to put forward to the minister something that was put forward by a Logan City councillor at a public forum last week. Councillor Pam Parker was speaking about some development applications in her division. She felt that police had a role to play in development applications and town planning. Councillor Parker told the forum that poor planning in the past had created environments in neighbourhoods that had contributed to increases in crime and that it was the police who had to pick up the pieces and deal with the problems.

I spoke to some police officers during the week about that proposal. They were not very excited at all about becoming town-planners. They told me that they were more interested in performing other duties that were more to do with their policing role. However, I put the idea to the minister for consideration. I have not spoken to the police minister regarding the suggestion, so I do not know her view. However, I am sure that during the investigations there will be discussions with the police minister and the Queensland Police Service. So while the minister for police is in the chamber, I put that idea forward. In the past governments have reacted to growth rather than led and planned for that growth. This bill leads the way. It enhances the framework that drives planning for the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (5.19 pm): I rise to speak to the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill is designed to contribute to public confidence and to deliver more transparent decision making in approving development applications. Already, an example of that transparency is the creation of the restricted zone in the greater Springfield area. I believe that was the right decision on the grounds that the zone would protect the residents from the hazards caused by mining, such as silicon dust, and also it would ensure that that residential area could be expanded.

Massive expansion is taking place in mining towns. Many decisions have to be made by councils in relation to residential expansions. In relation to the town of Moranbah, I can honestly say that in the past two years probably two to 2½ thousand people have poured into that town. Consequently, young mums are living in caravans in people's backyards. Houses need to be built.

Recently, the Moranbah council had the foresight to approve a 350-block residential development to solve the social and economic constraints that exist in Moranbah. Governments believe that mines are designed to provide millions of dollars in royalties—they are only places that give governments

bucket loads of cash. But the towns that are created as a result of those mines are more than just mining towns. The mining town of Moranbah has a heart and soul. It is a place in which parents are raising their children and to where grandparents are retiring. Some of the workers who live in that town have been there for 20, 25 years or 30 years. It is very important that we create in Moranbah a quality environment for people to enjoy—just like what has occurred in the Springfield area where the decision was made to create a restricted zone to cater for residential development. I believe that that decision was made in consultation with the local council, the local member and the current state government. That was a good decision.

I cannot see the difference between Moranbah and places such as Springfield in south-east Queensland. The Moranbah council had the foresight to approve a 350-block development to solve the economic and social constraints that were placed on that town. But that development was called in, even though that town plan was approved by the state government in 1995 and the mining development lease was approved after that town plan was approved.

I truly believe that councils need to be given more autonomy in order to make decisions about residential development and other development within their regions. Councils have a greater understanding of what is going on in their regions. As a member of parliament, my role is to bring to the parliament issues that concern the people whom I represent. Likewise, councillors have exactly the same role. There will always be people who are for a residential development and people who are against it. But in the case of the proposed development at Moranbah, 2,000 people signed a petition that was opposed to the state government calling in that development. Apart from one mining company, no-one opposed that residential development.

So I really believe that local governments need more autonomy in order to make planning decisions. I want to express my disapproval that that development approval was called in, because I believe that Moranbah is in desperate need of that development. There is nowhere for the township to expand. Houses are being built on football fields. We had an opportunity for the town to expand so that more people could enjoy the quality of life that Moranbah has to offer.

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (5.25 pm): I am delighted to support the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. It is another important bill that has been introduced into this House and I commend the minister for her effort in that regard.

I would like to confine my remarks to the improvements in the accountability regime that are set out in the bill. It is perhaps a matter of regret, but it is certainly a necessary matter, that we increase the accountability on councils in relation to how they meet their own town planning schemes. In order to contribute to public confidence in the town planning process, the IPOLA Bill requires councils to give reasons for all departures from planning schemes, whether the applications are approved or refused. The bill defines the grounds on which local governments can depart from their planning schemes and those grounds can be based only on a public interest, not a private interest of an individual owner or interested party. Importantly, the bill requires details of decisions to be published on the council's web site.

As everyone knows, Hervey Bay is booming. By and large, the town is going very well, but a number of town planning decisions have been made that are cause for concern. I am not talking about anything particularly sinister; I am talking about bad town planning decisions and, particularly, decisions that are completely the opposite of the recommendations of the council officers. I refer to the siting of the Bunnings store on Boat Harbour Drive, the relocation of Harvey Norman's premises to almost out of town and the Greypower retirement village in Pulgul Street. All of these decisions were made by the council in explicit rejection of the unanimous recommendations of the council officers.

I found the Harvey Norman decision particularly regrettable. It was explicitly contrary to the town plan, it was explicitly contrary to the strategic plan, it was explicitly contrary to the retail strategy and it was explicitly contrary to the development control plan. Every one of these plans is good. I support them. The council has highly qualified planners who have over a period developed very comprehensive documents that set out the rules for good development. Yet, unfortunately, the council has seen fit on a number of occasions to overturn the very clear advice of its officers, which is completely in accordance with good planning principles.

The failure of town planning is set out in two great evils: urban sprawl and commercial strip development. The destruction of rural areas by rural residential sprawl is particularly regrettable. We all know how it happens. The wonderful rural character of the area attracts new residents. New residents increase traffic and housing. Residential life then competes with rural life. Farm suppliers close down, farms become isolated and divided and eventually are not considered viable because they do not have access to suppliers. Rural residential sprawl is slow and incremental. It often happens down little side roads. It is not obvious from the ground what is going on. But these subdivisions will eventually have the effect of destroying rural areas. I think that is clearly understood in town planning practice. Virtually every town plan will simply say, 'We want to preserve these areas', yet over and over again these sorts of developments occur.

The reason they are poor development decisions is that they cost money; they cost communities money. The cost of cul-de-sacs is enormous. It simply drives up taxes to have garbage trucks, police cars and fire trucks navigating inefficiently designed roads. Those roads might look pretty on a marketing map, but they are actually bad for the economy and they cost communities money.

Mrs Reilly: They're bad for public transport.

Mr McNAMARA: They are hopeless for public transport. I take the interjection of the honourable member for Mudgeeraba. We need to preserve our agricultural districts and take a broad view of the fact that urban development should not wipe out rural areas in and around towns. The developments that should be approved in our rural areas should support the continued viability of those rural areas. Nurseries, community gardens, farm stands and related farm service industries are fine, but we need to say absolutely not to retail, offices and recreational vehicle parks and particularly to straight-out urban development.

Similarly, the issue of commercial strip development is a matter of deep regret. Hervey Bay has been put back decades by a series of very poor decisions which failed to aid the necessity of developing a city heart. We continue to have decisions made contrary to all of the advice of the professionals employed by the council which still have the effect of further disaggregating the city heart. Quite simply, it comes down to safety issues: cities that have less strip development have less car accidents. There are studies that indicate that strip development is bad for human life, yet we continue to do it. We continue to overturn these well-accepted principles in town planning documents around the state and particularly in my city. I think it is time to stop. Forcing councils to publish their reasons for overturning the explicit advice of their officers in relation to their published town planning documents is good.

It is also completely unfair to those developers who do the right thing: they go and buy land in areas which are appropriately zoned, they invest in those areas and they set out to develop those areas appropriately. When someone else comes along and buys a greenfield site and says, 'I want to get this rezoned for something else,' that devalues the land of those people who are doing the right thing. It completely overturns the sensible process of people wanting to develop in a rational way. That says that it is open slather: it is on for young and old—come on in and go anywhere. While I certainly support the need for councils to encourage employment and development, that should be done in a consistent way with published documents which all developers—those coming to town and those who are already there—can read, follow and understand and will know will be consistently applied by the council.

I commend the minister for the bill and particularly for this aspect of the bill. It has been a problem in my city. One of the few things that can hold Hervey Bay back is bad town planning. I accept that this amendment is a very serious attempt to bring that particular evil to heel. I commend the minister for it.

Hon. KR LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (5.33 pm): There is no doubt that there is a need to control the very fast-developing areas in Queensland, especially in south-east Queensland. The member for Hervey Bay just expressed some of the reasons for that. However, my first concern arose when I visited Perth with the Public Works Committee when we were looking at urban development sustainability and we talked to some of the new bureaucrats who were appointed to the Premier's department in Western Australia. One of the first comments they made was that they had to control the massive development that was occurring to the south of Perth, that they had to contain it. It was a bland statement like that. And to contain it they had to stop the massive development of the rural residential areas and bring the development back into the city. If anyone has been to Perth recently, they will have seen the massive development at Subiaco. They have developed the old rail centre into a magnificent urban development. But, of course, it is the very small flatette type development. Their explanation for it was that, unless urban development is controlled, the massive amount of money which is put into an area by developers is lost to a government because government has to provide the massive infrastructure. That was their reason.

When we asked them how would they control it they said it was quite easy: they would go back into the old suburbs of Perth and the government would provide infrastructure such as new train stations, new bus depots, and this would encourage private developers to go back into the inner-city area. Whilst we might agree to that philosophy, it is when a bureaucrat goes mad and has this massive thought that he is going to stop all rural residential development and bring all the development back into the city that we have cause for concern. When we visited other cities we could see exactly what was happening. In Melbourne, it is the development of Dockside. In Sydney, it is the development around the harbour. In Brisbane, one only has to go to Newstead to see what is happening as far as inner-city urban development sustainability is concerned.

The trouble with such decisions is that they can affect other areas, and this is the case with Boonah and Beaudesert. This government has made the decision to develop the area between Brisbane and Ipswich. The development of the area between Springfield and Ripley is going to be massive, and the government will provide massive infrastructure for that area. But what the government will do, in effect, is provide massive amounts of money for that area but neglect the areas of the northern parts of Boonah and the northern parts of the Beaudesert shire because those areas are rural

residential areas. The people who have moved into those areas are the people who will be affected. It is only natural that the councils would agree to this planning control because they were obviously given their urban footprint to control. But, of course, they lost control of the rural residential areas which has now gone to the government.

We have to remember that there are many people in those northern areas such as Boonah and Beaudesert who bought their 20 or 30 acres with the thought that it would be a very good nest egg as far as their superannuation was concerned. They have never really developed their land, but it has always been in their mind that at some time in the future—after their children, who may have had horses or cattle when they were young, have grown up—they would be able to break up their blocks into five-acre lots or smaller, such as two-hectare lots. The price of land in northern areas of Beaudesert is about $300,000 for five acres. So a person who might have bought 20 acres for $100,000 a long time ago would now have land worth well over $1 million. With the stroke of a pen, the realisation of subdividing that land has been taken away from these people. It is quite obvious that the people in the northern parts of the Boonah and Beaudesert shires will be severely affected by some of the decisions being made now.

In the northern part of the Boonah shire we see the effect of what has happened in the dairy industry. Some people whose dairies were not viable and have now stopped dairying are now sitting on blocks of land which they cannot subdivide—land which is clearly suitable for development. Around Boonah there are a lot of 40-acre or 30-acre developments. People have moved there and have become excellent citizens of Boonah. But now that this government has limited subdivision to nothing less than 100 hectares, this sort of development cannot occur unless these developments are within the urban footprint of the Boonah shire. As an opposition, we are saying that if and when we make government we will review this and look at the unforeseen circumstances that will unfairly affect some of these people.

An older couple may have a younger son who wishes to take a section of the property that his parents have already developed in order to build a new house. In the olden days that was allowed, but now it would not be. I think it is extremely harsh for there to be just a bureaucratic statement that none of these decisions will be reviewed. It sounds good by the bureaucracy, but there are personal considerations. An older couple may not be able to continue to run their dairy farm or horse farm. They may want their son, who is married and has a family, to develop and go along with them. They do not want to use the same house, but they have a property that they could subdivide quite easily, at no cost to the government. They are not asking for water because they have their own tanks. They are not asking for electricity because the powerlines run outside the property and it is easy to bring the electricity in. So they are not asking for the provision of any government infrastructure at all. The government infrastructure is already there. I believe that some individual decisions could be looked at, as opposed to applying an overall plan that blatantly says that no rural residential areas can be subdivided unless they are larger than 100 hectares. That really is a massive piece of land.

The other concern I have is that the infrastructure which has been provided by this government is very limited. Government members talk about the millions of dollars which they will spend on the Wyaralong dam, but that is not correct. We all know that if the Wyaralong dam is to be built, the Brisbane Area Water Board will be allowed to borrow overseas money. It will then charge the urban users of that water. That water will be of no benefit to areas such as Boonah and Beaudesert. It will only be of benefit to people in the Brisbane area.

The most cruel thing that is happening is that the urban management planners are saying that they are guaranteed water for the next 15 or 16 years in the northern parts of areas like Beaudesert shire. We all know that Maroon Dam is down to 20 per cent capacity. We all know that when it drops to a certain level, where there is only enough water left for the industrial and urban users of the Beaudesert shire for two years, no irrigator will be allowed to use that water. This dam was built to ensure agricultural viability. If dam levels are around 30 per cent or 40 per cent then the irrigators can use the water. However, if they drop to the point at which the Beaudesert township has only two years of water left, everyone is cut off. I think that is completely unfair. In relation to the on-stream storages such as Cedar Weir, farmers will be told that once these weirs drop to a certain level no-one will be allowed to use irrigation water. Boonah has not had irrigation water for the last three years because Moogerah Dam is down to 10 per cent capacity. Unfortunately, those dam catchments—for both Maroon and Moogerah dams—are not as reliable as catchments such as for the Hinze Dam, which receives water from the Lamington Plateau.

Members should not forget about rivers such as Logan River. Ninety-three per cent of the water in the Logan River runs out into the sea. We use only seven per cent of the water in the Logan River. To me, that is criminal when we consider the shortage of water. Surely, off-stream storages should be explored so that in good times water can be taken for storage, such as at Bromelton just outside Beaudesert. We believe the cost of that dam would be less than $12 million, but that would access water from Running Creek and Christmas Creek, which really come out of the Lamington Plateau. As we have seen with the Hinze Dam, the Lamington Plateau is much more reliable in terms of water than the areas around Maroon and Moogerah.

I can see why there is a need for planning processes. I can see why there is a need for this sort of legislation. But the government should not take the acceptance by councils as a sign that this is good legislation. The councils themselves are happy because they have the urban footprints. They are not happy because they have lost control of the rural residential areas. Indirectly, the government has hurt many people—many smaller citizens—who believe that they have not been given any advantage whatsoever. I believe that within 12 months or two years it will be necessary to review this legislation to see what unforeseen circumstances have caused a lot of hardship to many people, especially in the areas of south-east Queensland.

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (5.44 pm): I rise to make some brief comments in support of the legislation before the House. I will condense my comments to talk about the amendments in this legislation relating to accountability measures and the transparency of decision making. I certainly support these pieces of legislation. I was formerly a Cairns city councillor, and occasionally development applications would come before the council that in no way, shape or form met the requirements of the town plan or fitted in with the spirit of the town plan. I remember that the CEO at the time, David Farmer, always said that all we needed to change the town plan was seven votes. It was a council of 12 councillors and a mayor. He said that all we needed to get approval for those things was seven votes.

Nowadays, people in modern communities need a greater level of accountability than that. When councils do decide to go outside of their town plan in making a decision, they should give a much more detailed reason for doing so other than just 'seven councillors agreed to it on the day'. I do not know that any of those particular approvals was dodgy. Some of them were quite reasonable. Some of them seemed to me to be unreasonable and deserved greater explanation as to why council would go outside of its town plan.

I think we need to recognise that councils that do have a plan that has been developed under the Integrated Planning Act have put a lot of effort into the development of those plans. A lot of community consultation goes into developing that plan. It goes to and fro between state government departments and the council, and between the council and the community. The Cairns plan underwent extensive community consultation on two occasions. Councils need to respect the decision that is made when the minister gazettes that plan. So much work and community effort goes into it that we need to respect the outcomes of that extensive process, as was the case in developing the new Cairns plan. I fully support these provisions within the act that put the onus on councils to define the grounds on which they have departed from their planning schemes and ensure the public interest is the only reason for departing from the town plan.

The second issue I will speak on briefly is enforcement reforms. This occupied more of my time as a councillor than any other issue. A developer would receive a development approval and would subsequently undertake works contrary to the development approval, sometimes in excess of the development approval. On one occasion I can remember quite clearly that a wall was constructed a metre closer to the boundary of an adjoining property owner. While a metre might not sound like much, it brought a row of air-conditioning units a metre closer to the adjoining property owner's boundary. The associated noise as a result of the developer sneaking a metre had a profound impact on the livelihood of that woman and on her lifestyle. As the air conditioners were adjacent to her bedroom, the noise kept her up at night and was a great source of distraction to her. Ensuring that councils have adequate powers to deal with developers like that is important. That is what my constituents want to see. They want to know that councils have the teeth to enforce decisions that they make. That has been brought home to me time and time again.

I also welcome the change to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act, which allows for an additional Indigenous person on the Wet Tropics Management Authority Board. That is a step in the right direction. Hopefully, we will have greater Indigenous participation in the management of those areas. I think that is an important step in the right direction.

I, like other members, look forward to the broader review of the Integrated Planning Act that is occurring at this time. I would like to see a number of things come out of the consultation that is occurring at the moment.

Another complaint that I receive on a quite regular basis is in relation to private certifiers and the regulation of them. That needs to be looked at quite closely by the government to ensure that private certifiers are accountable for their decisions.

The second thing that I would like to see come out of that consultation is the use of negotiated decisions. This is another trick that is used by developers. A developer gets an approval from council which might have to go through a material change of use process, which requires public consultation. Subsequently, they receive the approval. They then put in a negotiated decision that alters the outcome of the approval without having to go back to the public for its input. Some of those changes have a significant effect, particularly on adjoining property owners. They are two points that I think need to be addressed as part of the review as we move forward. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Order! Before calling the honourable member for Mirani, I ask members to acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of the president of the LGAQ, Councillor Paul Bell.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (5.51 pm): Welcome to the Assembly, Paul. It is certainly great to see you here.

I rise to speak briefly on the Integrated Planning Act and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I support the member for Charters Towers' summary of the situation at Moranbah. Indeed, Moranbah is in a situation, basically, where the town is locked in. Most members would realise that that town is more than 30 years old. The people who wish to retire there—such as grandparents—want a lifestyle of some sort. Unfortunately, no opportunity currently exists for the town to expand and to put in the facilities that are required and the extra houses that are required to service the mining industry in that region. As most members would be aware, the mining industry is booming in the central highlands. A real need exists to substantially develop those areas to cater for the housing requirements. The residents really need security in tenure and security in lifestyle.

