

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 1966

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

WEDNESDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER, 1966

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. D. E. Nicholson, Murrumba) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

CIRCULATION AND COST OF
"HANSARD"

Mr. SPEAKER announced receipt of the report of the Chief Reporter, State Reporting Bureau, on the circulation and cost of "Hansard" for the session of 1965.

QUESTIONS

SALE OF CULWULLA CHAMBERS, SYDNEY

Mr. Hanson, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Works,—

(1) What was the amount involved in and the terms of the sale on November 11, 1965, by the Public Curator as Crown trustee to Culwulla Pty. Ltd. of Culwulla Chambers, a 12-storey building with frontages to King and Castlereagh Streets, Sydney?

(2) What real estate agents were employed in the initial offer for sale by public auction and subsequent private sale and what expenses and commissions were paid thereby?

(3) Was an independent valuation secured and what was the reserve price at the auction?

(4) What was the annual value of all rents paid by tenants at time of sale, exclusive of the ground floor occupied by the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau and what debit, if any, was made by way of rental against that Department annually by the Crown?

(5) What amount was payable in municipal water, sewerage and other rates and charges annually?

(6) Were there any Local Authority requisitions on the building at time of sale and if so, what estimate, if any, had been made of cost of meeting them?

(7) What are the names and addresses of the directors of Culwulla Pty. Ltd.?

(8) What is the total of (a) rent, and (b) other charges, if any, payable for the continuing use of the building by the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau and what portion of the building is secured by such lease for use by them?

(9) As the Government at the time of purchase of the property in 1947 laid upon the Table all papers connected with the transaction, will he now lay upon the Table of the House all papers relating to the sale?

Answers:—

(1) "\$620,000 Cash."

(2) "L. J. Hooker Limited was the only real estate agent employed. Commissions paid in accordance with the Schedule of Rates fixed by the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales amounted to \$10,780. The only expense was \$1,000 for advertising."

(3) "The valuation placed on the premises by the Valuer-General of New South Wales was \$900,000. This was the reserve price for the first auction. The property was resubmitted at auction with a reserve of \$750,000 without success."

(4) "The annual value of rentals was \$59,484. No debit was made by way of rental against the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau by the Crown."

(5) "Municipal water, sewerage and other rates and charges were \$19,277.08 per annum. Payment was also made for fire insurance, Workers' Compensation Insurance premiums, gas and electricity charges, &c."

(6) "No Local Authority requisitions as such had been received, but the Sydney City Council had drawn attention by letter to the dilapidated state of the fire escape and requested that repairs be carried out. The estimated cost of the necessary work was \$180,000."

(7) "The names and addresses of directors are not known to the Department of Works or to the Public Curator."

(8) "(a) The total of rent is \$26,000 per annum with provision for adjustment at the expiration of each period of five years of the currency of the lease, and (b) other charges payable are for electricity, gas, excess water, telephone and removal of refuse. The portion of the premises leased for the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau comprises the ground floor, basement and stairways of the ground floor."

(9) "All papers relating to the sale are not held by the Department of Works. I now lay upon the Table of the House papers from the records of the Department of Works which are pertinent to the transaction."

Paper.—Whereupon Mr. Bjelke-Petersen laid upon the Table of the House the papers referred to.

PROPOSED GATEWAY BRIDGE OVER
BRISBANE RIVER

Mr. Houston, pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

Concerning the calling of tenders for the Gateway Bridge over the Brisbane River,—

(1) For what period of time would a toll collection franchise operate?

(2) What are the estimated toll charges that should be charged for the various types of users?

(3) Who will determine the toll charges at any particular time, particularly, if money values alter during the period of the franchise?

(4) Are there any conditions in the franchise which would restrict the building of other bridges or tunnels across the Brisbane River? If so, what are the conditions?

Answers:—

(1) "Forty years."

(2) "The toll charges recommended in the Preliminary Feasibility Investigation by Wilbur Smith & Associates are:—

Vehicle Toll Class	Description	Toll
1	Two-axle vehicles, motor cycles and motor-scooters	\$ 0.40
2	Three-axle vehicles and vehicle combinations	0.60
3	Four-axle vehicles and vehicle combinations	0.80
4	Five-axle vehicles and vehicle combinations	1.00
..	Each additional axle	0.20

Three-axle vehicles and vehicle combinations would be assessed a toll of \$0.60 with four and five-axle vehicles charged \$0.80 and \$1.00, respectively."

(3) "The maximum toll charges which may be levied will be prescribed by the Governor in Council by Order in Council."

(4) "One of the basic assumptions made in the Feasibility Investigation was that no other river crossings would be constructed on the Brisbane River between the existing Story Bridge and the mouth of the river during the Gateway Crossing franchise period. The documents on which proposals for the toll franchise will be invited will contain provisions similar to those in the Tolls on Privately Constructed Road Traffic Facilities Act, for the assessment of the compensation to be paid to the owner of the toll facility, should another crossing be built downstream of the Story Bridge. In case the Honourable Member is unaware of the fact, two copies of the Preliminary Feasibility Investigation conducted by Wilbur Smith & Associates are available in the Parliamentary Library."

DRIVING LICENCES HELD BY PERSONS
UNDER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF AGE

(a) Mr. Sherrington, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

How many registered motor vehicles are presently owned and driven by persons under the age of twenty-five?

Answer:—

"The Motor Vehicle Registration records do not contain this information."

(b) **Mr. Sherrington**, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

How many current driving licences are held by persons under the age of twenty-five?

Answer:—

"This information is not held by my Department."

EXTENSION OF HOURS OF MEDICAL CLINIC, WYNNUM

Mr. Harris, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

(1) As there is no public hospital in the Wynnum area, will he favourably consider extending the medical service from a two days per week schedule to a daily service?

(2) Do clinics function at night at any centre or centres? If so, will he establish at Wynnum two services per week at night in order to cater for people who have exhausted their sick leave or who are dependent on others to transport them to and from the centre?

Answers:—

(1) "The General Medical Superintendent of the Royal Brisbane Hospital has advised that the medical team is able to cope with the patient demand at the Wynnum Clinic on the two days it is now open. No extension of the service is contemplated at the present time."

(2) "None of the medical clinics conducted by the Hospitals Boards at centres in the metropolitan area functions at night."

