

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY 1981

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PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council under—

Gladstone Area Water Board Act 1975.

Electricity Act 1976–1980.

Rural Training Schools Act of 1965 and the Local Bodies' Loans Guarantee Act 1923–1979.

Statute under the University of Queensland Act 1965–1973.

PETITION

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petition—

PENALTIES FOR CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

From Mr Shaw (122 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will increase the penalties for cruelty to animals.

Petition read and received.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

Questions submitted on notice by members were answered as follows:—

1. USE OF LAND AT CAPE PALLARENDA

Mr Casey asked the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General—

With reference to the former quarantine reserve, situated at Cape Pallarenda, Townsville—

(1) Has plan of survey No. 27507 been lodged with the Titles Office in Townsville for the preparation of three separate titles, over this former reserve?

(2) What was the area of the former reserve and what are the proposed areas of each of the three subdivisions?

(3) Who was the former owner of the reserve and who are the proposed owners of the three separate subdivisions or with whom will they be vested?

(4) Do all of the proposed subdivisions include freehold title down to the high-water mark and, if not, which ones do?

(5) What is the estimated valuation of the whole reserve and what is the proposed valuation of each of the new subdivisions?

(6) As there is much public advocacy in Townsville for Cape Pallarenda to be a proposed site for a casino in Queensland, what discussions, if any, have been held regarding the use of this land for such purposes and have Kern Brothers of Townsville been a company with whom discussions have been held?

(7) If it is proposed that this land be made available for casino purposes, will public tenders be called for the land?

WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY 1981

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. S. J. Muller, Fassifern) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

HER MAJESTY'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that I have received the following letter from His Excellency the Governor—

"Dear Mr Speaker,

"I have the honour to inform you that the Message of Loyalty from the Legislative Assembly dated 31st March, 1981, has been laid before the Queen and Her Majesty has asked that her appreciation be conveyed to the Members of the Legislature of Queensland.

"Yours sincerely,

"James Ramsay,

"Governor."

Answer:—

(1) Yes. The plan was lodged on 1 April 1981 by the Commonwealth Crown Solicitor.

(2) The original area comprises 66.842 2 ha. The proposed areas of these subdivisions are—

Lot 1	3.096 ha
Lot 2	44.206 2 ha
Lot 3	19.54 ha

(3) The former owner was the Commonwealth of Australia. The three new certificates of title will also issue in the name of Commonwealth of Australia.

(4) Only proposed Lot 2 will include freehold title down to the high-water mark.

(5) This question should be directed to the Honourable the Minister for Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services.

(6 & 7) These questions should be directed to the Honourable the Deputy Premier and Treasurer.

Mr Casey: I direct them accordingly.

2. ELECTRONICS RESEARCH AUSTRALIA PTY LTD

Mr Jennings asked the Minister for Commerce and Industry—

With reference to the application by Electronics Research Australia Pty Ltd to his department on 5 January seeking a Government guarantee to assist them to raise \$1.25m to transfer their operations to Queensland and set up a manufacturing facility at Southport—

(1) Is he aware that as recently as the 28 April, some 3½ months after the original application, a 53 line telex was sent from his department seeking detailed replies to some 14 questions and that as a result of this delay and a proposition received by that company from the Victorian Government late in April that Electronics Research Australia Pty Ltd are now proposing to set up their high technology plant in Victoria?

(2) If so, what is the reason for the delay and what action is to be taken in the future to see that applicant companies receive prompt consideration and replies?

Answer:—

(1) I am acquainted with the circumstances relating to this proposal. The application submitted by Electronics Research Australia Pty Ltd was thoroughly examined by my department and referred by me to the Industries Assistance Board for a recommendation regarding the provision of a Government guarantee. In the board's view the application did not satisfactorily meet the usual requirements in relation to the

security available and certain other aspects. Consequently, the board recommended that the application not be approved.

Subsequent to receiving this recommendation and its consideration by Cabinet, I had discussions with the principals of the company. They suggested to me that there could be a somewhat different approach taken by my department in relation particularly to personal guarantees that could be forthcoming. It was agreed that additional information would be supplied by the company upon receipt of advice from my department of the details required, and subsequently the telex of 28 April was addressed to the company.

Quite obviously the company was not prepared to furnish any of the details sought, even though at the discussions previously mentioned an offer was made to supply certain information.

(2) The time which elapsed between receipt of the company's application and its submission to the Industries Assistance Board was principally due to the delay experienced by the company in locating a source of loan funds for the project. My department was officially informed on 8 April 1981 that funds could be available, and the whole proposal was considered by the Industries Assistance Board at a meeting held on 13 April 1981, five days later.

3. RAIL CORRIDOR, BEENLEIGH—NEW SOUTH WALES BORDER

Mr Borbidge asked the Minister for Transport—

(1) Have officers of the Railway Department been investigating the feasibility of a rail corridor between Beenleigh and the New South Wales border?

(2) If so, what is the outcome of that investigation?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) Two consultant studies were commissioned by the Metropolitan Transit Authority on the Brisbane—Gold Coast linkage. The first report examined, at a strategic level, the scope for major public transport initiatives in the Brisbane—Gold Coast corridor and addressed itself principally to the issue of the feasibility of rail passenger services in that corridor. The other study was concerned with the most appropriate and effective means of providing a rail link between Beenleigh and the Gold Coast and the feasibility of reserving a transit corridor.

These reports are currently being examined by the officers of the Railway Department, on my instructions. When that examination is completed, the matter will then receive further consideration by the Government.

4. INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS TO QUEENSLAND

Mr Borbidge asked the Premier—

(1) What is the extent of State Government representations to Canberra to permit a joint British Caledonian Airways proposal to fly into Queensland?

(2) Have any other international airlines recently expressed interest in flying into Queensland and what has been the response of the Federal Government?

Answer:—

(1) Permission for any international flights into Queensland rests with the Commonwealth Government, which in turn deals with the overseas Government involved. I might add that Canberra goes to great lengths to protect the position of Qantas.

I would also point out to the honourable member that the question of any British airline being granted permission to fly into Australia is dependent in the first instance on a decision being made by the Civil Aviation Authority in the United Kingdom.

Applications were recently lodged by British Caledonian Airways and Laker Airways with the Civil Aviation Authority in the United Kingdom for licences to fly the route between Britain and Australia. The Queensland Government submitted evidence to the London hearing strongly supporting the British Caledonian application, which was the only one that included provision for international flights in and out of Brisbane.

If the CAA had granted a licence, it would then have been necessary for the British Department of Trade to make approaches through the normal channels to the Commonwealth Department of Transport in Canberra, in order to obtain the approval of the Australian Government.

The CAA has rejected both applications. The authority did, however, indicate that it would be prepared to give further consideration to an application for a joint Anglo-Australian service.

(2) It is my understanding that there are a number of international airlines interested in flying into Queensland. My Government would have no hesitation in supporting any such airlines wishing to extend their activities into Queensland, as the influx of overseas visitors from such services would certainly assist the tourist industry in this State. I have made this quite clear to the Prime Minister and the Federal Minister for Transport a number of times during discussions with them.

5. LOCALITY ALLOWANCE, PORT CURTIS AREA

Mr Prest asked the Premier—

(1) What is the present locality allowance paid to teachers in the Port Curtis electorate?

(2) As the Minister responsible for the Public Service, does he regard these allowances as reflecting the real cost of living in this area?

(3) In view of the Public Service Board's statement in its letter of 16 March, will the board review a submission on locality allowances in the Port Curtis area?

(4) Why is the allowance not paid to married women?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) The locality allowances payable within the electorate of Port Curtis would vary depending upon the centre. These rates are set taking many factors into account, including cost of living. The full rate is paid to supporting parents and married women where evidence of dependency is furnished. The Public Service Board has always indicated its willingness to review these rates upon receipt of evidence.

6. COMPENSATION PAYMENTS TO ROAD ACCIDENT VICTIMS

Mr Prest asked the Premier—

(1) Is he aware that the gross disparity between compensation pay-outs to road accident victims in different States leave disabled people in Queensland thousands of dollars behind similarly injured people elsewhere?

(2) If so, what action does he intend to take to have this situation rectified and brought into line with other States?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) I am not aware of any gross disparity but agree that superficially awards appear to be higher, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria. It is difficult, if not impossible, to compare injury cases. The facts involved vary considerably from one case to another. Under the Queensland system a judge determines the issue. His judgment of the extent of compensation is based primarily on three aspects, being the pain and suffering caused; the economic loss during the period from date of accident to date of judgment; and the future economic loss. The assessment of these aspects, of course, varies considerably from case to case. New South Wales and Victoria, in contrast, have a jury system. I am quite satisfied that the present assessment system in Queensland is fair and reasonable to all parties.

7. COMPULSORY REST PERIODS FOR TAXI DRIVERS

Mr Prest asked the Minister for Transport—

(1) What are the maximum number of hours permissible for a taxi driver to drive a taxi before being compelled, in the interest of safety, to take a rest period?

(2) How many hours rest must a taxi driver have before commencing the next shift?

(3) As many relief taxi drivers at the present time have other day or shift employment, how many hours rest must these drivers have before being allowed to drive a taxi?

(4) How long can these relief drivers drive per shift?

(5) If there is no limit to the hours of shifts or compulsory rest periods between shifts, what is the reason?

Answer:—

(1) No maximum hours are fixed as the number of hours of actual driving varies with demand. In any case, a driver generally has a break in between trips, which, on average, would be of short duration.

(2) Generally a driver, including an owner-driver, would not operate the vehicle for more than one shift each day. Surveys by the Department of Transport have shown that shifts generally do not exceed 10 hours in a 24-hour period—and even then many of these are made up of 3, 4 or 5-hour separate periods. Generally speaking, taxi drivers have the normal hours of rest that apply to other people operating in similar situations, such as delivery drivers and courier drivers.

(3) In considering an application for a part-time or week-end hire driver's licence, the extent to which an applicant undertakes other driving in the course of his main employment and type of vehicle operated are taken into consideration. Where an applicant is principally engaged in driving to an extent which could affect his driving of a taxi, a licence is not granted. Each case is considered on its merits, having regard to the relevant facts and factors appropriate to road safety considerations.

(4) See (1).

(5) Experience has shown that taxi drivers generally are responsible and competent drivers who would not drive to such an extent as to place themselves or their passengers at risk by working excessive hours which would affect road safety.

As a matter of fact, many taxi drivers have been awarded safe driving awards and in some cases have accumulated up to 15 years of accident and violation-free driving. I might add that the traffic record of each taxi driver is kept under

constant review and appropriate action is taken where warranted where road safety aspects are concerned.

8 & 9. 2,4-D AND 2,4,5-T

Mr Hartwig asked the Minister for Lands and Forestry—

(1) What quantity of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T was sold in Queensland in 1979-80?

(2) What quantity was sold to local government for use by councils?

Answer:—

(1) The total amounts of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T based herbicides sold in Queensland during the financial year 1979-80 is not known.

The total amounts sold by my department were as follows:—

2,4-D—176 370 litres; 2,4,5-T—36 190 litres; DT20/20 (Mixture of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T)—2 185 litres.

(2) The quantities of these herbicides sold to local authorities by my department for council use were as follows:—

2,4-D—7 385 litres; 2,4,5-T—3 620 litres; DT20/20—250 litres.

Mr Hartwig asked the Minister for Health—

With reference to the enormous usage of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D in Queensland each year, both by councils and landowners, what investigation has been carried out into the hazards to the health of residents such as bronchial trouble, nausea, headaches, skin problems and birth abnormalities?

Answer:—

A number of investigations have been carried out in Australia and overseas. A limited retrospective study was carried out by my department in the Cairns area some time ago. None of these studies has demonstrated any relationship between birth abnormalities and the use of 2,4,5-T. Other conditions referred to have only occurred in factory contamination with Dioxin. No adverse effects have been noted with 2,4-D.

10. FIONA MCKINLAY

Mr Hartwig asked the Minister for Education—

With reference to Fiona McKinlay of Alton Downs west of Rockhampton who has been transported by taxi some 24 km to school each day at Rockhampton—

(1) Why has this taxi service been discontinued for such a deserving case?

(2) Does he realise that if she was placed in the Local Community Health Villa it would cost approximately \$300 a week compared to \$153 a week for taxi fares?

Answer:—

(1) Taxi transport was provided to this child and her older sister for several years. During 1980 the child travelled to the QSNOWA school alone. In 1981 and in view of the major increase in the cost of this arrangement, an alternative scheme was negotiated whereby the parents were reimbursed for petrol and oil costs to transport the child to and from school. Recently, the mother advised that the demands of driving were proving too much and the option of boarding the child at a Department of Health villa in Rockhampton, where her sister resided, was raised with the mother by officers of my department.

(2) My colleague the Minister for Health would be able to apprise the honourable member of the cost of villa accommodation. However, a single cost comparison is not valid because the chief concern is the long distance being travelled daily by a handicapped child. Recent advice indicates that the villa option is not considered appropriate in this instance. Accordingly, a decision has been taken that taxi transport will be reinstated on a temporary basis, and to subsequently review the action, pending advice from the child's mother, on her ability to drive the child to school.

11. USE OF COMPUTERS BY RAILWAY DEPARTMENT

Mr Davis asked the Minister for Transport—

(1) What is the annual cost to the Railway Department for (a) hiring of computers and (b) cost of software (paper, etc.)?

(2) What number of persons is employed directly in the various computer installations?

Answer:—

I am informed by the Commissioner for Railways as follows—

(1) (a) The cost of hiring electronic data processing equipment, including computers, for 1979-80 was \$521,000.

(b) The cost of software, stationery and punch cards for the same period was \$155,000.

(2) The total number of personnel directly employed in the various data processing installations is 67.

12. MARYBOROUGH-MONTO RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE

Mr Davis asked the Minister for Transport—

Does the Railway Department intend to close the Maryborough-Monto rail passenger service and, if so, (a) when is the proposed date for the termination and (b) what are the reasons for the closure?

Answer:—

This matter has already been the subject of inquiries by the honourable member for Auburn. As indicated to him, there is no such proposal at the present time.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON BUYING SHARES IN PRIVATE COMPANIES

Mr D'ARCY: I refer the Deputy Premier and Treasurer to the Government's recent policy on buying a stake in Evans Deakin Industries Ltd, and I now ask: Was the recent increase in the Government stake in Evans Deakin made possible by buying EDI shares from Australian National Industries? What was the rationale behind the Government's increased stake in EDI, which took the level of Government ownership to just below 12.5 per cent, and what price was paid for the EDI shares?

Dr EDWARDS: I have not at my disposal here the full details of the price paid. As to the recent gazettal of funds for the Public Trustee, that, of course, was related to the merger procedures that were taking place, for which the Government had to finalise its payment. I will ask the Under Treasurer to ascertain the details, which I will present to the honourable member tomorrow morning.

FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT TO PREVENT TAKE-OVER OF BUNDENG

Mr D'ARCY: I refer the Deputy Premier and Treasurer to the recent take-over of Bundeng by the southern raider ANI Limited, and point out to him that late last year the Government made a foray into the share market to prevent ANI from taking over Walkers. The Government also recently increased its shareholding in EDI by further purchases from ANI. Apparently ANI made a trading profit from that of some \$1m, and that \$1m has now gone into the ANI \$4.2m bid for Bundeng. In other words, the Government financed about one-quarter of ANI's take-over of Bundeng. I now ask the Treasurer: Why did the Government not step in to protect Bundeng, seeing that it protected Walkers from ANI and EDI from Clyde Engineering (Qld) Pty Ltd, and why did the Government buy EDI shares from ANI and thereby abet ANI's offer?

Dr EDWARDS: I am absolutely amazed at the Opposition's attitude to the Government's support of Evans Deakin and Walkers.

Mr D'Arcy: What about Bundeng?

Dr EDWARDS: The honourable member will get his answer in a moment.

I am sure that the honourable member for Maryborough is absolutely embarrassed by the continued asking of questions about this matter, the details of which have been made totally public at all times. I am sure that the unfortunate member for Maryborough is most embarrassed by these continuing questions. There is a vast difference between the Evans Deakin and Walkers situation and the Bundeng take-over. At no time did the shareholders or the directors of Bundeng ask the Government for assistance in any form. In fact, the directors of Bundeng formally recommended to the shareholders that they accept the offer made last week. I am amazed that the Opposition would consider that there is any comparability between the two cases.

The Government made it clear at the time that its attitude towards the acquisition of shares was that it had to be a rare and unique decision, that it would have to be specific in its program and that the move would have to be for the benefit of Queensland in general.

We made it clear that, in due course, we would dispose of the shares within the market-place as quickly as possible. That is what we intend to do. To say that there is any relevance between Bundeng and the Government's not moving is totally irrelevant because the Bundeng directors recommended to its shareholders the acceptance of the offer. The Government was never asked to become involved. From recent advice I have had from the directors, they are totally happy with the arrangement.

GOVERNMENT DEFENCE OF LOCAL COMPANIES

Mr D'ARCY: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: With regard to the Government's overall policy of defending local companies against southern raiders, is it not obvious that the policy of protection of local industry is now in tatters following the Government's failure to protect Bundeng? Is it not obvious that the Government must be the laughing-stock of the financial world because it not only failed to protect Bundeng from ANI but financially assisted it by the purchase of ANI shares? Does not the Government owe assistance to other companies, such as SGIO and other white knights as they were described, who helped to protect Walkers from EDI, which now face losses in the share market because the Government is starting to sell its shares?

Dr EDWARDS: Obviously the person who wrote the brief for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition does not know what he is talking about. I suggest that the deputy leader either take no notice of that brief or get a new question-writer.

I repeat that the action taken by the Government in respect to Evans Deakin and Walkers was totally welcomed by the industry and by Queenslanders. Some people from New South Wales and other States were unhappy because they were not able to acquire control of these companies. If that is what Opposition members want, let them express that view very clearly. That is not the Government's stand. We believe that there should be a continuation of the policy that Queensland assets, where possible, are owned and managed by Queenslanders.

In the case of Evans Deakin and Walkers, we felt that there was a need for the Government to become a normal shareholder within the parameters of the stock exchange and under the rules of the Companies Act. On no occasion did we go outside those parameters.

As to the attitude of the SGIO—it was a matter for the board's decision. The board made the decision. I remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that the SGIO already had a very large parcel of shares in Evans Deakin and Walkers, and it was proud to keep those shares. It will continue to support Queensland companies such as those two.

I again suggest to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that he have a discussion with the honourable member for Maryborough to see where he stands on this issue. He could do the same with the honourable member for Lytton who was critical of the Government on a number of occasions when we were not prepared to protect some Queensland companies.

They cannot have it both ways. The Opposition stands condemned. The Queensland Government has had the support of the employees of Evans Deakin and Walkers. I am glad to say that we also have the support of the honourable member for Maryborough.

RESTRUCTURING OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Mr NEAL: I ask the Minister for Education: In view of the report to the effect that Cabinet has given preliminary consideration to the restructuring of higher education in Queensland, as required by the Federal Government as a precondition to full funding what planning has been carried out by him and his department to meet the Federal Government's requirements?

Mr GUNN: Cabinet has decided that the Queensland Government would be prepared to discontinue four existing colleges in Brisbane (North Brisbane College of Advanced Education, Kelvin Grove College of Advanced Education, Brisbane Kindergarten Teachers College and Mount Gravatt College of Advanced Education) and replace them with a single college. The new college would be known as Brisbane College of

Advanced Education and it would operate from four campuses at Carseldine, Kedron Park, Kelvin Grove and Mt Gravatt.

Although the State will have to await Commonwealth Government concurrence with its proposal, detailed planning will need to be undertaken towards implementing Cabinet's decision in the event of the proposal's acceptability to the Commonwealth. To this end, I have convened an implementation committee, to meet as soon as practicable, consisting of the following members—

Dr J. A. Allen—Chairman of the Board of Advanced Education (Convenor and Chairman); Mr N. W. Briton—Member of the Board of Advanced Education and former Director of Queensland Agricultural College; Mr G. F. Ashby—Director of Special Education, Department of Education and Deputy Chairman of Brisbane Kindergarten Teachers College Council; Mr R. A. Dore—Administrative Director, Myer Queensland Stores, and member of Council of North Brisbane College of Advanced Education; Mr W. J. Job—Architect and Chairman of Mount Gravatt College of Advanced Education; Miss Patience Thoms—Public relations consultant and Chairman of Kelvin Grove College of Advanced Education Council; Mr N. D. Alford—Executive Officer, Board of Advanced Education (Secretary).

I have asked them to make early recommendations to me regarding the following matters:

- (a) appropriate central and campus administrative and academic structures for Brisbane College of Advanced Education;
- (b) assignment of senior academic and non-academic staff to appropriate positions in such structures;
- (c) location of central administration for the college; and
- (d) arrangements for uninterrupted progress of existing students.

As the honourable member will appreciate from the four items I have listed above, I regard the welfare of existing staff and students to be an area of major concern and I am anxious that, in the interests of all, maximum clarity should be achieved in this area as soon as possible.

EMERALD JOCKEY CLUB

Mr LESTER: I ask the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police in his capacity as Minister in charge of racing: Can he outline to Parliament the various benefits that he obtained from visiting the Central Highlands over the week-end? What did he find to his liking in the progress being made by the Emerald Jockey Club?

Mr HINZE: Of course, the main benefit was that I won \$461 legally.

I now would like to be a little bit more serious to heap commendation on the Emerald Jockey Club for having what I believe to be the best grass race-track in Australia. All that I want everybody to do, if he has the time, is to witness it for himself. Here is a group of people who have worked in order to get together sufficient funds to put down a grass track. I hope that their example will be followed by every other country race club in Queensland. They have a system whereby immediately after the last race is held the track is completely watered. It is a great credit to them. It is an achievement and, as I say, I hope that it will be followed by every other country race club in the State.

APPRENTICES EMPLOYED IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Mr YEWDAL: In asking a question of the Minister for Employment and Labour Relations, I refer to his recent Press statement in "The Courier-Mail" of Saturday, 9 May last, wherein he stated that an assessment of apprentice numbers is to be taken throughout Government departments. If one can assume from his statement that his department is not aware of these statistics, one can also interpret that his department has fallen down on a very basic function as it applies to employment. If and when his officers ascertain the shortfall in apprentices or youth employment in the departments of his colleagues, will he provide the figures of shortages that apply in each department?

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: The Government is aware of the numbers employed and my department is trying to increase the numbers that are employed by the various Government agencies where there is a capacity to employ apprentices. The Railway Department does a magnificent job in putting on apprentices. It does this for its own needs, not for those of the community. The Railway Department has the capacity to employ more apprentices, not only for its own needs but also for the community's needs, but the trade unions involved have resisted that because they do not want to see these people employed in the Railway Department unless their employment is permanent. The Railway Department cannot guarantee the permanent employment of those apprentices once they become tradesmen. The Railway Department adopts a very reasonable attitude especially in view of the "anti" attitude adopted by a number of trade unions towards it. That is the sort of thing that has to be overcome. The Minister for Transport and I are trying to find a solution to that problem.

PETITION TO SAVE QUEENSLAND'S FREE
HOSPITAL SYSTEM

Mr YEWDAL: I ask the Minister for Health: Will he approve of patients, staff and visitors within hospital precincts signing and circulating a petition to save Queensland's free hospitals?

The petition reads—

"To The Honourable The Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, in Parliament assembled:

"The Petition of the undersigned residents in the State of Queensland respectfully sheweth:

"That we strongly condemn any action to destroy the free Hospital and Medical Services of the State of Queensland.

"Your Petitioners, therefore, Humbly Pray that the Parliament of Queensland will provide a continuation of the present scheme whereby all Queenslanders who wish to avail themselves of these services may do so.

"And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever Pray."

If the Minister objects to its circulation, that will greatly reduce the number of signatories to the petition. If that is the case, will the Minister give his reasons?

Mr AUSTIN: It is not the policy of my department or the Government to allow canvassers to go through Government hospitals, whether they are obtaining signatures to petitions to maintain the free hospital system or for some other purpose.

I do not believe the honourable member's question is a serious one. I believe a number of people in the community are concerned about this matter, and it is not beyond the realms of possibility that a parent, relative or friend of a patient might take such a petition to a patient who might sign it. But I strongly object to the invasion of privacy of individual patients by people who may be unknown to them asking them to sign a petition in a public hospital. I object to that and I believe the honourable member would object to it if a relative of his was approached by an unknown person to sign a piece of paper. The suggestion put forward by the honourable member is quite impracticable and I simply cannot agree with it.

X-RAY SCANNER FOR NORTH QUEENSLAND

Mr KATTER: I direct a question upon notice to the Minister for Health: Is he aware that, whilst there are four X-ray scanners in Queensland, all are situated in Brisbane? Is he further aware that in most instances when a scanner is required it is extremely important that a patient not be moved and that, whilst some half million people live in North Queensland, 2 000 km from Brisbane, a scanner, which has been

long and often promised to North Queensland, still has not materialised? Could he advise North Queensland when such a scanner will be installed and functioning?

Mr Austin: Do you want the answer now?

Mr KATTER: Yes, it can be without notice, if it suits the Minister.

Mr AUSTIN: The honourable member will be pleased to know that my department has submitted specifications to the State Stores Board, which is now calling tenders for a new scanner at Townsville. We have had some difficulty in drawing up the specifications. The rate of change in technology in this type of equipment is so rapid that if a specification is drawn up this week the machine is almost obsolete next week. We have had great difficulty in drawing up specifications so that we can get the most modern, up-to-date machine for Townsville. I can assure the honourable member that my departmental officers now believe that they have drawn up suitable specifications to give Townsville the most up-to-date piece of machinery possible at the time of closing of tenders. I hope that the machine will be well and truly on its way in the near future.

COMMONWEALTH DECENTRALISATION PROGRAM
FUNDS FOR QUEENSLAND INDUSTRY

Mr HANSEN: I ask the Minister for Commerce and Industry: What funds are currently available to Queensland industry from the Commonwealth Decentralisation Program? What portion is grant, and what portion is loan money? Does he envisage any problem in providing funds from State resources next year to take up the shortfall of funds caused by the Fraser razor gang's lopping of funds from national resources?

Mr SULLIVAN: The honourable member has asked what funds are available. At present, no funds are available; the allocation for the year has been fully committed.

If he wishes me to comment further on the latter part of his question, I suggest that he puts it on notice.

Mr HANSEN: I do so accordingly.

ELECTRICITY COSTS, PROPOSED ALCAN SMELTER

Mr POWELL: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: Has his attention been drawn to statements by spokesmen for the Wild Life Preservation Society relating to electricity costs for the proposed Alcan smelter? Are their statements correct? If not, will he present to the House the true position?

Mr I. J. GIBBS: My attention was drawn to an article on page 3 of the "Bundaberg News-Mail" on Monday, 11 May 1981, relative to Mr Hiscock's claim in regard to subsidy. His claim of a subsidy rests

entirely on the proposition that the power charges should be based on the export price of steaming coal. This is pure conjecture, because with such a pricing arrangement it would be more economic for Alcan to construct the smelter overseas. The real issue is whether we, as a State, want to be the quarry for the world or, alternatively, to upgrade our abundant natural resources and gain the benefits of additional employment, higher export values and increased job opportunities.

Contrary to Mr Hiscock's claims, Alcan's proposed smelter will not be subsidised. Charges for power will cover the actual cost of generation and transmission of this power, taking into account two important factors—

(a) Alcan will be a bulk user taking supply direct from the high voltage network. To supply the same electricity to a multitude of industrial and domestic consumers at different locations involves the installation, maintenance and administration of a complex distribution, metering and accounting system, the cost of which must be covered in tariffs charged.

(b) Alcan will take supply continuously, thereby allowing the most efficient utilisation of generating plant. Electricity requirements of other consumers vary appreciably throughout the day, resulting in low utilisation of plant installed to meet the peak load requirements.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES SYMBOL

Mr **WARBURTON**: In view of the absence of the Minister for Tourism, National Parks, Sport and The Arts, I direct a question to the Premier. In doing so, I refer to the official symbol for the 1982 Commonwealth Games, namely, the stylised kangaroo in full flight, the copyright for which is held by the Commonwealth Games Foundation. The Premier would be aware of the fact that the symbol, which is the result of an Australia-wide competition, appears on the very popular Commonwealth Games pin badge and other ornaments. Bearing in mind that the flying kangaroo symbol is a very important symbol of Australia in the minds of overseas visitors and tourists, and in view of the fact that the preliminary Commonwealth Games will be held later this year, I ask the Premier: As Queensland is the host State for the forthcoming Commonwealth Games, how will he and other members of this Government explain to overseas visitors and tourists that the flying kangaroo pin badges and other ornaments are manufactured in Hong Kong and not in our own State or country?

Mr **BJELKE-PETERSEN**: As I think the honourable member would understand, the whole matter of costs has to be taken into account in the conduct of the Games. As I understand it, this matter depended entirely on costs. As I recall, there was

a very big difference between the costs quoted for the manufacture of the symbol. I cannot give the honourable member the exact figures, but I recall reading them some months ago. As I understand it, the cost involved is the reason.

ORDER IN COUNCIL CONCERNING APPOINTMENT OF NEW TOTALISATOR ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Mr **WARBURTON**: I ask the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police: Will he advise the House as to when he intends to comply with the provisions on the Racing and Betting Act 1954–1978 by presenting to Parliament the Order in Council pertaining to the controversial appointment of the new Totalisator Administration Board? I remind him that the Order in Council was published in the Queensland Government Gazette some time ago, on Thursday, 30 April 1981. When will he table it in this House? Or is he letting the Liberals off the hook?