Of course, a big issue in Moranbah and the towns in that area is the supply of domestic water. Although the mines have a pipeline from the Burdekin Falls Dam, a huge shortage of water will occur in Dysart, Middlemount, Moranbah, et cetera. A lifestyle issue exists there and I totally support the speech of the member for Charters Towers. Even though Moranbah is not in my electorate, my electorate boundary extends right up to the edge of the Moranbah township.

I would like to speak briefly about rural subdivisions. A lot of anomalies exist in that situation. A land quantity of 150 acres is required to build a house and create a rural subdivision. In most areas, particularly with the weather we are currently experiencing, there is no chance for a person to make any sort of living on a 150-acre block. The problem, of course, is that it presupposes that all Queensland land is of equal quality or is in an area of equal rainfall. On 150 acres in prime, pristine areas of north Queensland, it is probably possible to earn a living. However, that would certainly be impossible in some parts of my electorate.

My constituents have issues where family farms require the building of another house for family members to carry on running the farm because the father and mother wish to stay on the farm. They have to subdivide 150 acres of the farm to hand on to the son, so that he can build a house on the farm, or they have to go through a process of boundary realignment—which amounts to the same thing, basically—or actually put a buffer zone around the block of land. The buffer zone can come down to 40 metres. However, in real terms, that becomes a problem not only for the landowner but also possibly for the council in future years.

It is my belief that there should be an allowance for, say, two to five acre blocks to be subdivided off rural properties. It should not occur in great numbers, but possibly one or two, particularly where family members are coming back onto a property to work a property. That issue is creating a big problem in the sugar industry throughout my area. It certainly needs to be looked at.

Another issue for our small towns is that under the Integrated Planning Act it is not possible to create smaller subdivisions that contain a number of blocks of two to five acres that can support the community. As all members know, some of our smaller communities are having trouble attracting people and smaller shires are certainly struggling with their rate base. I strongly believe that allowing smaller subdivisions on land that is probably not prime agricultural land, close to small towns, will actually make those towns sustainable. It will also help to provide those shires with a reasonable rate base and give them the chance of a decent future.

One issue, of course, as we move forward in this century is the real opportunity for some of our western townships to grow, with the possibility of tourism, et cetera, becoming a major asset to those communities. Unless the people are there to service the tourism industry and to build the infrastructure required, that opportunity will be lost forever and a day.

When we review the act at a later time, it is important to take into account that there are differences right across Queensland. What works in the city does not necessarily work in the country. There are even differences between certain country areas in different parts of the state.

I notice that the bill makes mention of the use of greywater. I have been a strong advocate of that over the life of this parliament. It is heartening to see that we are moving in that direction. However, an issue in my electorate has just come to my notice. People have done the environmentally friendly thing and put in place sewage or septic systems of the pump-out variety which are environmentally friendly. However, the council insists that the effluent or the water from those systems goes into underground drainage. Therefore, the real benefit of greywater is lost because, basically, it is being pumped back underground rather than being used on shrubs or in a garden setting or, as others have mentioned, through a soaker hose or low-pressure dispersion units. There is an opportunity here. Indeed, I will look into it further.

If, indeed, it is council policy to force landholders to redirect greywater into drainage systems, it seems to go against the intent of this legislation. We really need to use as much of our water as many times as we can. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, the use of shower and washing water through our septic or toilet systems is probably the best possible environmental outcome. We have to maximise that as much as possible.

The other issue I would like to raise is that of the on-costs involved in subdivision works in cities throughout Queensland. As most members would be aware, the cost of building a house has gone through the roof. One of the huge costs involved is in the development of the land—that is, the subdivision costs, the on-costs and the headworks costs of developing land. Of course, that is automatically passed on to the end buyer.

It is becoming a real hassle for our children to find low-cost blocks to buy and build their first homes on. There has to be some investigation or inquiry into the costs of development. While the availability of civil engineers and civil constructors is a problem, another issue in my area is the fact that the cost of land has almost tripled over the past two years. A block of land that one could buy two years ago for $80,000 is currently probably worth well over $200,000. That makes it almost impossible for young families to establish a home, as a very basic house costs somewhere between $450,000 and $500,000. With those few words, I support the legislation.

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (6.01 pm): I am pleased to rise in support of the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. While the bill makes a number of amendments, I will address briefly the section of the bill that deals with accountability measures, because that relates to the complaints that are most frequently brought to my office in relation to the Gold Coast City Council.

The amendments will increase the transparency of councils' decision making to address those concerns and to increase the public's confidence in a local government's ability to make decisions. Councillors will be required to give reasons for any departures from planning schemes, whether the application is approved or refused. The bill will also define the grounds on which local governments can depart from their planning schemes. Those will only be for public interests and not for private interests.

The bill will require details of decisions to be published on a council's web site. That will make a lot of difference to both members of the community and applicants who want to look at the decisions of local government. The commonality in many of the complaints that I receive from both residents and commercial or residential developers regarding decisions made by the Gold Coast City Council—whether they are complaining about a decision for or against—is what they see as the lack of accountability and the lack of access to information, particularly timely access, which would assist them in either lodging appeals or continuing with their arguments.

Today many speakers have highlighted examples where developments have been approved contrary to the community benefit or perceived benefit, despite local objections, or contrary to what the local community wanted. I have a particular example in mind, but I do not want to prejudice the applicant's opportunity to be successful in a future appeal. Broadly, there are examples where council officers have written a report recommending the approval of a development and that advice has been ignored and the application has been refused. That can affect small businesses in particular which may have worked with the council's planning division over a long period. I can think of examples where businesses have worked with council for up to a year or, indeed, over many years to address the issues or concerns raised by the town-planners and the experts in that area. If they want to be seen as accountable and transparent and avoid any accusations of political point scoring, the councillors, as the elected representatives, should at least consider the report in detail and avail themselves of the facts before deciding to reject an application.

During the application process issues such as noise, amenity, traffic, pollution, vegetation, fire management and so on must be raised by council officers. The application must meet the requirements of the town-planning scheme. Any objections based on such issues that may be raised by a resident, a lobby group or even a group of residents have to be addressed to the satisfaction of the council officers. If all of those factors are considered and the report is still satisfactory but the application is rejected because a political lobby group has emerged or become strong enough to stop it, that puts a cloud over the council's credibility, its reputation and its ability to manage such applications. Currently, it is very easy for councillors to ignore a positive report by pointing to community objection. However, if that community objection is not based on fact or if the lobby groups have not availed themselves of the facts, the decision is based on misinformation and potentially on political mischief.

I stress that this legislation will work both ways. It will act to better support communities and residents and it will also do a lot to assist and support small businesses, developers and applicants who work very hard to address all of the issues that they think will be put on the table but are then dismissed at the drop of a hat. That could happen because someone had a personal vendetta against them and may have brought in a lobby group for support and the council did not look at the facts further.

I am pleased to see these amendments come in. They will not help those against whom bad decisions have already been made, but they will help in the future. I look forward to the broader review of the IPA. Many people in my community, including developers, environmental groups and community members, look forward to seeing the outcomes of that review. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (6.06 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to contribute to the debate on the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I will limit my comments to clause 13, entitled 'Minor amendments of SEQ regional plan'.

When the South East Queensland Regional Plan was implemented in June 2005, it set the basic parameters for the changing landscape in south-east Queensland until 2026. As we know, the region is comprised of 18 separate councils, all of which will receive major population growth in the foreseeable future. Of course, the regional plan needs to be seen in conjunction with the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program 2005-2026. It is against both of those documents that the local government management strategies and structure plans become important.

I note that the second reading speech of the minister highlights clearly that we are currently looking at how to implement the South East Queensland Regional Plan, and the amendments to IPA contained herein deal with 'a framework for implementing the plan in each local government area'. This framework then becomes the catalyst by which detailed technical amendments to planning schemes could later be made.

The local growth management strategies and structure plans are governed by guidelines laid down by the Office of Urban Management and are geared to individual councils identifying those elements that need to be put in place and, I assume, time lines to ensure the regional plan is effective and provides the balance that individual local government authorities wish to strike for their populations.

The Sunshine Coast is no different from the rest of Queensland, and councils will need to be very mindful not just of what the regional plan states is going to occur but also of how the population they serve will react to any strategy that they put on paper, hence the necessity stated in the bill for 'adequate public consultation'. This is a process that will be time consuming and, given the breadth of changes that are going to occur on economic, social, community, infrastructure and other fronts, it will not be an easy task to communicate that to the public. However, what it will do is make councils and council bureaucracies focus on the more detailed picture and will allow the wider community a greater understanding of exactly how the future will impact on them. Importantly, the community will have the option of telling the council they do not want development to the extent or on the time line proposed. This gives a balance to the power of developers by placing in the public's hands a sense of veto.

Bad planning results in bad outcomes and throws all components of the plan into chaos thus compounding the bad outcomes. The amendment to the act that I am speaking to allows local growth management strategies or structure plans to amend the South East Queensland Regional Plan. The section being replaced by new section 2.5A.20 deals with minor amendments as stated in new subsection (1)(a), but in new subsection (1)(b) it would appear that a local growth management strategy or structure plan could amend the South East Queensland Regional Plan in more than a minor way.

As I understand it, when this bill was prepared the consultation draft provided to the Local Government Association of Queensland did not make any reference to the new section I have just referred to in the manner that is now being proposed. Does the new section therefore mean that these local growth management strategies and structure plans allow an amendment to the South East Queensland Regional Plan even if that amendment is not of a minor nature? Of course, I bear in mind that the document must be prepared by a local government and submitted to the minister for approval and also have undergone public consultation. What I am simply trying to ascertain in greater detail from the minister is the degree of variance that local growth management strategies or structure plans can have on the South East Queensland Regional Plan.

One of the greatest needs on the Sunshine Coast, and indeed Caloundra, is affordable housing. The cost of housing throughout the south-east corner makes it very difficult for young people or couples to buy a home. These same people are the lifeblood of our future and we need to ensure we provide them with the opportunity to stay in the area of their choice thus making a contribution to that community and injecting new ideas into the mix of the region allowing the region to develop and evolve. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (6.11 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006—IPOLA. The Integrated Planning Act—IPA—has now been in place for nearly eight years. Such a complex act, which I think most members certainly agree is the case, does require constant review so that it remains relevant to all of us. I would like to acknowledge the work of the departmental officers and the minister's staff who are on hand to answer sometimes difficult questions on IPA. I thank them very much for that. IPOLA contains several key reforms to IPA including ones to the integrated development assessment system—IDAS.

I will confine my remarks to a few of the issues. I want to make it clear that under IPA the state government has provided the mechanisms for councils to be able to adopt a planning scheme policy that sets out contributions to be levied on new developments to recover the cost of providing essential infrastructure. Similar arrangements have been part of the Queensland planning system, at least by law, since 1985, but were originally limited to water supply, sewerage contributions and parklands.

With the introduction of IPA contributions can be asked for by councils for transport, or local roads, and stormwater networks, although many councils already require contributions or works for these networks as a reasonable part of the development. These arrangements are due to be replaced by priority infrastructure plans—PIPs—and infrastructure charges schedules—ICSs—over the next few years. Most councils are still operating under the current policy based transitional arrangements. At the end of the day if the councils decide to charge, they do the calculations and they get the money.

There was a news item in the Caboolture paper last week suggesting that the proposed contributions for the local transport network—that is, council roads—are partly in response to a state government levy to fix roads. This is not the case. IPA simply provides the mechanism, currently policy but PIPs and ICSs later on, that allows councils to recover some of the costs of providing essential infrastructure to new developments. Similarly, the proposed contributions are for future works to address the impact of new development and not remedial works to fix existing problems. There are some concerns in the community—and I have been approached by a number of groups in the area—about the new contributions that may be levied by councils. I have also read that developers have some problems with the proposed contributions compared with previous contributions.

I will talk briefly about currency period arrangements. All development approvals expire if the development is not started in a reasonable time. This stops old approvals that do not comply with current planning standards and community expectations from persisting for many years after they were first issued. It also gives the development industry greater certainty by ensuring that there are not old inactive approvals in the system. However, industry is concerned that the arrangements are unclear and there is no link between the different approvals that they might seek for a single project. For example, this means approval to use a building might expire before it is actually built unless the applicant seeks an extension to the approval. Local governments also seem to be unclear about the requirements and their responsibilities such as the matters they are entitled to consider when an applicant asks for an extension.

This bill more clearly links different approvals for a project by allowing the lapsing periods for use and subdivision approvals to automatically roll forward to line up with the periods of later works approvals for the same project. However, there are also safeguards to ensure the arrangements are not abused to keep old inactive approvals alive. For example, an approval will only roll forward if the applicant demonstrates performance by bringing forward each later approval within two years of the last.

I turn to the improvements in accountability and transparency of decision making under IDAS for councils with regard to development applications. Last year there were several decisions made by councils about development applications that created concern in the community about a perceived lack of accountability and transparency in decision making, particularly with regard to councils appearing to ignore their own planning schemes.

To address these concerns and restore public confidence the IPOLA Bill includes several measures to deliver more transparent decision making. These proposals have been designed to minimise compliance costs which will also be offset by administrative savings from discontinuing referral coordination. The proposed measures are: firstly, requiring reasons to be given for all departures from planning schemes regardless of whether the application is approved or refused; secondly, defining the grounds on which local governments can depart from their planning schemes—these grounds can only be for a public interest and not a private interest of benefit to an individual; and, thirdly, requiring details of decisions to be published on assessment manager web sites.

I would like to mention the regional planning arrangements in south-east Queensland. Councils in south-east Queensland are preparing local growth management strategies and structure plans to show how they will implement the South East Queensland Regional Plan in their areas. Local growth management strategies and structure plans must be prepared in accordance with guidelines prepared by the Office of Urban Management, which was set up by the Beattie state government, and specify the required community consultation. The state government did promise to deliver a comprehensive regional planning framework for south-east Queensland along with the delivery of key state infrastructures and we have done that. While it is intended that local growth management strategies and structure plans be replaced by planning scheme amendments, the documents do have an important role in the period up until these amendments are formally adopted by respective councils.

The bill consequently contains amendments to allow local growth management strategies and structure plans to be incorporated into the South East Queensland Regional Plan by way of the existing minor amendment processes for the regional plan. The SEQ Regional Plan has been well received by most, but there are some individuals who certainly would have liked their land included. I do believe that there have been some appeals.

I received some correspondence today from the Environmental Defenders Offices Inc. I have taken the liberty to speak to the minister, the Hon. Desley Boyle, about the correspondence. She has agreed to make some amendments in the consideration in detail stage to address their reference to the

'referral coordination system' in IPA. I have also asked the minister to give consideration to broadening the definition of 'grounds'. I thank her for the time she spent with me discussing that correspondence from the environment group.

The IPOLA Bill also includes numerous other amendments that will further refine and streamline the operation of the IDAS to deliver more transparent and accountable decisions in a more timely manner. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (6.19 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. I, too, want to comment in particular on the accountability measures that the minister has included in this very important bill. I want to take the time to actually repeat the very words the minister used in her second reading speech, because I think it is central to the issue that I want to comment on during this debate. The minister said—

From time to time decisions made by local governments about development applications lead to concern in the community about a perceived lack of accountability and transparency in decision making. This is more particularly so when these decisions appear to contravene the council's planning scheme. To address these concerns and to contribute to public confidence, the IPOLA Bill includes several measures to deliver more transparent decision making. These measures are—

- requiring reasons to be given for all departures from planning schemes, whether the application is approved or refused;
- defining the grounds on which local governments can depart from their planning schemes. These grounds can only be for a public interest, and not a private interest, of an individual owner or interested party; and
- requiring details of decisions to be published on the council's web site.

This is the key to the very contentious issue which I have raised in this House, which the shadow minister spoke about and which I questioned the Premier about this morning—that is, the contentious Links development at Montville, in the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast. I think it is so important that we have this amendment and that councils are required to be totally accountable for their decisions there and then when they make those decisions.

I heard the shadow minister for local government and environment—the alternative minister in a coalition led government—saying that in his view there was no reason for this project to be called in. To quote his words, he said 'it is the strangest thing'. He then went on to say that the council's decision was not contrary to the advice from its own planning department. With respect, my understanding of the Links decision made by the Maroochy Shire Council was the exact opposite. It was contrary to its own planning scheme. That is central to the issue which generated so much interest and concern in the community, prompted the Premier to call in this matter and prompted so many staff to put so much effort into reviewing this decision. In response to my question this morning the Premier spoke about the effort that he has had to make to review all of the matters involved in this controversial matter.

I believe that it all boils down to the very important issue of the accountability of councils when they make their decisions and the requirement that when they make decisions they have to give the reasons. It is those reasons that they give when they stand up in that council chamber and say why they are voting for or against a development that should be relevant—not when a council later moves a motion to instruct the council's planning staff to come up with some reasons to advise the government as to why they have made that decision. I think that is imperative.

The Links matter—I asked the Premier about it this morning and the shadow minister said that he saw no reason the project should have been called in—goes to the very heart of this very important amendment to the act which we are talking about tonight. It is imperative that councils, if they are going to make these important decisions, be required to state the reasons there and then. They should not be able to go off and spend more ratepayers' money passing resolutions instructing their planning staff to come up with reasons to support their decision when in actual fact those reasons are contrary to the very reasons the town-planning staff gave to the council when the matter originally came to council.

I think this is a very good amendment—a very good amendment—and I look forward to seeing the alternative government led by the shadow minister for local government and environment standing up and supporting this very clause when it is debated in the consideration in detail stage, because I think it goes to the very heart of the issue involving the Links development, which the shadow minister says should not have been called in yet the Premier has acknowledged, the minister has acknowledged and everyone else seems to have acknowledged that the council made a decision that was contrary to its own planning department staff recommendation.

I cannot understand how, on the one hand, people are saying that the council's decision was contrary to its own planning scheme and, on the other hand, other elected representatives are saying that it was clearly not contrary to that advice. History will speak for itself, and this morning the Premier indicated that he hopes to make a final decision within a month. On behalf of all of the people who supported it and who opposed it and who are interested in this matter, I would urge the Premier to take his time to look at it. We are all looking forward to him coming back into this chamber at a future date and giving us his advice, because that certainly will then be the end of the road.