WATER HYACINTH MENACE, PIONEER RIVER

Mr. Graham, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Local Government,—

In view of the tremendous growth of water hyacinth that is taking place in the upper reaches of the Pioneer River and its tributaries, which could in the event of the flooding of the river cause considerable damage to all bridges spanning it below the Marian Weir, will he have an immediate investigation made in an endeavour to find ways and means of combating the menace?

Answer:—

"This matter will be discussed this week in the area concerned by a senior officer of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission and representatives of the Mirani Shire Council."

STATE SCHOOL ENROLMENTS

Mr. P. Wood, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

How many children were enrolled in Queensland State schools in each of the years 1963, 1964, 1965 and 1966?

Answer:—

"The numbers of children enrolled in Queensland State Schools on August 1 of the specified years are as follows:—

Year	Primary	Secondary	Total
1963 ..	212,001	39,358	251,359
1964 ..	190,535	64,676	255,211
1965 ..	193,677	66,644	260,321
1966* ..	197,000	69,400	266,400"

* Figures for 1966 are estimates.

PURCHASE BY STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE OF FLATS AT SHIELD STREET, CAIRNS

Mr. R. Jones, pursuant to notice, asked The Treasurer,—

Has the State Government Insurance Office recently purchased a block of flats at the corner of Shield Street and The Esplanade, Cairns? If so, what was the purchase price and for what purposes was the property acquired?

Answer:—

"Yes, for a Branch Office. It is not policy for details of transactions between the Office and its clients to be publicly disclosed."

TOURIST ACCOMMODATION SIGNS AT ROADSIDE REST AREAS

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

In view of the ever-increasing number of signs along our highways concerning tourist accommodation and the need for this information by motorists, will he consider the erection of suitable large signboards at rest areas on which all accommodation information could be displayed?

Answer:—

"Advertising on declared roads is prohibited but the Main Roads Department will consider proposals by Local Authorities to erect and maintain on rest areas directories of local attractions with details as to where information on accommodation, &c., can be obtained."

TOBACCO IRRIGATION, EUREKA CREEK AREA

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

(1) In view of the fact that a tobacco crop has been planted in the Eureka Creek area and that all irrigation will come from

the creek for the growing season of thirteen weeks, will he take the necessary action to see that pollution of Eureka Creek does not occur as was the case last year?

(2) Will he have an inspection made of the mining establishments in the area relative to holding dams?

Answers:—

(1) "The problem of pollution is always under close scrutiny by my Departmental officers. It is considered that the measures taken and restrictions imposed will prevent any pollution in this area."

(2) "The mining leases and the holding dams thereon are inspected regularly by my Inspectors of Mines and these inspections will be continued."

TOBACCO PLANTINGS, DIMBULAH AREA

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Primary Industries,—

(1) Is he aware of a report in the *Tablelands Advertiser* that there had been a four per centum decrease in the area of tobacco planted for the present season?

(2) Has the survey of plantings been carried out and, if so, what area has been planted and will it be sufficient to produce the quota for the Dimbulah area?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes. I am also aware that in the past few weeks both the chairman of The Tobacco Leaf Marketing Board in Mareeba and the chairman of the Tobacco Quota Committee have issued statements to the press in North Queensland urging tobacco growers to plant sufficient acreage to ensure that their individual quotas are met. These statements followed a preliminary estimate by the Tobacco Leaf Marketing Board that plantings in the Mareeba-Dimbulah area could be slightly down on last year."

(2) "The annual acreage survey which is carried out jointly by officers of my Department and the Tobacco Leaf Marketing Board has not yet been completed and until this is done, precise acreage figures will not be known. The ultimate yield will, of course, depend very largely on seasonal conditions."

STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE INVESTMENTS

Mr. Davies for Mr. Lloyd, pursuant to notice, asked The Treasurer,—

What was the amount of investments by all funds of the State Government Insurance Office as at June 30, 1966, in (a) Commonwealth Government securities, (b) Queensland local bodies, and (c) private industry?

26

Answer:—

"The information will be contained in the Office's Annual Report which will be tabled shortly."

OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL, TOWNSVILLE

Mr. Tucker, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) Is there presently a waiting list for entry into the Opportunity School, Townsville and, if so, how many children are on the list?

(2) How many recommendations have been made by the research and guidance officer in regard to entry to it?

(3) Is it intended to provide additional accommodation and staff for it and, if so, when is it anticipated that these will be available?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes. Thirty."

(2) "A complete record of all children whose names are on the waiting list is kept at the Guidance and Special Education Branch. The Head Teacher notifies the Principal Guidance Officer when vacancies occur. The admission of pupils from the waiting list is then authorized by the Principal Guidance Officer."

(3) "Yes. Two additional classes each catering for 20 pupils, will be provided from the beginning of 1967."

FORM OF QUESTIONS

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) proceeding to give notice of a question—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member's question appears to be a matter for Grievance Day. It contains much unnecessary detail. It is a speech, not a question. However, the hon. member can continue with it and I shall adjudicate on it later.

Mr. THACKERAY (Rockhampton North) having given notice of a question—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to re-frame his question, leaving out the invective.

Mr. THACKERAY (Rockhampton North) proceeding to give notice of question in an amended form—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I think the hon. member for Rockhampton North had better have a talk to me in my Chambers about his question.

Mr. HANSON: I rise to a point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member for Port Curtis could also well have a talk to me about some of his questions. I inform him that the disallowance of a question cannot be debated.

Mr. HANSON: What questions do you want to ask me? What kind of rules are they—Rafferty's or something?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has just cast an aspersion on the Chair. I ask him to withdraw it and apologise to the Chair.

Mr. HANSON: With due respect, I was acting under extreme provocation when you said, "The hon. member for Port Curtis may as well have a talk to me about some of his questions."

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I said that the hon. member for Port Curtis might like to have a talk to me about some of his questions. I also made that suggestion to the hon. member for Rockhampton North. I repeat that there will be no debate on the disallowance of a question.

COMMONWEALTH AND STATE HOUSING AGREEMENT BILL

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Mr. Bjelke-Petersen, read a third time.

STATE HOUSING ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Minister for Works and Housing (11.27 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

The main purpose of the Bill is to implement the Government's election promise to lift the qualifying income for the free life insurance benefit.

The Government also promised to increase maximum loans under the Workers' Dwelling Scheme from \$7,000 to \$8,000. This has been done and is now in operation, as I indicated yesterday.