Mr **HINZE**: I will take the necessary steps today to try to have the Order in Council tabled tomorrow.

Mr **WARBURTON**: In asking the Minister a supplementary question, I refer to section 146 of the Racing and Betting Act 1954–1978, which provides that every Order in Council made under that Act shall be laid before Parliament within 14 sitting days after the publication of the Government Gazette or within 14 sitting days after the start of the next session, which will presumably be in August. Bearing in mind that this Parliament can, as the result of a motion for disallowance, reject the Order in Council—I intend to move such a motion if I am given the opportunity—I ask: Is it not a fact that he has procrastinated intentionally in relation to this matter so that the new board will be firmly entrenched before this Parliament has an opportunity to debate the relevant Order in Council?

Mr **HINZE**: I would hate to have to point out to the honourable member that his remarks to the effect that I am procrastinating are rather rude. They are not factual. All my intentions concerning the racing industry are on the one track. Anything that has to be done will be done correctly.

Mr **Kruger**: That will be a change.

Mr **HINZE**: The honourable member might think so.

As I said previously, I will see what I can do tomorrow.

AMALGAMATION OF FOUR BRISBANE COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

Mr **SHAW**: I ask the Minister for Education: Does he expect that the amalgamation of the four Brisbane colleges of

advanced education will be completed in time for the next academic year? If not, what is the timetable for the proposed amalgamation as outlined in yesterday's "Courier-Mail" and in a question earlier today? In what way does he expect additional enrolments to generate extra revenue?

Mr GUNN: The amalgamation of the four CAEs will be completed for the next academic year. As to the second part of the honourable members question—as he is probably aware, the cost of the colleges is in the vicinity of \$24m a year. It is anticipated by the Federal authority that by 1984 there will be a saving of \$2.4m. The extra enrolments would not be of any great consequence. I repeat that the Federal authority believes that there could be a saving of \$2.4m by 1984. The honourable member might agree that that is not a great deal of money.

Mr Shaw: It is a saving, not an increase?

Mr GUNN: Yes, it is a saving.

RAILWAY EMPLOYEES ACCOMMODATION, KURBAYIA

Dr LOCKWOOD: I ask the Minister for Transport: Is he aware of a recent public statement by a spokesman for the Railway Station Officers Union in which he went to bat for some anonymous railway employee stationed at Kurbayia, between Mt Isa and Duchess, who, according to the union spokesman, suffered the gross indignity of having his feet go through a hole in the floor of a bondwood hut in which he was accommodated? Has he had this complaint investigated and, if so, was the employee a member of the Station Officers Union and is he still housed in those circumstances?

Mr LANE: I have had the public complaint investigated. I have managed to identify the person mentioned in the newspaper reports, although it might be indiscreet to name him in the House this morning.

During his period of employment by the Railway Department, this person was not a member of the Station Officers Union but was probably a member of the Australian Railways Union. He was discharged from the Railway Department following his conviction for having cultivated a prohibited plant, having possession of a prohibited plant and having possession of a pipe for use in smoking a dangerous drug.

I am sure that members will find it strange that the Station Officers Union should take up the cause of this Australian Railways Union member who is no longer employed by the department, particularly as I understand that the Australian Railways Union, having learnt the reason for his dismissal, decided not to make any further representations on his behalf.

MAROOCHY FIRE BRIGADE BOARD SUMMONSES

Mr MACKENROTH: I ask the Minister for Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services: Is he aware that the Maroochy Fire Brigade Board has backed off from issuing 144 summonses on developers in its area for breaching the Fire Safety Act because it believes it to be too huge a task and, instead, will forward to those developers a soft-peddling letter, a copy of which the board has received from the State Fire Services Council? Will he ensure that fire brigade boards prosecute for breaches of the Fire Safety Act, particularly when they are of the magnitude that I have outlined?

Mr HEWITT: I am aware of some disquiet with regard to these problems on the Sunshine Coast and on Friday of this week I will be visiting that area with the honourable member for Cooroora.

With regard to the application for final certificates and the enforcement of the Act, I asked for a sampling to be done in the last few days and I have been advised as follows: 36 premises from a list of 144 premises for which interim certificates of fire safety had been issued were visited. Of the 36 visited, it was found that nine were for projects not proceeded with; 15 were for projects still under construction; five were for projects involving extension of premises already legally occupied, and seven were for projects occupied illegally. Those illegally occupied included a vegetable storage, a motor showroom, a banking chamber, an office, a function hall and an electricity substation. The only one involving safety of persons, that is residentially, was one containing five home units. I will be seeking information on that matter when I visit the area on Friday.

FUNDING OF WOMEN'S REFUGES

Mr MACKENROTH: I ask the Minister for Welfare Services: Is it a fact that specific Commonwealth funding for women's refuges will cease as from 1 July? Can he guarantee that the Queensland Government will maintain a real level of funding of Queensland women's refuges?

Mr WHITE: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a matter that was discussed recently at the Council of Social Welfare Ministers. To my knowledge the Commonwealth has no intention of discontinuing funding for women's refuges. Only this morning I again wrote to the Honourable Fred Chaney on this matter and I anticipate having further confirmation.

To answer the honourable member's question—to my knowledge, no. If the Commonwealth did cease funding for women's refuges, it would be a matter for budgetary consideration by this Government.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

GOVERNMENT'S ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE LAST
STATE ELECTION

Mr CASEY (Mackay—Leader of the Opposition) (12 noon): Tomorrow this Parliament adjourns until August, and by the time we return we will be almost one-third of the way towards the next election. I believe it is an occasion when every member should review what has happened and what looks like happening during the next couple of months when Parliament will be in recess.

In his Liberal Party policy speech last November, the Deputy Premier and Treasurer (Dr Edwards) said that this Parliament was not operating as it should and, whilst he has done absolutely nothing to correct the situation, he was right then and he is still right today. Just what has happened in the six months since 29 November, just what has been achieved here in Queensland, especially in this Parliament? For those people who are interested or involved in politics, and for those who write the columns in our various newspapers, it is well worth a thought. A Government led by the National and Liberal Parties has provided too little money for health and education and is more intent on sponsoring trotting races for wealthy trotting owners, such as its own racing Minister.

The member for Callide has been expelled from the National Party for defending North and Central Queensland, and now as London debates the Prince Charles and Lady Di tapes we are told that poor old Mr Hartwig is in hot water again with the National Party over his secretary's Bob Sparkes tapes. We have had the scandal surrounding the Winchester South deal, with the tender, which was originally praised by the Premier as being far better than any other, suddenly subjected to major surgery after being let by Cabinet and after the public outcry led by the Opposition in this Parliament.

The anti-gamblers opposite, who lapse into hysteria at the murmur of poker machines in well-managed clubs, now promote more bets on the TAB, bigger prizes and dearer tickets in the casket, Gold Lotto for adults and even infants, and, later this year, two casinos. That was taken straight from Labor's policy, although it was criticised by Government members during the last election campaign. The Liberal leader proclaims his protest against the extent of our qangos but, apart from one single example—that was only a token show—he has silently endorsed the 100 or more appointments made to these shadowy organisations by Cabinet, in his presence I might add, since the election.

It is jobs for the boys all right and, as we will see later, it looks as if it will be jobs for the boys in the National Party in the North at Cairns. Sir Edward Lyons, the National Party's collector, is the new TAB chairman, and one of his "numbers"

is the son-in-law of the racehorse-owning Minister for Water Resources, who is in a racing partnership with Sir Edward Lyons. The Minister's son-in-law represents Too-woomba on the TAB from an area somewhere outside Roma.

As the razor gang in Canberra and the scissors squad in Queensland supposedly steer us towards smaller and cheaper government, \$185 an hour is being spent in Queensland to teach the Premier, at 70 years of age, to fly his own helicopter. The member for South Coast manages to accumulate four important portfolios (and he is even making statements on casinos, and it seems that he wants to control them as well), six Government offices, three Government cars (I do not know whether he needs three at the one time so that he can fit into them), and I can only guess how many expense accounts.

The National Party's new tourism and recreation Minister, who incidentally could not find his way to Myers without a road map, suddenly discovers that Brisbane has an image problem and, more credibly, he declares support for Labor's proposed sporting hall of fame, which his National Party's predecessor in that portfolio, in answer to a question that I asked in this Parliament, rejected just prior to the State election.

The new National Party Minister for Lands and Forestry wants a register of foreign-owned land, but the Premier does not. As always in these matters, the Premier gets his way, so the State does not have such a register. The racing world is still waiting to see the \$15m the new Minister in charge of racing promised last year. The Minister for Commerce and Industry angers the small business community and the member for Landsborough is tucked away as Minister for Primary Industries protecting Mr Hinze's milk quotas.

The current Queensland political scene is chaotic and contradictory political management at its questionable worst, coming from both Canberra and George Street. The sticky fingers of the Bjelke-Petersen "slush" Foundation of the National Party flex and worm their way undesirably through Cabinet into the functions of almost every Government department. There is not just a suspicion of corruption but a very real belief that it has occurred and will continue to occur. Sarcastically we are told that Queensland has the best Government money can buy—and there are genuine fears that favours are actually being bought, and being bought at Cabinet level.

The favourites of this Government, known contributors to the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation, bob up on glamour authorities, such as the TAB, or as recipients of extravagant Cabinet contracts, with monotonous regularity. Tenders were not called for the helicopter and were not even seriously considered for Winchester South. Every member in this House knows what is going on

but many are too afraid for their own political futures to say openly what they suspect. They know that the Premier is a ruthless, totally unethical man. That is easily seen by the way he has disposed of political colleagues and collaborators such as the member for Callide. He uses them and then he discards them.

The Premier is not an inflexible strongman, rather an unscrupulous old man. Where is his friend of the Whitlam days, the shifty American, Wiley Fancher? He was abandoned in his bankruptcy. What has really happened to the hydrogen car? Where is Milan Brych? I imagine his healings are left to the mercies of the American courts. Where is poor old Sir Gordon Chalk, his partner in coalition for ever so long? Appointments come and go for the Sir Edward Lyonses, the Ron Camms, the Wally Raes, the Max Hodges and others, but they all seem to pass by poor old Chalkie, the most capable Cabinet Minister I have ever seen in this House in my 12 years.

The Premier practises dispensable politics. Friendships and past loyalties are the real casualties. Where is Dr Glen Sheil, who only a few months ago was showing Senator-elect Mrs Bjelke-Petersen around Canberra and being ushered into the Macpherson by-election past all other contenders, including the faithful Lou Rowan? Dr Glen has gone, minus his Senate seat to Mrs Bjelke-Petersen, who also took three-quarters of his superannuation.

Young Vic Sullivan of last July is old Vic Sullivan this May, demoted in the ministry and ready for the Bjelke kill as Deputy Leader of the National Party with the Minister for seemingly everything except Local Government and Main Roads studying the layout of the 23rd floor penthouse.

The crash and crisis style of government of both the Liberal and National Parties in this State defies the credibility of the taxpayers who finance it. Today the Premier and his deputy have raced dramatically to Canberra in a circumstance of so-called emergency, which has been developing with Fraser federalism since they blessed it at its conception in September 1975, six years ago. Once again, when the cage has been left open and the birds have flown, it is the old reserve tactic of crash, crisis, chaos or criticism. It is panic politics dependent on the uninquiring headlines the Premier knows he can command. The Premier has received the protection of the Press in this State. From time to time he may receive a polite slap on the hand from "The Courier-Mail", the "Telegraph", one of the country newspapers, or perhaps a television station, but that is about all. "The Courier-Mail" and the "Telegraph" have been great protectors of Dr Edwards and are all that have kept him alive in the Liberal Party. From this criticism I exclude Moir's cartoons.

Where, I ask, are those noble objectives of the Deputy Premier and the Liberal Party of only six months ago? They said,

"Unity, not division." We will find out about that at the Liberal Party conference. The Liberal Party said, "Concern, not disinterest." What about the Bundeng issue—there was no concern about that! Another objective was: accountability, not doubt. What about the legislation for a public accounts committee that Labor placed on the Business Paper? The Deputy Premier said we were to have a new partnership between the Government and the people—listening, involving, responding, rational, commonsense, middle-of-the-road government. How empty those words sound now.

It is no wonder that the voting public has lost confidence in the basic policy of Government in Queensland when such admirable ideas become redundant so soon after the votes are cast and counted. Respect cannot be restored to the Government in this State. Because of the actions of this Government the same regrettably applies to the Parliament itself. This happens while the Liberal Party is willing to implicate itself dishonourably with the National Party through Cabinet and coalition solidarity in the grubbiest manipulations of the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation.

Just look at the way in which casinos are being set up. If ever I have seen a back-to-front approach, that is it. In no other area in the world would casinos have been allowed to be established, or tenders called for them, without first having the legislation placed before the Parliament so that the people—the community as a whole—could clearly see how they would be protected. Then we had the Deputy Premier and Treasurer last week and again this morning dodging questions in Parliament from my deputy as to why the Government supposedly stood in the market on behalf of Evans Deakin and Walkers, yet let Bundeng float straight down the line to a consortium from New South Wales. Not only was that company let float down the line, but the take-over was financed through profits made on the sale of shares to the Government in the earlier manoeuvres.

(Time expired.)

ALP SPLIT; QUEENSLAND'S GUN LAWS

Mr PRENTICE (Toowong) (12.10 p.m.): Before I commence my main topic, I shall pose a few questions: Where is Clem Jones, that great man of the Labor Party? Where is Tom Burns? Where indeed is Nick Bos? Indeed, where is Ed Casey and where will he be in a couple of weeks' time when all this matter is resolved? It is all very well for him to try to point the finger to the other side of the House, but that will not let him escape the difficulties that exist now within the Australian Labor Party, split so totally that one wonders whether it knows whether it is coming or going.

Mr Hooper: Why did they put a lightweight like you up to make a speech like this? You are the lightest weight the Liberal Party has to offer as a speaker.

Mr PRENTICE: I say to the honourable member for Archerfield that he reminds me of what an American doctor once said: "You can always tell the state of a politician's health"—and in particular I think it applies to the member for Archerfield—"by looking at his mouth. If it is shut, he is dead."

These days it is common to hear on news broadcasts or read in the Press about a person who has become so emotionally disturbed as to pick up a gun and shoot someone. Just over two months ago in my electorate a man thought to be a prowler was shot dead; one month ago a man went berserk in a Sydney shopping centre and killed a man; while only one week ago in Cairns one person was shot dead and another rushed to hospital suffering a gunshot wound. Those are but a few. Such cases occur on an average of 60 times each year in Australia, or approximately one a week. Add to this figure the 150 casualties resulting from firearm accidents each year and the number of victims becomes even more alarming.

I would like to place on record my congratulations to the Australian Bank Employees Union for bringing information like this before the members of this Parliament and before the community. Because so many of these shootings result from either domestic disputes or the surprising of an intruder, we can assume that the misuse of a firearm is seldom intentional. If a gun is handy, the person may well use it—often almost a reflex action. However, the problem does not end there. In a study of firearms and violence in Australia, the author Richard Harding found that, of all gun injuries that occurred in Queensland from 1973 to 1975, 90 per cent were caused by shooter incompetence.

Six people died in Queensland during the first two months of this year because of that shooter incompetence, or inexperience. The relatives—parents, wives, husbands and children—of victims should not have to suffer. It is time that we started protecting people instead of helping them to pull the trigger. How can we do that when the gun-licensing laws in this State are so grossly inadequate?

Mr Vaughan: They were brought in by your Government.

Mr PRENTICE: As long as rifles can be bought over the counter without a licence and as long as there is no requirement for a prior demonstration of skill or a knowledge of the laws, people will keep buying them and more people will be shot at. The pro-gun lobby may say that it is not guns that kill people; that it is people who kill people. To them I say this: in Australia

most people who die from gunshot wounds die from guns kept around the house either for hunting or self-protection.

It is all very well for members opposite to refer to legislation that has gone before. I was not here then. I make my views known now. In Australia most people who die from gunshot wounds—

Mr Hooper: You are plagiarising my speech.

Mr PRENTICE: I must say that the honourable member for Archerfield does not have a monopoly on knowledge or on views in this House, even though he may think he has a monopoly on interjections.

In 1975, 33 per cent of all Queensland gun owners were found to keep a gun solely for self-protection purposes. In addition, 74 per cent of the people who said that they kept a firearm for protection owned a rifle. No doubt that figure has increased considerably since the study was done over five years ago.

What are the reasons for that? The most obvious one is undoubtedly that licensing laws concerning long-barrel weapons in this State are virtually non-existent. As the law stands now, any honourable member could walk into a gunsmith's or a chain-store, hand over the required sum and walk out as the owner of a potentially lethal weapon—no questions asked.

As a member of Parliament responsible for the welfare of my constituents, I do have questions. One in every four Australians now possesses a firearm, while one in every six now possesses his own gun. In the United States of America, that figure is nine out of 10. How long before we reach a situation such as that? None of us wishes Australia to become another America in those terms, yet the way things are going the situation seems inevitable unless the Government is prepared to take a stand.

Democracy has been defined a thousand times as government of the people, for the people, by the people. How the definition of democracy can be taken to the extreme of allowing people to kill other people, I will never know. The case for licensing all firearms in Queensland is compelling. Gone are the days when guns were just instruments misused in hold-up situations. They are subject to misuse in almost any situation one cares to name. In particular, misuse often occurs in domestic disputes.

Mr Hooper: This is the content of my speech, but I am not delivering it. Turn it up!

Mr PRENTICE: The honourable member may have said the same thing, but I doubt that he said it as well.

Obviously, firearms should not be used to resolve domestic or social disputes, but they are. They should not be used as a means whereby authority can be exerted, but they are.

Governments must regulate the ownership and usage of guns—and that is all guns. I should like to see all firearms subject to registration, with the owners and potential owners licensed, the licences being subject to an annual review. To obtain these licences, a person should perhaps have to give a practical demonstration not only of his shooting skills but also to show that he knows the correct way to load, unload and carry a firearm. I believe that these people should also have to sit for a written test illustrating a thorough knowledge of all firearm safety regulations, as well as what never to do when handling a firearm. Intending owners should also be examined as to their reasons for wanting firearms.

As yet, no State in Australia fulfils all these requirements, although some States do show greater concern than others. Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory are the only States that lack some form of licensing, and of these three, Queensland, per head of population, has by far the worst incidence of accidents caused by firearms. It also is interesting to note that Queensland has by far the largest number of gun owners who have no specific reason for owning a weapon.

New South Wales is the only State to research the history of each applicant. The name of the applicant is checked in police files for any known misconduct in relation to firearms or any criminal conviction that resulted in over a year's detention. Western Australia at least makes applicants answer a questionnaire relating to regulations and safety.

I have outlined my thoughts on gun licensing laws in this State. I do so as a concerned citizen, both for myself and for my constituents. I am pleased that members of the Opposition share my views.

Mr Hooper: You are sharing my views.

Mr PRENTICE: I am pleased to share the honourable member's views on this matter. It is of such seriousness that it should be looked at on a non-partisan basis.

In this State, we no longer deserve to suffer the injustice of our own gun-licensing system. Enough people have been senselessly wounded and killed by sometimes careless, sometimes deliberate, misuse of firearms in this State, and I do not see a need for our suffering and the suffering of so many other people to continue. The time has come when the Government ought to be prepared to look at the situation once again. No matter how controversial it may be, it should be reconsidered and some hard decisions should be taken.

PROPOSED TAKE-OVER OF TULLY CO-OPERATIVE SUGAR MILL

Mr MENZEL (Mulgrave) (12.20 p.m.): I rise to draw the attention of honourable members to the proposed take-over of a co-operative sugar mill in Queensland. Although I do not live in the mill area concerned, this matter concerns me because I believe that the thousands of cane growers and other people who rely for their livelihood on the sugar industry in Queensland will ultimately suffer if multinationals or other large companies are allowed to take over our sugar mills.

I realise that it can be claimed that such a take-over cannot come about easily, as 75 per cent, or a majority, of the people who own a co-operative sugar mill—the cane farmers—have to approve of a take-over. However, if a carrot is dangled in front of them, they might be convinced that a take-over is in their best interests. If the possibility of a take-over arises, the Government should step in to prevent it from occurring. The Government has taken similar action in the past when big companies have tried to move into Queensland to take over our companies.

My remarks relate particularly to the Tully co-operative mill, but they will be of interest to everybody right along the coast of Queensland. If the Tully mill is taken over by CSR or any other big company, the power of that company will be increased. Furthermore, the control of the company over the growers will be increased.

Repercussions will be felt right throughout the industry, because growers who live in other CSR mill areas will be disadvantaged by the fact that the hand of CSR at Central Sugar Cane Prices Board level will be tightened, thereby enabling CSR to exercise more control over its farmers who operate under the local board awards.

I do not believe that the shareholders in a co-operative mill—that is, the farmers—should have the final say. After all, they are not the people who in the first place built the mill and levied themselves to help pay for the mill. That occurred 50 or 60 years ago when their forefathers were growing cane. When they sold out, they did not sell shares with a monetary value. The value of a cane farm in a co-operative mill area is no different from that in a proprietary mill area. As to the sale of a farm in a co-operative mill area, it is only a paper transaction.

Although the farmers claim to be shareholders in a particular mill and share in the benefits in a good year and bear the losses in bad years, they are in fact public trustees. I do not regard them as being the same as ordinary shareholders in a public company. Co-operative mills were set up on a small-businessman basis, and they should be retained. The Government should help promote closer settlement along the coast.

If big companies take over sugar mills, they will squeeze out the small farmers and re-create huge plantations. That would be a terrible thing. The Government should step in and stop such a trend. Legislation allows the Government to stop it and to promote closer settlement in our sugar areas along the coast. The Minister for Primary Industries and Cabinet have a responsibility to monitor the developments that are occurring.

I understand that offers are being made to take over another co-operative mill in Queensland. Moves are being made to tempt shareholders to exercise their authority under the rules and to vote to sell out. If they do so, they will be taking a detrimental step, which will ultimately affect other people.

The sugar industry along the coast of North Queensland encounters special problems in relation to flood mitigation and drainage. The problems have arisen mainly because rivers and streams have silted up, with the result that flooding is occurring on farms that, for more than 50 years, were flood-free.

Flood mitigation and drainage should not have to compete for priority with irrigation. I am not knocking irrigation in any way. It plays a very important role, and not enough is being done in Queensland to spread the benefits of irrigation. But nothing of any consequence is done about flood mitigation in our northern areas which suffer severely from floods. People in the North have made constant representations to the Government about flood mitigation, and the Government must make greater efforts to try to overcome the flooding problems.

Millions of dollars in revenue would be gained by Governments if productivity in the sugar industry was constantly maintained. At the same time, steady jobs would be created by increased, stable productivity. In the long run, mill workers and other workers in the NQEA would benefit. If a sugar mill has a continuing series of good years, it will spend money on capital works, thus providing further employment. The money will be well spent and it will circulate through the community. In the past that has been overlooked, but the need now is greater. It was perhaps reasonable years ago that little attention was paid to the need for flood mitigation in the northern sugar areas.

I have been told by a small businessman in Atherton that umbrellas attract 15 per cent sales tax. Apparently the Federal Government considers them to be a luxury. To people in wet North Queensland areas an umbrella is a necessity, not a luxury. A complete review should be undertaken in Canberra, because what are luxuries in Canberra are often necessities in North Queensland. We must try to convince Canberra that it should completely overhaul its methods of gaining revenue. North Queenslanders are disadvantaged by the belief that their necessities are luxuries.

Every day I receive inquiries from young people between 30 and 40 years of age, the greater percentage of whom have never lived

on a farm, about going onto the land. Many of them have saved some money, or own a house, and they want to use their assets as a deposit on a farm. There is ample land in North Queensland that could be cut from cattle and other properties to let young people who want to be farmers have a go. About 10 or 15 years ago it was felt that farmers were a dying race, and that young people did not want to go onto the land. These days, the young people who want to get onto the land should be encouraged to do so. Both State and Federal Governments may say, "We do not have the money to give young people long-term, low-interest loans." In my opinion, the Governments should guarantee private banks so that they can make such advances.

Without doubt, about 95 per cent of young people who want to go onto the land would make a go of it. The easy way to get them onto the land is to guarantee loans through private banks. That would overcome the Governments' having to outlay many millions of dollars. It seems that the private banks want to advance money only for hire purchase, but they have an obligation to lend money to employ young people, give them a go, and develop the country.

FARE CONCESSIONS FOR UNEMPLOYED PERSONS

Mr DAVIS (Brisbane Central) (12.30 p.m.): The matter of public interest that I raise today concerns the difficulty that unemployed workers have in obtaining fare concessions. Most Tory Governments have never shown much compassion or concern for the unemployed. They have invented terms such as "dole bludgers", they have employed tactics such as delaying the provision of unemployment benefits and they have generally made everything as difficult as possible, short of completely abolishing payments. The way the razor gang is going in Canberra, it is quite on the cards that unemployment benefits will be cut out altogether. The first reaction of this Government when unemployment is discussed is to claim that it is the Federal Government's responsibility. Government members, like Pontius Pilate, wash their hands of the matter.

I should like to draw attention to a matter that has already been submitted to the Minister for Transport, the Premier and Cabinet and been knocked back. It is the case for transport concessions for the unemployed. If this were a pioneering proposal we could not expect much support from the Government because it is generally like the 100 to 1 outsider; it is always lagging well and truly behind the rest of the field. A submission put forward by the Unemployed Workers Union shows that a number of other States already grant some concessions and I should like to record them in "Hansard".

Victoria operates a limited travel concession scheme. It provides for five half-fare or four \$1 country vouchers per week. Concession users are required to detail the use of the vouchers and specify jobs applied for, etc. Even though it is a fairly lousy type of concession, the figures indicate that from 17 March to 3 October 1980, 1 259 unemployed persons obtained 2 609 tickets and 246 rail certificates each containing four vouchers.

South Australia, under a Liberal Government, issues an unlimited transport concession card for a period of one month. The card is issued through all departments of community welfare at a cost of 10c. It is valid for several trips if they are taken within a two-hour period. If a trip takes longer than two hours, another 10c ticket has to be bought.

New South Wales provides unlimited half-fare travel throughout that State on all rail, bus and ferry services, including privately owned bus services. The concessions are granted upon production of a New South Wales half-fare entitlement card, which is issued, upon application, by the Department of Youth and Community Services.

Tasmania operates an unlimited public and private concession scheme for persons in receipt of unemployment benefits. A monthly permit endorsed "Unemployed Person" is issued by the State Transport Commission.

I have given those details as examples to show that it is quite easy to administer a scheme. The argument that the Government will put up is that it is a Commonwealth responsibility. That excuse can be used, but it does not make it easier for a person on unemployment benefits.

The argument put forward from time to time is that it would be costly and that there would be too much bureaucratic control. Obviously these people are not like ordinary pensioners because they can be taken off unemployment benefits if they obtain employment. It is only an academic argument because it would not break any Government to extend this concession to the minority of persons who would take advantage of the scheme.

The difference between persons on unemployment benefits and widows and aged persons who are in receipt of pensions is that unemployed persons require this concession to help them to find work. The total unemployment benefit is \$36 a week. I give some examples of the fares that unemployed persons are required to pay. Five train trips from Woolloowin to the city would cost \$4. That is 11 per cent of the unemployment benefit. Five connecting bus trips to the city from Woodridge, where a tremendous number of unemployed persons live, would cost \$9. That is 25 per cent of the unemployment benefit. Those fares would take a fairly large lump out of the benefit. A trip from Kelvin Grove to Rocklea, where

employment is available in industries, costs \$2, which represents 5½ per cent of the unemployment benefit. The cost of a return trip from Toowoomba to Brisbane represents 29 per cent of the unemployment benefit. So it goes on.

Mr Frawley: What are you trying to prove now?

Mr DAVIS: That is typical of the comments that I would expect from the honourable member for Caboolture. He has been a grafter all his life and would not understand the traumatic experience suffered by a person who is unemployed.

Mr Frawley: I understand how those poor Aborigines felt when they were in your taxi.

Mr DAVIS: That is the sort of reply we get from members of the National Party, such as the honourable member for Caboolture. He represents the area around Caboolture and Redcliffe in which there is a large number of unemployed persons. Surely this Government should be able to assist them by providing concessional fares. Some people think that everybody has a motor vehicle.

Mrs Kyburz: How are you going to prevent abuse of it?

Mr DAVIS: I honestly thought that the honourable member Salisbury was a rather brainy individual and would have been the first person to understand that it is very easy to administer such a scheme. All that the person concerned has to do is get a card from the Commonwealth Employment Service to indicate that he is receiving the unemployment benefit. In New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania people are given a card for a month; it has to be renewed every month. Obviously a small number of persons would try to abuse such a scheme.

Mr Shaw: It would not amount to much.

Mr DAVIS: It would be only a fraction of the overall cost. I have said time and again in this Parliament that if we were to make laws to cover every contingency in this State, they would fill this entire Chamber. We cannot cover every contingency. We make laws for the payment of the unemployment benefit and pensions. We can make laws only for law-abiding people. The grafters and corrupters will always be able to beat any plan. If these people were given a card for one month, only a small number of them would try to defraud the system.

The problem we have in this State is that a number of agencies operate the public transport system. The State Government could administer this scheme in the railways area. It could also provide funds for private bus proprietors and the Brisbane City Council and Rockhampton City Council which operate the buses in their cities. It is not such a big deal. At the present time the Government subsidises Hornibrook Bus Lines Pty Ltd, Bayside Bus Services, and the company that

operates the bus service in Townsville. The Government already subsidises the fares of pensioners who travel on those buses.