That is one good thing about a call-in power. It saves hundreds of thousands of dollars—councils spending ratepayers' money, members of the community spending their own money or developers spending shareholders' money. It is saving all of that unnecessary expense in going off to another forum to try to decide an issue. I certainly look forward to the Premier coming into the House and telling us his view after he has reviewed all of the material, and I certainly do not know what his decision will be. I understand that there is already one e-petition which is before one of our all-party parliamentary committees. I have received a written request from another side requesting that their concerns also be referred to the all-party parliamentary committee. I have spoken with the Clerk and have written to the Speaker, and I anticipate that the Speaker will make a comment on that when parliament resumes. I look forward to this bill progressing to the consideration in detail stage and in particular seeing all members in this House vote on this very important clause, which is about ensuring that council members—who are paid handsomely for the privilege of being elected representatives—have to be totally accountable for their decisions. I certainly commend the bill and this amendment in particular to the House.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (6.26 pm): I rise to speak to the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Given the time, I want to keep my comments brief and certainly to the point of the accountability mechanisms contained within the bill. In this day and age it is incumbent on all levels of government—local, state and federal—to be prepared to accept increasing levels of accountability. I do not believe that any council in Queensland will have a problem with the mechanisms contained in this bill.

It is important, as other members have said, that councils do a lot of community consultation in developing their planning schemes. It is of great concern to residents, particularly in my electorate, when council is seen to go against its planning scheme. The requirement contained in this bill is that councils must issue any reasons for the departure from the planning scheme to either approve a development or in fact reject a proposed development. The reasons for that must be posted on the web site. I do not wish to get into nitpicking issues with councils, but these planning decisions are within council's ambit to make. Councils are allowed to make good and bad decisions; they are just not allowed to make illegal ones. I am not suggesting that the majority of these decisions are illegal in any way, shape or form.

To quote the mayor of Redlands Shire Council, a fact of politics is that six beats five every time. Yes, the mayor is correct: six votes will beat five votes every time. But it is important that the reasons for the decision—the reasons the council has for taking that position—be effectively communicated to people. Too often council makes a decision where it accepts the advice of its experts—its professional officers—and then the following week it will make a decision where it rejects the recommendations of those same experts. If that is for base political purposes then the public needs to know on what basis those decisions have been made. Again, I certainly support the increased accountability mechanisms contained in this bill. I believe they will increase the level of public debate and public awareness of the reasons underlying many of these council decisions. I commend the minister and commend the bill to the House.

Sitting suspended from 6.29 pm to 7.30 pm.

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (7.30 pm): I am pleased to rise to speak in support of the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. The bill contains several key reforms to the IPA as well as some minor and clarifying amendments and I will speak to some of those.

I am sure all members of the House have to confront poor planning decisions made by local government. I have listened to quite a few stories related by other members in their contributions about exactly that. Just outside of my area the Montville Links development proposal has been called in pending a decision. That is an example of council going against its planning scheme to approve a development that goes against the wishes of many members of the community. Closer to home in Maleny there is the Woolworths supermarket development. Admittedly, the council made the decision to approve that development a long time ago—back in the late 1980s. Obviously, the community, through its DCP process, stated clearly that it did not want development on that site. Council did not follow through on that decision. The end result is an horrific building right on the banks of the Obi Obi Creek in Maleny. I believe that the Woolworths supermarket is due to open next week. That is a very disappointing outcome for the members of the Maleny community. Although the amendments that are contained in this bill we are debating will not resolve those problems—the bill is not retrospective—I hope that they will certainly stop these types of decisions being made in the future.

This bill will require reasons to be given for all departures from planning schemes, whether the application is approved or refused. It defines the grounds on which local governments can depart from their planning schemes. These grounds can be only for a public interest and not the private interest of an individual owner or interested party. The bill also requires details of decisions to be published on the council's web site.

I am pleased that this accountability mechanism is introduced to the IPA. It will make a big difference in the future as to how councils make their planning decisions. I also look forward to seeing a change to the way in which the Planning and Environment Court operates to make it easier for a council to defend its decisions and to certainly make the process cheaper. That suite of reforms will certainly be

very much welcomed by the community. It will mean that decisions that the community has indicated to council it wants made will be followed through.

I am also glad to see in this legislation reforms to the enforcement of environmental nuisance, erosion and sedimentation control on development sites. At the moment, if there is a problem on a site, for example, sediment going into the river, the council has to issue a show cause notice and then a couple of weeks later an enforcement notice must be issued. Obviously, that means that there is a time delay. A good developer and a good builder will do the right thing from the word go. A lot of them do that. But when someone is not doing the right thing and is being dodgy about their environmental practices, the amendment in this legislation will certainly mean that councils can step in straightaway and have the problem remedied. I know that the members of my community will support that entirely.

The South East Queensland Regional Plan has been very well received by the people in my electorate. They are very glad that finally a plan is in place that will guide development over the next 20 years. Councils fall into line with that plan by matching their planning schemes with it. I think we are going to see great outcomes. For example, the legislation refers to the local growth management strategies that will be put in place. We are working on one of those in Beerwah at the moment. The council will undertake its LGMS, which will dovetail into the infrastructure needs of the community. We will be able to do the necessary budgetary planning to deliver that infrastructure to the people. The local councillor for the area, Councillor Anna Grosskreutz, and I are working very closely on this matter. We have formed the Beerwah district roads task force. I can see that the member for Nicklin is looking interested. The formation of this task force means that, for the first time, local council representatives and representatives from state government departments such as Queensland Rail, Queensland Transport and the Department of Main Roads are sitting in the same room, working together and using local growth management strategies to deliver the road results that Beerwah will need in the coming years.

The task force is considering issues such as removing the open level crossing that is located right in the heart of Beerwah. That causes immense traffic problems to the local community. We are considering whether we can get access over the railway line somewhere else and hopefully fix up the school traffic problem at the same time, thereby making it a safe environment. That is important. The local growth management strategy process dovetails very nicely with planning for the infrastructure needs of Beerwah. So I am very pleased to see that this provision is firmly cemented in the legislation. I imagine that when councils across Queensland go through that process they will surprise themselves with the types of infrastructure plans that they can come up with and we will see them well and truly delivered.

An honourable member: And funded.

Ms MALE: Funded first, obviously, and then delivered after that. As I said, this bill is very important legislation. I congratulate the minister and her department on bringing this legislation forward. It delivers on making the legislative changes that the community has sought. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (7.35 pm): I, too, congratulate the minister on introducing this bill to the House. A number of members have already talked about some of the specific details of this bill, particularly the issue of councillors having to give reasons when they deliberately deviate from the advice of council officers. I think that issue has been covered very comprehensively. As such, I will not go over that ground.

I want to talk about the principles that underlie the Integrated Planning Act and the government's regional plan. That principle is that good urban planning is absolutely essential to good community life. In August last year in this place I made a reasonably major speech about the principles of good urban planning. I found that speech to be quite well received in the community and I want to build on that speech in my contribution tonight.

At that time the thesis I put to the House was that planning would be one of the defining issues of politics in the years ahead, just as the mistakes that have been made in planning to this point very much define our politics and the community in which we live now. In the past 50 years we have seen very much an increasing urbanisation in Australia. We have also seen increasing social dislocation. We have seen more and more people who do not feel connected to community. We have seen more and more people who live on the outer fringes who do not know their neighbours, who are not involved in the local P&C and who are not connected to what is going on locally. Sometimes we talk about that as a broad social trend. We contemplate the reasons for that decline in community. I put to the House that one of the fundamental reasons for that decline in social connectedness has been 50 years of, in many cases, very bad planning.

If we plan communities well, as the state government attempts to do both through this bill, with the IPA, which this bill amends, and with the regional plan, we can ensure strong communities and a strong quality of life for those people who live within them. Good urban planning depends on a number of things. It depends on shared public space. It depends on good public transport and, for that public transport to work, it depends on there being a level of urban density that makes both public space and public transport work, that is, a density of around 15 dwellings per hectare.

While they have achieved cult status in recent times and are agreed to by some and hated by others, the principles of new urbanism offer us a mechanism to develop that kind of good urban planning. The principles of new urbanism, as I said in my speech six months ago, are these: walkability so that people can genuinely walk from place to place; connectivity so that places are connected; mixed use and diversity so that we do not get the rich people living over here and the poor somewhere else and never the twain shall meet; mixed housing, preventing ghettos; and quality architecture.

While hardly adopting holus-bolus the principles of new urbanism, what the state is doing through the Integrated Planning Act and through the regional plan is ensuring some solid foundations for good planning and ensuring strong communities in the future. We get up in this place and we talk about those principles. I note that members opposite have broadly supported those principles as well tonight, with the exception of some differing views around load density in urban and rural areas. But I note that there is generally broad consensus that good planning is a good thing. I think it is easy for us as members of parliament to fall into a trap in which we believe that this is something to which everyone is committed. I want to put to the House the view that that is not necessarily the case.

I recently read a long article by a fellow called Bob Day, who is the national president of the Housing Institute of Australia. In his article called 'In defence of urban sprawl', Bob Day argues a number of things. He argues that planning mechanisms which seek to rid our communities of what I see is the scourge of urban sprawl are a bad thing. He argues that for a number of reasons. Firstly, he argues that methods of preventing urban sprawl—that is, government instituted mechanisms to limit the availability of land in outer metropolitan areas—have had a really negative effect in Australia in that they have made housing, particularly for first home buyers, more expensive. So he argues that urban sprawl is the only way that young Australians will have the opportunity to buy a first home. I want to deal with that proposition first in that it is clearly lunacy.

We have in recent years seen a real blow-out in the cost of housing in Australia. I understand that since 1996, when the Howard government was elected, the average cost of a house has risen from six times average annual earnings to nine times average annual earnings, which means, of course, that the average first home buyer has 1½ times the mortgage that they might have had before the Howard government was elected. Bob Day's argument is that that is because we have deliberately limited the availability of land; we have made land less affordable. Bob Day, sadly, is wrong in that what has really caused Australian house prices to blow out is the fact that modern Australians, rather than desperately wanting to live in the far-flung outer suburbs, want to live in bigger houses.

Since 1955 the average size of a new house, in Australia has risen from 110 square metres to about 220 square metres of floor space—that is, the size of Australian houses has doubled. But in the same period the average number of people living in the house has decreased from 3.6 people per house to around 2.7 people per house. So, while Bob Day might want to argue that it is somehow governments that are causing house prices to blow out, what we see from those figures is that house prices are very clearly blowing out because Australians are living in far bigger houses.

Bob Day's second defence of urban sprawl is that far-flung outer suburbs are a haven of biodiversity and that we are better off having suburbs with cul-de-sacs, trees and greenery than we are having inner city, concrete jungles—I guess he would call them that—surrounded by farmland. Again, this argument is a complete fallacy because we are not necessarily looking at having a trade-off between rural areas and urban areas. He completely ignores that what we might choose to have, should we plan well, is urban areas, some farmland and deliberately preserved natural green space, which, of course, is where biodiversity exists to a greater extent.

Bob Day's third argument is that we have to have urban sprawl because we have to have roads because public transport does not work. This seems to be the most self-fulfilling of all of his arguments. He argues that public transport does not take people to the places they want to go. It seems to me that it is hard for public transport to take people to the places they want to go if we plan badly. If we fail to plan, people live and work in areas that are very much geographically dispersed. But, if we plan well, we can plan systems in which public transport will take people from the places where they live to the places where they work, and that is, indeed, what happens very actively in the world's great cities.

The reason I raise these points is not particularly to get stuck into Bob Day. The reason I raise these points is that I think sometimes in the parliament we exist in something of a vacuum. We can have a debate about this integrated planning bill and if we all agree we can kid ourselves that there is, in fact, a broad consensus in the community that good planning is a good and desirable thing. Sadly, that is not the case. Sadly, there are forces very actively rallied in our community to defend the vested interests in this case of the housing industry who want to see the builders and the James Hardies of the world making money out of building McMansions in the outer suburbs while the taxpayers pay for the infrastructure to get people there. My argument is that good planning is by no means a done deal. Good planning is something about which we all as members of parliament need to be consistently vigilant, and a number of members have raised very good examples of that when it has come to their own local areas and their own local councils.

Ipswich is, I think, perhaps the best example in Queensland of exactly that. Ipswich is growing at an enormous rate. We expect Ipswich's population to more than double between now and 2026. That could be a wonderful thing. We could continue to have the strong sense of community and the wonderful quality of life that we have always had in Ipswich into the future if we plan well. If we do not plan well, we will create the kind of urban sprawl that already horrifies people when they drive to the Sunshine Coast and they see Brisbane sprawling out. It is imperative for the future of Ipswich that we plan well. I want to outline to the House a number of ways in which I think we can do that.

The state government, with its regional plan, has very much led the way for us to plan Ipswich well into the future. We have done a number of things. We have committed to the infrastructure, particularly in roads and rail, that will make that work, and we need to ensure rail corridors so that there are public transport options into the future. We have, secondly, invested a lot of money in the redevelopment of the Ipswich CBD. A good Ipswich will in the future connect people to the centre. In redeveloping the mall and with the River Heart project improving the inner-city reaches of the river, we will draw people back to the CBD. I spoke in this House in the last sitting week about how imperative it is to preserve the Flinders-Karawatha bushland so that we have genuine lungs for the western corridor and so that there genuinely is recreational open space. Finally, the federal government must fix the Ipswich Motorway if the Ipswich corridor is going to work into the future.

The future of Ipswich and the future of the western corridor absolutely hangs on good urban planning. We have an opportunity to preserve the sense of community, to preserve the quality of life and to share it with more people. But if the Bob Days of the world, the master builders who oppose sustainable housing measures and the vested interests succeed in opposing measures to ensure good planning then Ipswich will not work out well for the benefit of current and future residents. So we as a government need to be vigilant on issues around urban planning. We need to make ongoing change to update our legislation, as this minister is doing tonight, but we need to keep on the game. We need to know that there are enemies of good planning. We need to make sure that we are vigilant to them and that we are committed to good planning, every step of the way. That is what our people expect of us and that is what I hope to achieve as their representative.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (7.50 pm): I rise this evening to speak very briefly to the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. As has been indicated, the bill proposes to make a number of amendments to the Integrated Planning Act 1997 as well as amending a dozen other pieces of legislation. I know that the shadow minister, the member for Warrego, has made a lengthy speech about this, as have many members of the opposition. Among the amendments the one that I want to speak to is one that amends the definition of 'National Trust' in the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act 1976 to include any wholly owned subsidiary of the National Trust. The amendment to clause 91 of the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act 1976 is to provide the option for the National Trust to establish a separate company to run the sanctuary as a wholly owned subsidiary.

The Currumbin sanctuary has a special place in the hearts and minds of Gold Coasters and indeed all Queenslanders and any interstate and international visitors who have fed the wallabies, had the sanctuary's mascot rainbow lorikeet land on their head, had a python draped over their shoulders, looked in the distorting mirrors that I remember looking in when I was a kid, enjoyed a snow cone or ridden the train around the bird sanctuary. The sanctuary is truly a Gold Coast institution. What began with Alex Griffiths feeding the local lorikeets when he first gifted the sanctuary in 1947 has grown to become one of Queensland's most loved and eye opening attractions. Millions have enjoyed Currumbin's wildlife experiences. This Easter holidays I look forward to taking my youngest son to see the all-new Rockin' Ranger show featuring Rockin' Ranger Matt, who has built a legion of young fans with his combination of music and shows that give the chance to find out more about our amazing wildlife through entertaining and informative close encounters. All of my kids have had kindy and school trips there, as I did in the 1960s.

Gold Coasters love the bird sanctuary. We have fond memories of its original days and have always taken a keen interest in its development. It is because of this that Gold Coasters have also taken much interest in any suspected pressure placed on the sanctuary. As a Gold Coaster, I am concerned about the mechanism that is being introduced by this bill as it seems that the Currumbin sanctuary may once again be under threat. Indeed, the bill may be evidence of actual pressure on the sanctuary. This threat was almost admitted by the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women when we read between the lines of the reason behind the bill that, 'The current management structure limits the National Trust's ability to run a successful tourist park.' I note the comments of the member for Currumbin, who of course is more au fait with this issue than I, that this advisory board was set up as an interim measure to help the sanctuary through testing financial times 16 months ago and that this bill now gives formalisation to the process of that board running it. I think it would be a great concern if the board were to find that it cannot run it as an ongoing facility and it may be disposed of in some way. As I say, Gold Coasters would have great concerns if it were to be disposed of.

I think it is worth while to point out that the government does not assist the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary in any way by way of funding, but does give money to that other very worthwhile institution, David Fleay's Wildlife Park. I just hope that the resulting Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary board—which will

consist of business, tourism, financial and conservation leaders from the region—which will provide expert strategic advice and support to management, has all the luck in ensuring that this Gold Coast institution carries on well into the future.

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women) (7.54 pm), in reply: I thank all honourable members who have joined in the debate on the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As we have heard, it has many parts to it and yet so many of them are relevant to Queenslanders in very different circumstances.

The Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006 includes an important series of reforms designed to make the operation of the IPA and, in particular, the integrated development assessment system more efficient, transparent and accountable. Transparency of decision making, particularly decisions in relation to council planning schemes, is paramount to ensure community confidence in the planning process. I think it is clear tonight that all honourable members of this House who have contributed to the debate from whatever background—political and otherwise—agree that transparency is the order of the day. Unfortunately, there are communities who have lost confidence in their councillors and their councils because they are unsure as to how decisions are being made, why decisions are being made and they believe that they are not getting full and transparent information. So that probably is the theme of the changes that we are making to IPA at this time.

Planning schemes are statutory documents. There was wide public consultation prior to their adoption by the council. It is really important that I emphasise again tonight and through this bill that planning schemes are not merely guidelines.

I have been a little concerned by some of the comments made by members opposite tonight. Those comments suggest that the importance of the planning scheme as a statutory document is not even entirely understood by some members of this House. There was a comment, for example, by one honourable member opposite that I had made some remarks in relation to a particular development approval being outside the planning scheme. He alleged it was not so because the majority of councillors voted in favour of that decision. The vote of the council is, unfortunately, not always in line with their planning scheme and that, in fact, was the point that I was making. The use of the discretion and the flexibility that councils have to deviate at all from their planning scheme should be taken very seriously indeed.