In introducing the Bill I explained the main provisions at some length, particularly those relating to free life insurance, and there is no need for me to cover the same ground again.

In respect to free life insurance, the main comment by hon. members opposite was not that the adjustments we propose are wrong, but that they do not go far enough. We must draw a line somewhere. For instance, if the matter is argued solely on humanitarian grounds and as a social service, it might be contended that every client of the Housing Commission should have the insurance cover without any limitation at all in respect of income, age, or present health. Representations have been made to me on behalf of the co-operative housing societies to provide their clients with free life insurance cover, and to finance the scheme from the

Home Builders' Account. If we agreed to some of these points there would be no limit to the action that would have to be taken.

The action we are now taking will extend the present benefit to many more families, for two reasons. Firstly, the increased maximum taxable income will obviously widen the field of eligibility and, secondly, the proposal to take the previous financial year as the basis, in lieu of the previous calendar year, must also favour a number of families.

It is reasonable to assume that the income of most people would be less in the financial year 1965-66 than in, say, the calendar year March, 1966, to March, 1967. This is because of the general tendency for wages to rise as a result of award increases and by the advancement of individuals in their profession or employment. A border-line case which could be disqualified on the present calendar-year basis may very well be eligible on the basis of taxable income in the preceding financial year.

Mr. Tucker: It could operate the other way.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: It could, but nine times out of ten it would be in favour of the client.

Mr. Tucker: Take waterside workers, for instance.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: In some cases, through lack of employment, that could be so. Generally, a greater number of people will benefit by this provision.

It has been suggested that \$50 a week would exclude many persons. It has to be remembered that this is taxable income. Let us take the case of a man with a wife and three children who receives a gross income of \$66 a week. After allowing the tax deductions for his dependants and a reasonable sum for medical expenses, union fees, and school uniforms, he would approximate \$50 a week taxable and would be eligible for free life insurance.

Mr. Sherrington: Will there be any retrospectivity on this?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: No.

Mr. Sherrington: Will there be any reconsideration of applications made previously that did not qualify?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: No, there will be no retrospectivity in those cases.

It will be seen that if a person has some ordinary life insurance or superannuation contributions which increase his permissible deductions for tax purposes, he could receive even more than \$66 gross a week and still be eligible. Taking all those factors into account, I think hon. members must agree that this is a very generous decision in favour of these people.

Perhaps I should elaborate a little on the matter of deposits on sales of houses. There are two funds from which the Housing Commission may erect houses for sale. Let me be clear that this has nothing whatever to do with the Workers' Dwelling Scheme, under which loans are approved for the erection of houses on applicants' land. At present if a Commission house is financed from the Commission's account known as the Commonwealth-State Housing Fund, the Commission has authority to sell on a minimum cash deposit of \$500. This authority arises from a clause which was inserted in the State legislation approving of the various housing agreements. However, if, on the other hand, the house is financed from the Commission's other account known as the Queensland Housing Commission Fund, the Commission is limited by section 24 of the State Housing Acts to a 10 per cent. minimum cash deposit.

As the houses could be in the same locality, perhaps alongside each other and similar in all other respects, it is an anomaly that the first house could be sold on a \$500 deposit whilst for the second a deposit of 10 per cent. is required. In other words, if the houses were being sold for \$8,500 each, the first would sell on a deposit of \$500 with a debt of \$8,000, whereas the second would sell on a deposit of \$850 with a debt of \$7,650.

It is proposed to remove this distinction and to permit sales on minimum deposits of \$500 from both funds. In effect, this would enable the sale of houses at economic sale prices up to \$8,500, as I said yesterday, on \$500 deposit. The unpaid purchase money becomes in effect a loan to the purchaser, and, where the sale price exceeds \$8,500, the deposit would, of course, be increased in order to keep the unpaid purchase money in the vicinity of \$8,000, which is similar to the maximum loans under the Workers' Dwelling Scheme.

In view of the concern expressed by the hon. member for Belmont, I should like to allay his fears relative to the proposed increase from \$1,000 to \$5,000 in the Minister's authority for the purchase of land. I can assure the hon. member that there is no intention to purchase individually high-priced allotments.

The present position is that, under the Act, the Minister may approve of the purchase of land up to \$1,000. That was a reasonable limitation imposed on the Minister at the time when the Act was passed in 1945. Any land transaction in excess of \$1,000 requires an Executive Council minute and approval by the Executive Council. This limitation of \$1,000 on the Minister in respect of land is out of step with a Minister's general authority to approve other forms of expenditure up to \$5,000. For example, at the moment there is a limit of \$5,000 on me as Minister for Works, the other part of my

portfolio. Beyond this figure, such other expenditure requires Executive Council approval.

I have made a quick check on some land acquired by the Housing Commission in 1945, when the \$1,000 limit was enacted. I found that the first 80 sites purchased by the Commission ranged from \$70 each to \$300 each—that is to say, they all fell within the \$1,000 authority of the Minister of the day—but, of course, there has been a big increase in the price of land since then. I would say—I am sure hon. members would agree with me—that such a figure is entirely unrealistic today.

The amendment does not in any way affect the land acquisition policies of the Housing Commission; it is designed solely to facilitate the very desirable principle of not cluttering up the time of the Executive Council with relatively small expenditures that can very well be controlled by the sense of responsibility of a Minister.

I will reiterate a little of what I said last night to reassure the hon. member for Townsville South on problems associated with the transferring of property from the Housing Commission to owners. The position is that if a purchaser clears his indebtedness under the contract of sale, he receives from the Commission a transfer that will be accepted by the Registrar of Titles for registration. No stamp duty is payable on such a transfer from the Commission.

The purchaser does not need to engage an agent to lodge the transfer in the Titles Office; he may do this personally.

Mr. Aikens: But when people buy a house through a co-operative housing society or someone else, they are bulldozed into believing that the society's solicitor must do the conveyancing.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I do not know about that, but there is no need for them to do it in a straightforward transaction with the Commission.

Mr. Smith: I think they have been misleading the hon. member.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: That could be so. The purchaser will be required to pay to the Titles Office the prescribed fees for registration of the transfer and for issue of a new title deed, if necessary. I think the fee is about \$8 or \$9.

Mr. Aikens: As I said, in Townsville people are bulldozed into believing that the solicitor for the co-operative housing society must also be the solicitor for the buyer.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I am telling the hon. member what the procedure is in the Housing Commission. On the other hand, the purchaser may, if he so wishes, retain the services of a solicitor, and he is, of course, then responsible for any charges made by the solicitor.