We in this State should do something to assist these people. We could say that it is the Federal Government's responsibility. The policy of the Labor Party is that recipients of social service benefits should receive payments at such a level that they do not require other concessions for rates, etc. But the cold simple facts are that the Federal Government is not coming to the party in this area. The State Government should adopt a humane and responsible attitude and say, "Right, we will provide concessions for the unemployed. If we help them to get jobs, obviously they will not require the concessions."

(Time expired.)

WATER CONSERVATION

Mr HARTWIG (Callide) (12.39 p.m.): From time to time we hear of the grave fuel shortage facing this nation. I wish to speak of something that is equally important and of which we have a lot less—water.

Water is the life-blood of the land and its people. This country is very short of it. Each and every year a great portion of the State is faced with a drought. What is being done about this shortage of water? Hundreds of millions of dollars are expended to purchase a squadron of bombers but what has happened to the great Bradfield scheme which was to divert the rivers flowing into the ocean in the North back to the arid parts of this great State? The feasibility study of that project showed that such a scheme was possible.

Mr Davis: Have you read the other five reports on it?

Mr HARTWIG: The honourable member for Brisbane Central knows nothing about droughts, so if he listens he might learn something.

This nation cannot calculate the loss to it when a beast dies during a drought. It is particularly difficult to place a value on a beast, particularly a female. Such a loss is also a tremendous blow to individual property owners. Sheep flocks are decimated; agricultural crops are ruined. In some parts of Queensland for three and four years in succession people have put thousands of acres under crop in dry-land farming only to see the crop fail. It is not only that the crop fails; such properties have not had viable incomes for years. Producers have spent thousands of dollars on equipment and fuel to produce a crop, only to see it fail.

When a drought sets in a property owner is faced with three alternatives. He suffers from frustration and panic when he asks, "What should I do with my cattle?" Should the stock be sold off because of their low

condition and take whatever the market-place offers? Should they be sent to some other part of the State with more favourable weather conditions but at a higher rate of agistment with its consequent greater financial burden? Are the stock worth that? Should the property owner feed the cattle and pay the maximum price of something like \$200 to \$250 a tonne for fodder knowing that one of two things will happen: his liquid assets will be exhausted and he will no longer be able to afford fodder or he will get relief from rain?

Whichever course the land-owner takes, he will be financially destroyed. However, this Government has not put forward one positive plan to conserve and reticulate water. It is not a matter of building a dam such as the Fairbairn Dam and saying that it contains more water than the combination of all other Queensland dams. If the city of Los Angeles can pipe water for 7 million people over something like 180 miles, surely we can pipe water over large distances to other streams and into other dams within the State. As water is the life-blood of this State, we must embark upon a water conservation policy.

Today a lot of people are so concerned with politics and their political ambitions that they look only to where the votes are. But let us get back to the country because country people are the salt of the earth. They are the people who produce the spice of life, a thing called food. Without it, we have no future whatsoever.

Once we have adequate water we must then embark upon a fodder conservation policy. We talk about the great Burdekin Dam. As long as I can remember, there has been talk about a dam on the Burdekin. I understand that the Government is making some progress on it, but it is not coming quickly enough and moves are not being made in the right direction. Canberra and the State of Queensland must co-operate. Surely we must see that we will save this State only through drought mitigation. It is too late by the time the Government is saying, "We will pay concessions for freight on cattle. We will give you freight concessions on fodder and molasses." That is shutting the gate after the horse has bolted. We have to minimise the effects of drought. Droughts will be with us always, as well as good seasons. Irrespective of piecemeal efforts and the few million dollars made available for this and that, the whole point is that the Government has not done sufficient to adequately conserve water and fodder.

What is wrong with the Federal Government's financing each landholder with sufficient funds at 4 or 5 per cent interest to build a shed holding at least 100 tonnes of hay, or 1 000 tonnes of hay, according to the size of the property? Only when that is available does the grazier start to feed in time. It is no good waiting till the stock are dying before deciding to feed. Land-owners know full well that they

must start feeding early to maintain the condition of their stock in a drought. Surely we are able to embark on such a policy. It is not difficult. However, the two things we have to do are to conserve water and to make sure that that water aids the conservation of fodder. We must encourage people to grow lucerne. In a good season, they cannot sell their fodder.

Let us formulate a policy. Let us get together and put forward strong drought mitigation schemes—something that I have not heard put forward in the 10 years I have been in this Chamber. I am willing and available at all times to offer my knowledge on this subject.

ABOLITION OF INCOME TAX SHARING ARRANGEMENTS

Mr FRAWLEY (Caboolture) (12.47 p.m.): Today I wish to condemn the Federal Government and express my disgust at its actions in abolishing the income tax sharing arrangements that have existed since 1976. The greatest mistake Queensland ever made was to hand over the State's taxation rights to the Federal Government in July 1942. The Federal Government of the day imposed such a high rate of income tax itself that there was nothing left over for the States on which to raise a tax. In 1976 the Federal Government offered to allow the States to impose a State tax in addition to the Federal tax, but no State Government in its right mind was game to do that to people who were already heavily overtaxed.

Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania stop Australia from going broke. They are the only States that pay their own way. They have export surpluses. Since 1972 Queensland has had an average of \$1,600m export surpluses over imports each year. On the other hand, New South Wales and Victoria have had an annual average deficit of \$1,200m over those years.

Mr Simpson: Did you know that the right for the State to levy taxes applies only to pay-as-you-earn tax and not to company tax?

Mr FRAWLEY: Yes.

Victoria and New South Wales live off Queensland. Queensland exports approximately 23 per cent of Australia's total, but it gets very little in return. Because of the tariff protection afforded to the southern-based motor industries, we have to pay through the nose for motor cars.

We lose all along the line, especially in coal exports. A coal company first has to find the coal and then develop the mine, build a railway line and sometimes even establish a port. Then it hands it over to the State Government, which provides roads, schools and health and other facilities for the town. All the local authority receives is the rates. The State Government's share is about \$1.10 a tonne profit from the rail freight on coal, plus a royalty of

\$1 a tonne. However, the real bonanza is reaped by the Federal Government, which takes 47.5 per cent of the company's profits, plus income tax from employees, petrol tax, sales tax, import duties on equipment and on export tax on coal, which yields approximately \$120m a year.

Take petrol, Mr Deputy Speaker. Every time you put \$10-worth of petrol in your car, the Federal Government takes \$5.10 of that \$10 in tax. The service station proprietor receives \$1.30, the refineries and wholesalers \$2.20, and the oil producers (local and overseas) \$1.40. In other words, 51 per cent of the cost of that petrol is taken by the Federal Government. All that the Federal Government does in return is provide a few telephones, at exorbitant cost, and a few aerodromes, which it is now trying to dump on to local authorities.

The Federal Government has cut Queensland back by about \$130m. Because it will no longer meet half the cost of operating the State's hospitals, the Queensland Government has to find the rest of the money. Yesterday the Federal Government kicked in another \$16m, but it is still not enough. Casinos may be the answer, and I will reluctantly support casinos if I can be assured that part of the profits will go towards maintaining Queensland's free hospital system.

Because of the Federal Government's actions, Queensland has had to defer indefinitely electrification of the Blackwater to Gladstone railway line and electricity developments worth \$2,500m over the next 10 years. The electrification of the Rockhampton to Brisbane railway line will also have to be deferred.

After the Premiers Conference on 4 May, we discovered that the Federal Cabinet had empowered the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer to give another \$70m, of which Queensland's share would have been \$12m. However, the Prime Minister has stated that he will not give another red cent. By their actions, the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer have certainly damaged their credibility—that is, if they had any after the fiasco of the housing tax, when the Treasurer proved to be a political tiro. One would have thought that they would have learned a lesson from that. In fact, the statement of the Leader of the Federal Opposition (Mr Hayden) that the Prime Minister had adopted the tactics of a snake-oil salesman was correct, and I agree with him.

It is time that the Federal Government got its priorities right. In 1979-80 Queensland received a total of \$1,058,426,872 in Commonwealth payments and grants, and this year it is supposed to receive \$1,191,789,000. A breakdown shows some of the paltry amounts given. The subsidy for senior citizens' centres is \$711,000—enough to build two or three centres. Primary and secondary education receives a paltry \$44m, with another \$6m thrown in

for pre-school education. I remind honourable members that the State Budget for education was \$600m for 1980-81, which was 23.9 per cent of the total Budget. I could go on proving that Queensland has, to use a colloquialism, been given the big A by the Federal Government.

I am not opposed to overseas aid, but we ought to get our priorities right and realise that charity should begin at home. We should look after our own people first. Certainly money is well-spent on aid for medical services overseas. But what about a little money for our own services?

Queensland has been getting the rough end of the pineapple for years. Even during the 1939-45 war, we were going to be sacrificed to save the rest of Australia. The Brisbane Line was a military decision made by the Colonel Blimps of the day because they believed that North Queensland and Darwin would be overrun by the Japanese, and they intended to defend along a line known as the Brisbane Line. In October 1942, the Federal Minister for Labour and National Service (Mr Ward) stated that when the Curtin Government took office it discovered the existence of that plan. The previous Menzies/Fadden Government denied it, but on 18 March 1943 General MacArthur let the cat out of the bag. He told newspaper correspondents at his headquarters that when he arrived in Australia the defence plan was to allow the northern part of Australia to be taken without firing a shot and to defend at the Brisbane Line.

General MacArthur decided that the battle for Australia should be fought in New Guinea, and in November 1943 he reaffirmed that statement in a letter to the then Prime Minister, Mr Curtin. He said—

"It was never my intention to defend Australia on the mainland. That was the plan when I came here, but I immediately changed it."

That is conclusive proof that Queensland was to be sacrificed to save Sydney and Melbourne. Once again we are being dumped.

After the way in which this State has been treated over the years by successive Federal Governments, is it any wonder that one hears talk of secession? Queensland could go it alone, and the Queensland dollar would be worth a lot more than the inflation-ridden, tariff-protected Canberra dollar. With 23 per cent of Australia's exports and a surplus of exports over imports, Queensland pays dearly for being part of the Australian Federation. As an independent State, we could purchase luxury foreign cars for about the same price as we now have to pay for a Holden. Television sets and refrigerators would also be much cheaper without tariff protection for southern-based industries.

Many independent nations smaller than Queensland have made a success of going it alone, and they have not a fraction of Queensland's resources. We could conduct our own affairs under a sort of loose economic community system, as is done in

Europe. Queensland is much better placed than most countries in the world in meeting future energy needs. Of course, many of Queensland's Federal politicians would oppose such a move because they are only looking after their own political hides. It is to be hoped that today when the 20 Queensland Federal politicians meet with the Premier and the Deputy Premier they will come into line and stand up for the State's rights.

If the Federal Government keeps on walking over Queensland, the day might come when 80 per cent of the people of Queensland will vote to go it alone. If that happens, the man from Wannon River will lose more than one "Peacock" from his flock.

Over the last couple of years, Papua New Guinea has received the lion's share of overseas aid given by the Commonwealth Government. This year, Papua New Guinea is getting aid to the extent of \$243,675,000. As everyone knows, at present Australians in Papua New Guinea are getting a pretty raw deal. In the previous year also, Papua New Guinea got the lion's share. It is about time the Federal Government put its priorities in the right order. In 1979-80 it gave \$500,191,000 in overseas aid, whereas Queensland received by way of Commonwealth payments and grants a total of \$1,058,426,872. It is about time that the Commonwealth Government recognised the value of the States, especially Queensland.

RAIL TRANSPORT OF CATTLE

Mrs KYBURZ (Salisbury) (12.56 p.m.): I rise to take the Railway Department to task over the rail transport of cattle. I want to refer to a report on losses of rail-transported cattle in Queensland. I have received frequent complaints from small business people in my electorate concerning the number of railway staff who stand around at freight counters and other sections within the department. It is about time that those men were given a real job instead of being allowed to stand around like wax dummies. They should be given the task of minimising the delays that occur in the running of cattle trains.

The Queensland Railway Department is guilty on two counts: tardiness and lack of innovative approach when it comes to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report. It is a most comprehensive and excellent report.

It finds the Railway Department guilty on many counts. It is a sad thing that it is common for cattle trains to be stationary for 20 or 30 per cent of their transit time. Because of traffic control a proportion of this stopped time is unavoidable. However, most of the delays could be reduced by better organisation. What is going on in the Railway Department? Delays are also commonly experienced in marshalling yards, where trains simply wait for traffic clearance.

The report states that lengthy delays contribute to high losses because they increase the probability of heat stress during hot weather and the risk of injuries due to trampling, since cattle tend to lie down.

The report details some of the recommendations that must be implemented in Queensland, not the least of which is that drovers should be appointed on every train. Some of the men who enjoy a sinecure in the Railway Department should be given a real job. If they cannot be employed as drovers, they should be employed in a checking capacity to ensure that the regulations relating to the conveyance of cattle are observed. It seems that some people in the Railway Department regard this matter as being one of low priority. If the recommendations in the report are not implemented, many other honourable members and I will be extremely unhappy about the tardiness of the Railway Department.

It seems that the department is happy to hand over the consigning of cattle to trucking operators. That is not good enough. It should ensure that those consignors who in the past have sent their cattle by rail continue to do so.

The Railway Department should require that cattle be unloaded and spelled during transit when the scheduled journey exceeds 36 hours. Such journeys would be those from Longreach and the Far West.

Other recommendations are very important, not the least of which is the one concerning insurance. It recommends that insurers should charge lower premiums for cattle supervised by a train drover and for spelled cattle. The clauses covering the recommended handling practices should be included.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Miller): Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 10 March, the time allotted for the Matters of Public Interest debate has now expired.

[Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.15 p.m.]

CAIRNS AIRPORT BILL

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE

Debate resumed from 7 May (see p. 1048) on Mr Bird's motion—

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

Mr JONES (Cairns) (2.16 p.m.): This Bill is a catalyst. It is a first and, in that way, it is historic. It is unique because no other harbour board in Queensland or Australia manages or conducts the operations of an airport, and that is what this enabling legislation will provide for after it is passed. It is a catalyst because, from this point onwards, it will set a precedent for the responsibility for major provincial airports being shifted from the Commonwealth of

Australia to local ownership—to local authorities and statutory authorities such as port authorities.

At a later stage I will analyse why it happened. A blueprint has been set down for every provincial city in Queensland. The die is cast. I might well quote these opposite remarks of John Donne—

"No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls, It tolls for thee."

I warn other provincial centres throughout Australia that the Minister's comments on page 2 of his speech are ominous. He said—

"... and approaches for the transfer to local ownership have been considered in respect of the western airports at Mt. Isa, Cloncurry and Normanton. Negotiations are continuing in respect of Cloncurry where a take-over scheme is currently being finalised with the Cloncurry Shire Council. More recent approaches have been made in respect of other airports including Rockhampton, Mackay, Cairns and Maryborough."

That is typical of the domino theory. Following the passage of this Bill others will follow in sequence.

The issue of local ownership of the Cairns Airport has created turmoil and concern in Cairns. The citizens have been driven and perhaps led up a tortuous path, sometimes by the nose. On other occasions they have been nudged, gently prodded, bumped, obstructed and pushed. Now they are being bodily shoved unrelentingly into local ownership. That is a path which some think is a garden path. Others regard it as a path paved with good intentions, while some regard it as a dubious pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

When this issue first came to notice—the announcement was made in late 1978, which was about two years ago—I did not think that it would be my lot, as it is today, to present on behalf of the Opposition, the reply to the Ministers presentation of a Bill to convert the control, management and operation of the airport from the Commonwealth to the port authority under a local ownership scheme. That matter did not become apparent, or culminate, until about March of this year.

The people of Cairns and district—and I include those in all of the ancillary towns in the Far North Queensland region—have been subjected to much anxiety over the issue. In the forum of public debate it became quite apparent that most citizens in the region reject public ownership. Local ownership became a hot issue during the

past two years and it was an issue at the last State election. I took a firm stand on the matter and I was elected with an increased majority.

At the outset I held the objective view that the matter of ownership, control and management of airports was clearly a Federal responsibility, that the Commonwealth had a traditional obligation in this regard and that any departure from that view would not be tolerated or accepted by State Governments. I have been totally committed to that view throughout. I have been unwavering in my attitude during the whole campaign of local ownership and I maintain that attitude.

For the benefit of those honourable members who missed a small but important section of the razor gang's report, which was compiled and edited by Sir Phillip Lynch on behalf of the Liberal/National Country Party Government, as reported in "The Cairns Post" of 1 May 1981, I shall quote it. It reads—

"Mr Fraser said it was also proposed to sell domestic airline terminals throughout Australia, pending the result of the review of the airline industry, including the possible sale of part of TAA when it becomes a public company."

I am endeavouring to fit that statement in where it belongs—the recommendations and the carrying out of the proposals of the razor gang.

Katha-Upanishad said—

"The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over; thus the wise say the path to Salvation is hard."

Despite the machinations of our State parliamentarians, including members of Cabinet, following the general announcements of the razor gang, which dealt mainly with the parallel issue of placing our free hospitals in jeopardy, the quiet demise of the Commonwealth's responsibilities in the provision of airports went practically unnoticed. We are now seeing with more clarity the ramifications of the abnegation by the Commonwealth of the control of airports, which now devolve upon the States and are endorsed by the Federal Government and accelerated by the actions of the razor gang.

The State Treasurer blasted the razor gang's cuts in Queensland funding. "The Cairns Post" of Saturday, 2 May 1981, reported him as saying—

"The State could not tolerate or 'pick up the tab' for the drop in funding."

He also said—

"But I can assure you Queensland will not take this lying down—we are sick and tired of being kicked."

Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Government has said, "For \$16m you now assume control of the Cairns Airport. The Commonwealth is no longer responsible for it." The State Government has said that it will not pick up the tab. Apparently it has divested itself of the responsibility to take over the

airport. It has told the local authorities that they can face the irate ratepayers and it has retreated to the sanctum of electoral safety by conferring that responsibility on a non-elected body—the port authority.

Evidently such an indirect approach salves the conscience of Liberal Party members who have postulated about conferring responsibilities on statutory authorities and now do not create a new one but vest the responsibility in an existing authority and extend it. Cleverly conceived and with stacks of political connivance, it lacks only the credibility of Governments and the obvious question of intent. If it is such a good proposition and potential income bonanza, why would both the Commonwealth and State Governments rid themselves of it? If provincial airports are such a good investment and good revenue earners in these perilous economic times, why would not the Federal and State Governments welcome them?

If the State has not been duped, and if we are here today conscientiously divesting ourselves of public utilities, such as airports, and handing them over to private enterprise, why do we not go the whole way? Why should not the airline companies, which are the sole users of airports and their facilities, be granted the opportunity to run the whole show—lock, stock and barrel?

We have witnessed the Government's picking up the tab for the non-revenue producing side of air transportation since its inception. Why not then give the whole shivoo to the carriers who operate in the private sector? There is a precedent with the railways, which accept not only the responsibility for operating in the revenue-producing freight and passenger side of the industry but also the banal responsibility for the permanent way, station facilities, marshalling yards and ancillary equipment. The move is an ominous one. It portends a role for every provincial airport in Australia, and that is why the Opposition proposes to vote against the principles in this Bill.

We have no faith in the negotiators who acted on our behalf. We do not know who they were in this instance. The negotiations were conducted in secret. There is no report or agreement. The Opposition is concerned about this State's sovereign rights when the Commonwealth can off-load this facility without our having any say in the matter. In the light of the extraordinary behaviour of the Commonwealth Government following the recent Premiers Conference, we have no faith in the ethics of that Government. The Prime Minister simply took the States to the cleaners for \$70m. We believe that our share might have been \$12m. That is a classic case of being browbeaten into accepting a deal that everybody regards as being unfair.

The Commonwealth showed utter contempt for this State on that occasion. Our negotiators in that instance were no less than

the Premier and the Deputy Premier of this State. Who were the negotiators in the deal concerning the Cairns Airport? Were they of lesser stature? If Mr Fraser was so utterly contemptuous of those revered negotiators at the Premiers Conference, how much were the negotiators in the Cairns Airport deal demeaned? They were negotiating the deal concerning the Cairns Airport on our behalf immediately prior to the arrival of the Premier and the Deputy Premier at the Premiers Conference.

To what degree did we suffer as a result of this clandestine approach by the Prime Minister? What disadvantages did we in Cairns suffer? When we consider the bullying tactics of the Commonwealth Government at the Premiers Conference, how much more deceitful was that Government when it was considering a settlement in the Cairns Airport matter? What revelation will Mr Howard now make? He has admitted that the unfair and unfavourable treatment meted out to the Premiers at the Premiers Conference was an error of judgment. What chance do we, the people of Cairns, have in receiving equity in this matter? In the climate of such erratic and unstable behaviour, this Government asks us to accept this proposition for the Cairns Airport without expressing any concern. If our Federal counterparts are so determined to humiliate us by giving this unfair and inequitable treatment to such august negotiators, I suggest that we should be vigilant and demand the maximum funds from the Commonwealth Government's negotiators for the Cairns Airport development. If the Premier and Deputy Premier, who are well versed in these matters, were treated in that way, how can we have faith in what happened in the secret negotiations concerning the Cairns Airport?

Did we get the best possible deal in the negotiations? Could we have demanded more funds in real terms? Can negotiators of the agreement in the future be satisfied that improved terms can be obtained? Can they attain ascendancy in the future, or do we concede the exercise in bluff that has now been exposed and let the biggest cheat win and gloat over his coup? Do we have a chance to renegotiate the agreement?

I trust that it will not be said that—as is the case with the Premiers—if we had pushed harder we could have won X million dollars more. What have the people of Cairns been deprived of? Should they be content with this offer, particularly in the light of events at the Premiers Conference? Have the people of Cairns been taken to the cleaners? If on a previous occasion the Queensland Government was not taken to the cleaners, I believe some public statement should be made about it.

The Commonwealth Government has established a reputation for hard, economic restraint and has offered, as indicated in

the Minister's second-reading speech, a grant of \$16m at 1980 prices to fund the required works. For the benefit of the uninitiated, and for the benefit of the people of Cairns who may read my speech, I point out the Queensland Parliament no longer has an introductory debate. The introductory remarks of the Minister in his second-reading speech are all that the Opposition has to go on in its attempt to assess the meaning and purpose of the negotiations and the agreement on the details of the local ownership scheme.

In his second-reading speech the Minister said that the Commonwealth was also prepared to meet any shortfall in funds between the amount promised and the actual amount needed to carry out the works. He went on to say that the overall estimated cost as at April 1981 prices to the Commonwealth included the cost of the access road. Of course, that is a separate grant to the Cairns City Council of \$934,000. The negotiated amount is now \$21.1m.

The report of the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Study reveals that initially \$25m was to be the cost of the improvements. The harbour board will contribute \$2.8m to the cost, being half of the cost of the new terminal, so where did the other \$2m go? That shows the precarious nature of the path that has been set and it is no wonder that we perceive a precipice on each side, a narrowing of footholds and a petering out of negotiations. Conference negotiations begin with a hard line, a normal stance adopted by both sides. That may be the position in which we are at this moment, but there is a shortfall of at least \$2m. Is that our final position? Surely, unlike the Premiers, we will not accept this deal being forced upon us and let the matter rest there. I believe those who represented the people of Cairns and Queensland at the conference table could be exposed as bad bargainers. I do not envy the position in which the Minister finds himself as he has to try to retrieve the situation by renegotiating. If the Commonwealth's reaction to this proposal is similar to that of the health proposal, then there is a predictable reaction. This scheme will be foisted upon the people, just as the health scheme was. Perhaps we will suffer the ignominy of further deliberations. I believe we ought to take a "don't argue" approach in this matter and demand the \$25m as estimated in the original report.

The Commonwealth has said, "The local ownership scheme is yours. You take the responsibilities or you get nothing." The razor gang has decreed that. I believe that the hospitals scheme and the Cairns Airport scheme are akin. The only comment of the Commonwealth Minister for Transport (the Hon. R. J. D. Hunt) that I am able to give is from his Canberra news release 81/1620 of 30 April 1981. Relative to the review of Commonwealth functions, which is the euphemism for the razor gang report,

as it affects the Federal Transport portfolio and the Cairns airport, the press release states—

“Mr Hunt said that in implementing the decisions the Government was conscious of the need to rationalise activities with a view to increasing administrative efficiency, reducing costs where possible and—”

I ask honourable members to please note this, as it should be emphasised—

“transferring appropriate functions to the States and the private sector.”

However, I believe it is more pertinent to refer to an excerpt from Richard Carleton's interview with Ken Davidson, an economist with “The Age” newspaper in Melbourne on the program “Nationwide” at approximately 9.30 p.m. on Thursday, 30 April 1981, when they were commenting on the razor gang's report. I quote from a transcript taken from that interview. Ken Davidson, in talking about the razor gang's report, said—

“... Are we going to sell off the airport terminals around the country? ... the government gets a capital gain ... I don't know of any other country in the world where airport terminals are run by private enterprise—I would have thought that was a national responsibility—is there a company in the world with the managerial expertise that could run an airport terminal? When you go through these expenditure cuts—they're basically there as an act of faith—the underlying government philosophy is that public spending is bad, is unproductive—private—whatever type is good—you roll back the public sector and this allows for spontaneous growth in the private sector—now the proof in terms of recent experience in Australia is that that is not proved at all—if you look at other countries some of the best performers in the world—like Germany—40% of their gross domestic product goes through the public sector—they're probably one of the most efficient countries in the world, with one of the strongest growth rates, up until fairly recently.”

I emphasise that again there is minimal reference to selling off airport terminals.

The Commonwealth Government has a definite purpose and design in this matter. I reiterate what I said originally: what has happened here will happen to most provincial airports in Australia. Cairns is the first really big provincial centre to be confronted with this action by the Commonwealth. At this stage I lay to rest any suggestion that the Australian Labor Party, either Federally or at the State level, supports any scheme for local ownership of airports, particularly for major provincial cities in Australia; nor would it participate, if it were to assume Government, in handing over the Cairns airport to local or statutory authorities.

To support my submission, I quote from a telegram from Peter Morris, the member for Shortland in the House of Representatives and the shadow Minister for Transport, which was forwarded to a public meeting in Cairns on 15 September 1980. I ask honourable members to bear in mind that this was prior to both the Federal and State elections—

“Hayden Labor Government will give early priority to construction of new terminal building and longer strengthened runway at Cairns Airport to take fully loaded Boeing 727's and 747SP's. Estimated cost 18 million dollars will be borne by Commonwealth on no strings attached basis. As Transport Minister I will not force local ownership on taxpayers of Far North Queensland nor require 2 million dollars contribution from local rate payers as pre condition to airport upgrading. I believe present Federal Government has delayed long overdue improvements at Cairns in an attempt to intimidate ratepayers into accepting its local ownership proposals and the future financial losses it envisages.

“Peter Morris, MHR, Shadow Minister for Transport.”

In the full ramifications of this matter, I am wont to consider the defence aspects and the Commonwealth's policy on this element of the airport's future development.

Cairns has strategic significance, and upgrading of the airport will represent a substantial defence investment. Its development will be an essential part of Australia's northern defences. Irrespective of who develops it, the infrastructure will be of benefit to the Department of Defence. This is one more reason why the Cairns Airport ought to be a Commonwealth responsibility, and I have expressed that view from the outset. I am not opposed to the scheme for upgrading the airport; I am concerned mainly about who pays the piper.

I charge the Commonwealth with pursuing a deliberate policy of neglect and allowing the airport to run down. The need to upgrade the airport and to update its facilities is recognised, but there is no doubt that there was manipulation. After many red herrings had been drawn across the trail, a \$16m carrot was dangled before the people of Cairns, with the commensurate responsibility of local ownership. The alternative was to get nothing and allow the deterioration to continue till 1995, or some unlikely projected future date, when an airport might be provided. That was the type of blackmail that the Commonwealth Government foisted on the people of Cairns during the negotiations. In fact, a number of people in Cairns described that blatant threat as direct blackmail, and I have heard that charge repeated in the lobbies of the House.

I am opposed to the method that was used. I find it preposterous that anyone should suggest that a locally owned airport could compete with other airports that are

funded from the bottomless pocket of the Commonwealth. Of course, that is taxpayers' money, and the people of Cairns pay taxes in the same way as people elsewhere in Australia.

It is incredible that the Cairns Airport Committee and other ancillary committees did not get in touch with the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, as the alternative Government, for an opinion, or attempt to use it as a negotiating lever. As the State member, I was not even shown the courtesy of being provided with a copy of the report on the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Study prepared by Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey Pty Ltd, in association with Coopers and Lybrand Management Services, when it was brought out in 1980. I requested a copy from several sources, and I now have one that came to hand last Friday. After the Bill was presented and printed, I felt that I would not be compromising the people to whom I made the request. I had to go to the Mulgrave Shire Council with my request, which, I am pleased to say, was graciously granted. It is the only time I have had a copy of the report.

Nobody ever asked the honourable member for Barron River and me to participate in the work of any of the committees. The problem is on our doorstep and we have now to deal with it as a State responsibility. If it is not a State responsibility, why are we debating it in this Chamber? Irrespective of the passenger service charges that are fixed, the State Government will be guarantor for any shortfall in financing by the port authority trust. If I am incorrect in saying that, I am sure that the Minister will debate the issue with me at the Committee stage.