The other difficulty that I have attempted to address in the provisions of this bill that occurs in some councils from time to time is some well-intentioned elected members who fail to understand the importance of their decisions and the basis for their decisions in planning terms. That was mentioned, too, by one honourable member opposite who was talking about the context of rural subdivisions and saying, in effect, as some councillors do from time to time, 'Well, he is a good farmer and he has done a good job for many years on the land. Now he just wants to subdivide his land so he can have some superannuation,' as though that is a sufficient and reasonable basis for a town planning decision. I do not doubt at all that the people to whom these councillors and the member opposite tonight were referring are, indeed, good people who have done good work for their communities and who understandably want to find a way to have some superannuation. Unfortunately, that is not the basis on which planning decisions should be—must be—made. So we are addressing some of those ill based planning decisions tonight in the provisions of this bill.

When decisions are made outside planning schemes, the wider community has the right to be advised of the decision and the justification for it. This bill, therefore, will require councils to give reasons, articulated at the time of the decision, for decisions to approve or refuse development applications that depart from their planning schemes.

The member for Nicklin, who has also served as a member of a local government prior to entering this House, knows well that on occasion members have voted against the recommendation of their planning officers and have not given reasons for that decision at the time. In fact, after the meeting through the town clerk, the CEO, they have instructed the staff to come up with the reasons. That is not good enough. If councillors are so sure that there really is good reason to deviate from their planning scheme, to go against the recommendations of their planning officers, then they should indeed be expected to articulate the reasons for that and on the spot in their own words.

The bill defines that councils can depart from their planning schemes only for a public interest, not for a private interest or to benefit an individual. It requires that councils publish details of their decisions on their web sites. Of course, this is only the beginning. The use of electronic communication systems to aid transparency and to inform interested members of our community in a more timely and detailed way will only increase as the years go on. These changes in the bill are a major step towards improving the transparency of council planning decisions.

The bill contains some important reforms aimed at cutting red tape and improving efficiency. Most importantly, it will not be at the expense of the community's rights and expectations to have a planning system that reflects its needs and aspirations.

It has been said that any reforms to IDAS aimed at improving its efficiency and cutting red tape will favour the development sector and erode community participation. This is not true. In fact, it is on matters relating to the reform of IPA that I have heard the greatest similarity between the development agenda and the community sector agenda. Both want transparency, timeliness, efficiency and certainty. We are working towards that in a first tranche of reforms in this bill. In fact, one driving force behind my decision to overhaul the Integrated Planning Act was concerns expressed by the wider community and community groups. Reducing red tape will make the planning system more transparent and understandable for everyone, particularly the wider community. Achieving quick and clear development outcomes, which accurately reflect the community's aspirations contained in its local planning scheme, benefits everyone, not merely the applicant.

The bill contains several provisions aimed at promoting continuity and certainty for applicants, allowing them to act confidently on development approvals; and local governments, ensuring that they can proceed with their infrastructure planning programs while continuing to obtain contributions to fund essential local infrastructure.

I intend to institute the most sweeping improvements to the performance of the IPA in the eight years of its operation. The reforms in this bill are an important first step. However, there is much yet to be done. All stakeholders in the IPA system have told me that while its principles remain sound, there is room for substantial improvement in its operation. To this end, I have initiated the IPA-IDAS improvement project. It will identify a wide range of legislative and administrative reforms which are designed to dramatically improve the performance of the IPA. I will pay particular attention to reforms that can be implemented quickly to achieve measurable improvements.

The project has already involved extensive one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders. A summit held on 14 March 2006 elicited a substantial body of suggestions. I will soon release an options paper based on this consultation process to allow further stakeholder and community input.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and to respond to its comments in respect of the bill. The committee has identified two amendments in the bill with a retrospective effect. I turn, firstly, to the series of changes which reform the arrangements for the lapsing of development approvals. They will apply to all development approvals in effect at the commencement of the provisions other than those that rely solely on previous transitional arrangements for their effect. While this affects these approvals retrospectively, I confirm that it will be to the benefit of those holding the approvals because in some cases it will mean the currency of the approvals will be extended. Nevertheless, the provisions allow local governments to continue to manage the currency of approvals in the community's interest, as they have always done.

The other provisions raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee are the amendments to the Townsville City Council (Douglas Land Development) Act 1993, which validate previous amendments made to the Townsville Planning Scheme. These amendments to the Townsville Planning Scheme are procedural and reflect the development activity, mostly for residential purposes, already carried out under the Townsville City Council (Douglas Land Development) Act 1993. The provisions in the bill that validate these amendments will provide certainty to landowners in the area that the activities they already carry out on that land are lawful and, consequently, are entirely beneficial.

I thank the committee for its observations about the bill. I will formally respond to the committee in due course.

Some specific issues have been raised in the debate this afternoon and this evening, particularly by members opposite, and I would like to address them. I thank the shadow minister for local government and planning for his considered presentation. It was clear that he had done a lot of work to understand the very different perspectives of different stakeholders in the local government sector. I commend him for his generally sensible and balanced consideration of this complex bill. I must say that that is quite a strong statement. I am not often in a position where I can accuse National Party members of being balanced and sensible. However, on this occasion, I certainly do. I did not agree with absolutely every word said by the shadow minister, but nearly so.

I recognise some of the important issues that he raised. I would like to address the possibility he raised of a conflict between my portfolios. 'A conflict of interest' was his phrase, I think, with regard to being the minister for planning as well as the minister for the environment. Of course, that is a matter that I have thought about myself, from time to time. I am pleased to inform honourable members of this House that only occasionally do I find it to be a conflict. As minister for the environment, I am in a position to argue a single position, as it were. As minister for local government and planning, I need to take account of a broader range of factors, as expressed through the Local Government Act and the Integrated Planning Act, that bear on not only environmental matters but also social and economic matters.

I accept that there are those, particularly in the development community, who have grumbled from time to time about a planning minister who is a bit green. I am not sure—if we take into account the balance of Queensland's history—whether it will really hurt the system to have a little bit of bias for a

couple of years in the direction of a sustainable environment, particularly as I accept the wise words of many honourable members opposite who recognise that environmental sustainability is a matter of great concern not only to those with particular or extreme interests in the green movement, but to us all.

I will not make particular comment on the honourable member's comments about Montville Links. That decision will be made by the regional planning minister, who is the Premier. He indicated to the House this morning that the decision is not far away. It is a matter for him to weigh up the issues relating to whether the decision made by the council was in accord with its own planning scheme and, of course, to take into account state interests as expressed through the SEQ Regional Plan. I am sure that the decision will be made in good time and will be well made. Nonetheless, I note tonight that the opposition has made its position clear—it is in favour of the Montville Links development. I must say that I think it is a populist position rather than taking into account the serious planning issues and, particularly, the importance and the standing of the SEQ Regional Plan.

The honourable member opposite dwelt on another example—the Moranbah decision. I say to the member that with good planning we are not looking at whether we can have the jobs and economic prosperity that the coal industry brings to Moranbah and similar communities or whether we can have residential development just as fast as we can. The harder decision, which is the decision that I believe I have assisted with, is to help the community to have the best of both worlds: security of jobs, prosperity and well accessed high-quality coal deposits and, at the same time, a good rollout of the kinds of residential and other opportunities that are needed.

I recognise the Moranbah growth management strategy that is now underway. A multidisciplinary committee made up of people with local interests and particular expertise is being chaired by the member for Fitzroy, Jim Pearce, who is doing a very good job on a difficult matter. I have no doubt that the committee output will be beneficial to many other communities similar to Moranbah in the fine state of Queensland.

I note that the member for Gregory asked for some further information to understand better the issue of currency periods. He asked about the extensions that may be obtained, under what circumstances and for how long. I will attempt to summarise the currency period changes.

Currently, the use and subdivision approvals have four years to start and works approvals have two years to start. This was intended to allow works approvals for a project to be obtained and acted on before the use or the subdivision approval lapsed. However, the works approval process sometimes takes longer than four years so applicants must seek extensions to their use or subdivision approvals. However, it seems that some applicants have assumed that they only need to start works in order to save their use or subdivision approvals and they have not sought extensions. For all in the industry and for councils, we want to clarify that the use is the final use. It is not simply a matter of putting in some footings or starting building works on the site.

The amendments keep the current arrangements as a default position but also add a rolling forward process whereby the start of the use or the subdivision period moves forward to line up with the start of the works approvals for the project, but only if each successive works approval is sought within two years of the last. We believe it is a more practical way of ensuring that there is steady progress in good order and that the development approval process is in accord with the building works approval process.

The honourable member for Callide made some good points in the debate. However, I take issue with his comments and the comments of some other members opposite about rural subdivisions. Clearly it is a matter on which we disagree.

Rural subdivisions are already problematic in the state of Queensland. Particularly in the SEQ region, a lot of land has been split into parcels that are neither residential size nor farm size. That does not occur only in one area. Such blocks are scattered all over the place. When a rural subdivision occurs without proper local council planning, probably out of a good-intentioned but ill-reasoned desire to please a good member of the community who wishes to subdivide and make some money, there is a potential loss of good quality agricultural land. Of course, often the original subdivider onsells to city dwellers who are looking for what they believe will be a nice rural life. However, at the break of day the farm machinery starts up and wakes them from their sleep. They complain about the noise or the dust that keeps coming in their windows from the tractors on the nearby farm. Perhaps they get sick of driving their children all the way into town to school and figure that it is time that the school bus came by or they decide that the council is not doing enough with their rates money and they want the road sealed, thank you very much. Those are infrastructure costs and disruptions to agriculture that can result from piecemeal rural subdivisions.

Of course, rural subdivisions should and can still occur in the planning process, but they should be done in an orderly fashion and in designated areas indicated through a planning scheme as appropriate areas for urban expansion, albeit in rural subdivision style. The council should properly plan the cost of the infrastructure to serve that subdivision.

I accept the member for Callide's wise words about water efficiency. I join him in his ambition of seeing greywater fully utilised by each property in years to come.

I also mention the issue of the local growth management strategies and structure plans and how they will accord with the SEQ Regional Plan. We want to have an obvious accord between the subplanning schemes of the 18 councils in the SEQ region and the SEQ Regional Plan. In addition, we also want to have a speedy and reasonable process. If a council decides to do a local growth management strategy, that will be its decision. It may be encouraged by the Office of Urban Management through the SEQ plan process, but only encouraged. Should a council decide to proceed that way, there are proper processes for community consultation to ensure that it is transparently done and that all in the community and other stakeholders have the chance to have a say before a thing is decided.

A strategic growth management strategy does not provide the detail that one would have if amending a scheme, but it provides the directions for growth in the shire or the city. When properly adopted, it will be incorporated in the SEQ plan. Therefore, the initial round of consultation will be sufficient. There will be no need for a second round of consultation to be undertaken by those charged with the administration of the SEQ Regional Plan. Having been adopted by the government through the SEQ Regional Plan, the council will implicitly have the approval to continue the process and to get down to detailed amendments to the scheme to fit in with the local growth management strategy. There will be a similar process with structure plans for those areas that are designated as major development areas and, similarly, the broad infrastructure necessary for them, which will be in accord with the local government's planning scheme and the SEQ Regional Plan.

I will briefly address some of the amendments that will be made tonight in consideration in detail. The amendments relate to concerns that were brought to my attention by the Environmental Defenders Office and Ms Joanne Bragg in particular. I thank her and the EDO for their participation in the recent IPA summit. Ms Bragg brought to my attention the concern that communities have about the length of time for community consultation. She was concerned that, through dropping the process for referral coordination, we might accidentally diminish the time available for public consultation. We will not do that and we are reflecting that in the amendments to the bill.

Ms Bragg also raised questions about the definition of 'grounds'. We have dropped some of the examples that may have been causing some confusion in that regard. For those who are interested, I reiterate that the important thing about the grounds is the requirement for councillors who decide to make decisions against the advice of their planners to give their reasons. They must give the grounds for those decisions. I remind them that they must be grounds that are in the public interest. Of course, the public interest takes into account social, community, environmental and economic matters. It must be the public interest as distinct from the interests of a single person or a single organisation or company.

I will quickly address the amendments to the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act 1976. I understand the importance of the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary to people on the Gold Coast. I understand that in times past there have been considerable concerns about a possible sale of some of the assets of the sanctuary. I also understand that some know that the finances of the sanctuary are not as wonderful as they might be. In the community generally there is a wish for improved financial management and maybe further opportunities for income sought by those managing the sanctuary.

What we are doing will not affect the land sale issue at all. How the situation has been until this bill is that the National Trust is charged with the responsibility for the Currumbin bird sanctuary and has been engaged in the many everyday tasks of management of the sanctuary since the arrangement was first started. The National Trust, at its request, wishes to take a step back and allow the Currumbin bird sanctuary to be run by the board on a better financial model and seek greater prosperity and maybe expanded activities or opportunities while it still keeps a proper eye on their activities. This will be a step back but not a step away. The responsibility will still be there for the National Trust to oversee the Currumbin bird sanctuary's functions and oversee and approve of their formal planning—that is, their annual plans, strategic plans, financial plans—but no longer engage in their day-to-day management.

Under this new rule no sale of land could be undertaken by the Currumbin bird sanctuary board or body without the approval of the National Trust. The National Trust could not dispose of any land without the approval of the state government through the Governor in Council. Those arrangements remain in place. We hope the changes we make tonight will mean that a more businesslike board can hopefully lift the activities as well as the financial stability of the organisation in the future.

In closing, as a coastal member, the member for Cairns, I would like to recognise the importance of giving local governments the power to make a difference in terms of erosion and sediment control on development sites. On the one hand state governments have discharged responsibilities to local governments. In effect, they have told them that it is their responsibility from time to time to undertake certain local duties in their communities and yet not given them the tools to do so. That has been the case in terms of this matter until now. I am sure that these powers to enforce immediate fines and action on erosion and sediment control will be not only wisely used but also widely welcomed by local governments.

It is my great pleasure to be the planning minister in the state of Queensland at a time when so much is happening in this fine state. It is also my great pleasure and honour to lead the department of local government and planning which has so many eminent staff who work very hard. I thank Jessie Chadwick and Paul Roff and all of the team in the department who have worked hard on this tremendous bill—a good quality bill. I thank all honourable members for their support of it tonight.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—

Mr HOBBS (8.23 pm): I thank the minister for her summing up and the quite considerable briefing on some of the intricate details of the bill. Clause 11 provides the minister with the power to direct local governments to take action about a local planning instrument. It says that if the minister is satisfied that it is necessary to give a direction to protect or give effect to a state interest, the minister may direct the local government to take an action in relation to a local government planning instrument or a proposed local government planning instrument, review a planning scheme and so forth. I am trying to get my mind around what sort of examples of this we are likely to have. I am referring to clause 11 and the replacement of section 2.3.2. What situations does the minister see a local government finding itself in where the minister may have to come in with this power and take some action?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question about this important clause. Presently, the powers of the local government minister are that the minister may require a local government to take action to give effect to a state interest about a planning instrument that already exists. The powers are not there to require a local government to finish making a planning instrument.

Where this arose was with the Douglas Shire Council and its IPA planning scheme which has been a long time in the development, particularly the section of the planning scheme relating to development north of the Alexander Range, the Daintree as it is generally known. This is where the council fell into difficulty. From time to time, with changes in votes it changed its mind on whether planning instruments that it had or was asking me to assist it with should or should not be used. That confusion and circumstance that created tremendous uncertainty in the community was not beneficial to the community. Additionally, this is an area where there is a risk of significant environmental impacts as a result of the scheme that might be adopted. That was the circumstance which made us recognise that these powers needed clarifying.

Mr HOBBS: So in a lot of ways this is a reverse call-in. In other words, the council could not make a decision in relation to the area north of the Daintree and it asked the minister to carry out that work. What I understand of that particular arrangement is that the council had voted democratically to allow a certain amount of development. This legislation is only coming in now so the minister would not have had this power before. This is an example but it would not necessarily occur. It is a very interesting scenario. The minister can actually override a democratic decision of council. Even though the democratically elected council says that it wants to have some development in an area, the minister can come in and say, 'We do not want that.'

Ms BOYLE: I do not think it is quite like that. The local government minister already has a power to direct a local government with an existing planning instrument to incorporate a state interest. In fact, that is a power I use from time to time as I ratify planning schemes. There are often matters of relatively minor conflict between what the local government has recommended and what we as the state government see as appropriate.

This will extend those powers to the making of an instrument in circumstances where the system collapses. If the local government does not have an instrument in place that is necessary then I could as local government minister require them to. It will not be acted on in relation to the Douglas situation, but it came into being as a consequence of our experience in the Douglas situation.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12, as read, agreed to.

Clause 13—

Mr HOBBS (8.29 pm): This is a very interesting clause because it in fact changes quite dramatically the opportunity to change the South East Queensland Regional Plan. In the past there was the opportunity to make a minor amendment to the south-east Queensland plan. That type of amendment would have been for an error of some sort or some sort of clarification in the act, and it could be done. This clause says that the minister can put in place without consultation a local growth management strategy, which is a significant development which the minister has explained quite well, or a major development area or a structure plan.

The structure plan is, I understand, a long-term planning strategy for a council. I understand that the Office of Urban Management brought this particular issue up with the minister. Unfortunately, the Local Government Association and other industry groups were not consulted in relation to this clause when it came into this bill. They had not seen it before. Is there some way that the minister can in future ensure that they are consulted? Generally speaking, the industry is reasonably comfortable with this, but we find that legislation can come into the House without full consultation with the various industry groups. This is one case. I am not necessarily disagreeing with the minister on it, although I must admit that when I first read it it was a bit difficult to get my mind around exactly what it meant and whether there was any retrospectivity in it, and I understand there is not. I ask the minister to confirm that there is no retrospectivity in relation to a local growth management strategy or in fact a structure plan.

Ms BOYLE: I will start with the end. No, there is no retrospectivity. The member is right about the limited consultation that there was and that that was deliberately so on this package of amendments that was announced several weeks ago now. The reason for that is that many of the matters particularly related to the designation of major development areas are commercially sensitive. It was not something, therefore, for widespread consultation. What I do, however, draw the member's attention to—and I think it might have been clear in my earlier remarks—is that the local growth management strategies can only be developed through individual councils with full consultation. Therefore, the reason for not requiring consultation here is to not duplicate and repeat the process.

Clause 13, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 14 to 37, as read, agreed to.