Mr. Aikens: If he wants to be held up and mucked about for months, he will go to a solicitor.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I think I have outlined very clearly and fairly the provisions of the amending Bill. While the measures contained in it do not introduce any new principles, they fit into the general pattern of continually improving the assistance given by this State to enable its citizens to acquire their own homes and to bring up their children in a sound and wholesome family atmosphere.

I have pleasure in commending the Bill to the favourable consideration of the House.

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (11.40 a.m.): On behalf of the Opposition, let me say that we have had a look at this Bill to amend the State Housing Acts, 1945 to 1965, and have been glad this morning to hear the Minister elaborate on some of its clauses because he has clarified some matters about which the Opposition were concerned. We appreciate his attitude in this regard.

As the Minister indicated at the introductory stage, a number of the clauses in this Bill are machinery provisions, the inclusion of which is necessary as a result of legislation introduced over the years. Some other clauses in the Bill are designed to give added protection to the Commissioner in certain matters that come under his jurisdiction, particularly in regard to false statements that may be made in applications for rental accommodation and for rebates.

No doubt other hon. members on this side will be raising certain matters for clarification by the Minister in his reply, but it seems quite evident that what the Minister said yesterday revealed why these measures are being inserted in the legislation.

Dealing with applications for State rental accommodation, it appears that quite a number of notices to quit are being issued by landlords to get tenants out of their properties, either to allow other tenants in or to carry out renovations in order to sell the properties. Whatever the reason may be, the Commissioner or his staff have apparently made some checks and have discovered that some false statements are being made. The Minister indicated that in a number of cases the person being evicted by the landlord has been forced to go to court to prove to the Commission that he has to vacate the premises because a warrant of possession has been obtained by the landlord. The matter that concerns us most is that in days gone by, when a landlord took a tenant to court to get him out of a house and so that he could get into a Housing Commission home, the landlord met the costs of the action. At the present time, however, the costs are being charged against the person who is being evicted from the premises. We think that is unjust and places a heavy burden

on these people. It is to be hoped that somewhere on the declaration form a notation can be included to indicate quite clearly that any person who makes a false statement can be dealt with under the relevant section of the State Housing Act.

The correct completion of claims for rental rebates is very important, both to the tenant and to the Housing Commission. It is on the information contained in the application for rental rebate that the Commission assesses the amount of rebate. There is no doubt in my mind that some of the incorrect statements in applications for rental rebate have not been made intentionally. When the bread-winner passes on and the widow makes application for a rental rebate she may have no children working. Later on the amount of money coming into the house may be increased as some of the children become employed or because the widow takes a sister or some other senior person into the house for company. Immediately this occurs the obligation is on the tenant to inform the Housing Commission so that the rental rebate can be adjusted.

One of the main reasons for some of the mistakes is that when a widow's child commences work the whole of the additional income coming into the house has to be taken into consideration. When we check these applications in an endeavour to assist constituents we find that the \$16 or \$20 a week earned by the son or daughter is not passed over to the mother, but only the usual amount that a parent would ask for board, say, \$6 a week or a little more. I think everybody would agree that when a young person first starts work he or she has quite a few financial responsibilities, including the provision of additional clothing for his or her occupation.

Since the Bill was introduced I have had brought to my attention the cases of several people who have received notices to quit, and even a court order. In one instance, while the wife of the tenant was out, the notice was tacked on the front door. This is not a good way of serving a notice. It announces to any passer-by what is going on between the tenant and the Housing Commission.

It is quite evident, as I said on behalf of the Opposition at the introductory stage, that throughout the year checks must be made by the Commission of the passbooks of persons purchasing homes, and checks must also be made during the year of rent cards of people renting houses. In the case to which I am referring a check was made on 20 August concerning arrears of rent owing on a house at Carina. In trying to do what I could between the Commissioner and the tenant, I found that since the check by the Commission the sums of \$16 and \$8.50 had been paid by the tenant through the normal channel—the Commonwealth Bank—in respect of arrears of rent. When the tenant was served with the notice and given

only a couple of days to get out, the arrears in fact totalled only about \$10. When I drew the correct position to the attention of the officers of the Commission the difficulty was overcome.

The matter of the alteration of passbooks and rent cards has been raised and the amending legislation seeks to cover it. When I noted that an alteration had been made on this card I immediately asked the tenant who had made the alteration and why it had been made. In this case a mistake had been made by the receiving officer of the Commonwealth Bank; the amount shown was far in excess of the amount paid, and the alteration had been made to show the true position. If the amendments relating to alterations of rent cards and passbooks become law, the Commission must first determine that a mistake has not been made by one of the many agents who can receive payment on behalf of the Commission. A thorough check must be made to ensure that no alteration to a rent card or passbook has been made by the tenant.

I was very interested to hear the Minister elaborate on a very important aspect of the measure, namely, the extension of eligibility for free life insurance to persons purchasing homes from the Housing Commission. The latest report available for the Commission, dated 30 June, 1965, clearly outlines the free life insurance position in these words—

“From 28th October, 1949, the date from which free life insurance applied, to 31st December, 1958, cover was provided under insurance with the State Government Insurance Office and thereafter the cover was carried by the Housing Commission. At 30th June, 1965, cover applied to 7,929 cases, 4,232 insured with the State Government Insurance Office, and 3,697 under cover with the Commission, the accepted cases having been reduced by 2,212 on account of claims, withdrawals from purchase, paid off accounts, transfers, re-possession, arrears, &c.”

That is quite understandable. The provision is contained in the formula relating to free life insurance.

The report continues—

“To 30th June, 1965, £105,675 (£15,529 during 1964-65) has been paid by the State Government Insurance Office on 65 claims and loan indebtedness of £28,739 (£2,250 during 1964-65) was cleared by the Commission from purchasers' and borrowers' accounts in respect of 13 claims.”

The report does not indicate whether those were complete losses; some of them could have been partial losses. The State Government Insurance Office said that there were that number of claims in 1965, and there have been 13 in the case of the Commission, so that 78 actual claims have been made under this scheme.

It is also interesting to note that since 1949, when this scheme was introduced, somewhere about 25,000 homes have been purchased through the Queensland Housing Commission. Deducting the number which, according to the report, have been withdrawn for the reasons stated, the figure comes down to only 5,717 people actually taking advantage of the free life insurance scheme, which was introduced by the A.L.P. Government in 1949. It is at present before the House for the extension of eligibility.