I am inclined to the opinion that the committee was set up by political manipulation, and that is a pretty serious charge. Those who served on that committee were used, wittingly and unwittingly, to provide a whipping boy for the inadequacies of the Federal representation, which failed miserably over the years to have the Cairns Airport upgraded. The ability of the present incumbent of the Federal seat is suspect, and I lay that charge.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: It is unusual for this Government to stack a committee, Mr Jones.

Mr JONES: There are plenty of examples, but I want to highlight the situation because the people of Cairns will be reading this debate and perhaps they are not as completely au fait with all the other committees in the State as they are with this one.

While a Federal Government back-bencher obtained international status for the airport constructed at Townsville, we in Cairns languished with a Federal Minister who sired a committee by proxy. I was one who did not readily place faith, hope and charity in the committee set up to get a Federal representative off the hook. I am pleased

to say that my colleague the member for Barron River also was to the forefront and adamant in his opposition to the proposal.

Perhaps what we are witnessing here today and the manner in which that committee interpreted its charter will have much more serious repercussions than the committee at first thought or we now envisage. I must concede that in the analysis and findings the committee did not at all times fail to impart the wish of the people of Cairns in regard to the need for the upgrading of the airport. However, in its conclusions and recommendations, the committee certainly misinterpreted the way in which it was to be done. Its report caused a furore.

The main cause for concern was the factor of who pays. The initial assessment of stage I of the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Study, at page 32, paragraph 5.5.4, states—

"On this basis, the preferred option would result in a passenger service charge of 10c on a one-way ticket into the Cairns Airport in the worst year."

Later it states—

"Cash flow analyses using the assumptions for the sensitivity analysis given in 5.5.3 above indicate a passenger service charge for the extreme cases of between 2c and 40c to balance revenue against cost."

That jargon sounds as if it is a 50c per passenger charge for a single trip. Yet the Minister specifies \$2. In his speech he mentions a passenger charge of \$2 per person.

From January 1980 to May 1981 the estimate has risen from 50c to \$2. I foresee that by the time the operation commences, say in 1983, the charge will be about \$5. If we take it to the conclusion that the Bill does not specify a charge, which it does not, and if we make allowance for escalation or rise and fall—more rises than falls in this inflationary period—we can assume that as the airport management proceeds the cost per passenger will rise to about \$10 per head.

Whatever the amount, it is a surcharge or additional tax and it places Cairns people at a disadvantage. We will be paying double tax for an airport facility that is provided at other centres free of charge. Like good Australians, we pay our taxes. And we demand equality with all other Australians. Perhaps this could be used as the basis for an argument under Commonwealth Constitution on equal rights to all citizens. We could even take it to the stage of arguing, "No taxation without representation". The argument could well be applied to this board.

As I said earlier, boards are notorious for several things. Such disenchantment has been voiced publicly by the Liberal Party in relation to statutory authorities. Indeed, on 11 March 1981, in answer to a question

asked by me on another subject, the Liberal leader mouthed such sentiments. He denounced the concept of statutory authorities. Last night, when we were discussing another issue, an honourable member said that there were over 800 of them in Queensland. It seems that, to maintain the number, we are extending the power of the harbour board. In other words, we are not creating a new statutory authority but simply extending the powers of an existing authority. That may prevent the proliferation of the number of statutory authorities in the view of the Government, but it will have minimal appeal to the people of Queensland.

Unfortunately, the Bill confers maximum power without redress or power of recall by the people. There is no provision for appeal. The people are bereft of the right of appointment; the ordinary citizen is disfranchised and his democratic right of choice by selection or election is diminished.

Mr Warburton: Only about 50 of them report to Parliament.

Mr JONES: That is right.

There is no public participation. This statutory authority is not answerable directly to the citizens or indirectly answerable to the air travellers. As my colleague said, most boards are not accountable to this Parliament, nor are their accounts required to be certified by the Auditor-General.

It is interesting to note that on the last sitting day of Federal Parliament before the recent Commonwealth election, the House of Representatives Works Committee approved an amount of \$6.5m for improving and upgrading the airport at Norfolk Island, which is Australian territory off our eastern coast. Honourable members who are not acquainted with the quaint customs of the island may be interested to learn that the residents pay no income tax on that duty-free island which attracts about 20 000 visitors a year.

Since the Federal election we have heard that the Canberra airport is to be upgraded to international standards. It is notable that we have not received notice from the razor gang that that project will not go ahead. There is no chance of a precept or levy being imposed on a local government in Canberra, not because Canberra does not have a council, but because Canberra-ites just would not wear it.

Mr Smith: Don't you think that the people of Canberra would be treated in the same way as the people of Cairns?

Mr JONES: I do not know if the honourable member for Townsville West has ever visited Canberra, but I have done so on two occasions. The first occasion was on my honeymoon when I was looking for a quiet place. The second occasion was in 1972 when Labor came to power. All Australians, particularly people from the far-flung areas, should visit Canberra. It would do their hearts and minds good, and it might get the lethargy and apathy out of their systems. I commend a visit to Canberra to every taxpayer in Australia. To answer the honourable member's question, I should say that the people of Canberra would not tolerate it; they would not wear it. It is well to remember that the people of Canberra are far more favourably treated than those in our provincial towns and rural centres.

The people of Cairns and visitors to Cairns are expected to pay for the airport. We want to know why, how much, how often, and when will the payments cease. We are certainly expected to pay twice, in the form of taxes and a levy. Apparently we are babes in the woods in negotiations because we cannot put forward a reasonable, equitable argument. There have been elements of standover tactics, steam-rolling and threats of relegation of our airport to a minor classification if we fail to come to heel. In my view, that point is not negotiable. It is ridiculous that our negotiators should fall for that. The stand-and-deliver ultimatum in the form of the Government's having to accept the \$21m by 30 June or the money would be withdrawn does not equate with the former threat of relegation, taking into account the statistics on air transport in Australia. The latter ought to be stymied by strong representations at the Federal level.

The Minister, on pages 4 to 8 of his introductory remarks, quoted chapter and verse of the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Study conclusions 1 to 9. But they are projections. The figures of more interest are those released by the Commonwealth Minister for Transport, the Honourable R. J. Hunt, in his news release number 81/1618 on 29 April 1981 on air transport. One table is headed—

"DOMESTIC AIRLINE ACTIVITY AT AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS MARCH 1981"

Airport	Passenger Movements	Aircraft Movements	% Variation over Mar. Qtr. 1980	
			Passengers	Movements"

Another table sets out the same sort of information for the March year 1981.

The 10 busiest airports in Australia for the March quarter 1981 were at Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Canberra, Coolangatta, Hobart, Launceston and Cairns. For the year ended March 1981, Cairns jumped up to ninth on the list.

The Cairns figures show that passenger movements for the March quarter numbered 99 000; aircraft movements numbered 2 219; and the variation in percentage of passengers

over the March quarter 1980 was 16.5 per cent and for transport movements, 13.1 per cent. The overall yearly figures show that Cairns had 1 429 000 passenger movements and 8 787 aircraft movements, and that the variation over the year ended March 1980 in passengers was 14.1 per cent and in transport movements, 2.9 per cent. It would not be justifiable to allow Cairns Airport, the ninth or tenth busiest airport in Australia, to go to the wall.

The third paragraph of the conclusions of the Far North Queensland Promotion Bureau report, in referring to a comparison between Cairns and Townsville, reads—

"If both airports were developed on an equal basis to enable them to take equal sized international aircraft under an 'open skies' policy there would be little doubt that Cairns would attract the most international traffic."

The view is well held that both Townsville and Cairns International Airports would become white elephants under those circumstances. Speaking parochially, I hope that neither of them suffers that fate. I think they can work together. Cairns will be disadvantaged because it will be competing against an airport which is funded by the Commonwealth out of taxpayers' money. Cairns will have to find money for capital investments by way of loans or grants under the conditions that are contained in the Harbours Act. We will be on the money market.

No doubt the story that will be given to the motoring tourist to Cairns is that it will be no use going any further north. They will be told a horror story in a parochial way by people in centres south of Cairns. That has been done in the past. It is the traditional way in which some persons operate. Nevertheless, many motoring tourists come to our area. I wonder whether the proposed levy will be used to deter people from making Cairns their destination. We will have a surcharge tourist centre and people will pay as they go. Our city and district could be vulnerable to unscrupulous operators who engage in scare tactics. They could frighten away potential tourists to the area by saying, "What sense is there in paying \$2, \$5 or \$10 to go to Cairns? We can give it to you that much cheaper and you can spend so much more on your holiday." If we take the higher amount, that could add up to a sizeable sum.

With the Commonwealth's dedication to the principle of cost recovery and the user pays, I wonder whether the State Government will attempt to hand over our railways to local government or to some statutory authority. That is a ridiculous concept, but that is exactly what has been happening with the Commonwealth. It is, in effect, divesting itself of the responsibility for air transport and passing that responsibility to the State. The State Government has made certain public announcements on the matter. It has said, "We are not accepting that proposition. We are washing our hands of that."

The non-revenue-producing hospitals seem to fit into that category now. We could start preparing a list of responsibilities that the Commonwealth has passed to the States. At the local government level, perhaps we could say that the non-revenue-producing libraries in civic centres should adopt the principle of the user pays and start charging people who enter libraries. Of course, the result will be a great number of white elephants around the place.

The other aspect that I wish to cover in this debate relates to those Commonwealth employees who presently work at the Cairns Airport and are concerned about their jobs and their future. Before we discuss the clauses in detail, let me read into "Hansard" a letter that highlights the problems confronting those Commonwealth employees. Their jobs are threatened by this take-over. The letter is addressed to me, and it states—

"Dear Sir,

"As one of your constituents employed for a number of years at the Cairns Airport by D.O.T. (Aust), I have been nominated by the Groundstaff and Airport Traffic and Security Officers, who are deeply concerned at the proposed takeovers of the Airport by the Harbour Board or Port Authority, to request you as the local MLA to endeavour to have clarified a few issues which will affect us in the future.

"On the 6/5/81, Mr R. Galligan, the acting Airport Director, was instructed by Mr M. Seymour, the Queensland Director of the Department of Transport, to inform the Groundstaff and ATO's that these two sections would be the first to be absorbed by the Harbour Board, as Parliament had passed a bill making the way clear for the proposed takeover."

The statutory position is accepted.

It continued—

"The issues that concern us most are as follows:—1. Long service leave entitlements. 2. Sick leave. 3. Superannuation.

"We are querying if these entitlements are transferable to a Statutory body from the Commonwealth, or do we start from scratch again? Would we as permanent Officers of the Commonwealth be offered an alternate position with the equivalent wage we are presently receiving plus removal expenses, or would we be absorbed into the Port Authority with loss of pay etc., and would we, with many years of Airport procedures and familiarisation of the Air Navigation Regulations, lose our Seniority to other members of the Harbour Board Staff?

"Would Cairns Airport still be classified as a security sensitive Airport and the three existing DOT Security Officers still act in the same capacity under a new Authority?

"In the past, we (ATO's) have dealt with bomb threats and hoaxes, stowaways in the locker of a TAA DC9 and trespasses etc., found and organised an alternative

escape route from the Cairns Airport during a kidnap threat of the then Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam.

"If the Port Authority takes over, would we have permanency of employment and our previous years be included?"

"In closing I may add that practically all of us have lived most of our lives in Cairns, built our homes and raised our families and contributed to the growth of the city and environs.

"Trusting you may expeditiously assist us with the aforementioned issues, I remain,

"Yours faithfully,

"R. J. Byrne, ATO,

"For and on behalf of DOT
"Groundstaff and ATO's."

I realise that a clause in the Bill covers the general situation. I purposely read that into "Hansard" because it will record for history and for those who read "Hansard" at a later date, when their airports face the same sort of threat, the problems that will confront those employees. I am also endeavouring to gain an assurance from the Minister on those points of protection of the rights of those employees being transferred, that is, superannuation, long service leave, etc.

Mr Bird: Those will all be covered in the negotiations. You can be assured that I will want to see the results of those negotiations before any agreement is finally entered into.

Mr JONES: As a result of this proposal, a number of committees were set up such as the Cairns Airport Development Committee, the Cairns Civic Action Committee and the ratepayers' associations. At a public meeting called by the Cairns City Council a call was made for a local government referendum so that the people of Cairns could decide the issue. Several thousand signatures were on petitions presented to the Minister for Local Government but, despite the assurance of that Minister, the referendum did not eventuate.

Conversely, during that period the subject of local ownership was traded off like a magic carpet in a Persian bazaar and people began asking why ratepayers should underwrite the \$25,000 or \$30,000 which was the cost of the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Feasibility Study. I ask the Minister if those bodies and the local authority will be reimbursed for that expenditure.

Following much conjecture and before the details of the Bill were known, rumour prevailed that the precept scheme would operate. This is a newly coined word, so we had to go to the dictionary for its meaning. We found it meant all sorts of things from a royal decree onwards. For the uninitiated, a precept is a procedure whereby a levy can be charged against the local authority in the region of the Cairns

Harbour Board to provide finance for the airport. The reaction to that rumour was so great that a denial was issued from the joint parties meeting and passenger surcharges were referred to as a means of financing the scheme. Nothing in the Bill prevents an amendment to the legislation to introduce such a precept, or charge, upon local authorities within the harbour board area. I would like the Minister's assurance on that matter.

Mr Bird: I could not give an assurance for some future Minister or future Government.

Mr Moore: Or for what Cabinet does.

Mr JONES: There, of course, is the difficulty. That is another reason why the Opposition will be voting against the principles in this Bill. I warn the people of Queensland that responsibility could very well devolve upon every ratepayer. In the future a precept or levy could be written into the Act by amendment, with the result that ratepayers would be charged with the upkeep, maintenance, control and management of the airport. These are questions that people are asking. They are matters that ought to be clarified. We now have the Minister admitting that only for the life of this Parliament can he give any assurance.

Mr Moore: What else could he say?

Mr JONES: I just want it on record, because when the legislation is amended people will say, "Why didn't you raise it at the time? Why wasn't this issue brought forward?" Being the Opposition spokesman on the first occasion it has happened at a provincial airport, I do not want it to be said that I did not bring the matter forward. This has created a great deal of controversy. There is still an undercurrent of feeling, with threats of injunctions still being bandied about by organisations in Cairns.

This issue has its embryo in 1978, when a committee was set up in Townsville, known by various titles such as North Queensland Airport Improvement, International Airport Committee and North Queensland Airport Development Council, which culminated in the international airport for Townsville. I might say that the members of that committee, taken from the attendance at one of the early meetings, were A. G. Field (Townsville Harbour Board), Alderman R. Davies (Mayor of the City of Cairns), Mr D. S. Thomson, MHR, Senator C. Maunsell, Mr R. Braithwaite, MHR, Professor Rogers (James Cook University), Mr D. Coleman (Townsville Tourist Organisation), Mr G. Dean, MHR, Mr A. G. Cummings, Alderman E. J. Lindsay (Townsville City Council), Senator J. B. Keefe and Mr S. Williams, OBE (BPA). There was a notable absence of State members, particularly the member for Cairns and the member for Barron River, in whose electorate the airport is actually situated. Neither he nor I was included in any committee making any recommendation,

nor were they disposed to even extend to us the courtesy of an invitation to participate. I suppose that even at that stage it was felt to be a purely Federal responsibility, as indicated by the presence of David Thomson, Senator Keefe and Senator Maunsell. It was all federally constituted. Never did anybody dream that this would arise, even at that stage, with our raising the issue of local ownership and the Commonwealth's divesting itself of responsibility and transferring it to the States and local government.

Having become an issue in 1978, local reaction in Cairns followed, with public meetings being called for the upgrading of the Cairns airport. We were an international gateway, it was said, as the first Australian stop-over on Air Niugini flights. There was continued concern about what was to happen to the airport. I reiterate that because it was stated to us that we could take the deal or miss out altogether—"You either accept local ownership or you get nothing."

On 18 January 1979, the Cairns City Council called a public meeting at the Cairns Civic Centre to discuss suggested improvements to the Cairns Airport. The meeting was chaired by the Mayor of the City of Cairns and resulted in the formation of the Cairns Airport Development Committee. It comprised Alderman Ron Davis, Mick Borzi, chairman of the Cairns Harbour Board, Alderman George Chapman of the Cairns City Council, Syd Williams of BPA, Richard Murray-Prior of Outback Air, and two councillors to be nominated from district shires.

The resolutions from that meeting included a call for Cairns Airport runway to be strengthened and extended to take the expected tourist traffic and possibly DC-10 aircraft. They called for reclamation of land to the east of the existing runway, and so on.

My colleague the honourable member for Barron River was reported in "The Cairns Post" of 24 January as saying that he would not support the changes, which left the main route used by aircraft over the main area of Cairns. In fact, he became a very vocal opponent of local ownership, as the records will reveal.

At the meeting at the Cairns Civic Centre on 18 January, Alderman Ron Davis said that the Department of Transport had suggested that councils in the Far North take over the airports, thus relieving the Federal Government of responsibility. He told the meeting that a subsidy of 50 per cent would be received from the Federal Government, 30 per cent from the State Government, and 20 per cent from the local authorities. That report appeared in "The Cairns Post" on 24 January 1979.

Local opposition to the proposed extension of the airport was not long in coming. The original protest came from the Machans Beach Progress Association, which on 9 April 1979 expressed its concern with the

proposal for the relocation of the Cairns Airport runway 1200m to the east of its present site.

Meanwhile, the Cairns Airport Development Committee scheduled conferences for June, having decided in favour of—

(1) The Department of Transport's preliminary plan to build the taxiways on the eastern side of the existing runway.

(2) Simultaneously relocating the terminals, followed by the upgrading and extension of the existing runway.

(3) Requesting the Department of Transport for an estimate of the costs involved.

The first conference was held on 4 June with airline officials, and the council groups asked them to consider the local authority ownership of the airport. That was reported in "The Cairns Post" of 5 June 1979.

On or about that date, the Cairns Airport Development Committee met with the Working Committee of the North Queensland Airports Development Council of Townsville. Alderman Davis announced, following that meeting, that the North Queensland Airports Development Council Working Committee believed that the upgrading of the Cairns Airport was of higher priority than the upgrading of some airports at present being upgraded. That was reported in "The Cairns Post" on 5 June 1979.

In an address to the Regional Co-operation and Unity Conference held in the Cairns Civic Centre on 27 July 1979, the Mayor of Cairns (Alderman Ron Davis) announced that the Cairns Airport Development Committee had called for a special feasibility study into local ownership of the Cairns Airport.

In February 1980, the Cairns Airport Development Committee, headed by the mayor, held negotiations with the Federal Government in Canberra. The group included Mick Borzi of the Cairns Harbour Board, Alderman George Chapman, and Councillor Robert Rossi of the Mulgrave Shire Council. These representatives met with the member for Leichhardt (Mr David Thomson), the Minister for Transport (Mr Hunt), and the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr Anthony). They outlined a proposal for local ownership of the Cairns Airport to officials of the Department of Transport from Brisbane, Melbourne and Canberra.

"The Cairns Post" of 21 February duly reported—

"Government officials were told that if the Federal Government was prepared to carry out the specific new works the Cairns Airport Development Committee would establish a special board to control the airport."

Of course, the situation has changed somewhat; the Cairns City Council is no longer disposed to assume control. In fact, the Minister advised us of that in his speech.

The indication given to Alderman Davis in Canberra at the meeting was that the Federal Government may provide funds in its next Budget for the upgrading of the Cairns airport. The mayor duly announced this in Cairns and was so reported in the two local papers. He said—

"Part of the consultants' report had been forwarded to the Department of Transport and it would outline the necessary costs."

Alderman Davis also said that the committee had applied to the Queensland Minister for Main Roads (Mr Hinze) for finance to be included in the 1980-81 Budget for the upgrading of roads associated with the airport upgrading. The Federal Minister for Transport, Ralph Hunt, had told Alderman Ron Davis that the Government grants could not be paid until a statutory body was formed.

On 16 April 1980, Ron Davis was reported in "The Cairns Post" as saying that the statutory authority would comprise two members of the Cairns City Council, one member from each of the Mulgrave Shire Council and the Cairns Harbour Board, one representative of the adjacent shire and two representatives from the business community. Of course, that was detailed in the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Study.

The Ansett proving flight to Singapore on Friday, 19 April 1980 was a hallmark. It sent the Cairns Airport Development Committee into a flurry of activity. The Cairns Chamber of Commerce sent a 150-word telegram to the Federal Transport Minister, Ralph Hunt, urging expeditious development of the Cairns airport to ensure that Cairns remained the international gateway to Far North Queensland. The telegram also objected to Townsville's being considered as the only gateway to North Queensland for international air services.

The mayor of Cairns (Mr Ron Davis), as chairman of the Airport Development Committee, lost no time in flying back to Canberra to have discussions with the Federal Transport Minister (Mr Hunt). He came back to Cairns, saying that Mr Hunt reiterated that the Federal Government would not upgrade the airport unless it was to go to local ownership. That was reported in "The Cairns Post" on 20 May 1980.

Mr Davis was then reported in the Press as saying—

"So if the Cairns airport is to be upgraded, it is necessary that the Federal Government be asked to do so before it is likely to be taken over as local ownership by a statutory body similar in composition to the Cairns Harbour Board."

The situation gathered momentum. The Cairns Airport Development Committee, aided and abetted by the Cairns City Council and the Federal member for Leichhardt (Mr David Thomson), continued to flaunt the idea of local ownership and presented no alternative. It was a case of either local ownership or nothing.

On 23 May 1980 Alderman Chapman announced in "The Cairns Post" that Cairns was fortunate that the Airport Development Committee had taken initiatives to seek local ownership before any other major city in Australia, that this factor had been recognised by the Federal Government, and he went on to say that Cairns had been assured of No. 1 priority.

We are getting reports such as that only through the Press as they are released. In the period from March to the presentation of the Bill there has been a great absence of Press reports.

Alderman Chapman also claimed that the maintenance of the airport would be shared 50 per cent by the local owner and 50 per cent by the Federal Government and that, even after local ownership, 50 per cent of the costs of running the airport would be met by the Federal Government. Alderman Chapman added that the only time the State Government would be involved would be if capital works were required to expand the airport. That is to be found at page 21 of the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Study, in clauses 5.2, paragraph 2.

Meanwhile, public disquiet about events surrounding the airport had grown. The public were wary and very concerned about increased rates.

In "The Cairns Post" of 9 May the member for Barron River, with the support of the Machans Beach area, described the proposal to put the Cairns airport under local ownership as unnecessary nonsense. He stated his firm support for ownership and control remaining in Federal Government hands.

At the official opening of the new Lysaght-Brownbuilt Industries factory in Spence Street, Cairns, on 16 May 1980, the Premier of Queensland (Mr Bjelke-Petersen) announced that the present airport could never be upgraded to international standards and ultimately an alternative airport should be found. He is on record as saying that in "The Cairns Post" of 17 May 1980. He also said that, at present, aircraft were flying low over the city and suburbs and that that would not be practicable with international flights arriving and departing from Cairns 24 hours a day. The Premier also took up the suggestion by the member for Barron River that a possible venue for an international airport could be found on the Yarrabah Peninsula. That attracted a vehement outburst on the following day from the Yarrabah people.

I am conscious of the Minister's statement on page 4 of his speech where he said—

"The Cairns Airport facilities are totally inadequate . . ."

I agree with that. Later, he said—

"There are no viable alternative locations in the Cairns district suitable for a new airport development."

As the Minister indicated quite clearly in his speech we are stuck with the location. He said, in effect, that the Cairns Airport facilities are totally inadequate for the current and projected traffic and that further delay in carrying out new development work will seriously jeopardise the operation of this airport and limit the growth of local and overseas tourist traffic to the area. I agree with his assessment. Later, he said that the only practical and financially feasible proposal was to upgrade the existing facilities.

Public disquiet grew mainly because the people were not given the full story. On 2 June 1980, the honourable member for Barron River again called on the Federal Government to do its duty and upgrade the Cairns Airport without any strings attached. He said that the Federal Government was trying to drive Cairns into accepting local ownership of the Cairns Airport as the price of having it upgraded.

I have quoted the honourable member for Barron River because he has taken an avid interest in the situation. While we do not always agree, on this matter we have run concurrently. I emphasise that I am quoting a member of the Government in whose electorate the airport is situated. He has been very closely associated with the issue.

He, of course, with many other people in Cairns, attempted to stave off public antipathy by announcing that ratepayers would be barred from paying for the airport. That was the first time we heard it announced that the airport would be funded on the user-pays basis. The member for Leichhardt, and Federal Minister for Science and the Environment (Mr David Thomson), added his weight in no uncertain terms to the Cairns Airport Development Committee by confirming the offer made by the Federal Minister for Transport (Mr Ralph Hunt). He declared that there was no real, practical alternative to local ownership if Cairns wanted an international-standard airport within a reasonable time. We were told, "If you don't take it now you might get it in 1995." In effect, the Federal member sanctioned blackmailing the people of Cairns over the airport issue. The Federal Government's edict was to accept local ownership or go without. It was dictated and endorsed by the local Federal member.

Mr Thomson's announcement was not greeted too kindly by his political colleague the honourable member for Barron River, and something was said both publicly and in this Chamber about it. Mr Tenni said that we were paying for our airport twice. Public opposition grew to the stage that the Mulgrave Shire Council deferred a decision on the local ownership issue and called another public meeting. It was not held until Monday, 15 September. It was one of the rowdiest public meetings I have attended in Cairns.

In the interim what was increasing the concern in Cairns was what was happening

in Townsville, 200 miles to the south—the move for Townsville to have the international airport. That increased the concern in Cairns, particularly in the tourist sector. I can understand their concern and their intentions.

Mr Moore: They overreacted.

Mr JONES: They probably did, and I do not think they were wise. I do not think they used their political clout. They should have used it more wisely. I told them at a couple of public meetings what they should have been doing. They had the temerity to tell me that I was being political. I bet they realise now how wise I was. To achieve the required result without going through all this rigmarole they should have taken the proper action. The responsibility lies with the Federal Government. We should not be debating the issue today. Irrespective of what transpired I believe most sincerely that it is a Federal Government responsibility, that we are being duped, that this responsibility is being off-loaded onto us and that we will have to cop it sweet.

The other night we tried, by motion, to delay the resumption of the second reading of this Bill. If this Bill were defeated, the responsibility would automatically remain with the Federal Government.

The Premier of Queensland announced that he had swung his support behind the brief of the Townsville businessmen and was determined to press the Federal Government for the new international airport. That was probably an early announcement that Townsville would get the airport. The Premier said that the chances for Townsville looked good—I think those were his words. That engendered the fear of loss of traffic at the Cairns Airport and started another flurry of activity by the various bodies in Cairns that are interested in upgrading the Cairns Airport.

The Far North Queensland Promotion Bureau sent a submission to the Commonwealth Department of Transport urging the establishment of an international airport at Cairns rather than Townsville, and the Federal Minister, Mr Hunt, again visited Cairns. I think he met the representatives of the Northern Beaches area where the noise problem is a matter of great concern. All he did at that time was reiterate the Federal Government's announcement that moneys were available for the upgrading only on the condition of local ownership. That again brought a reaction from the local State members of Parliament, in particular.

On 3 September 1980 both the member for Barron River and I rejected the ownership demand by the Federal Government, and called for a referendum on the issue. This was duly reported in "The Cairns Post" of 4 September 1980. I have indicated the situation regarding the referendum. People went to a lot of trouble to get signatures

for the petition in accordance with the Local Government Act. Of course, that was not acted upon.

Mr Warburton: Isn't that what democracy is all about?

Mr JONES: There is a saying about the people's voices being heard and politicians keeping an eye on the horizon and an ear to the ground. Certainly it is a responsibility of elected representatives to reflect public opinion. Surely that is what we are elected to do. It has been indicated to me by the vote of confidence that I have received over the years. I believe that many members of this House are guided not by Federal Government edicts but by what their constituents want.

In accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act, 10 per cent of the electors in the city came forward and signed the petition. It was certainly a well-circulated petition. I think that the organisers had a fortnight in which to collect the signatures. If they took up a petition now I think they would probably get 10 000 signatures.

I wish to refer again to the statements that the Premier has made in this matter. On 19 September 1980 he said that the people of Cairns and district should grab the future of the airport for themselves; yet on 25 September 1980 he supported calls for a referendum on the question of the local ownership of the airport. The member for Barron River said that both the Premier and the Local Government Minister had agreed to that proposal. As a matter of fact, I think it was the honourable member for Barron River who said that he had convinced the Premier that he was wrongly advised in his previous statement on the airport that the people of Cairns should grab the future of the airport for themselves. He said that the Premier would always support the majority on a matter of such importance in the community.

A second public meeting on the airport issue was held in the Cairns Civic Centre. It was called by the Cairns Civic Action Committee, which opposed the proposal. The member for Barron River and I attended that meeting. The meeting called for a referendum on the issue of the local ownership of the Cairns Airport. The member for Barron River told the meeting that the Local Government Minister would approve the referendum if 10 per cent of the electors petitioned. Of course, I told the meeting that it was purely a Federal responsibility and that the Federal member for the area was shirking his responsibilities. It was then agreed that the referendum would take place and that it would be paid for by the Cairns City Council.

I think there were 5 000 signatures on the petition, of whom 2 976 were Cairns electors. That number was well over the 1 900, or 10 per cent of the electors required before a referendum could be held. The organisers

of the petition had hoped that the referendum would be held on State election day, 29 November, so that it would not cause too much disruption, and it was an election issue. However, the Cairns City Council delayed the issue, and I charged it with stalling by announcing on 22 October in "The Cairns Post" that it would be a month before the petition was lodged with the Local Government Minister. They were going to do a name check to ensure that the petitioners were local electors.