Clause 38—

Mr WELLINGTON (8.32 pm): I seek clarification from the minister in relation to the requirement that the elected representatives are required to give the reasons at the time that they vote on these matters. Does this mean there will need to be a secretary at all council meetings taking shorthand, or is there a requirement that there will need to be staff in attendance tape recording the actual words that the councillors have spoken when speaking in support of or against a motion and finally voting on it? Is it a requirement that the words they say at the time they stand up and speak in support of or against a motion for development are relevant, or is it the case that the words can come back later that day?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you very much for that important question and clarification. As I understand it, this bill will require that when a council makes a decision outside of its planning scheme the reasons for that decision must be recorded in the decision notice. The decision notice, however, will not normally be produced on the night of the council meeting or the afternoon—not on the occasion of the decision—but in the weeks afterwards. That decision notice will contain the reasons for a council's decision.

It is with some disappointment that it is this way tonight and that we have not yet completed the job of requiring councillors to express clearly and have recorded at the time of the meeting and at the time that they make the decision their general reasons for that decision. The reason that it has not been so clearly specified in this bill is that our best advice is that we may well have to make changes to the Local Government Act as well to specify that. I let the honourable member know that I join him in the ambition of having those reasons expressed as clearly as possible on the spot and recorded. While the substantial part of that is being introduced tonight in this bill, that job has not been quite finished yet.

Clause 38, as read, agreed to.

Clause 39—

Mr HOBBS (8.35 pm): Integrated planning is a fairly complicated business. It is lucky that we all have some idea of what we are talking about, but the people who are listening in must be wondering. Clause 39 states—

'3.5.21 When approval lapses if development not started

'(1) To the extent a development approval is for a material change of use of premises, the approval lapses if the first change of use under the approval does not happen within the following period ...

We are talking about four years. I ask the minister to comment on the fact that the Local Government Association, speaking on behalf of local governments, does have some concerns with this. Maybe the minister could help explain why it should not have a problem with it. It is basically saying that the basis for the current four-year period was to give local communities control of what is happening in their area and to be reassured that development will reflect the community attitudes and expectations of the time that the development was approved. In other words, there was four years in which they did the approval and they got control of it. A change to the currency period is the commencement of a process of chipping away—this is what the Local Government Association is saying—at the rights of local governments to manage what is to happen in their local area. It says that there is sufficient flexibility in the IPA to enable developers to seek an extension of the currency period. That is what it is saying right now. It is saying, 'We don't necessarily need this roll-on period because there's already enough flexibility in the system.' Proposed section 3.5.21 constitutes a further complex addition to an already intricate piece of legislation. Can the minister explain to the Local Government Association why this amendment is needed?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you very much for the question. That is a very reasonable question. My more recent information is that the Local Government Association of Queensland is not so displeased with what we are doing since further discussions. Its concern, initially, quite reasonably, was that this would be taking away some of the control it has over getting development properly started and finished. That should be its business and it did not want too much in the way of things that might give it, as it were, less control and too much flexibility. I believe that our further discussions have assured it in that regard.

Why I was keen, I suppose, to take up this issue was where it did not work for a particular development that became bogged down where the development was part completed. There were objectors and there was much to do around it and some other legal action taking place. The approval appeared to have lapsed and there was uncertainty as to whether in fact there could be stop-work notices and whether the whole development could be slowed down while there were appeals through the Planning and Environment Court, and that would have been a fine mess indeed.

That was the circumstance that was not able to be well controlled by that council at that time that led to us looking at this whole issue. In that process we discovered that many in the development industry had not understood that the use is now defined differently from what it was assumed to have been defined in generations past. Now, the use is the final use. It is the motel, the hotel, the resort, or the commercial office building up and running; it is not the use in terms of beginning to build on the site. That is where there had been some misunderstandings.

Nonetheless, it still means that it is within the entire control of the council as to whether it gives an approval for an extension. The council does not have to. This council also has the option of deciding the period up to two years for which it gives that approval. The council also has the option of refusing it. In that context, I understand, through the LGAQ, that councils are not so displeased after all with the provisions contained in the bill.

Mr HOBBS: This clause refers to a material change of use. Earlier, the minister referred to the call-in of the Montville Links development. I understand that, in that case, the developers applied for a material change of use, which was approved by the majority of the council. Under the act, that allows that proposal within the town plan. My argument is that that is an official approval by that council under the town plan. Would that not be the case?

Ms BOYLE: It depends on what the planning scheme of the day said. This is not a matter that I have turned my mind to in recent months. Since the decision of the regional planning minister to call in the development and reassess it, I have appropriately stepped back from the issue. I not only do not have the information at hand to address the member's question but also I think it is more appropriate that we await the Premier's decision on the matter.

Clause 39, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 40 to 75, as read, agreed to.

Clause 76—

Ms BOYLE (8.42 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 76—
At page 42, after line 11—
insert—

' '6.7.1A Notification period for particular applications

'(1) This section applies to a development application if—
(a) it requires public notification under chapter 3, part 4; and
(b) it is made after the commencement of the *Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2006*, section 26; and
(c) any of the following apply for the application—
(i) there are 3 or more concurrence agencies;
(ii) all or part of the development—
(A) is assessable under a planning scheme; and
(B) is prescribed under a regulation;
(iii) all or part of the development is the subject of an application for a preliminary approval mentioned in section 3.1.6.

'(2) Despite section 3.4.5(a), the notification period, under that section, for the application is 30 business days starting on the day after the last action under section 3.4.4(1) is carried out.'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 76, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 77 to 81, as read, agreed to.

Clause 82—

Ms BOYLE (8.42 pm): I move amendments Nos 2 to 6.

2 Clause 82—
At page 48, lines 22 to 33 and page 49, lines 1 to 4—
omit.

3 **Clause 82—**
At page 49, line 5, '3'—
omit, insert—
'2'.

4 **Clause 82—**
At page 49, after line 19—
insert—
'*omit, insert—*'.

5 **Clause 82—**
At page 49, line 28, after '*establishment cost*'—
insert—
', paragraph (a)'.

6 **Clause 82—**
At page 49, line 29—
omit, insert—
'*omit, insert—*'.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 82, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 83 to 86, as read, agreed to.

Clause 87—

Mr HOBBS (8.43 pm): I know that this matter does not fall within the minister's portfolio, but it is contained in the bill. The clause, titled 'Amendment of s 185 (Transition of coastal management plans)', states—

On the commencement of this subsection—

(a) the approved Gold Coast scheme of works is taken to be a development permit; and

(b) the works are taken to have been substantially started.

In other words, a scheme is prepared by the Beach Protection Authority pursuant to the Beach Protection Act. What is the scheme at the Gold Coast that is referred to?

Ms BOYLE: It is a scheme of works that was enlivened under the Beach Protection Act and which the Coastal Protection and Management Act could have killed off. The scheme of works is still alive and we are making sure of its survival.

While I am on my feet, I table the explanatory notes for the amendments that were moved previously. I should have done that sooner, I am sorry.

Clause 87, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 88 to 114, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Bill, as amended, read a third time.

DISABILITY SERVICES BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 1 December 2005 (see p. 4603).

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (8.46 pm): Once again, the Disability Services Bill gives me an opportunity to discuss on behalf of my electorate the very important and serious matter of disabilities. Once again I use this opportunity to ask the minister to review the funding and resourcing needs of two disabled children whom I have met in recent months and about whom I have made representations to the minister's department. Daniel and Zachary and their families desperately need more resourcing and assistance. I urge the minister to reconsider and review his department's approach to these profoundly disabled babies.

In recent days non-government disability service workers have drawn to my attention the fact that approximately 150 disabled people have applied for recurrent funding packages and approximately 10 have received that approval. That came as a bit of a shock to me, because it really puts into perspective the resourcing issue.

These workers have also brought to my attention the ACROD web site, which is the national industry association for disability services. The web site states that in March 2005 a concerned ACROD Queensland Division called a meeting of member organisations supporting more than 10,000 Queensland children with disabilities. At that meeting agreement was reached that there was a crisis

pending in terms of the health and wellbeing of children with disabilities and their families unless the state government prioritises a whole-of-government injection of funding to support those children to achieve their maximum individual potential within their communities.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics conservatively indicates that there are 64,000 Queensland children aged between zero and 14 years with disabilities who require specialist services. Of those children, 52 per cent have a severe or profound activity restriction.

In 2003-04, only 3,978 Queensland children aged between zero and 14 years with a disability received funded services. That figure represents only 6.2 per cent of Queensland children with disabilities. That statistic agrees with the anecdotal evidence that I have received from the Wide Bay-Burnett region. The ABS data does not include children with mild disabilities in the zero- to five- and the 15- to 18-year-old population.

The main issues that need addressing according to ACROD are: the urgent and immediate increase in funding for Queensland children with disabilities, dedicated funding needs to be provided for therapy services throughout the child's continuum of care and to develop a children's services program that includes early intervention and a continuum of care as the child develops to adulthood. The recommendations according to ACROD are that the Queensland government makes an immediate commitment to increase the funding available to Queensland children with disabilities and their families and that this increased funding commences in the 2006-07 state budget.

I have managed to locate some research and a referencing brief from the Queensland Parliamentary Library—for example, the output funding of Disability Services Queensland for the years 2004-05. The total cost for 'Support for adults' was $254.224 million; 'Support for children and families' was $150.551 million; 'Community and infrastructure support' was $49.964 million, bringing the total to $454.739 million. By way of comparison, in 1995-96 the total budget was $158 million. I must acknowledge that it has climbed through the years to reach a total budget in 2005-06 of almost half a billion dollars.

Mr Shine: Extraordinary growth.

Mr MESSENGER: Not enough growth. I would say that we could do a lot better as a state. I would expect all members of this House to agree that we do need more funding in disabilities. We are one of the highest growth states. The Premier continually reminds us that we have 1,500 people per week coming into the state, and that places extraordinary pressures on our state and also on our disability services.

In relation to current state funding, funding for non-government disability services for children comes from the following sources. Disability Services Queensland provides funding to the non-government sector for the provision of family support and respite, with some historical funding for therapy and social work services. DSQ provides direct therapy services to very young children with predominantly intellectual disabilities. Queensland Health provides very limited funding to support children with disabilities. Most non-government organisations listed on the ACROD web site receive no health funding, although they provide some preventative services. Some of the non-government organisations provide direct acute health services—for example, specialist respiratory therapy for people with end stage muscular dystrophy, treatment for acute arthritis and intensive therapy following botox injections. Following school entry, most children do not have access to outpatient health funded therapy services. Health's recent reduction in service provision has directly resulted in huge increased demand within the non-government sector.

Education Queensland is a direct employer of therapists who have a brief narrowed to educational outcomes and are unable to meet the needs of the large number of children with disabilities in their education settings. Education therapists rely on their non-government organisations to provide general and specialist therapy support, especially in rural and remote settings. It has been my experience after talking with many constituents that the delay that children and their families experience in meeting with and being assessed by different therapists engaged by Education Queensland is outrageously long. I remember one case where a hearing impaired lad was getting speech therapy within the health system and as soon as he moved across to the education system he missed out on his weekly speech therapy. I remember his mother complaining to me that it was going to take six months to meet with a speech therapist in the Queensland education department and be assessed by that person. Consequently, his development was going downhill.

Queensland is a state which is well off. Everyone knows that. We are a rich state because we are awash with revenue from our mining industry, GST and stamp duty. We need to spend more money on our adults with disabilities. We need to spend more money on our children with disabilities. You can find no-one who is more deserving of extra funding than the disabled people of our state.

Mr Pitt: I agree with you, but where are we going to get the money from?

Mr MESSENGER: That is quite a legitimate question and I would suggest that we first of all look at our administration costs. Are we doing things as efficiently as we can? Are we prioritising our budgets? Are we spending the money on the right things and getting back to basics?

Some disability services in the Burnett and Bundaberg region are: the Bundaberg Regional Access Advisory Committee Inc.; the Endeavour Foundation, Blue Care Respite Services; Carinbundi Burnett Respite Services; Community Lifestyle Support Inc.; and the YMCA disability program. There are many worthy community organisations within the Burnett-Wide Bay region that take care of disabled people and their families. I would briefly like to mention Community Lifestyle Support Inc. I would like to declare an interest here. I have a cousin who is being looked after by Community Lifestyle Support Inc.—young Bradley Stehbens. Bradley is a profoundly disabled man. He is about 42 years of age. He visited me at Parliament House. I have to pay tribute to his carer, Mo, who does a fantastic job and who has provided a far greater quality of life in many ways than he was getting at home. My Aunty Doris and Uncle George would freely admit that. They are a classic case of an older couple who have reached around 70 to 75 years of age and are physically unable to lift Bradley. Now, with Mo's care and Community Lifestyle Support's care, Bradley is able to go on train trips and go on the river cat and have many wonderful experiences which have added to his lifestyle and quality of care.

Community Lifestyle Support Inc. is offering a vital service to the community in and around my electorate. It is a state government funded disability service, servicing the Bundaberg-Burnett region, and was established in 1993 after numerous parents of children with disabilities raised concerns. The service was set up to assist, serve and educate people with disabilities in establishing a more productive and independent lifestyle.

The vision statement of the service is: 'Community Lifestyle Support Inc. will be a consumer directed service within a community equally which includes people with disabilities in all aspects of community life.' Some of the various lifestyle support programs the organisation runs include: attendant care program, facilitate in-home care, home respite, adult lifestyle support, recreational support, community access, after-school support program, holiday respite, post school services, hydrotherapy and the early intervention program.

The early intervention program is currently being established and is aimed at children aged between zero and five who have severe physical and/or speech disabilities. I am told that there is not any program operating in Bundaberg and surrounding districts which meets the needs of families with a disabled child aged between zero and five years. So Community Lifestyle Support Inc. is proposing to establish the early intervention program which will enable families to access therapy on a daily basis to assist the developmental and coping strategies of families.

The project will be a mix of centre based and in-home support to allow families to choose a support mix that best meets the needs of their child. The aim is to take pressure off families and improve the quality of life for the children. Service manager, Mr Greg McMahon, believes that prevention is better than cure. While in some cases there may not be a cure, they can at least minimise the impact. Due to the high population growth in our region—the Burnett, Wide Bay and Bundaberg—the number of families who have children with disabilities is ever increasing and placing extra pressure on services. Mr McMahon believes it is very hard for families with children who have severe disabilities to obtain respite. There are approximately 80 families currently in the Bundaberg and Burnett district who have children with disabilities that do not have access to quality support such as that which Community Lifestyle Support Inc. is offering and would qualify for this particular program. Basically, Community Lifestyle Support Inc. is looking for funds which will go towards staff salaries to man the early intervention program. I hope the minister acknowledges that request.

While I and the shadow minister agree with the overall thrust of this legislation, which acknowledges the rights of people with a disability, provides a regulatory framework for services by DSQ, ensures that these services are safe and accountable to protect people with disabilities and gives clarity—

Time expired.

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (9.00 pm): It is with much pleasure that I rise to speak on the Disability Services Bill 2005. I would like to congratulate the minister and his staff on the bill. I know of his commitment to providing assistance for people with a disability.

We have heard from the member for Burnett that much more can be done. The moneys that are available have to be spread across the whole of Queensland, and that is done in an even-handed way to allow the provision of assistance to all disabled people. If honourable members listened to the figures that were quoted, they would know that the rise in funding for disability services in Queensland since 1998 has been astronomical. Hopefully, that can be increased, but that is subject to other funding obligations that the department would have.

I would like to deal specifically with community engagement. It is an important human rights principle that people with a disability have a right to participate actively in decisions affecting their lives, including the development of policies, programs and services. That is what this bill seeks to address. The Beattie government is committed to ensuring that the system for disability service delivery in Queensland is relative and responsive to the needs of people with a disability, their families and carers. I do not believe that those people, both inside and outside this House, who do not have a member of

their family who suffers from a disability fully understand the overall needs of people with a disability. I have a cousin with an adult son who has a severe disability. I know that the quality of his life has been greatly enhanced by the assistance that he receives through Disability Services Queensland.

One of the things that is vital in shaping policy and service delivery is input from the people with a disability and, as we heard also from the member for Burnett, from those peak bodies. Of course, some of those peak bodies sometimes push their own barrow to the exclusion of some of the real needs of the people out there who need that assistance.

There has been extensive community consultation with regard to this bill. The community has been engaged in helping to shape it. In actual fact, the consultation commenced before this parliament; consultation started in 2002 with a reference group of key stakeholders. There have been extensive periods of public consultation. There has been input from many of the peak bodies and the organisations that have been referred to. That consultation continued in 2003 and 2004. Then there was further targeted consultation on a draft version of the bill more recently. The government does not want to sit back and say, 'We know what is necessary for the disabled in our community and this is what is going to happen.' It wants to work with the organisations and the people with a disability to target any of the assistance that is provided.

The bill recognises the importance of receiving advice from the community. It provides the minister with the authority to appoint advisory committees. This role is actually a primary source of advice and is carried out by the Disability Council of Queensland, which is a peak body. There are 10 regional disability councils fulfilling the role. These councils are an important means of facilitating partnership between government and local communities. The members of those councils come from within their local communities and are mostly involved with the provision of services or have a very good local knowledge of the requirements of people within their region.

Another of the advisory committees which is very important to the minister is the Complaints Management Quality Committee. This committee is to be established to provide independent advice to the minister for disability services on quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the Disability Services Queensland complaints management system. That system allows for those people who believe that their care has not been sufficient or has been compromised to have the matter reviewed by the complaints system and specific instances of difficulties investigated and attended to. That committee is specifically provided for under the legislation. It gives the community itself an important role in overseeing the complaints process under the bill. This provision recognises the importance placed on the right of people with a disability to make complaints about the services they receive and not just to go to their local member. There are very well established procedures, and those procedures will lead to complaints being resolved in a timely and effective way.

I know the amount of work and the care that the minister has put into ensuring that this bill does address the needs of people with a disability in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (9.08 pm): I rise to speak to the Disability Services Bill 2005. As I was looking into this bill I came across some of the history associated with disability services in this state and its evolution, which I found very interesting. Through most of the 20th century disabilities were considered to be part of the state health system and, therefore, a state government responsibility. Until the end of the Second World War, most people with disabilities were cared for by their families with none or very little government help. It was in the latter half of the 1940s that the Commonwealth took over the field of personal taxation from the states and introduced allowances for dependants and invalid pensioners and sickness benefits for incapacitated workers, giving those with disabilities some kind of financial security. Many were then placed in institutions or homes for the deaf or blind which were often built and run by charitable and voluntary organisations.