Opposition members are concerned that more people have not availed themselves of this free life insurance cover. I congratulate the Commission on the way it has laid the formula down. If a copy of this document was given to all persons entitled to coverage, they would understand how the scheme operates. Taking the figure of 5,717, it seems apparent that there must be a number of people above the age of 40 years who are purchasing homes. Opposition members would like to see the eligibility extended to cover more persons. It is not long ago that a person could get a 20-year policy on a small premium. But the insurance companies have tightened up in this field and a person would be lucky to get a policy of less than 25 years' duration on a small premium.

Our main bone of contention with free insurance coverage has been clearly explained by the Minister this morning. One of our main objections was that, on the matter of eligibility, we did not feel that the Bill compared favourably with the legislation introduced in 1949 by the Australian Labour Party. However, if eligibility is assessed on taxable income after allowing the prescribed deductions, the coverage that we were concerned about does seem to be given. We felt that if the eligibility that we gave was to be granted, the amount should have been somewhere between \$32.60 and \$60, or £30. It appears, from what the Minister said this morning and a quick look at the Bill, that this has been done.

Of course, we cannot have it both ways. If the eligibility was extended, it would not be possible to increase the maximum entitlement. It is to be hoped that the Government will give some consideration to this matter in the near future, because building costs have been gradually increasing, even since this Government took office. As I said at the introductory stage, £2,250 would not have fallen far short of the advances being made by the Queensland Housing Commission when hon. members opposite became the Government in 1957. Consideration is now being given to granting increases ranging up to \$8,500. This is getting into a rather high bracket, and almost half the amount is left to be paid by a widow if her husband dies soon after they purchase the home and are entitled to insurance under the scheme.

Removal of the section dealing with liens under the Contractors' and Workmen's Lien Act, which has been repealed, was to be expected. (It is a wonder that that was not noticed before today.) We of the Opposition are very concerned that the promised substitute legislation to deal with situations that may arise following the repeal of that Act has not yet been brought down. This poses very serious problems in the building of houses. Recently a long article in "The Courier-Mail" referred to the way in which subcontractors are carrying builders in this State. Although a builder may be able to obtain his payments, sometimes it is up to six months before subcontractors eventually receive theirs. With the deletion of this section from the State Housing Act, there is nothing to protect those who subcontract for contractors who build groups of houses for the Housing Commission.

As the Minister probably knows, much of the work entailed in the building of houses—clearing the land; laying the foundations, whether they be concrete stumps or brickwork; electrical work; plumbing; painting; drainage; fencing—is done by subcontractors. For some time we on this side of the House have been complaining bitterly that the actual building work is being let on a basis of labour only. It has been suggested that wage increases to workers in the building trade have helped to lift building costs. I have found that people undertake to build houses at, say, £50 a square, and then hawk the contract around till finally they get someone else to take it on at £25 a square, which means that £25 a square goes into the pocket of the person who originally undertook the work. It means that, on a 10-square house, he is £250 better off for doing nothing more than acting as a silent partner. The Government must investigate the situation and give over-all protection to subcontractors in this State, whether they are engaged in constructing houses, flats, or any other buildings.

Opposition members are disappointed with the provision that has been made in the Bill. Probably the Minister believed that impending legislation would provide the necessary coverage. However, if it does not, he will have to bring down a further amending Bill, and it is to be hoped that it will be done quickly. There is no doubt, of course, that since the Contractors' and Workmen's Lien Act was repealed, things have not worked out as the Government hoped they would.

I turn now to the problem of the capital cost of site and house. At present, if a person wishes to purchase a house through the Queensland Housing Commission, the money usually is advanced either under the Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement or under the State Housing Act. Although an estimated price is given for the cost of the house and site, it is some time before the final cost of the house is known. If the proposed provisions are put forward in an effort to overcome this difficulty and streamline the

methods of purchasing through the Housing Commission, members on this side of the Chamber believe that this is a step in the right direction. Under a new Minister and a new Commissioner, the Commission may believe that purchasers should not have to wait as long as they had in the past to ascertain the final cost of a house purchased through the Commission and that it may be possible to estimate fairly accurately the market value of a house and the site on which it is constructed.

The main complaints that hon. members on this side of the House have received relate to contracts let by the Queensland Housing Commission under the State Housing Act for the construction of groups of houses. Applicants may have selected a particular site and the type of house they want and paid their deposit, having in mind some idea of the capital cost of the site and the house. Unfortunately, the policy of the Commission has been changed. Formerly, the house was proceeded with immediately the deposit was paid on the site and the house; today, when construction is carried out either by contractors or by day labour, the houses are built in numerical order. That means that a person who has paid his deposit often has to wait some time before he can get possession of his house. It is to be hoped that the provisions of the Bill will effect a big improvement in this situation.

I was happy to hear the Minister explain the powers he is taking relative to the purchase of land. I have previously indicated that I believe the best way to encourage home ownership, irrespective of what party is in office in this State, is to try to keep the cost of land to a minimum and to have houses erected on the land as reasonably as possible.

I hope the Commission continues to do what the Minister outlined this morning. Wherever suitable land is available, it should acquire it and do the subdividing itself. In doing that it will be following the course set by previous Labour Governments in Queensland and it will have the effect, I am sure, of stabilising land prices with consequent benefit to people desiring to purchase or build homes.

The Minister is also acquiring power to dispose of land that, from the Commission's point of view, is not suitable for building purposes. In my electorate there is a large area of land that comes into that category, but with modern methods of building, such as building homes on split levels, much of this land could be used for building purposes. A flat-type roof is being used today that enables buildings to be broken at various levels. This would probably overcome the objection to many blocks of land which would previously have been considered unsuitable for building purposes. Admittedly, many of them have huge gorges running through them. A house can be built on them but to go downstairs one would have to be

a mountain goat. I worked on one Mt. Gravatt project where the houses needed 22 steps at the back to provide access to the kitchen.

If such blocks are sold, the Minister and the Commissioner should give consideration to using the money thus obtained to acquire other blocks, of which there are quite a number in the metropolitan area and possibly throughout Queensland. There are some areas in which the Commission has carried out its obligations but in which the local authority has not met its responsibility in the provision of drainage and so on. Consideration should be given to putting this money into such sites. I know of some land in the metropolitan area that, when it was subdivided in 1954, would have cost the Commission only about £250 a block. Some of the sites have storm-water channels running through them and are eminently suitable for building purposes.