With the ensuing events we can only assume that the petition is still in the pigeon-hole of the Minister for Local Government, because nothing has eventuated. The people of Cairns have not had the opportunity to exercise their democratic right on whether or not they want local ownership. It has been foisted upon them through a devious course.

On 28 October 1980 the local Press carried a statement from the Premier who vowed to tackle the Federal Government over the issue. The Premier also stated—

"The main thing is that we are anxious that Canberra continues financing the airports and maintaining them."

However, on 14 November he announced that a committee had been set up to investigate the consequences of local ownership of airports in Queensland. He said that when he was in Innisfail officially opening the campaign for the then National Party member for Mourilyan. I do not know whether it is significant, but she was not returned here. From 1978, right from the beginning, the former member had come out in support of the concept of local ownership.

Mr Moore: She paid the penalty.

Mr JONES: That is right. She paid the penalty for going against the wishes of the electors of North Queensland.

After the election the issue went dead and we heard no more about it until March this year when the Minister for Science and Technology officially opened the Sun Lodge International Motel in Cairns and, with his continued scaremongering, said that if the Federal Government's \$16m offer to upgrade the Cairns Airport was not accepted within the next couple of months, the money would be lost to the North. In effect, the Federal Government put the squeeze on, and that was effectively heralded by the Minister for Science and Technology. In effect he was saying that the offer had to be accepted before June or the North would go without.

The mayor of Cairns lost no time in announcing his response to the offer. At a Press conference on Friday, 13 March 1981, he announced that the Cairns City Council would pull out of the negotiations on the airport and that the Cairns Harbour Board was negotiating in a bid to acquire local ownership.

Subsequently a group of businessmen said that they would seek control of the airport but they wanted a mandate to run a casino so they could pay for the airport. Possibly the airport could pay its way if a casino was run in conjunction with it. The area is isolated. This Sydney-based consortium of prominent Australian businessmen wanted overseas participation. I could see a few sticky fingers getting into it. They would underwrite the airport, provided it was upgraded. There were too many provisos in it. I do not think that proposal was seriously considered.

An announcement was made that the harbour board's proposal had been accepted, that the matter would come before the State House. The matter of responsibility was then bandied about, whether it should be for the Minister for Local Government, the Premier or the Treasurer, but now we have seen the Minister for Northern Development and Maritime Services take control of the legislation. I do not know whether he is introducing it as the Minister for Northern Development or the Minister for Maritime Services.

Mr Bird: Maritime Services.

Mr JONES: Mr Minister, I said it to you in the lobby and I will say it to you again: good luck.

I feel that the Minister is flying—and I hope he will pardon the pun—in the face of public opinion and will receive a great deal of reaction, confrontation and opposition from every provincial city in Queensland. If the Cairns Airport is to be the guinea pig in determining the issue of ownership, all I can say is that it is a sad day for the Queensland Government.

(Time expired.)

Mr TENNI (Barron River) (3.45 p.m.): I have pleasure in speaking to this Bill. Most of the comments made by the member for Cairns were in line with my thinking. It is difficult for me to say that, because he and I do not really view one another with the greatest respect; nor do we agree very often. However, I do agree with most of the points he made. Many of them I intended raising myself; but I will let them pass by as he has explained them very well.

Instead, I will highlight what I see as the major detrimental effects to the State through the action that we are about to take. First, let me make it quite clear that we are bowing to the pressure of blackmail by the Federal Government; let there be no doubt about it. It is nothing more or less than utter blackmail. It is being forced upon the people of Queensland by a Federal Government that I never believed would adopt such a positive attitude. I say "positive" because this attitude has been retained from the word "Go".

In 1978 I was the first to oppose the local ownership of airports. To this day I have

maintained that no State Government should accept that type of responsibility, which is one for the Commonwealth Government.

Mr Katter: What was Mr Jones's position then?

Mr TENNI: He was not at that meeting. A few days later he voiced his opposition to local ownership.

Mr Casey: He wasn't invited to the meeting, and you know it. What are you talking about?

Mr TENNI: The truth is what is important in this House. It was a public meeting, advertised in "The Cairns Post". There was an open invitation for all to attend. Something like 80 people attended the meeting. Mr Don Forbes, who is the secretary of the Cairns canegrowers organisation, one other person and I were the only ones to oppose the proposals put forward at that meeting, which did not talk about local ownership but rather about the upgrading of the airport.

Mr Casey: We spoke about that in Parliament before you even came near the place. What are you talking about?

Mr TENNI: Again we have the Leader of the Opposition misleading the people of the State. He should be treated with the contempt he deserves. He has done this before—we all remember the drug issue, when he misled the people of this State. Again he is trying to mislead them, so I will ignore him.

The point is that I was totally opposed to upgrading the airport. The present airstrip, as we all know, is on a mud-flat. It was virtually built by the Civil Construction Corps in 1941 or 1942, when it was upgraded. It was a matter of dirt, gravel, rocks and mangrove sticks being piled onto mud-flats. There was no proper foundation under it whatsoever. I believed at the time of that meeting, and still believe, that it was an unsuitable site, with aircraft either taking off or landing over the Cairns Base Hospital. More flights by larger aircraft over the Cairns Base Hospital should not be encouraged. At the other end, aircraft are landing over large and growing residential areas.

At that time, I believed that consideration should have been shown for the people of Cairns and that thought should have been given to shifting the airport either to Yarrabah or to the Tablelands area, where suitable land is available. Admittedly, the cost would be greater initially, but it would be cheaper in the long run. However, I was overruled.

As the honourable member for Cairns said, even though the airport was situated in the electorate of Barron River and an attempt was being made to force the State Government to provide a 30 per cent subsidy in future, I was never invited to attend, or allowed to attend, any of the meetings. Nor was I ever offered or given, when I requested

it, a copy of the report by Gutteridge, Has-kins and Davey. I had to go to the Cairns Library, where it was on display to the public, and stand there like a galah and read portion of the report. The full report was not on display. A deliberate attempt had been made by a member of the committee to hide the facts from the people of Queensland.

I then used tactics similar to those used by the Commonwealth Government to obtain from a certain member of the Federal Government a copy of the report. That was the only way in which I could get a copy, and I believe that that is a shocking state of affairs. I was not permitted to sit in on meetings, nor was I provided by any member of the committee with details of what had happened at the meetings. However, that did not worry me, because the majority of the people whom I represent were, and still are, totally opposed to local ownership.

One must look back if one wishes to discover why this has happened. Although I will hear screams and cries from the Leader of the Opposition and some of the other socialists opposite that I am again picking on the Whitlam Government, the fact is that Mr Jones, the Transport Minister in the Whitlam Government, was completely in favour of local ownership of airports throughout Australia. He was the one who led the way. Unfortunately, it seems that the Government's advisers in Canberra are the same people who advised Mr Jones when he was Minister for Transport in the Whitlam era. The present Government has followed the Whitlam Labor Government in its belief in local ownership of airports.

I repeat that we are looking at a blackmail situation—"Either you accept, or you go without". That has been told to us by the Federal Minister for Transport in the present Fraser Government. I am very proud—and I am sure that the people of Cairns, the honourable member for Cairns, and all those who opposed the proposal originally also are proud—that we have forced the Federal Government to raise its offer from \$16m to \$21.1m. We have saved the people of Cairns \$5.1m because we would not be blackmailed. We would not let them get away with it without a hell of a fight, and that is exactly what we gave them.

The honourable member for Cairns stated the throughput of planes and passengers at the Cairns Airport. It is ninth in order of importance in Australia, so the Federal Government must realise that it plays a very important part in the movement of people and aircraft. It is only reasonable, therefore, that the Federal Government should be responsible for upgrading the airport to ensure that it is safe, if for no other reason. In my opinion, the Federal Government has got out from under, and members of the coalition Government know my views because I expressed them at the joint party meeting last week.

Mr Bertoni: Don't you think the State is being blackmailed?

Mr TENNI: It is being blackmailed all right, and that is unfortunate.

An Opposition Member: By your Federal Government.

Mr TENNI: Yes. We do not hide the facts; we tell the truth. Whenever mention is made about some of the disastrous things that the Whitlam Government did to this country, Opposition members jump up and down and scream, "It never happened." But it did happen. A similar situation arises today concerning the Cairns Airport.

The matter for concern is that the Cairns Airport is not the only airport that will be subject to the Fraser Government's blackmail and standover tactics. Airports right throughout the nation will be affected. An important aspect that has not been brought forward here today is the number and location of jet airports in the States.

People travelling in Queensland stand to pay more than anyone else in Australia pays, for the reason that Queensland, because of its size and the location of its airports, has more jet airports than any other State. So Queensland will definitely suffer.

Another important aspect to remember is that the Commonwealth Government is really not being very generous, even by providing the \$21.1m. That sum will not allow for the complete upgrading of the Cairns Airport; it allows only for a partial taxiway. If the completion of that taxiway had to be carried out tomorrow, it would cost approximately \$5m. People associated with the operations of DC-9, Boeing 727 and light aircraft have told me of the problems associated with the lack of a taxiway on the present strip. The proposal for the new strip allows for only a short taxiway, which, without doubt, will cause hold-ups in landings and take-offs immediately after the airport is completed.

So besides being blackmailed, we are being forced into accepting something that is not complete. We are also being forced into paying for half the cost of the terminal. That is not right. If local ownership is to take place in this country, it should be on the basis that the strips should be fully completed before the handing over takes place.

Another point worthy of consideration is that people using the Cairns Airport, and particularly people who live in the Cairns area, will be doubly taxed. They will pay \$2 to land and \$2 to take off. Perhaps that does not sound much. However, when added to the cost of flying from Cairns to Brisbane and back, which is in excess of \$392, it does amount to a heavy imposition. It means that the further away the people are, the more they pay. I cannot accept that.

I pay a tribute to Mick Borzi, the chairman of the Cairns Harbour Board, for helping us raise the Commonwealth's figure from \$16m to \$21.1m. I know that he went in to bat for us on this issue. He has the ability to run the Cairns Harbour Board. As chairman of the Mareeba Shire Council and, before that, a councillor, I worked with him. I know that he has the ability to handle the proposals that are being put forward today. I thank him for his efforts and for telling the Commonwealth Government, "You will give us so much or we won't have a bar of it."

Other Australian airports presently owned by the Commonwealth Government should have a \$2 landing and \$2 take-off fee applied to them as an additional charge on all tickets. If the Cairns people who use Cairns Airport have to pay this levy the same principle should apply to all people. The Commonwealth Government should introduce immediately a \$2 landing and take-off fee at every Commonwealth airport. That money should be paid firstly to the Cairns Airport. As other airports become locally owned it should be distributed equally amongst them until all of them are locally owned, if that is the principle that the Federal Government is following in line with the principle announced by the Whitlam Government. At least the people of Cairns would then be treated equally with other people in Australia—and, after all, we are all Australians.

In discussions with the Commonwealth, the Minister should give very serious thought to proposing that a tax be levied on every airport owned by the Commonwealth Government, and that the \$2 landing and take-off levy be used to subsidise locally owned airports, in addition to the 50 per cent subsidy that the Commonwealth Government is offering to local ownership committees.

The member for Cairns said that he adopted a firm stand on this matter at the last election. I have taken a firm stand on this at all times, and I might say that my vote, like his, also increased. No-one can tell me that the people of Australia want local ownership.

After listening to the views expressed by Liberal and National Party members at the joint party meeting, I know that anything we accept will be accepted under strong protest to the Commonwealth Government, and that it will put yet another nail in the Government's coffin. The sooner it wakes up to its mistakes and blues the longer it will stay in government. The people of my area will not accept this proposal, and they will show their feelings at the next election.

Mr Fouras: Will they vote you out and show their good sense?

Mr TENNI: That comment is typical of the socialists on the other side. It proves that the honourable member does not know what he is talking about. If he were

asked to go to Cairns I am sure that he would go to Perth. He has not the ability or common sense to direct his nose in the right direction, but his comment is typical of comments made by the socialists.

Without doubt Cairns will suffer if the airport upgrading does not take place quickly. I am sure that even the honourable member for Cairns will agree with that. The new international airport facility at Townsville means that the business houses in Cairns are losing to their counterparts in Townsville. Everyone knows that travellers do not land and backtrack. If they land at Townsville they will not go to Cairns, but to Mackay and the nearby islands, and then head further south. If we could land travellers on Cape York Peninsula and get them to travel south it would be far better for our State as a whole. It is normal for travellers to work south. They will not travel to the north and then to the south. The importance of upgrading the Cairns airstrip must be considered by every member of this Parliament.

The passage of this Bill will certainly assist tourism in the northern regions of the State, but I should like to record in "Hansard" that I believe local ownership of airports will run into financial trouble in the future. The only way by which that can be avoided is by increasing landing fees for those who use the airports.

Mr Katter: The user pays.

Mr TENNI: The user pays.

I should like to record my fear of a future precept being payable by the ratepayers of the areas concerned—in this case the Barron River electorate, which contains the city of Cairns, the Shire of Mulgrave, the Shire of Douglas and the Shire of Mareeba. I should hate to think that I played any part in Queensland's taking over a totally Commonwealth responsibility and levying charges on the ratepayers in my area. I should like the Minister to give an assurance to me and to the people I represent that this will not happen.

I would like some assurance that the present employees at the Cairns Airport will be protected and will retain their due entitlements in long service leave, sick pay, holiday pay, superannuation, etc., in the change-over from Commonwealth employment to employment by the Port of Cairns Authority. That is not asking a lot, as only something like seven or eight people are involved.

It is only four years ago that the Commonwealth Government built a Commonwealth police station at the Cairns Airport. The Commonwealth police play a major role at airports. The police station will be on the side opposite to where the terminals will be built. Perhaps the Minister could enlighten us on what will happen in that regard.

The authorities are talking about a \$2 landing charge and a \$2 take-off charge. What will happen when people travel from Brisbane and, on their way to Thursday Island, land at Cairns and take off again from Cairns? I hope that they will not be charged \$4, but I also hope that they will subscribe to the cost of operating the airport and not be able to use it without paying anything, because the airport will need more and more upgrading as traffic increases.

If this Bill becomes law, I would like a guarantee that the people living in the Northern Beaches area, the Cairns area and the Aeroglen area will not be subjected to increased noise pollution and that the comments made by the mayor of Cairns and many of the business people who have supported this move so strongly that less noise and less danger will exist are in fact true. If they are not true, the people in the areas I have mentioned can judge them.

I repeat that the Queensland Government is being blackmailed by the Federal Government into accepting this move. Queensland is being forced to accept the Commonwealth's responsibility and will have to charge people in the area I represent an additional tax while Queensland is receiving less tax revenue from that Government. I will let the people of the area I represent judge that Government in the future.

Mr CASEY (Mackay—Leader of the Opposition) (4.10 p.m.): The debate seems to have got a little bit away from the core principles of the Bill before the House. This Bill will set a precedent in Queensland, which I believe will be disastrous for the provincial towns and cities in Queensland. The precedent that is being set is that airports will be operated by harbour boards in this State. We have to look at the reason for this present situation.

The member for Barron River tried to blame Gough Whitlam and somebody else in the Labor Party for something that happened years ago. That was despite the fact that the plan for local ownership of airports was introduced by the Commonwealth Government back in 1958. This is the first occasion on which somebody has said, "We are going to implement it in so far as the major provincial airports in Queensland are concerned." There is no doubt that one of the unique features in this State is that the major airports are situated along the coast, and they provide considerable finance for the airline companies in Australia.

One only has to go to the Brisbane Airport this afternoon to try to get a seat on a plane going to Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville or Cairns to see the present situation in Queensland. It is no good being a stand-by passenger. Unless a stand-by passenger breaks a leg of someone coming through the door of the airport terminal, he will not get a seat on a plane. That is not the position when people are seeking stand-by seats on planes flying South. There

is a similar situation with Mt Isa, as the member for Mt Isa would well know. It is extremely difficult to get a seat on any flights in Queensland at this moment. Why is that? It is because of the way in which the airline policy in Australia has been implemented by the Commonwealth Government. Australia is five years behind in moving to wide-bodied jets for normal operation throughout Australia. This year TAA will get its air bus, and probably next year Ansett will get its 767s.

Then we will start to move into a new era of civil aviation in Australia. Suddenly these airline companies will have additional planes available to fly to the airstrips in Queensland that I have mentioned. They will by trying to attract the people who, in the meantime, have been driven away from air travel because of the way in which the ownership of airports is being transferred and additional costs are being imposed on people who wish to travel by air in the country areas of the State.

Instead of upgrading provincial airports to meet the needs of today's air traffic and the projected air traffic of the next two decades, we are in a holding operation. We are rushing around trying to find somebody who is prepared to accept responsibility for airports to maintain the industry in the position that it should have occupied in the early 1970s, or even the late 1960s. In this debate I have heard no-one say that there is a need for additional airports in the so-called great developing areas of Queensland. I am sure that the honourable member for Port Curtis, who will take part in this debate later, will tell us that we should be looking at the Gladstone Airport, which is crying out to be upgraded to take jet aircraft, but absolutely nothing is being done about it. The airport has been completely disregarded by the Commonwealth and State Governments in their infrastructure plans for that area.

Recently I was in Bowen. Let us not kid ourselves: that will be the next "Gladstone" in Queensland: it will be the next area that will take off industrially. A Cessna aircraft is flat out landing on that airstrip because that council is being forced into a local ownership position. Mr Deputy Speaker, you are a North Queenslander, and you know that we speak the truth up there. We speak from our hearts when we talk about these matters; we let it fly. If I might use an unparliamentary term, it is a bloody disgrace that we have this situation before us today.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! In spite of the suggestion by the Leader of the Opposition that the term might be appropriate, I still think it is unparliamentary.

Mr CASEY: This Bill authorises the Cairns Harbour Board, with only two delegates from the city of Cairns, to manage and control the Cairns international airport—that

is certainly what it is—under what is loosely termed the Commonwealth Local Ownership Scheme. With the known composition of the harbour board and its accountability only to State Cabinet, one of the very serious problems and precedents established by this Bill will mean that in more factual terms the National Party is about to become the de facto administrator of Queensland's fourth busiest airport. It may now be the third busiest, because I believe last year it was rated marginally ahead of Townsville.

Eight of the 10 people operating the Cairns Airport will not be responsible by election to the citizens of Cairns. I draw attention to the lack of assurances that have been given in relation to possible future funding. The member for Cairns asked questions about this. No assurance can be given that the people of Cairns will not at some future time, by way of precept, have to meet further costs needed to upgrade this airport to a standard required by modern jets. Eight of the 10 members of the Cairns Harbour Board, which made this decision, will not be responsible to the people. As I understand it, there was only one dissenting voice on that board, that of Mr Tony Mijo, the deputy chairman of the Mossman Shire Council and, of course, a member of the Labor Party.

Mr Tenni: You are getting political now.

Mr CASEY: I am not getting political at all.

Mr Tenni: You are.

Mr CASEY: I lay this on the line: the personalities involved in this are very important and I will touch upon them a little more at a later stage.

Mr Tenni: You are into the politics.

Mr CASEY: I will look at the politics of it, all right, because they stink.

If the fraudulent pretext of local ownership is applied to other cities, the Brisbane Airport, which handled 2.6 million passengers last year, will be taken over by the Port of Brisbane Authority, with appointments and decisions finally determined by the National Party numbers in Cabinet, as we have seen recently. The present chairman of this authority was, until just under two years ago, a National Party member of this Parliament. When I look further at what has already happened to the Port of Brisbane Authority, with one of the Government's original nominees able to totally frustrate its \$20m complex, I shudder to contemplate similar consequences at Brisbane Airport.

However, such a frightening prospect is only one step away from the step all political parties in this Parliament are asked to endorse in this legislation. The latest political preoccupation of the National Party is not only jobs for the boys but also airports for the boys.

This move in Cairns is only one step away from the transfer of the Coolangatta Airport, Queensland's second-busiest airport, which services the Gold Coast, and gives access to the Gold Coast waterways. We all know the authority that has control over that area.

I am also concerned that in the long term, because of some of the sweeping powers under this Bill, we might see emerging the sticky fingers of the Bjelke-Petersen "slush" Foundation. It does not matter where one looks in this State or what legislation comes before the Parliament, one has to look underneath it because the National Party has a callous contempt for this Parliament.

Government Members interjected.

Mr CASEY: We can see just how callous their contempt is from the squawking of the National Party's back-benchers. We will see how callous they are when this matter is put to the vote. Then we will see what real support they will give to the people.

Under the false pretence of local ownership, this parochial misrepresentation proposes the administrative acquisition of our strategic tourist airports through this legislation that will be forced through Parliament today by National Party numbers and Liberal Party weaknesses. That is a disgrace!

In his second-reading speech last Thursday the Minister told this House that transfer approaches similar to this one have recently been made in regard to airports at Rockhampton, Mackay and Maryborough, three of the major provincial airports of this State, jet airports that already need considerable upgrading to enable them to handle modern Boeing 727 series 200 aircraft. They will not be served by such aircraft as the Airbus and the 767 unless something is done fairly quickly by a Commonwealth Government that has procrastinated and a State Government that has sat back in the bleachers and said nothing over the years about the disgraceful state of the airline industry in Queensland and the appalling state of our airports.

The transfer of the Cairns Airport was originally offered to the Cairns City Council, but it declined after investigations indicated the need for pre-take-over upgrades by the Commonwealth at a cost of, on the Minister's estimates, at least \$25m.

Mr Tenni: It didn't have it offered to it. It asked for it.

Mr CASEY: In the first instance it considered this proposal at the instigation of discussions that took place between people in Cairns and others connected with the Commonwealth Government. The member would not deny that for one moment. The offer was made by the Commonwealth, and the council finally declined the offer when it realised the amount of finance that would

be involved and the implications of such a step, which have already been clearly outlined by the member for Cairns.

Despite the fact that the Federal Government is being recreant in the amount of funds it is offering the Cairns Harbour Board for the take-over, the board has stepped in to fill the local ownership vacancy—as I said before, with the one dissenting voice of Councillor Tony Mijo of the Mossman Shire. The Cairns Harbour Board has 10 representatives—two appointed by this Government through Cabinet, two from the Cairns City Council and one each from the six smaller local authorities in the wide-stretching far northern region. Consequently, eight of those 10 are not accountable by election to the people of Cairns.

The first Government nominee is Mr Borzi—the man whom the member for Barron River was trying to praise a moment ago. He is the harbour board chairman, a real estate agent of Mareeba and a well-known National Party front man who stood for the old Country Party in the Tablelands seat in 1969 and for Barron River in 1972. He was defeated on both occasions by the Australian Labor Party candidate.

The second Government nominee on the Cairns Harbour Board, which now aspires to run the State's third-largest airport, is Councillor Stanley John Collins, OBE (to give him his correct title), a grazier of Spring Creek Station, which is between Forsyth and Mt Surprise. He is the chairman of the Etheridge Shire Council, which, on the latest figures, has a total of only 459 voters. He will be one of the major voices on the new board that will run the airport on behalf of the 39 000 people of Cairns. He is a close friend, of course, of the Premier and has previously been rewarded by the National Party with his Imperial honour and the chairmanship of the Far North Queensland Regional Electricity Authority.

The shire of Mareeba, including the Government appointment of Borzi, will have the same representation as—and probably more say, since Borzi is chairman, than—the city of Cairns, in which the airport is located. From the time this legislation is given Royal assent, the harbour board with its National Party majority from outside Cairns will acquire, manage and operate the Cairns international airport. Subject to air transport powers held by the Australian Government, they will be the administrators of this major tourist airport, with 50 per cent of annual maintenance costs subscribed by Canberra, and their decisions will be answerable only to the National Party Cabinet in Brisbane, via their National Party Minister for Northern Development and Maritime Services, who of course lives in Brisbane.

From the time of assent to this Bill, this National-Party monopolised harbour board will inherit powers to grant leases on land, terminal concessions, buildings, works, conveniences and appliances in the airport area. They are sweeping powers to be given to a group of people whose track record we

know so well. Their ability to conveniently help friends is quite well known within the Cairns area.

Under this Bill, that board will not only be able to acquire land but—and in more sinister tones, when one considers the National Party's record in these matters—it will also be able to sell, exchange, transfer or grant easements over existing land. What a bonanza it is for those in the Cairns area who are interested in the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation!

The harbour board, which is dominated by all the people whose names I mentioned earlier, can establish by-laws and prescribe airport charges on any service, facility or convenience at the airport, including the parking of vehicles and aircraft. It is open to it to determine whatever charges it desires. It will employ a sizeable staff, and I accept the Minister's assurance that he will provide in some way in this measure for the conditions of transfer of staff. It seems rather a pity that there is not a stronger provision in the Bill to cover that.

Another matter of concern is that the harbour board will be able to prescribe not only charges but also exemptions. Honourable members have seen other instances in which exemptions have been given by groups dominated by National Party supporters and the power-hungry executives of the National Party at Bjelke-Petersen House in Spring Hill.

Under this legislation, the Cairns Harbour Board, with the majority of its representatives nominated by shire councils outside Cairns with enrolments as low as 459, becomes virtually a separate local government within the city of Cairns. It will be a municipality within the city, if I might put it that way.

As I said earlier, the legislation incorporates a passenger charge of \$2, which I am told will apply to each landing and take-off from the airport. In answer to my recent question the Minister said clearly that if I fly from Brisbane to Weipa through Cairns Airport, the charge will be \$4—\$2 for landing on the flight from Brisbane; \$2 for taking off from Weipa. When I return, it will again cost me \$4. I will probably be rushing from one aircraft to another, and I will be paying \$4 for the privilege of walking across the tarmac at Cairns Airport. That is what will happen.

I express the same fears and issue the same warning as the honourable member for Cairns. In the long run, the people of Cairns will have to provide through rates precepts for the running and maintenance of the airport, and they will have also to pay a tax of \$2 each time they leave or return to the airport. At the same time, the National Party Government poses as being in favour of reducing taxes. I am sure, in the light of what is happening in Cairns, the people of Cairns will not believe that; nor will the people of Mt Isa, Mackay, Rockhampton, Maryborough and the various

other cities that will have the same thing foisted upon them be prepared to accept it. We will see concessions let for bars, booths, souvenirs, newsagencies and other amenities in a new terminal.

In Cairns there will be an opportunity to spread the tourist industry to Papua New Guinea, to the near north, and to the whole Pacific region. Tourists from those areas using the Cairns Airport will also have to pay the new charges. Under National Party legislation, it is not unusual to see special powers used by certain groups. Perhaps the harbour board, with the guidance of State Cabinet, will use its powers to sponsor a casino or a shopping centre if it can acquire a little more land nearby.

It amazes me that the Liberal Party is taking no interest in this Bill. It is obvious that it has no interest in the provincial cities of Queensland. Of course, Liberal Party Ministers are ineffective in Cabinet, and I do not know whether they have even raised their voices in Cabinet on this matter. Perhaps they are following the line of fully supporting Fraser federalism, as they have done since it was first espoused in September 1975.

What we will see in this instance, Mr Deputy Speaker, is the decision of the National Party back-bench members of Parliament from the relevant areas. Additional charges will be foisted first on the people of Cairns and later on the people of other Queensland provincial cities. The honourable member for Cairns referred to the fact that recently the Lynch razor gang simply said, "As part of the deal we will get rid of the airports at Mackay, Rockhampton and Maryborough." Mt Isa had already received a previous offer, but it was rejected by the council. That occurred as long ago as 1973.

Some people say, "There is nothing else we can do." In fact, the honourable member for Barron River said that. He said that we have been bulldozed into this and we have to accept it. I say there is plenty that can be done. And there is plenty that will be done by the people of Cairns.

I remind the Federal member for Leichhardt, Mr David Thomson, that he saved his seat in Federal Parliament by only a few votes. He was able to do that because of the promise he made during the election campaign that initially the sum of \$16m would be made available for the redevelopment of the Cairns Airport. Mind you, he did not tell the people of Cairns that it would be made available only if they agreed to local ownership and the Cairns Harbour Board became the owner and operator of the airport. I am sure that the people of Cairns who, because of Mr Thomson's statement, supported him on that occasion, will not support him again, particularly when they have to start paying an airline tax to use their own airport.

As the honourable member for Cairns has pointed out, in the last State election both he and the honourable member for Barron

River publicly opposed the proposal to have local ownership. Mr Tenni saved his seat by only a short whisker. He knows full well that he was able to do that only because he was prepared to go along with the member for Cairns on this issue. If he had not done so, he would have been tossed out by the people of Edge Hill, Freshwater and Machans Beach, as well as those in the other northern beach areas in his electorate.

I am concerned about what will be the response in this House when further legislation following the pattern set by this Bill is brought before Parliament. If Brisbane Airport is involved in such legislation, what will the Liberal members do then?

Mr Davis: Give it to the Port of Brisbane Authority.

Mr CASEY: I have already referred to that aspect. If Brisbane Airport is delivered into the hands of the Brian Baillies and the share sharks—such as the Premier's special choice for the Port of Brisbane Authority, Bill Siller—whose only credentials are their selfish villainy and opportunism to pay into the Bjelke-Petersen slush fund, what will be the future of Brisbane Airport? Such a move is not beyond the bounds of possibility. In fact, it could be the next step. The result will be that air transport, which was previously a non-political area, will be manipulated for political purposes.

As I have said, eight years ago, in 1973, a similar Commonwealth offer of transfer was made to the Mt Isa City Council. It rejected that offer. At that time the passenger tax that was suggested was 50c. Once this legislation is passed, how long will it be before the National Party sets up another of its qangos to control an airport in another major provincial city?