I remember well the Cootharinga Home that was operated by the North Queensland Society for Crippled Children and located in Townsville. It was well known and it catered for the whole of the north and the far-north of Queensland. There was another facility in Charters Towers which I believe is still operating today.

In the latter decades of the last century, nursing homes or hospices also took in people with disabilities. By the late 1970s, the Commonwealth and state governments focused on the education of children with disabilities and took over many charity run institutions. They established a range of special schools, with the states paying special attention to those with intellectual disabilities. Many members here, I think, would remember when the special ed. units combined with the state schools. The people who work in special units do a sterling job of trying to give special children the best possible chance of living independent lives when they grow older.

I would like to mention Elaine Cahill and Dianne Cantoni. Elaine is back in mainstream teaching now, but I know what a wonderful job she did while working with disabled children. Dianne, who worked in that field in Atherton for many years, also did a wonderful job. These women were two of a team that brought children with disabilities to my property in the 1990s. For approximately seven years we hosted them and provided ponies for them to experience the joy of riding. It is well recognised that this kind of

activity offers great benefits to the disabled. However, the environment of public liability these days would be a severe deterrent for someone like myself, even with access to exceptionally quiet horses, a suitable environment, and willing and experienced hands.

I take this opportunity to especially recognise Peter Parry for his exceptional input into making all of that possible as well. That experience and my involvement with these children greatly helped me to understand, at least to some extent, the variations covered by the term 'disabilities' and the vital need to treat each person on an individual basis.

The first Commonwealth Disability Act was passed in 1986. It included abundant support programs for accommodation, employment, independent living and training. The Home and Community Care program was introduced to provide support services to older persons, people with disabilities and their carers to allow them to live independently in their own homes by accessing home help, domiciliary nursing and respite care. This program is now administered by both federal and state governments. HACC has helped and still helps many people in my electorate. However, there are never enough hours and resources to go around. These workers do a wonderful job of enabling people to remain at home for far longer than they otherwise would without this vital help.

In the early 1990s an agreement was reached with the Commonwealth and, subsequently, the Queensland Disability Services Act was passed in 1992. This provided funding from the Commonwealth and delivery by the state of a range of disability services. The Commonwealth kept administrative responsibility for employment services, while the state was responsible for accommodation, respite services, community access and support. Advocacy, research and development were shared responsibilities. The third Commonwealth-State/Territory Disability Agreement, a five-year agreement which covers the years 2002 to 2007, was signed in Queensland in 2003.

Disability services in Queensland have evolved over the last 50 years or so, some might say all too slowly. However, they are now well up on the radar, and so they should be when they represent such a large proportion of our population. The biggest shifts have come with the recognition and introduction of financial support for those with disabilities, and the opening and, more recently, the subsequent closing of many institutions and the movement of many people with disabilities into mainstream society. Between 1995 and 2003, some 700 people moved from larger residential settings to community based accommodation. Most of us would have heard in the media recently that people with disabilities who are under 50 years of age are no longer wanted in state hospitals or nursing homes in the long term.

The Disability Act covers a wide range of people with impairments, including intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical, or a combination of any of them, if they are permanent or likely to be permanent. In 2004-05 the largest group was people with an intellectual disability, at approximately 43 per cent, followed by people with a physical disability, at around 18 per cent. Of course, there are so many variations of disability, which makes it very difficult to manage, as one size does not fit all. That is why individual funding arrangements, such as the adult lifestyle support packages, have been so popular and successful.

A constituent of mine has a physical disability and he is in a wheelchair. He works as an assistant at a Tablelands school. He is about 40 years of age. His mother died about four years ago and he is now cared for by his ageing father, who finds it increasingly difficult to care for his son. An adult lifestyle support package would allow the son to remain at home for many years to come. It would assist not only him but also his father to remain at home for longer.

A lot of interest has been shown in these amendments by people with disabilities, their families, carers and so on. They tell me that even though it is touted that there has been widespread consultation over a long period of time—years, in fact—they feel that their concerns have not been taken on board. Meetings were held across the state. I know because I attended one in Atherton a few years ago, which was well attended. Questionnaires were also put out. The same people state that they dealt inadequately with their concerns.

These concerns about consultation and input do not apply only to the proposals in this bill. I have been advised that some of the existing mechanisms, especially regional disability councils, are often almost invisible and not seen to have any real value at all for people with a disability. A feeling exists, which verges on anger, at the number of highly paid administrators, who are able-bodied people on high salaries, who are seen as sucking up too much of the scarce resources. Clearly, these resources should go instead to those with disabilities to enable them to remain in their own homes, leading independent lives for as long as possible. One letter that I received explained the consultation process in this way—

> This review process has been lengthy and may have created the impression within government of comprehensiveness and thorough inclusion of the community.

The author went on to state that his group shared common ground with various other interest groups within the disabilities sector and he wished to 'express our disillusionment with the resulting bill which appears to have taken little of the community feedback on board'. His group is fearful that these amendments will result in the diminution of rights and the quality of life for people with disabilities. He feels that a five-year hiatus until the next review is far too long to wait. If something does not work, it should be fixed well before five years is up. While there are some positives in these amendments—for

example, legislatively empowering the disability sector quality system—there seems to be some unnecessary duplication which could lead to inflexibility and possibly a waste of already scarce resources.

With regard to the disability services plans, there are concerns about the mechanisms available for accountability, monitoring, approvals and checking to take place and their potential to do great damage to existing community partnerships. While considerable new legislative powers are given to those investigating breaches of the act, there seem to be relatively few offence provisions aside from those relating to criminal history screening—that is, a service provider failing to have appropriate insurance or for impersonation of a departmental investigator.

The concern is that, while these amendments may improve financial accountability and compliance, they will have little direct effect in safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable people with a disability. Also of concern is that the preapproval of service providers and criminal history screenings will lead to nothing more than greater bureaucratisation in delivery of services and increase the level of risk by reducing the choice of service providers, thereby limiting integration by people with a disability.

These amendments may discourage perfectly eligible, smaller organisations and individuals from becoming involved in the sector at all. This group clearly believes that criminal history screening, while important, needs some changes. The effort required to gain a clearance could be off-putting for some who wish to provide a limited service to one person with a disability but who may not do so even though they do not have a criminal record. Again, this could lead to further isolation.

Scepticism exists about the effectiveness of the prosecution process, as successful prosecutions of abusers of people with a disability are rare. In fact, criminal history screening may even create a false sense of security and heightened vulnerability. They would like legislative protections extended to boarding houses, hostels and the like, subsequent to the public benefit test process presently being carried out.

In shared housing environments, careful consideration should be made when matching up people to live together. We all know that living in close proximity can bring out the worst in people, whether they are able-bodied or disabled. A constituent of mine has a son who lives in supported community accommodation in Brisbane. When the son was told that he would have to share with another disabled person, it was found that they were entirely unsuited. Luckily—but only after great persistence—he was matched with someone more suitable, with a much better outcome. As I said earlier, one size does not fit all.

One very great concern with these amendments is the apparent removal of an individual's ability to make an application for individual funding packages, such as the adult lifestyle support packages, in favour of applications being preapproved by service providers. I ask the minister to clarify this part of the bill as there are serious fears that this will lead to the return of block funding and that service providers will have all the power, leaving the disabled beholden to their economically based decisions, which could include where they live and what services they may receive. They also urgently seek the reinstatement of a section equivalent to section 25 of the present act, allowing for funding applications from individuals and assurances that there will be no retreat from the government's once strong commitment to individualised funding for people with disabilities.

Another letter I have received also raises many concerns about these amendments and lists a number of relevant questions. The letter states—

1. Why are the human rights principles being weakened, when what people said was they wanted them strengthened?
2. Why was Section 25 removed from the Act, denying citizens with disabilities and their families the ability to apply directly for funds?
3. Will services find it more difficult to recruit staff if screening becomes compulsory? Will people be made more vulnerable if it takes a longer time to recruit staff? Will volunteer screening be extended to family and friends? Will family and community members be disempowered to form relationships and provide natural supports as a result of screening?
4. How will quality be enhanced if the increased tougher and punitive controls over community services result in the loss of flexibility and creativity in services, and vastly reduced options for people with disabilities? How many people with disabilities and their families will be harmed because services will be no longer able to respond to them as individuals?
5. Why can't people with disabilities and families access the Reviews and Appeals section of this legislation?
6. Is Section 222(5)(a) in breach of the National Privacy Principles?

I also note that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has commented that the term 'criminal history' is broadly defined and the possession of a criminal history can and will disqualify persons from working in relevant areas and could have an impact in terms of the privacy of potential employees. Even old convictions will be taken into account, as well as charges where no conviction resulted. Broad-ranging powers of entry and post-entry are also conferred on authorised officers which extend beyond situations where occupier consent or a warrant is obtained.

Many of those with disabilities have been caught up in the trauma associated with Cyclone Larry. In the southern half of the Tablelands electorate, most people were without electricity and phones for many days. Some still have not been restored due to fallen power lines and batteries that went flat in exchanges right across the vast area affected. Many of the roads were impassable. Those most

vulnerable in our society were left to cope as best they could, and many of them were alone. They did not have power, phone, food or medical supplies and in some cases they did not have water either. Many people have said that if vegetation had been cleared within a chain—in the old measurements—either side of the power lines as used to happen, the vastness of this devastation would not have been so great.

In conclusion, many people with disabilities or those who are connected in any way believe that this bill, if it is passed in its present form, will leave them disillusioned and feeling that it may lead to big multinational companies, who only have interests in dollar signs, gaining too much control over their lives and will not allow them to have the freedom of choice that they desire and are entitled to. It is difficult to imagine the courage with which many families confront the challenges of having a person with a disability as a member. It is even more difficult to imagine the courage that the people with disabilities demonstrate in the simple pursuit of their day-to-day lives.

It is a very vexed sector with some very complex problems to be dealt with as DSQ tries to meet the needs of fellow Queenslanders in, at times, heartbreaking circumstances. However, it is very troubling to see a bill before us that has left significant proportions of the most important stakeholders of all, that is, people with a disability, fearful for their future. As one writer said, those with a disability are looking for a commitment from both state and federal levels of government to adequately fund grassroots services that will provide assistance for many individuals and families currently struggling to gain help. This would be an investment in Queensland's future, but will only be effective if the resources are directed to the individuals and families, and not spent on the bureaucracy of the government sector.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (9.25 pm): I take this opportunity to congratulate Minister Pitt and his department and the former minister, Judy Spence, for all the hard work that went into the preparation of this bill. I also recognise the considerable contributions made by individuals, family members, advocacy groups, service providers and members of the state and regional disability councils.

I have been fortunate to serve as parliamentary secretary in this portfolio under both Minister Pitt and Minister Spence. I value the many friendships I have made with people who work within the disability sector, a number of whom I still have some contact with. On that note, I recognise Kevin Cocks, the Director of Queensland Advocacy Inc. Recently Kevin was awarded the 2005 human rights medal for his lifelong dedication to disability rights and social justice issues. Recently at Government House I attended a function held by Her Excellency Quentin Bryce in honour of Kevin's achievements. Present were a large group of family and community members who all recognise Kevin's tireless efforts in the disability sector.

This bill is the result of an extensive consultation program. Obviously it is impossible to satisfy every wish of every individual or organisation, but in the framing of this bill every effort has been made to take on board the issues raised by consumers, service providers and advocacy groups. It is well known that one in five members of our community has some form of a disability. This bill is all about the process of continually improving the quality of disability services available to those who need that support.

It is a well-established fact that the Labor government inherited a legacy of chronic underfunding of disability services by the former National and Liberal governments. Since our re-election in 1998, we have embarked upon a sustained campaign to significantly increase the level of funding to this sector. Since 1999, funding for Disability Services Queensland has increased from $156.6 million to $402.6 million, which is an increase of 157 per cent. No-one is claiming that this level of funding is meeting all of the needs of every Queenslander with a disability. However, it is an historically significant increase that needs to be acknowledged. I believe it would not have occurred to the same extent under a National/Liberal government.

As I indicated earlier, this bill follows an extensive program of consultation and discussion with the community. However, following the initial consultation rounds, some representatives of major stakeholders in the sector raised concerns that some issues had not been adequately canvassed. To her credit, the then Minister for Disability Services, Judy Spence, acted on those concerns and decided to fund an additional round of consultation, which had the active involvement of a number of the peak advocacy, parent and representative groups. As the minister's parliamentary secretary at the time, I chaired a committee of the stakeholders and departmental personnel to oversee further consultation on the issues raised. Following the 2004 state election and the appointment of the new minister, Minister Pitt, the member for Glass House, Carolyn Male, was invited to chair this group and she continued with that consultation process. I place on record and acknowledge the great job she did in finalising this additional targeted consultation.

All of this work has resulted in a bill that focuses on important matters such as recognising human rights, consumer safeguards, service standards, accountability and more appropriate monitoring of accountability mechanisms. I do not intend to go into any of the detail of the specific provisions of the bill as they have been canvassed at length by many government and non-government speakers on the bill. I simply reiterate my congratulations to the current minister and his department for the valuable work they have continued and undertaken with the community to put this bill together. As the minister said in

his second reading speech, this bill marks the beginning of a new, dynamic and positive change for disability services in Queensland. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (9.29 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on the Disability Services Bill 2005. The shadow minister, the member for Beaudesert, has outlined the position the opposition will be taking and raised a range of concerns expressed to him by various disability lobby groups and action groups. I look forward to the minister addressing those issues in his summing up and perhaps during the consideration of the clauses.

When first elected in 2001 I was, amongst other things, immediately appointed as the shadow minister for disability services. I have to say that that really did open my eyes. I knew about a lot of the issues affecting people with disabilities. Being the shadow minister—and I am sure being the minister the experience is exactly the same—there was a constant flow of people whom I wished I could help. In a lot of cases there is a limit to the help that can be given to them. I think that is a real shame.

At times I found it a particularly distressing position to be in. In some cases we simply could not provide the assistance that people in often quite desperate situations were looking for. In my maiden speech in this parliament I actually mentioned my experience of doorknocking and running into various people. I remember one gentleman in particular who was his 50s, I would guess, and was looking for a lifestyle support package. He had a severe disability. He was on a lifestyle support package but it did not not provide the assistance he needed which was a full-time carer. He was living by himself in a house in one of the suburbs in my electorate.

I continued to work with him to try to assist him in accessing more and better care and help, both financial and physical. I was able to help in some small way. I do not think I helped to the extent that he would have liked and certainly not to the extent that he expected. It was a real problem for him. That is just one case. That gentleman passed away a couple of years ago.

I still remember the first day that I doorknocked him. I think that experience would be replicated for members across this parliament. Members would come into contact with those sorts of cases all the time. Unfortunately, we simply cannot provide assistance for a lot of people in our communities who are living with disabilities and that is a real shame. I do not know that we are ever going to be able to. That is an even greater shame. I think we have to continually strive to provide assistance as best we can, as efficiently as we can and as generously as we can to make sure that those people living with a disability have the greatest sense of security and wellbeing they possibly can. We should do this not only for them but also for their friends and families who are in a lot of cases trying to assist them.

There are a whole range of issues to consider when dealing with the disability portfolio. In the case that I was explaining it involved a gentleman living on his own. There are parents who are at their wit's end because they are the only carers for their children. They come to us looking for respite services. There are no respite services available for them.

I know that in Toowoomba that is a real concern. I had constituents come to me when the Bribie Island facility closed down. That was the only facility where people could access respite services. People would travel from Toowoomba for that. There were some real concerns with that facility that have come out since but that was the only respite facility available. We need to make sure that we continue to look at respite services for parents who have children with particularly demanding behaviour problems or disabilities so that they can have the rest that they need to be able to continue to provide the care that they want to provide for their children or family member.

The other obvious problem that members have talked about ever since I was elected—and I have talked about it as well—is the growing problem of ageing parents. We will face this for some time to come. The member for Burnett spoke about this in his contribution. I speak of ageing parents who are the carers for their children who have a disability. The parents are now in their 70s or their 80s and their children are in their 40s or 50s. They are sometimes living with very profound disabilities. There is nowhere for them to go. There is no-one to look after them. There is nowhere those parents can feel confident that their children will be looked after. That is going to be a real challenge for any government in power. It is going to become a growing problem as that age profile continues to increase.

There is also the problem of young people with disabilities living in nursing homes. That is a problem that we need to face. There has been a history of deinstitutionalisation not only in Queensland but all around Australia and in fact the world. That was the right thing to do. As the shadow minister said at the start of his contribution to the second reading debate, we have been involved in that and supported that move when it happened. We have to make sure that support is available for those people outside an institution, in the community and with their families. We need to make sure that the support networks and the accommodation are there. It is something that is incredibly difficult to provide.

It is an issue that we will continually be faced with. With the advances in medical science and the technology available people with sometimes very profound disabilities are living to a much older age. That means that the challenges are there for those people for longer. I think that is a good thing. Do not for a minute think that that is not a good thing. But it means as a government and as a community we need to make sure that we provide the resources to ensure that they are cared for in the best way they can be.

In Toowoomba the Endeavour Foundation has traditionally been a very large provider of support and services for people living with disabilities. As every member knows, the Endeavour Foundation has gone through some difficult financial times. In Toowoomba we have been particularly hard hit with the closure of the Endeavour farm and the Endeavour nursery, both of which are in my electorate. It was a very difficult time for the families of those who worked in those particular locations.

They were both excellent facilities. They really provided a fantastic resource, a fantastic outlet and jobs for people living with disabilities. They were very rewarding jobs in a lot of cases. Unfortunately, when those facilities closed it was a real blow to the families and individuals who worked there. I urge the minister to continue to work with the Endeavour Foundation to see whether those facilities can reopen at some time in the future. They did provide a very valuable resource for our community in Toowoomba. I look forward to the day when they may be able to reopen. I do not know whether that is going to happen.

I know that a lot of people have been concerned about what will happen to the facilities themselves. At the moment there is nothing happening on those sites. They are in what was the outskirts of Toowoomba but is now very valuable residential land. I know there has been a lot of concerns about their ownership, how they were gifted to the Endeavour Foundation, whether they will be sold and all those sorts of things. The concern has died down since the initial announcement of the closure last year, but what is going to happen to the Endeavour Foundation in Toowoomba is still of concern.