One area in particular to which I refer the Minister is the Broadwater Road estate. It is a beautiful estate, the development of which was commenced by the Labour Government. Unfortunately it contains some unsuitable sites. However, this estate contains what I consider to be some of the best building sites in the metropolitan area, and most of the blocks would be very suitable for building purposes if they were properly drained.

If these matters are taken into consideration, as was indicated earlier, I am sure that the Opposition will give the Bill its full support. We approve of the streamlining machinery provisions, as they will enable the Commission to function more smoothly. I do hope that in due course the Government will give further consideration to extending not only eligibility for free insurance but also the maximum coverage.

It was said by the Minister the other day that Labour's policy speech made no mention of what we would do about this legislation. If we were to endeavour to indicate to the people of Queensland what we intend to do when we again become the Government, particularly by way of legislation, it would take us a week to present our policy speech. During the Government's term of office it has introduced a great deal of amending legislation which was designed to adjust monetary sections of Acts to present-day money values. I refer, for example, to the Workers' Compensation Act and similar legislation containing monetary provisions. The previous Minister for Housing—the former Treasurer—did not have included in the Government's policy speech any mention that this action was to be taken. When the amending Bills were brought before Parliament they were accepted by hon. members on both sides as desirable in the interests of trying to keep up with

changing money values so that the legislation would achieve what it was designed to do in the first place.

We do hope that the extension of eligibility and the maximum coverage for free life insurance will be considered again much sooner than it has been on this occasion. It is a long time from 1949 to 1966 without anything being done. There is no doubt that the extension of the time from six months to nine months is a very good thing. I am sure that full advantage of this amending legislation will be taken by all concerned.

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) (12.19 p.m.): Much to the delight of several Government back-benchers, and certainly much to the Minister's satisfaction, my remarks on this occasion will be very brief.

The hon. member for Belmont indicated very clearly that as the Bill effects some improvement in such things as free life insurance the Opposition is quite happy to support it. However, it would not be adopting an Oliver Twist attitude to suggest that it could have gone further. To my mind there is a continuing need for any Opposition to be ever on the alert and to suggest to a Minister who is introducing legislation that perhaps he has not gone far enough. That has been fairly clearly illustrated by the fact that since 1949 there has been no review of the policy relative to the conditions governing free life insurance for home purchasers. I think it will be readily agreed that we should not again allow 17 years to pass before reviewing these conditions. I hope we are living in a world that is gradually becoming more affluent but if we are not careful, what we seek to achieve by legislation may very often be lost because of the lengthy passage of time between reviews.

In my introductory speech on this Bill I said that, in the light of changing circumstances, it would be worth while having more frequent reviews of the conditions governing free life insurance. During the Minister's speech this morning I asked by interjection whether it was intended to grant any retrospectivity to applicants for free life insurance, particularly those who, in the past 17 years, have been disqualified from obtaining free life insurance merely because their taxable income exceeded the amount provided in the legislation. I do not wish to make my remarks in any way political, but I venture to say that, since 1949, in the first 12 or 14 years that the formula operated its provisions would have adequately covered any increases in the wage structure. However, it could well be that in the last five or six years the wage structure has changed so greatly that many people have been denied the safeguard of free life insurance.

I ask the Minister, either in his reply at this stage or at some other suitable stage, to tell us how many people have been disqualified from participation in free life insurance in the last five or six years because their taxable income exceeded the specified amount. Whether there be only a few or a considerable number, in the interests of justice consideration should be given to granting retrospectivity, particularly to those who are on the border line. It would be unfair if one person could qualify for free life insurance under this legislation whereas two years ago an applicant in similar circumstances was refused this insurance because his taxable income exceeded the then allowable maximum. I suggest to the Minister that his officers should examine this matter.

The Minister said we did not state in our policy speech that we would do anything about these matters. He may have scored a point or two, but I wonder whether it is better not to mention these matters at election time (but still be happy to do them) than to make promises and fail to honour them. I should like to remind the Minister of his promises about refrigerators and other things.

The measure provides that certain alterations are to be made in present practices, particularly those relating to rental pass-books and applications for rental rebates. Problems arise in assessing rental rebates. The original Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement provided that rental rebates could be extended to tenants in certain circumstances. It reads—

“If any rebate is granted, then at the expiration of a period of six months after the granting thereof, the rebate shall cease to be granted and the economic rent of the dwelling shall be charged, unless the tenant makes application for the grant of a rebate and the housing authority, after proper investigation or the production of evidence as aforesaid as the housing authority thinks fit, is satisfied that, in pursuance of this Agreement, the rebate should be granted.”

In other words, a system had been set up under which a person who would normally qualify for rental rebates had to submit a statement of income to the Commission each six months so that he could retain his rental rebate.

I do not want to be critical of the Housing Commission officers in this regard—possibly there is an explanation in the office procedure—but on numerous occasions the problem arises that a tenant, having submitted a declaration of income, is not informed that because of changed economic circumstances in his house the rental has been increased. Sometimes there is a delay of up to eight weeks. This causes a certain amount of distress, particularly to pensioners, because the

tenants are then required to pay the increased rental back to the date on which the form was submitted to the Commission. The Minister might claim that the tenant, because he knows that any increase in earnings will mean an increase in rent, may be prepared to pay an additional amount to the Commission pending determination of the new rent. I could possibly agree with that contention. But many of those in receipt of rebates are aged persons or pensioners, and because of human frailty it does not occur to them that because of increased income they will have to pay additional rent. Very often these people are distressed to find that following a review they are committed to pay so much a week extra for several weeks. Perhaps the Minister or his officers can devise a way of overcoming this problem.

On the matter of rebates, in future discussions with the Commonwealth Minister for Housing the Minister may care to point out what I feel is something of an anomaly in assessing the economic rental of a dwelling.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Campbell): Order! The Bill does not deal with any alteration to rental rebates; it refers only to penalties that will apply if false information is given.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have no wish to express thoughts that should have been expressed when another Bill was before the House. However, because there are limited opportunities to draw attention to these things and as in many cases rental rebates are serious matters, I felt that you might show me some tolerance while I outline briefly what I have in mind.