My attitude in relation to the airport in my home city of Mackay is that I want no part of these local-ownership deals, with their suspicious National party overtones. As the member for Mackay, I will resist by every means at my disposal any attempts to take control of the Mackay Airport out of the city of Mackay and place it indirectly into the clutches of the Mackay Harbour Board or one of the National Party's qangos loaded with Government representatives from the membership of the local branch of the National Party.

I am a regular traveller through Mackay Airport. In fact, I would be one of the most regular travellers in this House through all our provincial airports. There is not one of them that has not gone backwards and does not need upgrading. All of them have gone backwards under 15 years of control by the Federal Liberal/National/Country Party Government, which has pussyfooted around and ducked its responsibilities.

This legislation is highly undesirable. It is undemocratic. It should not be contemplated without at least a referendum in the city of Cairns, which is most affected. But, of course, that will not happen. It is legislation

that invites corruption from a State Government that has shown some partiality towards it under some circumstances. I believe that what is envisaged in this legislation was never intended when the airport local-ownership scheme first surfaced. It will create dangerous precedents for the future.

The Minister's speech contained only one major point with which I agreed, namely, that the current facilities at the Cairns Airport are totally inadequate. I query the report prepared by Gutteridge Haskins and Davey Pty Ltd about growth estimates. The figures presented by the honourable member for Cairns clearly show that over the past eight to 10 years the actual growth in passenger and aircraft movements was about 29 per cent. Yet this report predicts that it will be 10 per cent a year for the next five years, and after 1985 it will decrease to 5 per cent. No explanation is given in the report for such a forecast. There is no basis for the prediction.

At the other end of the scale, I can only say that the whole basis of the future operations at the Cairns Airport must be looked at in the light of growth in traffic in the past eight to 10 years. Without doubt, tourism will boom in Queensland, and Cairns is one of the major tourist centres in the State. It has tremendous tourist potential, and the key to that potential is the airport.

After considering the proposed work, I am still not clear what is to happen after 1990. I am sure that there will be a lot of growth in the area. What will happen when we are looking at aircraft bigger than the 727-200, which is the main basis for the figures presented? The Airbus and the 767 are now coming to Australia. The growth pattern of tourism in other parts of the world clearly indicates that Cairns will depend on package tours direct from the major cities.

The big growth will not be in international tourism but in interstate tourism. In that context, we are looking at domestic flights from Sydney and Melbourne. We will have aircraft such as the Airbus and the 767, or the even larger 747s—and I do not mean the SP ones—carrying full passenger loads direct from Sydney to Cairns and return, as package tours. That is what I visualise as the future for the Cairns Airport, but that will not be its future under the control of the harbour board.

Even now, the airport has problems during the wet season. That is not mentioned in the report, but that is why it is said that occasionally aircraft of a certain size will not be able to use it. The honourable members for Barron River and Cairns referred to the problems associated with the airport being close to the swamp. Because of my involvement in the industry, I know of the difficulty experienced in overcoming the pavement problems that are likely to obtain there. The Minister or the member

for Barron River said that more money may be available from the Commonwealth after further talks. In the light of the recent razor gang proposals, how likely is it that such talks will be successful?

The harbour board is not responsible to the people. According to its balance sheet, its assets, built up over 100 years of port operations, equal half of the cost of upgrading the airport. The harbour board has about \$12.9m in assets and the upgrading of the airport will cost the best part of \$26m. The asset structure that the board is taking over will eventually be equal to about three times its existing asset structure in the port area.

It is not a situation that we desire in Queensland. It is not the sort of arrangement we should be entering into. It is not a situation that we want to develop in the other provincial city areas. That is why the Labor Party is strongly opposed to the Fraser Government's abnegating its responsibilities in this area, aided and abetted by the Queensland Government.

Mr BERTONI (Mt Isa) (4.40 p.m.): Before speaking to the Bill, I should like to praise the Minister for his dedication to North Queensland and for presenting this Bill which, no doubt, has put him in a very embarrassing situation.

I totally object to the Bill. It is similar to what happened during the Whitlam era. I asked myself the difference between Fraser and Whitlam.

Mr Hooper: What reply did you get?

Mr BERTONI: I am thoroughly convinced that there is no difference.

It is interesting to see how hypocritical the Leader of the Opposition is. He said he would have no part of local ownership deals. It was Whitlam who introduced local ownership deals.

Mr Casey: No, not true.

Mr BERTONI: I will take the honourable member up on that statement.

Mr Whitlam tried to force local authorities to take over the running of local airports in country areas. In 1973-74 when I was mayor of Mt Isa, I was visited by officers of the Department of Transport. They tried to force the council to take over the running of the local airport. I objected very strongly to it because no local council should have the responsibility of running airports. That is a Commonwealth responsibility. Why should we place a burden on the ratepayers and citizens who use the airport when we did not have to? I objected strongly and I was called some names which I shall not record in "Hansard". If that principle was good for Mr Whitlam, then it must be equally good for Mr Fraser. I do not switch my principles.

Mr Hooper: When you were mayor of Mt Isa and all these problems were taking place, were you a member of the National Party?

Mr BERTONI: Yes, I was a member of the National Party, and I objected. I objected about what Mr Whitlam wanted to do and I object to what Mr Fraser is trying to do. The people who are advising the Federal Government at this time are the same people who advised Mr Whitlam. The idea was to dispose of airports in provincial and country towns and maintain only those in the capital cities. My argument to Mr Seymour, who is in charge of the Department of Transport, was, "When you give me proof that the councils in the capital cities take over the running of their airports, we will take over ours." The airports in the capital cities will remain under the control of the Commonwealth Government.

Why should people in country and provincial cities, who pay a large amount of revenue to the Commonwealth Government, be slugged once again? That is exactly what will happen. They will be slugged if they want to use their airport. Somebody said it was a double tax. I agree. The people will pay the normal tax as well as another tax for the privilege of going to or leaving their own city. Who will use the airport most? The people living there.

It is all right to say that tourism should be promoted in Cairns and therefore the airstrip must be developed to handle the larger jets. But why should the people of Cairns and district pay for it?

Mr Jones: Penalised.

Mr BERTONI: Why should they be penalised? I agree with the honourable member.

Mr Casey: If we follow the text of this legislation the Mt Isa Airport would be taken over by the Townsville Harbour Board. It is ridiculous, isn't it?

Mr BERTONI: I think that the Cairns Harbour Board agreed to take over the airport, but I believe that all the Commonwealth Government is really looking for is some authority to take over airports. The Commonwealth Government will try to make the local government in Mt Isa take over the airport there—unless, of course, it intends to form the Leichhardt River Association. If the Commonwealth Government attempts to do that, I will object strongly at that time, as I am objecting to this proposal today. I do not understand everything that is happening here. During the Whitlam era the Liberal and National Parties were jumping up and down saying, "We cannot do this. Mr Whitlam is a long way behind. He is going overboard. He is penalising the country areas." However, we are doing exactly the same thing now.

Mr Davis: I take it you will be voting against this Bill.

Mr BERTONI: I will be walking out of the House; I will not vote against the Bill. I will not support the Bill because I just cannot accept the principle that, on the one hand, we objected to Whitlam doing something, and now, on the other hand, we are asked to agree to Fraser's doing exactly the same thing. To me, that is hypocrisy.

We see this principle of the user will pay coming through the so-called Fraser federalism. Country people are being asked to carry a burden in order to help the Commonwealth Government overcome its so-called financial problems. I do not believe that the Queensland Government should be a party to helping the Commonwealth Government unless it is prepared to accept responsibility for the running of this airport. What the Commonwealth Government is really doing here is saying to the Cairns Harbour Board, "We will give you \$20m, plus a few dollars here and there, to upgrade your airport. Then we want nothing to do with it. We wash our hands of it. We don't want to know anything about it. You run it and organise it." From that point on the people will pay.

It has been estimated that a charge of \$2 will be levied at the Cairns Airport. Who are we kidding? Will that be the charge in two or three years' time? During our previous discussions between the Mt Isa City Council and officials of the Department of Transport, the department estimated that the charge would be about 50c. However, our estimation revealed a charge of at least \$2 and this charge would substantially increase in the years ahead. Does anybody honestly believe that the charge at Cairns will be \$2? It may be \$2 for the first year, but from then on it will be anything up to \$5 or \$6. If people do not realise that fact now, they certainly will in the next couple of years. With inflation, and with more and more burden being placed on the Cairns Harbour Board, people will realise that they have a tiger by the tail and they will not know what to do with it.

If the charge is not increased, then I must agree with Opposition speakers who ask, "Who is going to pick up the tab?" Will it be the Queensland Government, or will a further charge be levied on the people? If, because of some political motive, an attempt is made to keep the charge down, then the State Government will have to pick up the tab to help the Cairns Harbour Board overcome its financial problems. Whatever happens, the State Government and the Queensland people will be taking the burden off the Commonwealth Government and supplying a service that is much needed in country areas. We have heard a lot about the free hospital scheme. The crunch came this year when the Commonwealth Government said, "We don't want anything to do with it. You take the burden." This is exactly what will happen with the airports. We will be accepting all the burden and the Commonwealth Government will not reciprocate by reducing taxes.

I come back to this principle of the user pays. Why should people in country areas pay a surcharge to use their airport when people in Brisbane and in the other capital cities of Australia do not have to do so? I cannot get a satisfactory answer to that question. I am told, "Oh, they are major airports, but we should be able to control our own." I cannot accept that, and I will not vote for this Bill. This will be the forerunner of many such Bills. The Commonwealth Government has now broken the back of a major airport in Queensland—Cairns.

There is talk about taking over Townsville Airport but I doubt whether that will happen because it is an RAAF base.

Mr Tenni: They will take over the buildings and the amenities; they have said that.

Mr BERTONI: Yes, but not the actual running of the airport or the costs associated with that.

Mr Tenni: No, the strip will remain.

Mr BERTONI: That is right, and so will the surrounding things.

Mr Tenni: To answer your question there, the reason why North Queensland cops it is that it cops it all the time. Cities such as Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane get everything all the time—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Miller): Order! The honourable member has had an opportunity to address the Chamber.

Mr BERTONI: The honourable member for Barron River comes from that area and I shall allow him to have his say. I believe he, like the honourable member for Cairns, is very interested in this matter.

This Bill contains a matter of principle and I strongly object to it. I urge other people to think very clearly on this point because a very important matter of principle is involved. If it was bad in the Whitlam era, then it is equally bad in the Fraser era.

Mr EATON (Mourilyan) (4.51 p.m.): Like many other people, I live within a distant radius of the Cairns Airport and am a regular user of it. This proposal was initially brought about by the need in Cairns for an international airport, which is most important for the future of the Far North. As other speakers have mentioned, not only at times is the North isolated but also it is the forgotten North.

Funding has been the main concern about the upgrading and developing of the Cairns Airport to an international airport. This split the community because there were those who could see the drastic need for this development and were prepared to take whatever was offering. As time went on and their senses returned they found that the proposition was not as good as it at first

appeared. To emphasise that I read an extract from a letter from the secretary of the Cairns Airport Development Association—

"The purpose of this letter is to advise you officially that as a result of a public meeting held in the RSL Hall, The Esplanade, Cairns on Tuesday 11th November 1980 it was decided to re-form the Cairns Airport Development Committee."

That committee was formed, it rushed in with enthusiasm and it is to be commended for that. The need was there and this was a group of people who not only saw the need but decided to try to do something about it. Because of lack of support from the community and organisations involved in the Cairns district interest dwindled so a public meeting had to be called to see if that association could be reformed. The end result is that the airport has been handed over to the Cairns Harbour Board. That shows the strength of feeling within the Cairns community. I assure all honourable members that the people of Cairns and the surrounding district are great sticklers for a worthy cause but they were being sold a pup by the Commonwealth Government.

Time has proved just that. I have to go back only to last week when the Federal Government dealt with the top echelon of the Queensland Government, as well as the other State Governments, and sold the States short by \$70m. So for two reasons, we have to keep our wits about us whenever we deal with the Federal Government: its record in funding projects in other States is not first class and the recent Premiers Conference proved that it always falls slightly short of what is needed to increase development in this State.

Over a period of time I have insisted that this airport be built by the Federal Government. My reason for that is that such a project is so big that the Federal Government's resources are needed. These things have to be looked at constructively; I believe that any criticism that we offer is constructive. This airport should be built by the Federal Government and, if it insists, it could then be taken over by an airport authority. Let the Federal Government hand over a going concern. In all my life I have never seen anybody have any problems giving away a viable proposition. It is as simple as that.

When we tried to pin the Commonwealth Government down its argument was that, under the present Act, it could not do that. However, as we have seen in this House and in the Federal House, when a Government wants to change an Act or law, it can rush a Bill through in a matter of a few hours. If that was what was preventing the Cairns Airport from being developed to international standard, it should have been no problem for the Government (which we are led to believe at election-time has all the political nous to deal with problems as they arise), in conjunction with the heads of departments, to draw

up an amendment to the Act to allocate the total amount of money needed to bring that airport up to international standard.

I notice that when figures on page 9 and in other parts of the Minister's second-reading speech are added the total is \$23.9m. Therefore, if there is a mess with the figures now, what is it going to be like when construction of the Cairns Airport gets under way?

I do not believe for one moment that that money will be anything like the full amount required to upgrade the Cairns Airport to international standard. The Minister in charge of the Bill should be well aware of that, because he came north after the floods in January to see the damage that can be done every January and February as a result of the normal monsoonal wet season. He could imagine the result if we were hit with a normal wet season when the construction was half completed. In an abnormally wet season, it would be a catastrophe. It is nothing unusual to see a million dollars worth of work destroyed in a few days during a normal or an abnormal wet season. That is why I honestly believe that by the time the airport is completed the figure will be more like \$30m-plus. I cannot see its being brought up to international standard under \$30m.

In order to realise that this is a show-pony exercise by the Federal Government, anyone visiting the Cairns Airport at the present time or in the near future need only notice that both Ansett and TAA, since the announcement of the plan to upgrade the airport, have almost completed new sections in their terminals. Nobody can tell me that the heads of those companies, with the contacts they have in the Federal Government, did not know from the word "go" that the Federal Government's plans for the Cairns Airport were nothing more than a myth. The directors of those companies would not have authorised such work to commence if the Cairns international airport was to be a reality, as we were led to believe in the initial announcements by the Federal Government.

The effect of an international airport in the Far North will be tremendous. Three or four weeks ago we saw on television an American airline company taking delivery of a brand new airliner and placing it straight into moth-balls. The film clip showed the airliner being taxied into position alongside another one. That company had taken delivery of two brand new airliners that had been flown from the manufacturers to the terminal, where they were put into moth-balls. We know that that cannot go on forever. When the cameras panned the field, we saw—and I could be corrected on this—about 12 airliners in moth-balls. As economic conditions govern all things, we will find that it will not be long before those airliners will have to be airborne and, whether they like it or not, those companies will be forced through sheer economics to

accept international charters into Australia. Because of the cost of our internal flights, people will want to charter airlines overseas and fly direct into an airport such as Cairns. Cairns has proved over the years that it is the central point for seeing the Barrier Reef. State and Federal authorities can provide figures to show that the Barrier Reef is the No. 1 draw-card for tourists. Taking into account the tourist field branching out from Green Island, we realise that Cairns is the centre point of what is perhaps one of the greatest tourist areas in the world. North, south, east and west of Cairns are some of the greatest tourist attractions and some of the areas with the greatest potential for tourist development in Australia.

Mr Moore: The skiing slopes are very poor there.

Mr EATON: Perhaps I will make that exception. It is a little difficult to find snow there. There are many snowy-haired kids; we still do our bit in the North.

One of the sore points with a number of people in the Cairns region—and I emphasise that I am speaking about the Cairns region, not only about the city of Cairns—is that they have not achieved the results that they desired from the time and money they have put into developing the tourist industry in North Queensland. On a couple of occasions they have organised international tours, one being from Japan. The Japanese tourists landed in Cairns, saw Green Island and then left. Later one member of the party who had time to spare returned to Cairns. He was taken to the beautiful beach areas to the north of Cairns, to the Atherton Tableland, where there are mountains, lakes, water falls and many other scenic attractions, down to the tea plantation in my electorate, to the Innisfail area, where the rain forests come right down to the beaches, and to other areas in which there are beautiful rivers and mountains. The Japanese tourists did not know that those areas existed, and I suppose it could be taken as a mild criticism that the one who returned wanted to know why they were not advertised.

The Northern Tourist Development Council is trying to publicise the areas outside Cairns, but it forgot to put Innisfail on the map. It was just a little dot. With the international airport getting off the ground, the Government should play its part in encouraging tourist development to take place. It should ensure that tourists who come to the area know about Green Island, Cairns and the Barrier Reef and also about the areas surrounding Cairns. People would have to stay a week to see all that there is to be seen. If visits were organised on a regular basis, the Government and the business people in the Far North would all benefit.

In conclusion, I reiterate that I believe the Minister is well aware that the cost of upgrading the airport will be fairly heavy

during the transition period. In my opinion, it can only increase, because damage to earthworks can be great even in normal wet seasons. In addition, arguments are bound to occur in relation to award wages and conditions, superannuation, and so on, when people are transferred from one employer to another. We have all seen instances of that in the past.

I feel that the criticisms I have offered are just, and I hope that the Government will consider them. On the question of cost, it should take into account the opinions of engineers and consultants who, in discussions with me, have mentioned that there could be a difference of \$1m in the cost of constructing the shoulders of the runway alone. It is obvious that a large amount of money is involved, and I do not wish to see the people of North Queensland saddled with another tax, even if it is for development purposes.

This has been a bad blunder by the Government. It should have brought pressure to bear on the Federal Government, which should be building the airport. It should not be left to the State Government or the Cairns Harbour Board to build it.

Mr POWELL (Isis) (5.4 p.m.): The legislation now before the House is probably the second piece of legislation in this session of Parliament in which we find examples of what is euphemistically called Fraser federalism. When announcing the cuts in Federal Government spending, the Prime Minister said that there were many things that the States could do much better than the Federal Government, and I think that all honourable members—certainly honourable members on this side of the Chamber—would applaud that philosophy. However, when it comes to airports, air traffic navigation regulations and regulations dealing generally with air safety, all of which have nation-wide application, one wonders why we have to accept this legislation.

We are in a very difficult position. On the one hand, we are told by the Federal Government that \$21.6m will be spent on the Cairns Airport, provided there is local ownership; on the other, we are told that if there is no local ownership that \$21.6m goes back into Mr Howard's coffers.

This afternoon Opposition members have castigated the Government for taking the step that it has taken. If the Government had refused point-blank to do what it is doing, Opposition members would be equally vociferous in their attacks on us for ignoring the \$21.6m, which they would say, euphemistically, would be for northern development.

Mr Hooper: "Euphemistically" and "vociferous"?

Mr POWELL: Yes.

Mr Hewitt: Isn't he loquacious?

Mr POWELL: He certainly is.

This Government is in a very difficult position. I do not think any member on this side of the House is enthusiastic about the Bill. In fact, I do not think any single person is enthusiastic about it. Nevertheless, the Government must act responsibly, and in attempting to act responsibly it is looking for an authority that can capably handle a development of the magnitude of the Cairns Airport. I believe it has found the right authority.

Perhaps it is strange to have a harbour board in control of an airport. Perhaps there is a strong case for changing the name of the board, but that is something that can be dealt with in the future. What we have to look at is the principle involved.

For many years the Federal Government has had a policy of local ownership of airports. This is not new; the Leader of the Opposition mentioned 1958 as the genesis of this policy. It was given a tremendous boost by a one-time Federal Minister for Transport, Mr Jones. For some obscure reason, people in Canberra of the same political persuasion as ourselves are following the same procedure. It is on that basis that we criticise them. It is about time that they woke up to themselves.

To get back to the basic fact—the Federal Treasury has allocated \$21.6m, which must be taken up by 30 June 1981 or the Cairns Airport falls into further disrepair and, I would suggest, further disrepute.

Mr Jones: By design.

Mr POWELL: I am not denying that it is by design. I am firmly convinced of the stupidity of the Federal Government.

Mr Wilson: Why don't you call its bluff?

Mr POWELL: I thought I had just explained that, if we did call the Federal Government's bluff, the honourable member who has interjected—it is strange to see him in the House—would be jumping up and down and criticising the State Government for not accepting the \$21.6m.

Mr Frawley: It is pretty hard to explain it to him. You would need a blackboard.

Mr POWELL: It would be difficult for him to read what was on it.

The problem is that the local ownership policy is a fait accompli as far as the State Government is concerned, and it has to do the responsible thing. It has been said that the airports at Mackay and Maryborough are next to be affected by the Federal Government's line of defence. That worries me. The Maryborough airport is adjacent to my electorate and I use it reasonably regularly. Three airports within a very short flying distance, namely, Bundaberg with the highest passenger concentration, Maryborough and Hervey Bay, are capable of handling Fokker Friendship F27 aircraft.

I wonder if the people of Cairns would be happy in the long run if we, as somebody suggested, attempted to call the Federal Government's bluff and ignored this sum of money, and the Cairns Airport reverted to F27 standard? In our part of the world we find it a disadvantage not to have jet air transport. For example, APEX fares are not available to people in my area. People who travel on a Fokker Friendship get a fairly good ride. I have no complaints at all about the Fokker Friendship except that it is noisier and slower than a jet. However, we have no alternative to paying first-class fares.

Mr Frawley: The wheels don't always come up.

Mr POWELL: I do not mind if the wheels don't come up; it is when they don't go down that it worries me.

We are forced to accept a single-fare structure. Worse than that, when BPA introduced its turbo prop Metros, we had to pay the same fares to travel on that aircraft as we did on Fokker Friendships. In my opinion, the fare structure is completely wrong. How would the people of Cairns like it if they had to accept it? I suggest to the Parliament that that is the sort of alternative that they are looking at.

It is not in the hands of this Parliament to look at that alternative. I am sure that the members for Cairns, Barron River and Mourilyan would be extremely upset if the Cairns Airport was downgraded so that only turbo-prop or piston-engine aircraft could use it?

Mr Eaton: Get to the point: the money was available under one condition. If \$19m or \$20m is available under one condition, it should be available under another. That was our argument.

Mr POWELL: I agree with the honourable member. I do not disagree in any way. However, I am trying to put to him and other honourable members the 'difficult position in which the Government is placed.

Allegedly the money is given, under a certain set of circumstances, by the Federal Government. It will not accept the other argument that has been advanced. For over 12 months we have been negotiating with the Federal Government. Instead of the argument being carried on in this Parliament, it should be carried on in the House of Representatives and the Senate. As the honourable member for Mt Isa suggested, the people in the Federal Parliament should be arguing on behalf of the people of North Queensland and those in other provincial Queensland cities.

If the Federal Government is honest in its policy on tourism, it will be clear to it that it is not just the Cairns Airport that has to be upgraded, but the airports at Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay and Maryborough. It is quite clear that if we are to attract tourists we must be able to jet them in to these places.

Mr Eaton: Don't you think that if the Commonwealth was to build the airports and hand them over to Mackay, Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton, they would be accepted as a going concern?

Mr POWELL: That creates another problem. It is the thin end of the wedge. If the Federal Government upgraded the airports to an acceptable standard and handed them over to local ownership committees, they would still have to be maintained. I think it was the honourable member for Mourilyan who pointed out clearly that it would cost \$1m to do just the shoulders of the runway, and I accept his figure because I believe that it is correct. They will require constant maintenance. If the local group takes over the airport and continues to run it, it will face the same maintenance that the harbour board faces under this Bill. So it is really six of one and half a dozen of the other.

I object to this policy. All Government members object to it, but we are faced with it. It would be totally irresponsible of us to stick our heads into the sand and ignore it. That is the sort of thing that the honourable member for Cairns and the Leader of the Opposition were suggesting. That would be irresponsible. I do not like the legislation but I will support it simply because I cannot, for the life of me, see any way out.

A number of airports are already locally owned. For example, Hervey Bay Airport was upgraded by the Hervey Bay Town Council. This will amuse honourable members. The council has applied for local ownership and the Federal Government will not allow it. I cannot work that policy out and we are trying to come up with the answer. That council is willing and able to take over the airport and run it successfully and the Federal Government will not come to the party; yet it is playing around with Cairns in this fashion. To me, it has one policy for one part of the State and another policy for another part of the State—or could it be that the Commonwealth Government can see the writing on the wall in the Far North?

I object to this Parliament's having to deal with this type of legislation. We have no alternative but to go ahead with it. We will be carefully watching what happens. I believe that the Cairns Harbour Board is the right authority to take it over because the Government has far more input on that board than, for instance, on a local authority. Ratepayers will not be lumbered with the disadvantages that might occur. On the other hand, the harbour board will get the profits, if any, from the airport and it will have to look carefully at going into its cost structure.

I am disappointed that some members of the Opposition have not been constructive and positive in the point of view that they have taken. I cannot understand why the Leader of the Opposition, whenever he

criticises the Government, must deliver a diatribe of mundane, party-political mutterings. He continually looks for a problem in anything in which the National Party is involved. It is the Government that is involved. It is a harbour board that will look after the airport. Whilst I have doubts and whilst I disagree with the proposal, I hope that it is successful.

Mr HANSEN (Maryborough) (5.19 p.m.): Air navigation control by the Commonwealth was first put to the people of Australia in 1936. The proposition was carried in two States but it was not carried in the majority of States. The Commonwealth then exercised the powers under section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution, applied to the courts and took over the control of air navigation and airports in major centres.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that, since 1958, there has been a system of local ownership of airports. It was designed initially to encourage and assist the development of airports in country areas. Many councils looked on it as an opportunity to develop their districts, and they entered into schemes under which subsidies were available through the Department of Civil Aviation to build and maintain the airstrips. Most of the jobs were small, as the airports catered mainly for small aircraft.

Later, some towns along the coast felt that they could further their interests by having an airport. The local council at Maroochydore proposed that it would build an airport to jet standard. I do not know what the economics of that are, but I know that the standards for jet aircraft are much higher than those for turbo-prop aircraft.

It is true that during the period of the Whitlam Government the Transport Minister sought to interest a number of larger centres in taking over the ownership of airports. There was a little bit of lolly on the end of the offer, as there is in the case of Cairns, which is being offered \$21.36m. The little bit of lolly was that the councils could maintain the airports better because they would have the staff and machinery available not only to construct airstrips but also to carry out maintenance work. The councils were also told that they would be able to lease or rent buildings and sites at the airport. The Whitlam Government felt that, with subsidies, local authorities could do the job much more cheaply. But in those days that offer never applied to major airports. It was always conceded that major airports would be serviced by jet aircraft.

Over recent years there has been a reduction in the amount of maintenance carried out at airports in provincial areas. I refer to the airports in Maryborough and Gladstone. Since immediately after the war, fire tenders and crews had always been available at those airports, but they were taken away. It was decided that it was too costly to maintain this safety standard. There has been no fire tender at the Mary-

borough airport for nearly four years. If one is required, the fire brigade has to travel out from town. I do not know what will happen while it is doing that. Anyone who has any knowledge of aircraft crashes knows that it is a question of seconds, not minutes.

The honourable member for Isis referred to Hervey Bay. It is true that the Hervey Bay Town Council felt that it could improve its position by providing an airstrip in the area. It used a considerable amount of the money that it received from the Fraser Island compensation funds to develop an airstrip at Hervey Bay that was capable of taking Fokker Friendships. I think that one service a week operates out of Hervey Bay. The council felt that the amenities at the airport should be improved. What did it do? It allocated funds to build better toilets and a waiting room at the airport. The council applied to the Department of Transport for a subsidy. The Department agreed with what the council was doing, but as yet the council has not received any money.

I see this proposal as being the thin edge of the wedge. The fact that Cairns Airport has been chosen on this occasion means that provincial airports along the coast have a very short future. They are being pushed into this local ownership situation, and it must be a matter of concern to all honourable members in this House. The member for Isis said, "When they offer you money, you can't refuse it." If the State Government refused this money on this occasion, it would not be the first time it has done so. It was offered money by a Federal Government to acquire land; it was offered money by the same Minister for Transport who has been mentioned here, Mr Jones, to upgrade the railway system.

That offer was also made to other States. South Australia and Tasmania took advantage of that offer and took the money. Other States decided to maintain the ownership and forget about the money. Whether that is right or wrong, it is not the first time that the present Queensland Government has refused Federal money because of the conditions attaching to it. I do not see that the Government is in the position of being pushed into a corner and not being able to walk out. I see this measure as being the beginning of the end, with local ownership being thrust upon other areas.

Perhaps in future a port authority will not handle it, but then it gets down to local authorities, and after that how far will it go? Will it be a joint venture by a number of local authorities or will it fall on one local authority? When I was Deputy Mayor of Maryborough a case was put by the Department of Transport, but it was rejected out of hand because the council was not prepared to saddle its ratepayers with extra expenditure. The council did not expect to get very much assistance from surrounding shires, even though they might use the airport.

For that reason I feel that I must oppose this measure. I point out that the Government is not in a position of "take it, or leave it". The Government is approving the issue of local ownership and the handing-over by the Federal Government of its responsibilities. If the Queensland Parliament passes this legislation it is aiding and abetting the Federal Government. As I have said, it would not be the first time that Commonwealth moneys have been refused because of the conditions attached to them. I suggest that the money should be refused on this occasion.