Putting my shadow minister for education hat on, another issue relates to concerns raised recently about the special education units in our schools. The member for Burnett raised the issue of trying to access speech therapy services for young people at school who have disabilities. That is of real concern. That is a concern not only in terms of speech therapy but a whole range of specialities that people want to access and are not able to. If we are going to provide the best possible lifestyle, and the best possible education for children who have disabilities then we need to make sure that those sorts of specialists are available so people can get the best type of care that they possibly can.

The changes that have been undertaken in recent times in terms of the allocation of teachers and teacher aides have meant that a lot those special education units have lost allocated hours. That has been of real concern. We have seen strikes around the state protesting at the loss of those hours. It makes us ask this question: if we are losing that support in our schools, are we equipping those children as well we can for the future that is ahead of them?

Providing for people with disabilities, regardless of their age, is a real challenge for government. It is an area that I know will continue to challenge us. I do not know that we will ever be able to do enough, but we need to strive to make sure that we do everything we possibly can to provide for them and make sure that they can lead the best life they possibly can, regardless of their disability or level of disability. I know that every member of this parliament, regardless of where they sit, would do everything they could to help their constituents when they request help.

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (9.39 pm): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Disability Services Bill 2005. I am gratified to see that the bill reflects the views of the majority of those most affected by it—people with a disability, their families, carers and service providers. The government made a commitment to listen to stakeholders, and those views have been considered and are reflected in the development of this new legislation. Extensive community consultations were conducted as part of the review of the Disability Services Act 1992 that commenced in 2002. A reference group assisted in the development of a series of nine issues papers for public consultation in 2002. Extensive consultation on the issues papers was undertaken in 2003 with more than 800 Queenslanders attending public meetings or responding to the consultation papers.

In 2004 I chaired a steering committee that coordinated a second phase of consultation. This phase was conducted by an independent consultant and sought the views of 139 people with a disability, family members, advocates, service providers and others. The consultation resulted in a submission to the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors entitled *Bringing life to legislation*. Through consultations, the Queensland community asked for legislation that reaffirms the rights of people with a disability, sets out requirements for disability service providers and provides greater safeguards for people with a disability when they are receiving services, and these are embodied in the Disability Services Bill 2005. In addition, targeted consultation was undertaken on a draft of the bill in 2005.

The Disability Council of Queensland, the 10 regional disability councils, the Complaints Management Quality Committee and a focus group of experts provided feedback on the draft bill—in all, more than 100 Queenslanders dedicated to disability issues. Whilst it has been a significant investment in time and resources, the finished product is all the stronger because of the contribution of ideas from many people, and I want to thank all Queenslanders who gave their time to provide comment. That participation has certainly been appreciated by myself and I know the minister was very pleased to see so many people getting involved in the process and coming forward with their views and being quite forthright. It was lovely to see. It means that many Queenslanders have contributed directly to these

historic reforms, and they should be proud. I do note that there have been some concerns raised by the Disability Network, the Community Safeguards Coalition and Queensland Advocacy Inc., but I believe that the minister has taken their concerns on board and has provided the sector with legislation that safeguards the rights of people with a disability. During consultation many people highlighted the positive features of the Disability Services Act 1992, including strong statements about the rights of people with a disability. The Disability Services Bill 2005 incorporates and extends these features.

It should be noted that a key objective of the bill is to acknowledge the rights of people with a disability and promote inclusion of people with a disability in community life. This object is supported by statements of rights and principles of service delivery to people with a disability. The bill retains the existing rights of people with a disability and it adds two new rights: the right to live a life free from abuse, neglect or exploitation and the right to receive disability services in a way that respects the confidentiality of personal information.

The service delivery principles within the proposed new legislation reaffirm the right of people with a disability to equally access the generic services available to other members of the community, and I think that this is a very important aspect of the legislation. I had the opportunity recently in my own electorate to see the philosophy of inclusion in action. I was pleased to host the minister to open the new all abilities playground at Landsborough. I should note that this is a regional facility and is just an amazing example of what can be done when planning and the right funding come together. I invite all members to come and see the end result.

The playground gives children of all abilities the opportunity to play with exciting and interesting equipment that is both fun and challenging. It provides a positive and worry-free environment where families can enjoy spending time together and it offers parents and carers a place to relax and talk amongst themselves while watching their children not only play safely but also grow and develop from that play. This playground and recreational area has some wonderful features. It removes barriers that children with disabilities encounter in existing playgrounds and it demonstrates to the community that children of all abilities learn and grow from play.

The overall purpose of this project was to have an accessible, inviting and safe recreational area and playground and one that fully incorporates the diverse needs and abilities of children and adults, and I believe that this outstanding facility clearly achieves that goal. I want the minister to note that every time I drive past Landsborough I have a look at the playground and no matter what time of the day I go past there are always lots of children. I can see from the roadway. I can see that there are lots of children in wheelchairs and lots of parents gathering together and enjoying their children's play. It is just really wonderful to see.

It was great, too, because I took my two girls—Jordan and Jetta, who are almost 10 and almost eight—to the playground opening with me. They had a fabulous time on the day. Interestingly enough, the next weekend when we had an afternoon free, the girls said to me, 'Can we go back to the playground at Landsborough? It's a great place to play, Mummy. We just want to go now.' Of course we did take them back. The way that it has been planned to allow children with a disability and children with no disability to play together is just beautiful to see. As I said before, I would encourage all members to tell their communities about it, especially if they live in the area or nearby, and invite them to come and see the great result that is there.

A further objective of the Disability Services Bill 2005 is to ensure that the disability services provided as well as funded by the Queensland government are subject to the same rules—that is, to provide safe, accountable and responsive services that meet the needs of people with a disability throughout the state. This important aim is supported through the introduction of new requirements for accountability and quality in service delivery and through a capacity to respond where the safety of people with a disability is threatened. The objects of the bill also recognise the importance of responsiveness in service delivery. The concept of responsiveness incorporates the principles of flexibility in meeting individual and changing needs and innovation in service delivery in order to meet identified needs.

Many people took the opportunity to talk about funding and in part about housing needs for people with a disability, especially those who have ageing parents. We as a society need to look at models beyond what is currently available. Individual placements and cluster housing are very expensive and I feel that more people could be assisted if we looked at larger facilities that can provide more places utilising an economy of scale. I think the providers of aged care provide us with models that we could start to look at, and I think that we need to look at independent units, hostels and that sort of nursing provision all within the same facility.

Interestingly, there is a retirement village being built outside of my electorate but the company is based in my electorate. It is looking towards a model where it can incorporate older people bringing their older children on site and then have service provision provided to them while living in the same retirement village but in a separate part of the village. So they have that peace and security to know that they are well supported but also that they are just there and they can keep an eye on them while they are still fit and healthy themselves. That is an amazing way of doing it.

I also thank the minister for providing the funding and opening the respite centre in Caboolture that he came to the other day. It cost $360,000 to get The Retreat up and running and Homelife through the Caboolture Family Network is running it. Once again, it is a respite centre with a difference. It is out in the country a little bit. It has land around it. It has gardens. The people get to come there and feel like they are on a holiday. They are away from the cares that they have at home. They are away from all of the noise and hustle and bustle. They can come to this quiet place with caring staff who look after them. It is really amazing to see. We talked to some of the residents who had used the facility for respite and they were full of praise for what a wonderful facility it was. Homelife provides a loving, caring family type respite service. I would like to see more of that throughout my electorate.

Safe and responsive services are vital to the wellbeing of many people with a disability, and these principles are rightly acknowledged in the objects of this bill. Once again, I commend the minister for taking this on board and pushing for it as hard as he did. We have certainly brought the time frames down to get it into the House much quicker, and I know that the people out there are appreciative of this. The staff in the department and the staff in the minister's office have worked very hard to make sure that the consultation has been widespread. I would ask the minister to pass on my congratulations and my thanks for their assistance with that. On that note, I commend the bill to the House.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (9.48 pm): In rising to speak to the Disability Services Bill, previous members have outlined a range of quite serious issues relating to services for the disabled in our community. Certainly, this has to be one of the most challenging areas of service delivery. As we understand, it is an area that affects all age groups and there are complexities not just about intellectual disability but physical impairment. More than the intellectual disabilities that we try to tailor services to, there is also the huge area of mental disability, which has been very controversial in recent times.

I want to address this matter, because one of the criticisms of the previous service delivery for those who have a mental disability has been the difficulty in having the coordination of services from a Queensland Health and a Disability Services perspective. Certainly, coroners' reports into the deaths of those who have had a mental disability have identified that, tragically, there has been a breakdown in the service delivery of these two service providers.

Traditionally, Queensland Health and Disability Services have had two very different models of service delivery. Where there are gaps in those services there are opportunities for the most vulnerable to be exposed to threat or a lack of care. I believe that the intention of this legislation is to try to attain levels of appropriate care, but I bring to the minister's attention the issue of the lack of coordination between Queensland Health and Disability Services for those who have a mental disability. That is one of the greatest challenges that is still to be adequately addressed.

Certainly, the two organisations have different cultures, but one of the greatest challenges is that, through the deinstitutionalisation of people—which is a philosophy that I agree with—there is the risk of a lack of accountability and a lack of visibility of those who have these disabilities. Tragically, sometimes those who are out of sight may also be out of mind. I do not think that is the intention of government services, ministers or any other member of this House, but when people who have a mental disability are not seen in an institution because they are living within the community and they may look normal—and to all intents and purposes we want people to lead as normal lives as possible—one of the challenges is that their mental disability could be misinterpreted by service providers who come across them in the course of their duties.

We know that many people with mental disabilities end up in trouble with the law. They may be misunderstood by their neighbours. They may, in fact, cause a great deal of difficulty for communities because of their social behaviour. Therefore, those people could end up becoming homeless. They may be removed from private accommodation. They also may find themselves living in public accommodation that is also fairly turbulent.

I believe that this matter is yet to be addressed effectively. It is not just a matter of formulating legislation; it is also a matter of providing better models of care and training for people who are the first point of contact for those who have mental disabilities. I also believe that it is a matter of ensuring that community based services are really a network of care that not only deals with people in an acute setting but also can identify and support them before they suffer acute phases of their illness. That way, hopefully, we are able to keep people with these disabilities from falling back into the hospital system and going through what can sometimes be a worsening system of care.

Other issues that are certainly very difficult and concerning relate to the ageing carers of disabled children. We all know constituents who are quite elderly and who have disabled children. Those intellectually or physically disabled children are now getting into their 40s and 50s. It is so heartbreaking to have a mother who is pushing 80 years of age come to see you about her son who is like a child and who needs constant care. Obviously, anyone who has had any experience with toddlers knows how intense looking after them can be. But these physically or intellectually disabled children never grow up. For these mothers, it is like living forever with a toddler or a very young child. It is heartbreaking when an ageing parent of that child faces severe health difficulties themselves. That parent may have lost their

long-term spouse, so they are also experiencing the financial difficulties involved in living on their own except with this disabled child whom they dearly love and want to see able to make that transition into supported care.

I do not think the member for Glass House referred to a good model. I venture to say that we should look at the way in which service providers in the aged-care sector deliver care. One of my aged-care providers said to me, 'There is an opportunity for the nursing homes of the future to not be like institutions but to be clusters of cottages around nodes of services.' I think that model would provide an opportunity for the provision of services that are tailored more to the needs of the client. That cluster accommodation could be provided for someone who is a young or middle-aged disabled person. They could have a quality of life within their own walls and service providers could take them out into the community. Those people may not necessarily share a cottage with someone who is of a very different age profile.

We recognise that we need to have cluster services that can provide some fairly heavy-duty human resource backup of qualified staff to deliver services into those areas. There are people with profound disabilities who require fairly heavy levels of nursing care. Currently, they do not have many accommodation options other than nursing homes or hospitals. We recognise that to send them home on a package, particularly with a ventilator and nursing care, is a significant impost on a budget. Yet that person has a very real need and a desire for quality of life. I think we should be encouraged to try to provide other models of care, perhaps in the form of cluster services, to offer different styles of accommodation that will give these people some independence, the ability to live with people of their own age demographic and choices that currently are not offered in the system.

I have referred to the mentally disabled and the problems of the coordination of services between Queensland Health and Disability Services. I have also referred to the problems experienced by ageing carers and their children who may be 40 or 50 but still do not have packages and support mechanisms. There is also the problem of younger disabled people and their need for a different style of care.

I know that this legislation deals with the regulatory framework and the rights of the disabled. The opposition has outlined some of the issues that have been raised by disabled constituents that still raise matters of concern. One of my constituents is intellectually extremely bright but has a profound physical disability. She has written to the government and also to members of the opposition stating that she believes that this legislation restricts her choice of carers, because she is able to make choices as to the people she believes should be able to care for her. I place that point on the record, but I also appreciate that there need to be safeguards. These safeguards ensure that those who are vulnerable can be protected from those who do not necessarily have the interests of the disabled at heart. Certainly, it is the opposition's intention, when in government, to review the issue of unforeseen circumstances to ensure that safeguards are in place.

Debate, on motion of Miss Simpson, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.58 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Cyclone Larry

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (9.58 pm): Most members have seen more of the devastation caused by Cyclone Larry on television than I have. When I left home yesterday I still had no electric power, as is the case for people living in many other parts of my electorate, so most of us have not seen the TV coverage since Cyclone Larry hit over a week ago. I experienced the event firsthand and watched as 200-kilometre-per-hour-plus ferocious winds, coupled with rain, blew first one way and then viciously turned around and blew in another direction. Luckily, my property suffered no structural damage, just the loss of some very large gums, bloodwoods and pines that fortunately fell between buildings.

When the cyclone had passed I ventured out to see how others had fared. Many streets and local council controlled roads were strewn with a tangled mess of trees and powerlines. Houses and sheds sustained tree damage while others had their roofs blown off and were destroyed.

The damage to industry has been enormous. I saw corn and cane crops lying flat on the ground. The older corn will be unredeemable. Mature banana plants were snapped in half, so there will be no income this year for those farmers.

Avocado growers found their crops on the ground and many trees damaged or uprooted. This is similar for other tree crops such as macadamias. Avocado and macadamia trees take five to 10 years to become productive, so it will be a very long wait for that income to return. Others affected include pawpaw, citrus and other tropical fruit growers. Flower farms, hydroponics, fish farms and tourism have also had their incomes abruptly halted due to extensive damage.

But one of the hardest hit industries on the tablelands is the dairy industry. Due to power blackouts, most are still unable to send their produce to the factory at Malanda. This is a major industry in the Eacham shire—and there are farmers in Atherton and Herberton shires as well—and a loss such as this is a huge blow. It is hoped that the milk factory will stay open and jobs will be saved. Some farmers were unable to milk their cows for many days until generators could be obtained from elsewhere in the state. A cow produces milk continuously and you cannot just say, 'Stop', as any female who has had children would know. The poor animals were becoming severely distressed and vulnerable to mastitis and milk fever, which can be fatal.

Over the past week there has been a huge clean-up operation, and thanks must go out to all those involved from the SES, police, council workers, volunteers, Ergon crews and the list goes on. Most roads are now open, telephones are being reconnected and the electricity is gradually being restored. As Peter Cosgrove stated in his first report, and which small business representatives raised with the Premier and ministers when they visited the tablelands several days after Larry, 'tiding over' programs in relation to industry workforces should be a very high priority. In the long term this will be critical to the whole community's wellbeing. What we most need to do is to be unstinting in our efforts to restore to our fellow Queenslanders the homes, the livelihoods and the futures that Cyclone Larry tore away from them on Monday morning just over one week ago.

Bowen

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (10.01 pm): I have said it before in this place and I will say it again tonight: Bowen is on the precipice of a whole new beginning. We have heard a lot in this House in recent times about the company Chalco and the proposal it will soon put to the state government to develop the Aurukun bauxite deposit and potentially a downstream processing refinery or smelter in Queensland. Of course, Mr Deputy Speaker Lee, you know that I am one of many people lobbying very hard for that to come to Bowen.

There are other great things happening in Bowen. Stage 2 expansion of the Abbot Point coal loading port has just recently been announced. This is going to create a great deal of interest and work in the Bowen area. We are also hoping to hear in the next few months some positive news about the missing link project—the missing rail link between Newlands and Goonyella minefields which will deliver coal to Abbot Point and will perhaps facilitate the stage 3 expansion of that great deep water port just north of Bowen.

One of the biggest issues that has always faced the town of Bowen has been water. We have come just a little closer to solving that conundrum for the town. We need water in Bowen for existing industries like horticulture and aquaculture and for new industries such as Queensland pork—the great new enterprise developing just outside Bowen—and for future industries in the area.

On 14 March this year Henry Palaszczuk, the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Water, joined me, the mayor of Bowen and many local people, as well as SunWater delegates, to announce the launch of stage 2 of the Water for Bowen project. This is a very exciting project. It is a proposed new scheme that will take water from the existing Burdekin River Water Supply Scheme down the coastal plain all the way to Bowen. It would take in Inkerman, Gumlu, Guthalungra and Bowen and may even provide a viable water supply south of Bowen.

The project so far has seen SunWater conclude stage 1 investigations in late 2005. At this stage both the state government and SunWater have each committed $1½ million to stage 2 investigations. What we are looking for now is an indication from potential water users of their commitment to this project so that we can continue work on stage 2 and work towards the delivery of the project. I was very excited to see one person John Wilcox, a local grower, stand up and sign up on the day for this water from the Water for Bowen project. I urge all potential water users in the Bowen area to consider signing up for this exciting project.

Australian Labor Party

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (10.04 pm): A leopard never changes its spots—and the Australian Labor Party hates successful people who it tries to destroy when they enter this parliament. On Friday night on *Lateline* we witnessed the remarkable scene of the Premier trying so hard to be a statesman in the wake of Cyclone Larry, swearing like a navvy—unlike that true statesman John Howard—and likening himself to Jesus Christ.

But let us look at the Premier's record in dealing with his fellow man. How does it compare to Jesus Christ? Would Jesus Christ have said to a group of doctors last year, 'You are the same as the aristocracy before the French revolution'? Would Jesus Christ have carried out such a shameless smear on the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Caloundra, as Premier Beattie did in this parliament in the last sitting week? This highlights an alarming trend noticed by outsiders and commented on to me by government members as well as those of us in the opposition—the politics of personal denigration—as this government finds itself under pressure. A Labor member said to me that he has never seen it as bad as it is now.