The Act lays down that the economic rental is determined on the whole of the weekly earnings of the highest income-earner in the family; two-thirds of the income of the next highest earner; one-third of the weekly incomes of all other persons; and so on. The tenant has the responsibility of maintaining the house in good order and condition, and it is even laid down stringently that where the tenancy of a home is in the husband's name, in case of desertion, unless the husband agrees in writing to transfer it to his wife, no transfer of tenancy to the wife can be made. In spite of that, the economic rental, particularly where rebates are concerned, is determined on perhaps the incomes of the eldest child or second-eldest child in the family, and not necessarily on that of the tenant.

In several rental-rebate cases that I have dealt with, this has caused difficulty. When the formula is explained to the applicant she says, “I am in receipt of a pension and my son is in receipt of £12 a week, but he pays me only £4 a week board.” She feels that to some degree she is being penalised because the economic rental is assessed on the income

of the highest earner in the home, irrespective of his contribution to it. I do not know whether this position can be overcome; I certainly suggest to the Minister that consideration be given to it. Although the tenant is expected to accept full responsibility for the house, his income is not the major factor in determining its economic rental.

We accept that the amendment will bring about some improvement, but we would not be a worthy Opposition if we did not continue to press for a better deal in housing. I pointed out at the introductory stage that second advances for home construction purposes through the Housing Commission do not attract free life insurance benefits, even though those to whom they are made may not have received the maximum advances.

The Minister advanced reasons why this was not desirable. One reason was that people of advanced age possibly may not be an acceptable risk. However, I am not completely happy with his reply, because very often one finds that young people who are setting out in life and who should be constructing a three-bedroom house are compelled, because of their financial circumstances, to construct only a two-bedroom house. Often they have two, three or four children within eight or 10 years and accommodation becomes overcrowded. If they make application to the Commission and have not received the maximum advance, additional money is made available to them quite readily; unfortunately, however, it does not attract free life insurance.

As the Minister said, in certain circumstances it may not be a good risk to grant it, but I do not think every application should be determined on the basis that a hard-and-fast rule has been established that second advances through the Housing Commission should not attract free life insurance. It seems rather ludicrous to me that if an applicant has free life insurance and he decides to obtain additional finance to enable him to make alterations and additions to his house and his application is approved, the part of the house built with the second advance is not covered by free life insurance. In the case of a widow, it would mean in effect that she would have to go on repaying the second advance obtained from the Housing Commission even though the insurance covered the original portion of the house. She may have the benefit of free life insurance on, say, 75 per cent. of the house and, because of circumstances, be unable to meet her commitments on the balance remaining of the second advance. What would the position be then? Would the Commission be able to leave her with three-quarters of the house and repossess the part that had not been paid off? There must be some way of overcoming this anomaly.

No doubt the situation has arisen and will continue to arise; in fact, a person in my electorate has already found himself in that

situation. In my opinion, it is not good enough merely to adopt a hard-and-fast rule that the second advance does not attract free life insurance. A young person with quite a good life expectancy could be given some special consideration. I believe that the matter is worthy of investigation.

Mr. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha) (12.39 p.m.): As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the policy of the Government since assuming the Treasury benches has been to encourage home ownership in all sections of the community. The very admirable system of free life insurance does assist those who otherwise probably would not be prepared to shoulder the responsibility of home ownership.

Mr. Hanson: This Government did not bring in free insurance.

Mr. LICKISS: The hon. member for Port Curtis has interjected. Let me tell him that, to my knowledge, there is only one other State in Australia—I think it is South Australia—in which there is a Government insurance scheme, and there it is on a contributory basis. I think free insurance is a very admirable thing for people who otherwise would probably depend for the rest of their lives on rental housing.

Hon. members opposite have obviously, for one reason or another, decided that it is appropriate to at least give lip-service to the change in policy from house rental to house ownership. I do not want to refer back to what prominent Labour members have said previously in regard to this matter of home ownership, but I have stated before that, traditionally, the hierarchy of the Labour Party can never really be in favour of home ownership.

Now let us have a look at where this free insurance scheme will have the greatest effect. I suggest it will have the greatest effect amongst young-marrieds who are setting out in life to rear young Australians who are so necessary to our nation. The three conditions that are set out in order to qualify for free insurance are (1) health from the insurance risk angle, (2) age, and (3) income. If an applicant can fulfil those three conditions this Government is providing security for his wife and family in the event of tragedy or unforeseen circumstances. This is a wonderful thing for these people.

It has been said that this scheme should be extended. However, bearing in mind that the Government is doing its level best at all times to help members of the community to become home owners, if a person is in an income bracket above the figure stipulated in this legislation, surely he should be able to provide for his own security. I think that is the answer to those who say that the Government should extend the scheme. There is at least cover up to a stage above which, with reasonable management, people should be able to provide for their own

future security should unforeseen circumstances occur to prevent them from continuing their payments.

Another matter that has been raised on a number of occasions, not only in this debate but in previous debates that concerned housing generally, has been the cost of land. The hon. member for Belmont this morning spoke at some length on this subject. He referred to unsuitable blocks and suggested that these could be used. But let me say—the hon. member will know this—that with blocks that are rather awkward to build on, although it is possible to build homes on them the cost of building goes up quite substantially because of added requirements in providing suitable foundations. While obviously some of these blocks could have homes built on them, the ultimate cost would probably be out of all proportion to the type of finance that the people concerned would have available for home construction.

Dealing with the promise of hon. gentlemen opposite that if they ever resume the Treasury benches they will be able to bring down the price of housing blocks, I think I have assessed this issue in the House on previous occasions. The actual cost of land in globo represents a very small proportion of the ultimate cost of the developed, subdivided block of land, and the additional costs are involved almost entirely in land development.

By interjection the other day—this is a reflection of the thinking of people of the same political colour as hon. members opposite—I pointed out that the Brisbane City Council subdivided land in the city of Brisbane and saw fit to make it available at prices comparable with the prices charged by private subdividers. The Brisbane City Council, who are supposed to represent the same people as are hon. members opposite, should have had some compassion for those who would buy the land and establish homes—

Mr. Bennett: Why should the Brisbane City Council have to nurse the Government?

Mr. LICKISS: I feel that I have hit the target.

On the subject of the subdivision of land, development costs are beyond the control of the Government. Whoever develops land will have to provide sewerage—

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Campbell): Order! The hon. member is straying somewhat from the principles of the Bill. I must ask him, as I asked the hon. member for Salisbury, to confine his remarks to matters contained in the Bill.