Mr PREST (Port Curtis) (5.27 p.m.): I am concerned that the Federal Government does not want to shoulder its responsibility in relation to air transport in this State. The Federal Government is seeking local authorities that will take over the control of airports in their areas. In this case the Cairns Harbour Board is doing that. But I ask: Why? I have no hesitation in saying that I believe that airports are a Commonwealth responsibility.

In his second-reading speech the Minister stated that Queensland has 123 licensed aerodromes, 20 of which are owned by the Commonwealth. Of course, the 20 Commonwealth-owned airports of Queensland include those at the major cities of Cairns, Mackay, Townsville, Mt Isa, Rockhampton and Coolangatta. 69 of the 103 remaining licensed aerodromes are operated under the scheme of local ownership administered by the Commonwealth Government. That is a scheme of Commonwealth subsidy for the construction and maintenance of community airports.

I live in an area where the airport is operated by a joint local authority, that being the Gladstone-Calliope Joint Aerodrome Board. From time to time many problems arise. I have a Press statement issued by the Chairman of the Gladstone-Calliope Joint Aerodrome Board in relation to a proposed new terminal building. I have a statement here that appeared in the Press on 5 May 1981 by the Director of the Transport Department's Queensland Region, Mr R. M. Seymour. He stated that the Government remains responsible for providing, maintaining and operating special facilities. Those included navigational aids, communications, fire service and air traffic control. He also said that the Commonwealth Government would keep ownership and responsibility for appropriate buildings and facilities. In "The Gladstone Observer" of 9 May 1981 Councillor Stiller was reported as saying that although some funds had been granted the plans had still not been approved. That article continued—

"Cr Stiller said that repeated setbacks in funding from the Department of Transport had put a drain on Council funds.

"At a time when the Razor Gang's recommendation that local government authorities should take over the running of the airports is causing an outcry from many councils, the Gladstone City and

Calliope Shire Councils already provide one third of the costs of the Gladstone Airport's maintenance and up-keep. The State and Federal Governments pay the remaining costs.

"Cr Stiller said that both councils must provide for the airport in their annual budgets and that additional revenue is obtained through head taxes imposed on airline companies for the use of the airport.

"Problems arose because of delays in Federal Government funding for the terminal. 'If the Federal Government doesn't approve the plans by the end of June, we will have to wait another 12 months,' he said.

"Cr Stiller explained that delays in funding necessitated the serving of another precept on the councils to obtain more money.

"I am very dissatisfied with the whole situation,' he said. 'There is no forward planning by the government. We don't know what funds we will receive from one year to the next.'"

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Miller): Order! I point out to the honourable member that we are not discussing the Gladstone Airport. The Bill refers to the Cairns Airport, and I would like him to relate his remarks to that.

Mr PREST: I do relate my comments to that. The Bill refers to the Commonwealth's asking a statutory authority to take over the Cairns Airport. I am pointing out that, although the Commonwealth might say that it is responsible for these things, in view of the experience in Gladstone I am very concerned that it will be tardy in coming forward with the finance necessary to carry out the maintenance and upkeep of the airport.

The article continues—

"Gladstone's Mayor, Ald Cold Brown said yesterday, 'It is the responsibility of the Department of Transport to operate the airport. It is definitely against my ideas.'

"Ald Brown concluded that the maintenance of the airport placed an extra burden on the ratepayer."

I recommend to any member of a local authority contemplating taking over control of an airport in the area that he have second thoughts on it. I have lived in an area that has operated its own airport and am aware of the extreme financial burden placed on the local authority as a result.

I am also concerned about safety at these airports. Mr Seymour says that the Government is responsible for navigational aids, communications, fire services and air traffic control. I am concerned about safety at the Gladstone Airport—and an accident could happen at Cairns. The member for Maryborough has already said that the fire

services have been taken away from Maryborough. We have never had them at Gladstone.

I understand that the airline pilots association of Australia has made some demands and indicated that, because of the absence of safety devices, it is dissatisfied with flying into Gladstone. From time to time we are told that we are unable to obtain seats on aircraft because the pilots association has recommended a cut-back of flights and is prepared to man only a certain number of flights to Gladstone because of safety considerations. A full-time fire service is required at the airport. Faced with a shortage of funds, the local authority is unable to provide that service.

A further concern of mine relates to safety of aircraft when approaching these airports. I was informed a little while ago that the Gladstone/Clinton Aerodrome Board had written to the Queensland Department of Transport in Brisbane about an incident that happened on 19 December 1980, when a TAA Friendship was approaching the airport—it must have been under 400 feet—and was suddenly put on its tail. Through the port windows could be seen the red light of a aircraft taking off. I have been led to believe that a BPA aircraft on a commercial flight cut across the path of that large commercial airliner making its approach.

Being concerned, I spoke about the incident with the board in Gladstone and also with the traffic controllers in Rockhampton and the department in Brisbane. The answer that I received was unsatisfactory; in fact, it increased my concern. I was told that there is no air traffic control over an aircraft at Gladstone once it is below 4 000 ft.

I spoke to a pilot employed by BPA and asked, "How is air safety at airports throughout Queensland? I am concerned about Gladstone." He said, "Well, Gladstone is bad, but the worst airport in Queensland is Maroochydore. Little aircraft are coming in and going out very regularly there, and in many instances they will not talk to you. It is very dangerous." The Commonwealth Government is responsible for navigational aids, air safety, fire safety, and so on, yet commercial pilots say that incidents such as the one to which I referred do occur in Queensland. If something is not done about that, sooner or later there will be a mid-air crash, and who knows how many lives may be lost.

In my opinion, the responsibility for airports lies entirely with the Commonwealth, and I am concerned about the Cairns Harbour Board's interest in taking control of the Cairns Airport. Millions of dollars will be required to bring that airport up to an acceptable standard for international flights and to meet the safety requirements of the air pilots association of Australia, and it is obvious that there will be a shortfall in

funds. If the Commonwealth Government cannot provide safety devices to protect people's lives, I am sure that its assistance will be sadly lacking in the maintenance of the Cairns Airport.

I have no doubt that the Cairns Harbour Board has good intentions. Probably Mick Borzi and his board are concerned about travel facilities, because Cairns is the centre of a major tourist area that is continuing to develop. The Minister said that he is acting on behalf of the Department of Harbours and Marine in this instance, and I question why it has a responsibility for tourism. The Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation was established recently. If the State Government is to be involved in any way in this proposal, perhaps that corporation should take over the airport. The Cairns Harbour Board could then concentrate on providing marine services.

I reiterate that it is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government to provide finance for the maintenance and upgrading of airports, and I agree with the honourable member for Cairns that airports in Queensland should be a major link in the defence of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Hon. V. J. BIRD (Burdekin—Minister for Northern Development and Maritime Services) (5.39 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate. When I assumed responsibility for the portfolio of Northern Development and Maritime Services, little did I know that I would be introducing a Bill to allow a harbour board to take control of an airport. Because of circumstances that one might say have been thrust upon the Government, as honourable members are now well aware, I have introduced a Bill to allow the Cairns Harbour Board to take over responsibility for the Cairns Airport. As various members have said, it is most unusual and this is the first time it has been done.

If I might reply briefly to the contributions of various members—the Opposition spokesman, the member for Cairns, admitted that it was the first time that a harbour board had agreed to take over an airport. We know the reasons for that decision; they have been canvassed here this afternoon. Since 1958 the policies of the various Commonwealth Governments have been to hand over to local ownership, where possible, the airports throughout the State and, in fact, throughout the Commonwealth. Previously that policy applied only to the smaller airports that had been handed over to local authorities.

Here for the first time we have the Commonwealth wishing to transfer a jet airport to local ownership. Some consideration had to be given to who would take over the Cairns Airport. We know that the Cairns City Council and other local authorities in North Queensland considered taking it over and then rejected the proposal.

As Minister for Maritime Services, I was informed that the Cairns Harbour Board had indicated a desire to take over the ownership of the Cairns Airport, subject to the Commonwealth Government's carrying out its responsibilities with regard to the upgrading of that airport. The honourable member for Cairns asked who was negotiating on behalf of the Cairns Harbour Board and the people of North Queensland to obtain a satisfactory upgrading of the airport prior to its transfer to local ownership.

The Bill provides for the Cairns Harbour Board to enter into an agreement with the Commonwealth. Negotiations concerning this agreement are being undertaken by the chairman of the Cairns Harbour Board, in collaboration with the Co-ordinator-General and the Under Treasurer. Honourable members can rest assured that when those negotiations take place I will be looking at them closely to ensure that Queensland gets the absolute maximum that can be extracted from the Commonwealth so that the airport can be upgraded to the highest degree possible. It is unfortunate that the Commonwealth has stipulated that it will spend the money on upgrading the Cairns Airport only on the condition that it is handed over to local ownership.

I have a dual responsibility. As Minister for Maritime Services, I have the responsibility of looking after our ports; as Minister for Northern Development, I have a responsibility to ensure that the people of North Queensland are assisted in every way possible to bring about development in their part of the State as rapidly as possible.

Knowing Cairns as well as I do—various members have spoken of the attributes of the city and the surrounding areas—I believe it is absolutely essential that Cairns have the best airport that can be provided, and at the earliest possible opportunity. We should be able to give an undertaking to people wishing to travel to and from Cairns that their safety is assured and that the type of aircraft that it is proposed will use the airport both now and in the future will in fact be able to use it. It must be usable by aircraft carrying overseas visitors to Cairns and Queensland people overseas.

I had to arrive at a decision on which was the correct course to follow—whether to reject entirely the Commonwealth's offer or whether to act in what I hope will prove to be in the best interests of the people of Cairns and agree to introduce this legislation so that Cairns Airport can be upgraded with the minimum of delay.

The honourable member for Cairns spoke about the envisaged \$2 charge and expressed some doubt about whether it would meet the future requirements of the Cairns Harbour Board in maintaining the airport properly. The Cairns Harbour Board has indicated that the placing of a charge of \$2 on passengers travelling in and out of Cairns

should allow it to build up a reserve in the immediate future that would allow it to carry out maintenance for quite some time. At this stage it visualises no need to review the \$2 fee for approximately 10 years.

The member for Cairns spoke about military aircraft using the airport. I suppose that we all have in mind what would happen in wartime or if this nation were under threat. I give him an assurance that under the terms of the proposed agreement all aircraft owned by the Commonwealth Government, including defence aircraft, will have guaranteed access to the airport.

Mr Jones: Don't you think the Defence Department ought to be responsible in some way for underwriting the facilities because of the possibility of a war or some other national threat? In such an event it would virtually confiscate the airport and all the facilities would be there.

Mr BIRD: No doubt the Commonwealth will be keeping a close eye on the condition of the Cairns Airport at all times. It will still have some responsibilities. It will have to meet 50 per cent of the maintenance costs. It will be watching what happens very closely. It is generally considered that Townsville is the main RAAF air base in the North. We also have Darwin and Tindal in the Northern Territory. I doubt very much that the Commonwealth Government, through its defence policies, will have any great interest in Cairns at the present time. No doubt it will keep a weather eye on the condition of the airport so that if it is required at any time in the future it will be in a reasonably serviceable condition.

The honourable member for Cairns spoke about the airports at Canberra and Norfolk Island, and said that the Commonwealth is doing nothing about handing them over to local ownership and imposing a levy on the people in those areas. I remind the honourable member that both Canberra and Norfolk Island are controlled by the Commonwealth. It would simply be handing the responsibility to itself.

The honourable member for Cairns rightly sought an assurance about the future of the airport personnel. That is spelt out in the Bill. The future of the Cairns Airport personnel is safeguarded. That is another matter that I will be watching very closely when the agreement is in the final preparation stages.

I think it was the honourable member for Cairns who spoke about some assurance being given about a referendum. If an assurance was given it was not given to me as the Minister for Northern Development and Maritime Services. From the correspondence, telegrams and telephone calls I received, I can say that there did not appear to be any great desire

for a referendum before the decision was made on whether the Cairns Harbour Board should take over the Cairns Airport.

It was also said that some assurance was desirable that a precept would not be placed on the Cairns ratepayers. I can only give the House an assurance that while I am Minister for Northern Development and Maritime Services, and responsible for the implementation of this legislation, I will certainly not give any consideration to the imposition of a precept on the ratepayers of Cairns and surrounding areas.

The honourable member for Cairns mentioned the cost of the preparation of the report. It is presently being considered by the Commonwealth, and if the cost is not met by the Commonwealth prior to the drawing up of the agreement, we will certainly be endeavouring to get it from that Government before the agreement is finally approved.

The honourable member for Barron River spoke about the additional cost of future taxiways and, of course, the cost of the terminal buildings. I am a little disappointed that the terminal buildings were not included in the requirements to be met completely by the Commonwealth. For some reason or other, the Cairns Harbour Board agreed to meet the cost of the terminal buildings on a 50/50 basis with the Commonwealth. It is fairly obvious that the board has taken into consideration that, by the time the taxiways are required, the money that it will receive—the \$2 per passenger and the other charges—will provide sufficient finance.

The honourable member said that he fears for all airports under local ownership. He said that there is every possibility that they will face future financial difficulties. We all worry about things like that. If we worried too much about them we would not progress at all. We would constantly be worrying about how much something would cost and we would not do anything. The Government has made decisions in past years. For instance, it decided to go ahead with the construction of the Parliamentary Annexe because it would never get any cheaper. Once things are done we seem to find no difficulty in making the finance available.

The honourable member for Barron River sought an assurance about continuance of employment and an assurance that the employees would not lose any of the benefits that have accrued to them. As I have said, I will be looking at that matter very closely.

He also sought advice, as did the honourable member for Cairns, about who would pay the levy. They asked about the passengers who would be simply passing through Cairns. That matter will be covered by the by-laws. I should like to see some research into this matter before finally deciding whether each and every passenger passing through Cairns will be required to pay the \$2 levy to step off one aircraft and board another.

Mention has been made of the Australian Police and what the future holds for them. They have a responsibility under the Air Navigation Act and I see no reason why their position should not be maintained.

The honourable member for Barron River mentioned noise pollution. I am not an aircraft engineer but, on the advice that has been given to me, I believe that the aircraft of the future will not be as noisy as those in use at the present time or in use years ago. Therefore I trust that noise pollution will decrease and not increase.

I give the House an assurance that this legislation will not be proclaimed until there is an unequivocal undertaking from the Federal Government that the necessary finance is available to meet all my requirements and those of the board. I have no qualms about giving that assurance.

The Leader of the Opposition said that we should be looking at the future of all airports and, indeed, additional airports in the State. I agree with that, but I do not agree that it is the State's responsibility. Indeed, it is the Commonwealth's responsibility.

Mr Casey: The State has to license operations in and out of those airports.

Mr BIRD: It does that for certain airlines using those airports. The responsibility is mainly on the Commonwealth to provide and maintain the airports.

I indicated that this Bill refers to the Cairns Airport, and only to the Cairns Airport. I do not believe that this should be construed as setting a precedent for the future ownership of any other airport in Queensland. If further demands are placed on a local authority or any other organisation in Queensland, and if it is part of my responsibility, I will certainly want to give very serious consideration to those requests before I agree to them. I only hope that, before any demands are placed on this State or on any body associated with this State Government, we have ample opportunity to assess the outcome of the particular operation.

Mr Casey: But the Lynch razor gang has already said that it is going to off-load Rockhampton, Mackay and Maryborough.

Mr BIRD: No indication has been given to us, and I do not know when the Commonwealth Government is likely to have the finance to upgrade those airports. I very much doubt whether it has the finance to do that immediately. I could not imagine any local authority or any other harbour board wanting to take over an airport unless it had been upgraded.

Mr Tenni interjected.

Mr BIRD: I have no doubt about that, because although the member for Mt Isa (Mr Bertoni) said that he was opposed to local ownership, he did mention that the first approach by the Commonwealth for

the handing over of the Mt Isa Airport was made during the Whitlam era. I am not saying for a moment that because the Whitlam Government wanted to do it and it was opposed at that time there is any less reason for opposing it at the present time. No doubt negotiations will continue concerning various airports throughout Queensland. At this time, certainly nothing has come to me. I await with bated breath the day when somebody says that a proposal has been put to a local authority or perhaps to another harbour board to take over the ownership of another airport.

The member for Mourilyan spoke about the advantages of a full jet airport not only in Cairns but also to cover the Innisfail area, which is in the electorate that he represents. He expressed his doubts about future costs. As I said before, we all will be looking at what the costs might be in the future.

I also thank the member for Isis (Mr Powell) who dealt with most of the points that I have covered this afternoon relating to our concern in this matter. I am in complete agreement with him.

I thank other honourable members for their contributions.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time (Mr Bird's motion)—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 33

Akers
Bird
Booth
Doumany
Fitzgerald
Frawley
Glasson
Greenwood
Harper
Hewitt
Innes
Jennings
Katter
Kaus
Lane
Lee
Lester
Lickiss

Lockwood
McKechnie
Menzel
Muntz
Nelson
Powell
Prentice
Scassola
Simpson
Stephan
Sullivan
Wharton
White

Tellers:

Moore
Neal

NOES, 22

Blake
Burns
Casey
D'Arcy
Eaton
Fouras
Hooper
Jones
Kruger
Mackenroth
McLean
Milliner

Prest
Shaw
Smith
Underwood
Vaughan
Warburton
Wilson
Yewdale

Tellers:

Davis
Hansen

PAIRS:

Bjelke-Petersen
Edwards
Goleby

Gibbs, R. J.
Scott
Wright

Resolved in the affirmative.

[Sitting suspended from 6.7 to 7.15 p.m.]

COMMITTEE

Mr Akers (Pine Rivers) in the chair; Hon. V. J. Bird (Burdekin—Minister for Northern Development and Maritime Services) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Short title and commencement—

Mr JONES (7.15 p.m.): The Bill will become known as the Cairns Airport Act 1981. It is in two parts, the first of which merely cites the terms of the transfer agreement, and commences on the date of assent from the Crown. The Minister has already given an indication in relation to the proclamation.

Part II will come into effect when gazetted, when a date will be set for the operation of the airport now controlled by the Commonwealth of Australia to be transferred to the port authority to be controlled and operated by the Cairns Harbour Board. I realise the Minister's difficulty but, because of the public interest in this Bill, I ask him whether he can give any sort of timetable so that we will know if the airport is to be handed over on 1 July or some other date.

Mr BIRD: I cannot give a date for the commencement of work up there. As I said during my second-reading speech, the Bill will not be assented to until such time as there is complete agreement between the Cairns Harbour Board, or the authority, and the Commonwealth.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—Meaning of terms—

Mr JONES (7.17 p.m.): In my speech at the second-reading stage I placed quite a deal of emphasis on the negotiators, and the Minister has indicated who they will be. The port authority will negotiate the agreement with the Commonwealth—I take that to mean the Federal Minister for Transport—in conjunction with the Co-ordinator-General and the Under Treasurer. Under the meaning of terms of this Bill, the negotiators will have power to act on behalf of the Government and the port authority, on the one hand, and the Commonwealth on the other. They will be able to draw up the agreement. Once that has happened, I ask the Minister if the terms can be redefined. In other words, will the whole matter be able to be rehashed in terms of money and conditions?

Mr BIRD: I can give this Chamber an assurance that no settlement will take place until complete agreement has been reached between the harbour board, with the assistance of the Co-ordinator-General and the Under Treasurer, and the Federal Minister. If that requires a complete rehash and a relook at the total amount to be spent on the airport, then that will have to be negotiated and agreed upon before final consent is given to the agreement.

Mr JONES: My other point deals with the additional lands, which include all aircraft hangars, buildings, structures, roads,

plant and equipment. As I read the Bill, clause 7 deals with the acquisition of land. I suppose that the disposal of the facility or the land under the Harbours Act would still be done under sections 62 and 66. I think that is mentioned at a later stage of the Bill. I take it that the State and Commonwealth Ministers will have to approve before there is any disposal of land. The Minister has already indicated that the Maritime Services part of his portfolio, or that which has within its purview the Harbours Act, will be supreme in the event of the portfolio's being split in the future. Do I understand that correctly?

Mr BIRD: The honourable member is correct in his assumption.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—Transfer of Cairns Airport to the Authority—

Mr JONES (7.21 p.m.): The Minister indicated that under the previous clause he and his appointees have the powers of the negotiator. We have not exactly accepted that as a fait accompli. The agreement has scope for further concession—or further restriction, for that matter. Has the Minister or any of his officers been involved in the previous negotiations? Obviously, from what he said in his reply, he has not. The prime negotiators were the representatives of the Cairns Harbour Board and the Commonwealth.

Mr BIRD: My understanding is that the Co-ordinator-General and the Under Treasurer have already taken part in those negotiations.

Mr JONES: Who will be the management? I take it that the existing personnel serving on the harbour board will be the effective management, with no subcommittee being set up. Will there be a manager appointed or will it be the secretary of the harbour board? How many would he envisage being on the management staff and in the operations and maintenance of the airport? The Minister said that the Bill authorises the authority to employ staff including, subject to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act and the agreement between the Commonwealth and the authority, the staff transferred from the Commonwealth.

As I read in a letter at the second-reading stage, there is some staff concern about seniority. I know that the staff are concerned about that. Page 25 of the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Study enumerates the positions as manager/bookkeeper, clerk/typist, three airport traffic officers and three janitors. That is included in the staff costs prior to the completion of stage 1 works. Following the completion of stage 1, operating and management costs, I take it, are assumed to be \$126,000—based on January 1980 prices. These are the only staff mentioned in the report.

Page 27 of the report refers to airport maintenance staff. It is assumed that an airport maintenance group comprising one foreman/overseer and two caretaker/groundsmen will be required. The approximate salaries for those gentlemen will be \$13,500 for the foreman/overseer and \$12,800 for the caretaker/groundsmen.

I raise that question particularly because Commonwealth employees at the airport are greatly concerned, and I believe the House should be told what the proposal is for their future. Certainly the employees and the unions ought to be given fair warning of the implications of the proposal for their jobs, their future and the future of their families. At this stage, it appears that the two sections directly affected will be the ground staff and the airport traffic and security officers, but there may well be more now or at a later date. It is obvious now that those two sections will be affected, and they have been advised accordingly.

The general questions that I raise will involve conciliation in great detail because of the effect on employees, their families and their homes. When decisions are made that affect them—some of them may already have been taken—the employees will have to make decisions of their own, and I believe that any consultations ought to include them and representatives of their unions.

If they are no longer Commonwealth employees, they will want to know what their position is and what rights they have to superannuation, long service leave, sick leave and other award provisions. Surely they ought to be given a choice and a say in the matter so that they will not be disadvantaged or less favourably treated. I say that having in mind clause 3 (2) (g), which says—

“the transfer to the Authority of persons employed by the Commonwealth for the purposes of or in connexion with the operation of the airport and the preservation of accrued rights of service to which those persons would have been entitled if they had continued to be employed by the Commonwealth.”

Mr BIRD: It is obvious that the honourable member has read the report. Therefore, he would be aware that management plans have been prepared by the consultants, and every effort will be made to employ the people who are presently employed at the airport. No final decision has been made as to the exact number of staff, but I should say that there would be additional staff rather than fewer staff to carry out the actual management. That decision will not be made until agreement has been reached.

I gave an assurance in the Chamber earlier—and I will repeat it—that every effort will be made to protect those members of the staff who are presently employed at the

airport. There may be some who wish to transfer, and that will be the subject of negotiation between the Cairns Harbour Board and the present employees at the airport.

Mr JONES: All that the employees know at present is what they have been told by the regional director, and I accept the Minister's assurance that they will be looked after. From my experience in the State Government railways, I am well aware of the eligibility of State employees transferring to the Commonwealth service for continuity of service and protection of their long service leave entitlements. However, in this instance the position is reversed. Commonwealth employees will be reverting to employment in a semi-Government or local government area where there will be no flow on of benefits. What will happen to their superannuation entitlement and other benefits?

The agreement may yet contain provisions of this nature, because clause 3 (2) (g) adverts to the preservation of accrued rights of service and draws attention to the ramification involved. The provisions should be understood to mean that their entitlements, eligibility and conditions of employment will not be altered by the changeover. Their rights should be protected, and I accept the Minister's assurance that they will be.

Clause 5 (5) (ii) gives a fairly wide-ranging interpretation, subject to the Acts, both Commonwealth and State, that the authority may determine the terms and conditions of its employees and separates the Commonwealth employees "handed down" as subject to the agreement.

Clause 3 is the negotiating clause and it is dependent on the approval of the Minister. He is a very important person in regard to the future of these employees. Their future rests on all conditions appropriate to all aspects of the airport. We will be interested to hear of the Minister's involvement and to receive his assurance that during the negotiations he will be keeping a weather eye on the employees. The forthcoming agreement will determine not only the future for these employees but also the blueprint for other Commonwealth employees who are transferred in the future.

The agreement will also contain the Commonwealth's part and participation in the management, operation and maintenance of the airport as well as in the regulation, manner of performance and the functions.

As to Clause 3 (2) (f), this Parliament has the right to know and have spelt out what outstanding liabilities and obligations the Commonwealth still has to fulfil. They were incurred before the transfer, and others may occur prior to the State Government's going into the negotiations within the provisions of the agreement. What additional requirements does the Minister, as the negotiator, see as being those that should be predetermined or subject to an arbitrary referral?

Clause 3 (3) allows for renegotiation. I venture to suggest that the time for argument is in the embryo stage, which is now, and that the Minister will be the person privy and the party to approve. That is a very important point concerning the employees and the future negotiations.

Mr CASEY: I should like the Minister to clarify one point, because I can see a problem area arising in the future. I refer to subclause (2) (e), which refers to the provision for the security of the airport.

Earlier the Minister said that the Commonwealth Police would probably have to remain at the airport. That is to be expected, because the airport is, after all, an international airport. Naturally the Commonwealth Police will have a role to play. However, the Bill is a little confusing in that in some provisions it refers to the airport as being virtually Commonwealth territory, yet in others it refers to the fact that the airport will come under the Harbours Act. That Act, of course, is a State responsibility, so I should like some clarification on the powers of the Queensland Police Force in relation to crimes that may be committed on that property. I am thinking of breaking and entering and other crimes.

Most airports have security officers from security firms and watching services. The duty of those officers is to search baggage, to inspect facilities and to keep an eye on certain buildings and property. It is likely that we will end up with a hotchpotch. I should like the Minister to indicate what is going to happen.

Mr BIRD: I see a need for a continuation of the employment of Commonwealth Police, because most of their duties are related to air safety. They ensure that no passenger carrying a gun or any other type of weapon hidden on his person is permitted to board an aircraft. That will remain a Commonwealth responsibility. Once the aircraft is in the air, the Commonwealth has the responsibility of ensuring the safety of the passengers. I see no reason why the Commonwealth Police should not still have a role to play. I suppose that security would be the same as with any other public building, and therefore there will be a responsibility on the part of the State Police to be involved.

Clause 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—Interpretation—

Mr JONES (7.36 p.m.): I think it well to retrace the situation under this agreement because the agreement is probably the most important matter. Technically, it is the kernel. According to clause 3, the agreement will have wide ramifications. It will be the blueprint for every other agreement by which an airport is transferred.

I am sure that some cognisance can be placed on what happened in the House when the Opposition voted against the principles

of the Bill. I noted that nobody other than the Minister spoke in favour of the Bill. Of all the speakers who made a contribution, not one Liberal member spoke, and I did not hear one voice supporting the principles of the Bill. Almost as many members abstained from voting as voted against it, because 25 abstained, 33 voted for it, 22 voted against it, and there was one pair. That is my assessment of the situation as a former Whip. I draw the Minister's attention to that situation so that when he is negotiating—

Mr NEAL: I rise to a point of order. The statement made by the honourable member for Cairns is totally incorrect. Quite a number of members were officially on leave. Only four were absent from the Chamber.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (Mr Akers): Order! There is no valid point of order.

Mr NEAL: The Premier and his Ministers were absent on official business.

Mr JONES: The vote was 33 for and 22 against. The honourable member may manipulate the figures as he will, and he may make excuses on behalf of members, but I saw a crowd of northern members in Mr Speaker's gallery who did not vote with the Opposition. They certainly showed that they were against the Bill by standing outside the Bar of the House.

Mr Moore interjected.

Mr JONES: The honourable member for Windsor may deny and argue as he wishes, but can he tell me why no-one in this Parliament supported the Bill other than the Minister?

Mr Moore interjected.

Mr JONES: The honourable member for Windsor is making a lot of noise but not one member of his party supported the principle of Mr Fraser's standing over the Government and handing it a fait accompli.

Mr Casey: No member of the Liberal Party showed any interest in it at all.

Mr JONES: None at all.

Mr Moore: If you really want to know, I was against it.

Mr JONES: Why didn't the honourable member vote against it? Why didn't he come over with us?

Mr Moore: Because you gabbled on for an hour and a half. Heavens above, who would want to be a party to that?

Mr JONES: The honourable member did not vote with us because I took an hour and a half to outline the situation on behalf of the people of Cairns? The plight of the people of Cairns warranted my spending an hour and a half on this issue. That was all

too little to do for the people of Cairns who will be taxed twice and will have to underwrite the provisions of this Bill.

I hope that the conclusions on pages 39, 40 and 41 of the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Study will be accepted more widely than the terms of the agreement indicate. I trust that this agreement will be widely debated and that some hard bargaining will take place. If we are to accept it, we want to get the best possible deal.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—General functions and powers of Authority in relation to Airport—

Mr JONES (7.41 p.m.): This clause is a very important one. It provides the overall control for managing, operating and maintaining the Cairns Airport and it is the authority to provide the services, to sell or hire, to carry out works and to purchase or otherwise acquire.