These true colours of the Australian Labor Party—the masterful exponents of the politics of envy—were exemplified by the former member for Werriwa, Mark Latham, and are typified in this place by the Minister for Energy, the member for Logan, or, as I think we should rename him, the member for Logan Latham. Maybe we should just call him Noddy. The Minister for Energy cannot decide whether he wants to be a minister or a muck-raker, a Labor thug or a potential leader. I have not been here long but I reckon that you need more than a smart mouth and a chip on your shoulder to be a leader in this state. His interjections since I have been in this place include, 'What car do you drive?' And one he often uses is, 'Do you bulk-bill?', which he thinks is very clever. But when one of his staff needs a doctor, who do they call for? My friend the member for Moggill, who is a doctor—similarly when medical attention was needed for the member for Mudgeeraba; the previous Speaker, the former member for Redcliffe; the member for Mulgrave, the minister for communities; and the member for Kallangur and former transport minister.

The member for Mudgeeraba last week asserted that the coalition candidate for Gaven should be bulk-billing, when she knows nothing about the business the candidate is operating or the profile of his patients. More doctor slagging and the poor bloke is not even in this place! But why am I not surprised? This is the example given to the backbenchers: a Premier who rejected the recommendation of the all-party Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee that members of parliament who are dentists and doctors be allowed to help out the Queensland Health system.

I say to members opposite: keep up these personal attacks on us all the way to polling day, as I think the people of Queensland want something more from their politicians and do not like to see themselves reflected in politicians who carry out the vicious politics of envy. Do you know what they want, Mr Deputy Speaker? They want a health system that takes care of them, a transport system that gets them to work and play, and an education system that teaches their kids; they do not want a bunch of haters who are the very antithesis of everything Jesus Christ ever stood for.

Cyclone Larry

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (10.07 pm): On Sunday, 19 March the sun was shining in Cairns, there was a gentle tropical breeze and people were going about their usual weekend activities. I was in the Smithfield Shopping Centre with my monthly mobile electorate office stand and I talked to people about the impending cyclone, checking that they were prepared. But nothing could have prepared us for the reality of the impact of the destructive power of Cyclone Larry that laid waste to coastal communities in the Innisfail area and on the tablelands less than 24 hours later.

I went to the Cairns Counter Disaster Centre as soon as it was safe to do so on Monday morning where the emergency services response was well underway and the enormity of the impact south of Cairns was emerging. My own electorate was fortunately almost unscathed, but it is now apparent that this category 5 cyclone was the most intense since the 1918 cyclone that hit the same area of far-north Queensland. But, of course, today many more people live in the area, and it is a testament to the effectiveness our counterdisaster planning that no lives were lost. However, the damages bill is expect to exceed $1.5 billion—the power network, homes, community infrastructure such as schools, roads and bridges all severely impacted. But it is the devastating impact on the tourism and agricultural industries such as sugar, banana, dairy, timber, avocado and macadamia nut that underpin the economic life of the region that is of the greatest long-term concern.

I can confirm that the last of the 156 affected state schools will reopen tomorrow when Innisfail State High School senior students return to their studies. I have seen at firsthand the incredible effort that was required as my husband Ross, in his role as regional executive director, has worked tirelessly over the last 10 days, together with staff from regional and central office, principals and teachers, to achieve this outcome. But this effort has been replicated across so many areas as we move from the disaster to recovery phase thanks to the amazing commitment of people from all levels of government, our emergency services organisations, Ergon, the defence forces, non-government agencies like the Red Cross, Lifeline and the Salvation Army, the corporate sector and, of course, the hundreds of volunteers who helped in so many ways.

The response from people from other north Queensland communities and indeed from across the nation has been very heart warming. Donations already total in excess of $8 million. In Cairns contributions of all kinds have come from across the community. Today the Chamber of Commerce, TTNQ and Advance Cairns launched the Give a Day Appeal for cyclone victims, be that a day's pay, profits, tips or holiday pay. I myself spent time as a volunteer with the Department of Communities in Babinda—a wonderful, resilient community where everyone was pulling together.

I particularly want to thank the Premier for his leadership, compassion and total commitment to our communities in their time of need. Warren Pitt, the minister for communities and member for Mulgrave, has always been a committed local member, dedicated to the wellbeing of the people of Babinda and the Innisfail region as shown by his role in the disaster. But it is the amazing indefatigable community spirit of these far-north Queensland communities that I have witnessed that will ensure the government's restoration plans coordinated by retired General Peter Cosgrove will succeed and restore this region to its former glory.

Clifton Pest and Weed Show

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (10.10 pm): The initial Central Downs Pest and Weed Show was held back in 2003. This year the Clifton Pest and Weed Show, held on 18 March, continued to build on that success. It was held at Clifton recreation grounds. There was a large crowd in attendance with people coming from all over the Darling Downs and from as far away as the Gold Coast. The Central Downs Land Care Association presented this event in order to showcase excellence in pest and weed management and also to raise environmental awareness.

Central Downs Land Care Chairman, Ian Sobbe, and the committee members worked very hard on this event for over 12 months and the efforts they put in should be acknowledged. The day provided an opportunity for farmers and householders to come along and view the numerous displays, demonstrations and exhibitions and also to listen to the informative talks that were held on the day. Topics at this year's event focused on basic conservation, pest management, soil fertility, permaculture, risk management and safety, identification of weeds, and environmental forecasting.

During my visit I was very glad to help present the awards to the winner of Australian's best pig trap competition, which was won by a farmer from Millmerran. The prize was $1,000 cash. That is indicative of just how big a problem feral pigs are in our area of the Darling Downs.

In addition, there was also a school project competition and special mention goes to the students from Clifton State High School for their wonderful efforts. Events such as the Clifton Pest and Weed Show are fantastic for creating awareness and further educating the public. It is great to see farmers being proactive in addressing environmental concerns. It is a real shame that none of the metropolitan media, which so often portrays farmers in Queensland as being environmental vandals or raping the environment, was there to see the proactive work—the great work—that farmers are doing to address the real environmental concerns out there with regard to pests and weeds.

Senator Ron Boswell opened the event. The member for Toowoomba North was there representing the state minister for natural resources and mines, who was a late withdrawal from the program. I always welcome members of the government to come to my electorate because it gives me an opportunity to remind my constituents of the things that the government is not doing when it comes to environmental management.

I have spoken many times in this parliament about the removal of extension officers from Natural Resources and Mines and the department of primary industries. Every person I saw on that day in Clifton agreed with me about the real environmental problems that are being caused because those extension officers have been withdrawn. This government has withdrawn extension officers, has withdrawn the advice that has been provided at on-farm level, has withdrawn that expertise out of towns like Pittsworth, Clifton, Millmerran and Warwick. Now that expertise simply does not exist in the department of natural resources.

Time expired.

Woodcrest College; Hospital to Home: Heart Failure Service

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (10.14 pm): At the outset I would like to congratulate all students at Woodcrest College, particularly Stacey, Haley and Zara, on the successful launch yesterday of their community radio station Crest FM. Honourable members can tune to 88.9 FM if they live in the Springfield area for the latest news and the greatest music. I would like to thank Rod Evans, the principal of the school; Llew Paulger; Craig Kerwin; and Megan Scott, the broadcasting teacher, for their leadership and inspiration of students in the broadcasting media. I was able to read messages from the Premier, Peter Beattie; the Minister for Education, Rod Welford; and myself as state member for Bundamba. Our government is very proud of all the students and we would like to say: well done and good luck in your broadcasting careers.

It will be my great privilege as the parliamentary secretary for health to represent the health minister at the official launch of an exciting new initiative, the Hospital to Home: Heart Failure Service on 6 April 2006. Heart failure is a major public health problem in Australia. It affects one per cent of the general population, three per cent to five per cent of people in the 65 to 75 age group and 10 per cent of people aged over 75. The burden to patients and their carers is high as the need for medical care frequently reaches crisis point, resulting in an emergency hospital admission. High admission rates are stressful to the patient and, of course, significantly add to private and public healthcare costs.

Research across the world has shown that programs to support patients with heart failure in the community have had excellent outcomes for patients and carers. The quality of the patient's life also improves as he or she gains more control over the condition and spends less time being hospitalised.

Health professionals at the Prince Charles Hospital and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital have developed a Heart Failure Support Service program based on models of care shown to work internationally. They have had help from patients such as Mr Norman Gregory, who has had a

heart failure condition for almost 30 years and whom I believe I could call a 'satisfied customer' of Queensland Health, and also from carers such as Mrs Beverley Smith-Harding, who looked after her husband who was suffering from a heart failure condition until he passed away a few years ago.

Basically, the heart failure hospital to home program is about providing a lot of support to patients in their homes and through other community services. It is about giving them the latest up-to-date information about their condition, especially their medication regime which can be extremely complicated, and empowering them to be able to help themselves. Education gives them that control, and this is why it is the key element in this program. This heart failure program is part of Queensland Health's Chronic Disease Strategy, which fits in with the new Cardiac Services Plan. It has attracted recurrent funding from the Queensland government. It is a landmark collaboration between the Prince Charles Hospital and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. Dr Deborah Meyers, Associate Professor Charles Denaro and Associate Professor John Atherton are the three clinicians from these two hospitals who already have enormous workloads but who have worked together for the bigger picture of this program. I will be personally thanking these three people at the launch and extending thanks to all members of the hardworking teams at these two hospitals.

Cyclone Larry, Benefit Concert; Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (10.17 pm): Late last week I was contacted by an experienced and respected music promoter, Mr Rick Szabo from Nightowl Entertainment, who asked if I could help him cut through some red tape and deliver before the Premier and other community and business leaders his proposal to stage a relief or benefit concert for the victims of Cyclone Larry. I would hope that all members of this chamber would support a Cyclone Larry benefit concert. Today I spoke with Minister Warren Pitt, who is also very enthusiastic about a relief concert. He has promised to personally take the issue to the Premier. I have also spoken with Lawrence Springborg, leader of the coalition, who is very keen to lead a delegation to the Premier regarding the issue.

A benefit concert would realise some very important goals. The concert would significantly boost the fundraising efforts that the Premier and Prime Minister have started. I give them both and the people of Australia a pat on the back for the $8 million raised so far, but we can do better. The concert would also significantly boost the morale of victims and all workers—the SES, the tradies, the police, the ambos, the Army, health workers and public servants. We have had a relief concert for other disasters—for the tsunami victims. Let us do the right thing and have the same response for our own Queensland families.

Tonight I would also like to advocate for a constituent of mine who desperately needs a hip replacement operation. Mr Danny Rappard is being forced to wait years on this Labor government's public hospital waiting list. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Queenslanders find themselves in the same situation as Danny. Mr Rappard is a young family man with a wife and two children whose life is in significant crisis right now because this Queensland health system cannot guarantee him a relatively simple hip operation in a timely manner. Because of the pain and disability associated with Danny's medical condition, he has lost his manager's job, is living with his parents and has to rely on five different types of medication, including morphine, to cope with the pain. The wait for an operation is ruining his and his family's lives. I call on the health minister to adopt the coalition's health plan and double the amount of visiting medical specialists and significantly increase bed numbers so that waiting lists and times for joint replacement therapy and unnecessary family and patient misery are drastically reduced.

The earliest time that Danny is able to consult with a specialist is in October and the earliest time for an operation with Queensland Health is years after that. Danny is better off breaking his hip. He would then have the operation performed immediately by Queensland Health. I call upon the health minister and the Premier to look after—

Time expired.

Airport Link

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (10.19 pm): It is an undeniable part of the government's responsibility to guide and shape the future of the state. Of course, future planning requires careful and considered management of resources and infrastructure to support a dynamic and progressive Queensland. The airport link and associated projects are a prime example of how the future is assessed and catered for, yet with a completion date estimated to be around 2012 it still really only falls within the category of a medium-range future. It is not the quick fix to a problem; nor does it fall into the category of long-term visions such as the Smart State ethos with its reams of initiatives that will impact positively on a Queensland beyond our lifetimes.

In this time, when community consultation and information are an important component of future planning, it is a curious fact that it is the midrange projects, such as the airport link, which can engender some of the trickiest public relations issues. People understand the quick fix. There is a need and a solution. The long-term vision is more easily marketable on the basis that you are inviting people into the big picture on a conceptual basis. However, the medium-range infrastructure project, and the airport link in particular, we just presume has been thoroughly analysed, costed, planned in detail and incorporated into the larger infrastructure development vision, and the dispassionate observer can accept this.

However, we must not forget the significant number of people who are anything but dispassionate—people who are having to deal with the impact of the present; people who face issues involving property, disruption, lifestyle impacts and short-term uncertainties; people who believed life was one thing and now find it is another. It is unrealistic and, indeed, unfair to expect these people to display calm altruism. The big picture is cold comfort to a family facing any degree of upheaval and financial uncertainty. A constituent of mine has stated—

I am frustrated by the consultation document alluding to 'improvements to the urban environment'. These improvements are not specified, have no budget and, therefore, are not likely to happen. If there was a clear trade off and tangible benefits to the community of this massive project, I feel reasonable people may support the project. Until then, I think there will be fear and anger. The effects of this are already becoming obvious.

Change cannot happen without impact, even change for the better. If we as a government are guiding that change then our responsibilities include managing that impact.

The airport link will be a reality and will be acknowledged as a key piece of infrastructure development. However, while it transitions from a plan to actuality, we must do what we can to mitigate the short-term downside of a dynamic long-term future. We must not ignore the people. We are a great state because of people. Let us listen, let us trust and let us get it right.

Safety House Program

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (10.22 pm): I wish to draw the attention of honourable members to the Safety House program which began in Victoria in 1979 and was modelled on a scheme in Canada called Block Parents. Beginning in Leichhardt, Queensland in 1983 with a mission to promote the safety of children, teenagers, adults and the elderly, this program is of greater consequence today than ever before.

Part of the Safety House program is the provision of, as the name suggests, houses that those in fear can enter to seek refuge. Certainly those providing refuge need thorough screening. Understandably, this process is not embraced by everyone in our communities. However, the impost is not excessive for those who spend regular intervals at home. From reports that I have read, it would appear that the Safety House network throughout the Gold Coast and elsewhere in Queensland is in jeopardy. For the sake of our children, it is critical that we reinvigorate this vital community network of safe havens.

Gone are the days when the majority of children had members of their extended family living in close proximity which guaranteed a number of safe houses in a general location. Today, society accepts that more parents have to work, that families are separated by distance and that children are exposed to a greater scope of danger. Many of our elderly lack extended family support.

It is often said that a broken arm will mend but a child or person cannot be replaced. Over recent months I have put out an SOS for help from the community and the state government to get behind the Safety House program to ensure the safety of our children. Whilst the government, to its credit, allocates around $110,000 in kind, it is clear that more needs to be done to promote the protection of our children through an awareness campaign for this program.

I am honoured to be opening the Safety House state conference on Saturday, 29 April to be held at the PCYC Ashmore. I encourage all members in the wider region to spread the word and support this important program. It is a positive step towards building safer communities for all of us. At this stage, I applaud our Neighbourhood Watch, which has a remarkable crime-reducing effect in our suburbs.

On another note, I congratulate Chris Holland, a 17-year-old young man who is the recipient of the first Youth Community Spirit Award, which I launched in February. Chris, a 17-year-old Currumbin Waters resident, was nominated by Judi Old from the Currumbin Valley rural fire brigade. She described him as showing great maturity, being responsible and methodical, displaying extremely good manners and being always polite. Chris not only exhibits a serious commitment to the rural fire brigade unit but also has been active in the air cadets and the scouting movement.

Once again, I ask members for their assistance with the Safety House program. We cannot continue to risk the lives of children, and that is why preventative programs such as those promoted by this scheme should be an integral part of our community.

Point Lookout Surf Lifesaving Club

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (10.25 pm): The surf-lifesaver is an Australian icon. These heroic and dedicated men and women volunteer thousands of hours each year to ensure that Australia's beaches are safe for all. At the 304 surf-lifesaving clubs in Australia, over 113,000 lifesavers are on guard to protect beachgoers from the hazards of the surf. Approximately 100 of these lifesavers are members of North Stradbroke Island's Point Lookout Surf Lifesaving Club.

I would like to inform the House of a rescue which took place on Sunday, 26 February. Four of the club's members risked their own lives to try and rescue a young man who had fallen from Point Lookout's notoriously dangerous north gorge. Club captain Brad Truman and director of lifesaving Gavin Black were called to the scene. For more than 10 minutes they tried to pull the young man out of the water from their inflatable boat. All the while, Gavin and Brad had to manoeuvre their boat, which was caught in the midst of a very heavy swell, to ensure that it did not crash into the two cliff faces that surround the gorge. Despite repeated attempts, the crew could not get any closer to pulling the young man out of the surf.

Then, 17-year-old Jason Nankervis swam from the beach and 19-year-old Aaron Cole jumped from the rocks in an attempt to rescue the young man, who was now being pounded against the rocks at the base of the gorge. These two men entered water so treacherous that even an inflatable boat was barely braving the conditions. Despite the immense danger to themselves, Jason and Aaron decided to risk their own lives to save another young man's life.

Jason and Aaron were able to rescue the unconscious young man. He was taken back to shore, whereupon lifesavers and paramedics desperately tried to revive him. Sadly, the young man was unable to be revived. The young man's name was Vamshi Krishna Katta. He was a student who had arrived from India on a two-year student visa. Our condolences go to Vamshi's family and friends on their loss.

The lifesavers did everything possible to save Vamshi's life. Brad, Gavin, Jason and Aaron were not the only club members who participated in the rescue that day. Almost 40 club members were involved in the rescue effort, with volunteers providing invaluable assistance in the form of locating and delivering equipment, comforting Vamshi's friends and providing crowd control. Despite great danger to themselves, Brad, Gavin, Jason and Aaron braved treacherous conditions to attempt the rescue. I commend them on their courage and determination.

Furthermore, I congratulate all members of the Point Lookout Surf Lifesaving Club, as the rescue was a team effort. I thank those members of the Point Lookout Surf Lifesaving Club who participated in the rescue. I am sure that beachgoers who visit Point Lookout on North Stradbroke Island will rest assured knowing that dedicated and determined volunteer lifesavers will do all that they can to keep the Point Lookout beaches safe. The efforts of the members of the Point Lookout Surf Lifesaving Club epitomise why the surf-lifesaver is an Australian icon. They volunteer their lives to save others.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.28 pm.