Mr. LICKISS: I was going back to the point made by the hon. member for Belmont this morning, when he more or less castigated the Government for the high cost of land on which these houses would be built. As the Bill deals with finance for the building of Housing Commission homes, and as it is

impossible to attach houses to any sort of sky hook, I think I am being relevant in referring to land, the cost of which is a very considerable part of the expense involved in housing. I was endeavouring to point out to hon. members opposite that although they might be prepared to castigate the Government because of what they consider to be high land costs, on a pure mathematical assessment of what is involved in land development they would not be able to do any better at all.

I congratulate the Minister for bringing down this measure. I feel sure that it will demonstrate further the Government's very sympathetic consideration for all sections of the community in trying to assist people to become home owners. I believe that home ownership is the very basis of a happy family life and the raising of better citizens. This, of course is the prime motive behind the Government's activities in making houses available on this basis to all people.

Mr. TUCKER (Townsville North) (12.47 p.m.): As is usual when the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha gets to his feet, he spoke in a snide fashion on this occasion. The Australian Labour Party has home ownership written into its policy. In the old days of the State Advances Corporation, Queensland had the highest percentage of home ownership in the world. Let the hon. member remember, too, that we wrote free insurance into this Act. When we write these things into our policy we indicate to the world that our policy is flexible, not frozen and inflexible like the Liberal Party policy.

I interjected when the Minister was speaking about taxable income. I am concerned about railwaymen and waterside workers in the North whose earnings have been considerably reduced by dieselisation and automation. In many instances their wages could have been considerably higher last year than they will be this year. I should hate to see any of these people miss out on free life insurance because of the higher wages they received last year. I hope the Minister will adopt a flexible attitude in this matter. It is their present income that should be taken into consideration.

I do not want to belabour this point, but I wish to place on record, as I did yesterday, that I believe an advance of \$8,000 is not sufficient under Townsville conditions. An ordinary brick home—not a pretentious home—costs about \$13,000, a timber dwelling costs over \$10,000, and a fibro dwelling about \$9,000. Because of inflation in land and building costs the assertion that \$500 would represent the deposit is absolutely unreal in my area; it would seldom be so. On the mean of the three dwellings (the timber one costing over \$10,000), young people seeking to build must raise \$2,000, or £1,000, no matter what may be said today. This matter should be investigated and I ask the Minister to take note of it.

I believe it is wise to increase the amount available for the purchase of land from \$1,000 to \$1,500. I ask the Minister if the Commission ever develops land as opposed to buying allotments already developed. In developing land in northern areas, the Commission, like other people, would have to comply with council ordinances. In Townsville the council demands kerbing, channelling and bitumen surfacing, which can add up to \$700 to the cost of land. By developing the land, the Commission in some instances could provide it at considerably lower cost than land already developed. Costs should be kept down by the Commission if at all possible, and this is one way of doing so.

The Minister referred to the cost of conveyancing a matter that was raised by the hon. member for Townsville South. I am aware of the high costs of conveyancing. Over the years the procedure adopted by the Housing Commission has been for it to lodge transfer documents direct with the Titles Office, thus saving costs. I am not pushing the barrow of the solicitors, but in all fairness I must say that something has been overlooked, possibly through ignorance.

Although I believe that solicitors' conveyancing charges are too steep, it must be remembered that when a private individual lodges transfer deeds at the Titles Office he has to take the risk that there may be an outstanding encumbrance of which he has no knowledge. I am referring to local authority alignments, which are not immediately obvious to the layman and which may be placed on the title. I am referring also to land tax encumbrances, and to the fact that a layman could be inquiring about the wrong land.

Many of these risks must be taken by an ordinary person lodging transfer documents. If a solicitor does the conveyancing, he takes the risk. If he conveys land with encumbrances on it the owner has a right to sue him. Although I believe that solicitors' conveyancing charges are too high, the real crux of the matter is that the solicitor may be sued if there is any error in the title. I believe it might be described as a fair gamble if, in fact, a solicitor charged \$20 when dealing with land valued at \$20,000. With the risk involved, it could be a fair gamble provided the charges are correct.

Mr. Aikens: Have you ever known of a case where a solicitor was sued?

Mr. TUCKER: Yes, I have known of quite a number of cases. I agree with the hon. member that in many cases the charges are enormous, or at least more than they should be.

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Minister for Works and Housing) (12.55 p.m.), in reply: I thank all hon. members who have spoken this morning. I have noted what they have said, but as the time is late

I shall discuss with them personally the matters they raised. I do not think there is anything difficult to overcome.

I thank hon. members particularly for their words of commendation, and for the suggestions they have made.

Motion (Mr. Bjelke-Petersen) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(Mr. Campbell, Aspley, in the chair)

Clauses 1 to 8, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—Amendments of s. 41; Bribing officer—

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (12.57 p.m.): I was happy to hear the remarks of the hon. member for Townsville North, who worked in the Titles Office for many years and would know what goes on. I know of a case—I quoted it in this Chamber not long ago—of a man who bought property in Fletcher Street, Townsville, through a prominent firm of solicitors in Townsville who gave him the usual written assurance that there were no encumbrances or requirements on the property.

Mr. Bennett: Name the solicitors.

Mr. AIKENS: The case has not been heard yet. If it comes on, I will not advise the gentleman concerned to brief the hon. member for South Brisbane.

When this man paid over his money he was again given a written assurance by the solicitors that there were no requirements or encumbrances on the property. However, he learned subsequently that there was a council requirement four or five years old on the building. It cost him in the vicinity of \$600 to satisfy it. I suggested to him that he sue the firm of solicitors. He went from solicitor to solicitor in Townsville but could not get one to take on his case. I am now negotiating with a solicitor in another town in the hope that the solicitors who handled the transaction can be sued.

Mr. Bennett interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: We are talking law.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Campbell): Order! I hope the hon. member does not pursue his line of argument. Clause 9 does not deal with the subject matter that he is discussing.

Mr. AIKENS: It is covered generally, Mr. Campbell, but I do not want to strain your tolerance any further. The hon. member for Townsville North and I are talking law, a subject of which the hon. member for South Brisbane is totally ignorant. We all know that solicitors can be sued, but who can sue them when no other solicitor will act against them?

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 10 and 11 agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

The House adjourned at 1.1 p.m.