It is the crucial clause in relation to the head tax or what is called the passenger service charge in the industry. However, no charge is prescribed. It does not provide 50c, as appears in the first report. It does not provide \$2 for 10 years as the Minister has indicated. The Bill does not spell it out. Therefore I approach it with some trepidation.

I refer again to the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Study which is the skeleton on which the Bill was framed. Clause 5.5.4 on page 32 of the report, the results of the analysis, shows the terminal rental. The second part of that clause reads—

"The lower annual terminal rental of \$80 000 per annum also was adopted. On this basis, the preferred option would result in a passenger service charge of 10 cents on a one-way ticket into Cairns Airport in the worst year.

"Cash flow analyses using the assumptions for the sensitivity analysis given in 5.5.3 above indicate a passenger service charge for the extreme cases of between 2–40c to balance revenue against costs."

We talk about cost aspects and the user pays. I read that to mean that, in January 1980, it was said that a 50c levy would be imposed as the passenger service charge. Why then is it now \$2? If it escalates to that extent in 14 months, by the time the airport is in operation in 1983 it will be \$4 or \$5 and by the end of the 10-year period it will be \$10 or, for a man and wife, \$20.

The Minister has said that he will hold it down to \$2 for 10 years. But the Minister has said that he could be here for only one term. That is all he can really guarantee. He can give his word but the next Government could say, "We will not abide by that."

A Labor Government would have a solution. It would look at the New South Wales system and, following what was done in New South Wales, we would abolish the harbour boards and appoint regional authorities. The statutory provisions under this Bill would then be in a bit of a fix. The

statutory authorities would be changed. I am prepared to go out onto the stump and welcome a challenge from anybody.

The airport tax or the head tax creates a nuisance situation. The Cairns Harbour Board will become a tax collector for the Commonwealth of Australia. It will be a head tax. One of the greatest nuisances that we experience when we travel overseas with a delegation is that when we hit an airport like Kuala Lumpur we have to pay \$10 on the spot. I know that this charge will be included in the price of the air ticket and that passengers will not actually have to pay the charge on the spot. People are very conscious about where their money goes. They will be aware of the extra charges that are being levied on them.

Mr BIRD: I reiterate that before agreeing to introduce this Bill into this Parliament, I had to give careful consideration to the future of Cairns, the tourist industry and the general travelling public of Cairns. The proposals were put to me after consultation had taken place between the Cairns Harbour Board, the Co-ordinator-General's Department and the Under Secretary. The figures cited by the honourable member for Cairns were very early ones. After consultation and more in-depth study into the level at which the charge should be fixed, it was decided that in order to ensure there was a capital build-up to allow other works and maintenance to be carried out on the Cairns Airport in the future, a levy of \$2 should be imposed. That is not spelt out in the Bill, but it will be spelt out in the by-laws.

Mr JONES: Subclause (3) gives the authority the same powers as a harbour board. Subclause (4) provides that the authority may appoint contractors and contract in any manner. That is fair enough. Subclause (5) (i) gives the authority the right to hire and fire as it considers necessary and as determined by the agreement. The agreement again comes into the matter. Its terms and conditions are of paramount importance. It is purely a matter for the authority to determine the terms and conditions of employment under subclause (5) (ii).

I thought that the holding of a conference with the unions in a spirit of co-operation would have been the basis for the initial determination of conditions of employment. Unions that are responsible for the employees concerned ought to be consulted. A one-sided approach will always lay down an employer-orientated view, which projects problems in the long term. I believe that conciliation and consultation are much better than resorting to arbitration at a later stage. Again, this clause can be subject to powers exercised by the Minister in determining the stages of the agreement. That should be spelt out at this time. If the matter is left as open as it appears to be now, I foresee some difficulty, which could be avoided if the Minister worked these matters out with the unions at the beginning. That is my advice in this matter. I believe that the

Minister's obligations at the agreement stage are very important ones. His designated negotiators are very important in this agreement.

Mr BIRD: I have already endeavoured to give an assurance to the honourable member that the rights and privileges of the present employees will be protected. I am quite sure that there will not be any need for this matter to go to arbitration. I am also quite sure that agreement will be reached on conditions of employment for each and every one of the present employees. However, there must be a right to hire and fire in the future. All the present employees will not stay there for ever—some will reach retirement age and no doubt others will move to other places—and there will be a need to replace them. There might be a need to take on additional staff. That right will have to vest in the Cairns Harbour Board.

Clause 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—Application and construction of Harbours Act and other statutory provisions—

Mr JONES (7.50 p.m.): I raised this matter when dealing with clause 2. This clause ensures that the provisions of the Harbours Act apply in principle to the airport operation. Section 62 also gives the power to buy and sell land and covers the leasing and licensing of buildings and facilities and the disposal of land. That is subject to the consent in writing not only of the State Minister but also the Commonwealth Minister. I wanted to comment on that to bring to the attention of the Chamber that that provision is well covered in relation to the disposal of land. That had concerned quite a number of the citizens of Cairns.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—By-laws—

Mr JONES (7.51 p.m.): In effect this clause prescribes the manner in which ancillary funds will be raised, such as by means of parking meters. The clause also deals with security, public entry, charges by levy, freight handling charges and the manner of collections and exceptions.

Subclauses (2) (a), (b) and (c) emphasise parking. Local authorities have found that such charges are not the greatest profit makers in the world and I do not think that they will fill the coffers.

Clause 11 (2) (f) deals with exceptions from levies. Those exceptions are to be determined solely by the board, whether they deal with car parking, aircraft, persons or otherwise. Although I have some hesitancy about this, I admit that the board can prescribe charges for goods, the manner of levying and collecting the prescribed charges and the manner and period of those charges.

As I read the Bill, I understand that the by-laws, when completed, will be tabled in this Chamber, the same as any Order in Council through the Governor in Council, so we will know exactly what has transpired in that regard.

Mr BIRD: That is correct. The by-laws will be tabled in the House.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12, as read, agreed to.

Clause 13—Finances—

Mr JONES (7.54 p.m.): This clause provides the method of financing the scheme, and also provides that finance of the harbour board cannot be transferred to airport expenditure and vice versa. Superstitious persons may consider the numbering of this clause ominous, particularly as it deals with the very important subject of finance. The coincidence that this clause is being debated in this Chamber on Wednesday, 13 May, might, for the superstitious, be even more unlucky. Separate funds are established—one for the Cairns Harbour Board and one for the airport—and the finances received in one account cannot be applied to the other. At least there will be some separation of the funds.

I draw attention to page 26, clause 5.3.1, of the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Study. It says that the Department of Transport is assumed to contribute 50 per cent towards all operating costs, with the exception of board members' expenses and audit fees. These are excluded on the assumption that the managing statutory board, which I assume will be the harbour board, will have other responsibilities apart from the airport and that it may be possible to readily separate the costs attributable to the airport. Does the Commonwealth still come in on 50 per cent of the operating costs?

Mr Bird: Yes.

Mr JONES: I understand that the members of the harbour board already fully expend their fees. I imagine that the Cairns Airport will be an entirely new ball game, requiring a whole new set of fees and expenses to be drawn in addition to the harbour board expenses and board meeting fees. I assume that there will be additional amounts set aside which will in effect double their income. They may have to devote twice or three times the amount of time.

The members of the Cairns Harbour Board are not permanent employees. They are not permanent board members, but they will have a double responsibility. The two Queensland Government nominees are Mr Micheli Borzi, OBE, 36 Atherton Street, Mareeba—a real estate agent—and Councillor Stanley John Collins, OBE, Spring Creek Station, via Einasleigh—a grazier who lives in Atherton and is also chairman of the Far North Queensland Electricity Board. Representing the city of Cairns is the mayor, Alderman Ronald Edward Davis, an accountant,

and Alderman Henry Denis Friend, who is a civil engineer with Gutteridge, Haskins & Davey. Representing the shire of Mulgrave is Councillor Roberto Rossi, who is a cane farmer from Charringa, via Gordonvale; for the shire of Douglas is Councillor A. Mijo, a cane farmer of Miallo, via Mossman; for the shire of Mareeba, Councillor Cedric James Davies, 20 Quill Street, Mareeba. I think he is a butcher. At least, that is his occupation listed in the electoral roll.

Mr Tenni: He is a bus proprietor—a mechanic by trade.

Mr JONES: He will be busy bringing the kids into school, I suppose.

For the shire of Atherton we have Councillor Thomas Patrick Johnson, Godfrey Road, Kairi, a farmer; for the shire of Malanda, Councillor Donald Gordon Waugh, Elias Road, Millaa Millaa, probably a dairy farmer; and for the shires of Herberton and Etheridge, which is a joint representation, we have Councillor Harry Rankine of Chilverton, via Evelyn Central, who is a dairy farmer and chairman of the board of directors of Malanda milk. He is well known in the back country up there.

The board members are busy men. I wonder how much time they will be able to devote to the management, organisation and supervision of the airport. They draw all the meeting fees and expenses to which they are entitled as members of the Cairns Harbour Board, and that indicates how busy they are. I imagine that meetings will be held in Cairns. As few of them live in Cairns, travelling will be involved.

Although it may be very convenient to extend the responsibility to a statutory board, I point out to the Minister that some members of the board might be overloaded.

Mr BIRD: I would be very surprised if each and every member of the Cairns Harbour Board has not given full consideration to the additional responsibilities and time involved in carrying out his duties as a member of this authority and come to the conclusion that he will be able to perform those duties satisfactorily. I have no doubt that fees for meetings will be in accordance with the Act.

Mr JONES: I draw attention to page 19 of the Cairns Airport Local Ownership Study. The board will have to underwrite the charges, and a summary of capital costs is set out in layout A and layout B. Layout A shows—

	\$ Million
Runway	4.343
Taxiways	4.441
Aprons	3.526
Access Roads	2.344
Carparks	.700
Drainage	.843
Terminal Facilities	4.100
Services (Power, Telecom, Water, Sewerage)	.477

The stage I subtotal is \$16,843,000, the subtotal for stages I and II is \$20,744,000, plus contingencies and engineering (20 per cent). The stage I total is \$20,200,000, and the total for stages I and II is \$25,000,000. Those making the report have not been game to estimate the cost of stage III, which includes widening to 60 metres. The report says that it is not likely to eventuate.

I can only wish the harbour board good luck and hope that the people of Cairns will not be flogged to death in an attempt to underwrite the items of expenditure that I have mentioned.

Mr BIRD: I am amazed that the honourable member for Cairns has said that the people of Cairns will have to underwrite the expenditures to which he has referred. With the exception of 50 per cent of the cost of the terminal buildings, those expenditures will be met by the Commonwealth before the take-over by the Cairns Harbour Board.

Mr CASEY: As the panorama of the Bill unfolds, a number of matters about which there was doubt when it was introduced become a little clearer. Of course, the financial provisions are the key.

I do not wish to repeat what I and other honourable members said in the debate on the second reading of the Bill, but it is clear that the Minister, even in his most recent remarks, cannot give any undertaking that in the future some form of precept will not be imposed on the people of Cairns or other local authority areas.

Because of the doubts that arise in the report—suddenly there was a need to increase the estimate of between 10c and 40c up to \$2—doubts have risen as to the future costing of the upgrading of the airport. Even before the work is carried out, there will probably be the normal escalation of 10 per cent. Because of the Federal Government's financial attitude to this issue and because the number of other sources from which finance can be derived is limited, future funding is by no means a simple exercise.

The Minister has made it quite clear that the State Government is neither in a position nor prepared to fund the Cairns Airport. I presume the Government is not prepared to fund any other airport, either. So the State Government is out.

This brings me to the identity of the persons who are really behind the introduction of this Bill. It is quite obvious that the pressure has come from the Cairns Harbour Board itself. So it is from that board that money to make up for shortfalls should be derived.

The harbour board can obtain funds from only one of two sources. It can obtain them as part of its normal procedures under the Harbours Act, or it can derive funds by means of a precept on the people of Cairns and the surrounding shires for whom

the airport will create a service. So no undertaking can be given tonight that the second eventuality will not occur. At some time in the future the harbour board has to determine that funding will come from a source other than its current procedures under the Harbours Act.

This circumstance has not been discussed so far. I know that the insertion of this subclause is designed deliberately to prevent such a measure. However, because no undertaking can be given in relation to it and because the Cairns Harbour Board has been able to exert sufficient pressure on the Government to allow the board to become involved in this scheme in the first instance—to become an undertaking for this scheme—I have no doubt that at some time in the future the Cairns Harbour Board will be able to put sufficient pressure on the Government to have the legislation amended so that it can derive funds. The Queensland Government, because it does not want to have to provide the finance, will be amenable to such suggestion. The Commonwealth Government certainly does not want to commit itself over and above its existing commitment.

This brings me to my next point. The money has to come from somewhere. Figures show that 75 per cent of exports through Cairns are made up of sugar and sugar products and 66½ per cent of imports into Cairns are petroleum and petroleum products. The majority of those petroleum products are used by the sugar industry, which is a highly mechanised industry. Consequently, if at some time in the future there is likely to be any change in the financial structure and there is a need for money to be found to make up the shortfalls in the costing structure, the burden will be imposed on the sugar industry. It will become the source of finance for this proposal. I say that because of the large contribution that the sugar industry makes to the Cairns Harbour Board.

Sure, the present proposal appears to be a good deal as far as the harbour board is concerned. However, before today we have seen deals of this type go haywire. The Mackay Abattoir Board is a classic example. Moves went on for years to try to assist its funding. Additional costs have been a worry for both the Bowen and Port Alma harbour installations, because certain undertakings went haywire. Money was spent and the anticipated financial return was not forthcoming. Both authorities have been in debt ever since. The difficulties facing the Port Alma/Rockhampton Harbour Board provide a classic example of the problems that can arise. Most meat today bypasses Port Alma and comes to Brisbane on the Queensland Railways. The Queensland Government is manipulating the affairs of one of its qangos.

It is probable that in the future the Cairns Harbour Board will approach the Government to change this legislation so that more finance is forthcoming. Finance can come

from only one of two sources, that is, the ratepayers of Cairns and surrounding shires or from the Cairns Harbour Board which, in the main, means the sugar industry. There can be no denial of that. We can talk about the current situation and the intent of the board and the Government at this stage, but when problems arise additional finance can come from only one of those two sources.

Mr TENNI: I am very concerned about the funding arrangements under the Bill, particularly what might happen if the harbour board gets into financial difficulties. I have no doubt that that will happen unless a precept is imposed on councils, the arrival and departure fee is increased, or a very stiff charge is placed on incoming freight and light aircraft landings. I therefore earnestly ask the Minister to consider inserting a clause in the Bill to protect the people.

I know that the Minister said that the present arrangements will stand while he remains Minister. I believe they will stand while we hold power in this State, and we have only to look at the Opposition to know that that will be for a very long time. Nevertheless, I suggest that a clause be added to give full protection to the ratepayers of the shires of Douglas, Mulgrave and Mareeba, and the city of Cairns.

I am sure that the Minister is aware that we are paying enormous freight charges, even on newspapers. For example, air freight on the "Sunday Mail" is 55c, while air freight on "Sunday Sun", which comes only from Townsville, is 50c. In the light of those charges, I hate to think what the Cairns port authority will do to freight charges on newspapers, food and parts for equipment and vehicles, when it gets into financial trouble. I should like very effective protection to be inserted in the Bill, perhaps under clause 13, to protect the people of the area. I should like the Minister to comment on that matter.

Mr BIRD: Both honourable members raised the same issues—the matter of a precept and the possibility of the Cairns Harbour Board getting into difficulties with the future operation of the airport. History shows that harbour boards have got into financial difficulties in the past, and the Government has never insisted that they impose a precept. So I cannot see that that would suddenly become part of our policy on the operation of the Cairns Airport.

To write into a Bill that something shall never occur is virtually impossible. I do not recall its being done before. I do not see how we could write into a Bill that at no time in the future will legislation be introduced to change an original decision.

Mr CASEY: I accept the Minister's explanation and what he has said about our past endeavours mainly in regard to loan funding of harbour boards to meet their commitments or amortise debts. But

there have been cases in which the Government has forced harbour boards to increase dues.

I accept the Minister's comment that it is impossible to include in a Bill a clause providing that something will prevail for ever more. We are a changing community and we change our habits. In a few years' time we might not be flying in jet aircraft; we might be taking off in spacecraft.

I am simply pointing out that there is a flaw in the financial measures that the harbour board is talking about, and the people of Cairns should be made aware of it. The people involved in the sugar industry in the Cairns district should be told that no undertaking can be given to guarantee that this will be a financial success and that in the future there is a very real possibility that we could be debating amendments to this legislation to remove some of its provisions so that the harbour board can undertake its own financial commitments to the airport.

Mr TENNI: I am not altogether satisfied with the Minister's answer. I am still very concerned about what might happen if this organisation gets into financial difficulties. I do not believe that we have to worry about what will happen in the far-distant future but surely we could add a few more words to the Bill to cover the life of this Parliament.

It is no good saying that it will not get into financial difficulties. We can all remember the Great Depression and a couple of recessions in the Whitlam era. In those times, tourism is the first hit. The figures applying to the financial operation of the Cairns Airport are based on the movement of tourists into the Cairns Airport and its development to international standard so that it can handle more tourists. I do not agree that there is no chance of a precept being imposed or any alterations being made to this legislation at the request of the board. A recession could force the board into financial difficulties.

I agree with the Minister's comments in regard to the harbour board. It has been very successful financially. But it deals with crops such as sugar. That automatically provides it with income. But the airport relies mainly on the movement of people. When trouble occurs, the first area affected is the transportation of people, and that could badly upset the financial standing of this organisation. I again plead with the Minister to give serious consideration to providing some form of protection for the people of that area.

Mr BIRD: I repeat that the matter of the levy to be applied has been fully considered and thoroughly researched by very competent men. It is obvious to them that at this time—we can only talk about "at this time"—a charge of \$2 on every person going through the airport will be sufficient to

allow not only the immediate repair costs of the airport to be met but also a capital build-up to ensure that future maintenance is carried out.

Would the honourable member ask my colleague the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police to give an assurance that at no time in the future will he increase motor-vehicle registration fees or any other charges that he imposes? We have to be realistic. We do not know what the future holds. We do not know what might occur with inflation. If another Labor Government got into power and there was massive inflation such as we saw before, but which I hope we will never see again, it is fairly obvious that there would have to be an increase in charges. I have no doubt that that is what the Cairns Harbour Board would be looking at. In answer to the plea that I write something into the Bill—as I say, there is no provision in the Bill relating to the imposition of a precept, and that is the only guarantee that I can give.

Mr JONES: The Minister took me to task for outlining the capital costs of the project. I refer him to subclause (2).

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Akers): Order! The honourable member for Cairns has spoken three times on this clause.

Clause 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—Funds—

Mr JONES (8.22 p.m.): This clause provides that the authority shall establish funds, and the funds have to be established in order to finance the operation. The Bill provides that the revenues received by the authority under the Act shall be applied for the purposes of the Act. The Minister took me to task on the previous clause for outlining the capital costs. I am saying that eventually—not now, but in the future—these costs will have to be recovered.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order: I think that the honourable member is stretching the intention of clause 14 a bit far.

Mr JONES: Clause 14 refers to an Airport Operations Fund and an Airport Loan Fund.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I do not want to get into an argument with the honourable member, but the clause specifically talks about keeping the funds; it does not talk about the application of them.

Mr JONES: I shall bow to your ruling.

Clause 14, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 15 and 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—Other Prescribed Funds—

Mr JONES (8.24 p.m.): In essence this clause provides that Cabinet can determine further prescribed funds and purposes to which the funds can be applied. Of course, this covers the three previous clauses which

deal with the Airport Operations Fund, the Airport Loan Fund, the raising of funds, expenditures and payments and moneys received by way of loan, subsidy or grant for a specific purpose. I take it that this clause deals with the specific purpose.

In effect, this clause and subsequent clauses are fail-safe clauses for the State. If the harbour board runs out of funds and the Cairns Airport cannot be operated, as the Commonwealth has transferred its responsibilities to the State the board becomes a State instrumentality and there will be another prescribed fund from which to underwrite the losses of the Cairns Harbour Board, just as if it was an ordinary harbour board. The cost recovery aspects are fully and finally loaded onto the State of Queensland and in their entirety the responsibilities devolve upon the State, not the Commonwealth.

Clause 17, as read, agreed to.

Clause 18—Regulations—

Mr JONES (8.27 p.m.): I take it that the port authority is bound by the Harbours Act to table reports and regulations in this Chamber so that all members, through Order in Council through the Governor in Council, will be able to see them. This Chamber, as a sovereign State Parliament, will have the oversight and will be empowered to act under the same provisions as are provided in the Harbours Act in respect of all matters necessary for the proper administration of this Act or the proper exercise or performance by the authority of its powers.

In effect, this Parliament overlays the authority and will be bound to step in; it is legally obliged to do so. That effectively transfers the operation of airports from the Commonwealth to the State. By default or by design, that is irrevocable. As I said at the second-reading stage, this Bill is a catalyst for bringing about control of all rural and provincial airports by statutory authorities, port authorities or boards. The State will be riding shot-gun as guarantor of those authorities. Airports in provincial centres will become the responsibility of the State Government.

Mr TENNI: I support the honourable member for Cairns to a certain extent. We have not been successful in introducing an amendment to provide some form of guarantee for people in the Cairns area. If in fact this airport gets into financial difficulty, will the Commonwealth Government pick up the tab or has the State Government the responsibility for that? I have no doubt that the airport will get into financial trouble; the only way it will get out of it is to load the people in the area. I would hate to see this State Government get loaded with anything. It backed out of the 30 per cent subsidy scheme and said that it would not have a bar of any costs. I now ask the Minister: If the airport does get into financial trouble, will we be the bunnies or will

the Commonwealth Government pick up the tab? Will it make sure that the people of Cairns still have an airport, in spite of their paying through the neck for it?

Mr BIRD: The State Government wishes to make it perfectly clear that it will not come to the rescue of the harbour board in the event of its getting into difficulties.

Mr TENNI: If the State Government will not come into it, is the Minister saying that the people of Cairns who use that airport will be fully protected by the Commonwealth's picking up the tab?

Mr BIRD: I cannot give an assurance of what the Commonwealth may or may not do. That is a matter for negotiation between the Commonwealth and the authority when it is set up, if it gets into difficulty at some time in the future.

Mr JONES: The Minister's statement has vindicated my assessment. If I were the Minister for Maritime Services, I would be setting up a marine board with regional authorities, because what he has in effect said is that he would do what the Minister for Local Government does. If it went broke, he would put in an administrator.

Mr Hinze: Use the trains; you own them. As an old railway porter, you would like that, wouldn't you?

Mr JONES: That is right. All my supporters will have to use the train. They will not be able to afford to go by air through our airport.

We are getting to the end of the Bill and on the lighter side of it. I reiterate my belief that this is the let-out clause for the harbour board. Perhaps it will not be in the Minister's time, but I think that other prescribed funds will get them out of difficulty.

Clause 18, as read, agreed to.

Clause 19—Protection of Authority and persons acting in pursuance of Act—

Mr JONES (8.32 p.m.): I have one short question, and I thank honourable members for their patience. Does this clause in effect put the authority under the shield of the Crown?

Mr BIRD: This clause gives the same protection to the harbour board as is given to any other statutory authority—nothing more; nothing less.

Clause 19, as read, agreed to.

Clause 20—Saving as to Commonwealth powers—

Mr JONES (8.33 p.m.): The Commonwealth still retains its powers at the airport through the harbour board. It seems to me that it retains all power while accepting no responsibility. In a lighter vein—and the Minister for Local Government would probably appreciate this—I note that the members of the authority will not be able to own or operate their own aircraft. I take it that

that is a precautionary measure against megalomaniacs. The Minister is not allowing members of this authority to get aeroplanes like other fellows in this State.

Clause 20, as read, agreed to.

Clause 21—Evidentiary provisions—

Mr JONES (8.34 p.m.): Is the secretary's advice—I imagine that it would be the secretary or the manager of the board—sufficient on behalf of the authority? Another question is one that was not answered previously: Will the secretary of the Cairns Harbour Board have the dual role of secretary of that board and manager of the airport? Will there be any conflict in serving the two authorities—in serving the two masters—or will there be two separate positions, manager of the airport and secretary of the harbour board?

Mr BIRD: This will be a new authority that will have the dual responsibilities of running the normal affairs of the harbour board and of running the airport. It will be up to the board to eventually decide the question of the management of the airport.

Mr JONES: In conclusion, I should like to know what undertaking or assurance the Committee has that the final agreement will be made public or available to members of this Assembly. In other words, if an agreement is negotiated and we are responsible for the Act, will we see the agreement? Will it be made public, or what will the position be?

Mr BIRD: I have no doubt that, following all the deliberations and agreement eventually being reached, it will in fact become public knowledge. I cannot see any reason why the Cairns Harbour Board should seek to hide from public view the final details of the agreement that has been reached.

Clause 21, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE

Debate resumed from 7 May (see p. 1053) on Mr Hinze's motion—

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

Mr PREST (Port Curtis) (8.38 p.m.): The Bill contains quite a number of amendments, and again the Minister states that they were requested by the Local Government Association of Queensland. Having looked at the proposed amendments, I am certain that the Opposition agrees with almost all of them. I hope that, as the Minister said, the Local Government Association of Queensland has requested that the amendments be made,

because I intend to expose some of the amendments as providing double standards—one law for some; another law for others.

The first amendment relates to the removal of commercial and industrial waste. All members of this Assembly have been bombarded with correspondence from various local authorities throughout the State asking that the section be repealed. The Government has seen the mistake that was made earlier, and the Opposition has no objection to the section being repealed.

The next amendment further tightens the provisions of the Act relating to the disclosure by a member of a local authority at any meeting of the local authority, including committee meetings, of any pecuniary interest. It also increases from \$200 to \$500 the maximum penalty imposable for the failure by a member of a local authority to disclose his pecuniary interest.

I agree entirely with the proposed amendment, but I cannot see why the Local Government Association of Queensland has asked the Minister for it. I ask: How many members have disclosed their pecuniary interest? I do not know of any. I believe that up to the present time it has been a toothless tiger. Recently the honourable member for Rockhampton referred to the Brimblecombe/Kern case in Toowoomba. Because of what occurred, that matter has not been aired fully. I do not believe that the Minister can enforce this provision by imposing a fine on any councillor or alderman.

The legislation could be seen as applying a double standard. We have in this House Ministers and back-bench members who will not disclose their pecuniary interest and who, at the same time, attend various committee meetings, speak when they are told to, vote in the party rooms as requested and, in this Chamber, introduce and speak to legislation in which it could be said they have a pecuniary interest.

I do not want to name anyone, but I will start with some members at the top. There are members who speak on mining matters and who have interests and shares in mining and farming as well as other interests. Of course, we are not told about those interests. There are doctors and chemists who speak on medical and health matters. There are members, such as the member for Warwick, who have dairying interests and speak on dairying legislation. It could be said that he has a pecuniary interest and that he does not tell us what it is. The list goes on and on. There is the back-bench member for Yeronga, who is interested in racing.

Mr Lee: What have I done?

Mr PREST: The honourable member does not disclose his pecuniary interests in racing. He is always talking about racing.

The Minister for Local Government himself is a big racehorse owner, the owner of trotters, a milk producer, a real estate

agent, a sand and gravel merchant, and so on. He speaks to legislation concerning all those activities, yet he does not disclose his interests. There are barristers and lawyers who speak on legal Bills and who are then paid to implement the provisions of those Bills. There is the Minister for Lands, who is a landowner and a grazier. The list goes on and on.

Mr Innes: Are you a householder?

Mr PREST: Yes, I am.

Mr Innes: Are you going to speak to the rating Bill?

Mr PREST: I have tabled my interests. If the honourable member would like to do the same thing, that would be OK with me.

What I am saying is that Government members are asking members and officers of the Local Government Association to disclose their interests, yet those Government members are not prepared to disclose their interests.

To go on further—Mr Tomkins is involved in racing with none other than Sir Edward Lyons, the TAB chairman. Does that Minister have a pecuniary interest?

This provision relating to pecuniary interests is just a joke. Business people are clamouring to get into local government so that they can obtain inside information to assist them in their business activities. That remark applies also to statutory bodies. People are seeking appointment to them so that they can gain information and an unfair advantage as well as financial rewards.

Mrs Nelson: Aren't most of the local authorities in Queensland dominated by Labor Party politicians, anyway? Aren't you accusing your own members?

Mr PREST: The honourable member has said she has been in politics for 10 years. Her suggestion is not true. Certainly members of the Labor Party are involved in local government. However, the shires are controlled predominantly by persons who are not members of the Labor Party, and there are many more shires than city and town councils.

At the outset I said I agree with the Bill, but I do not want double standards to be applied. We do not want one standard for us and another standard for other people. The standard that we set for ourselves suits us much better than does the standard that we apply to others. I believe that the provision should apply across the board to all tiers of government, including statutory bodies and senior public servants.

The next proposal provides that officers of local authorities shall disclose in writing any pecuniary interest in a matter that is to come before a local authority meeting or a committee meeting. I agree with that. Some officers of local authorities cannot decide on which side of the street they wish to

walk. They want the best of two worlds: to hold their jobs, and use their position of trust as a means of profit. Again, we must not be seen to be discriminatory. Some professional men use their positions of trust as a means of obtaining extra profits. When they get away with it they are considered to be shrewd businessmen.

Under another provision officers of local authorities are not entitled to perform work outside the local authority without approval. This provision will receive the same response as a similar one received from public servants. I cannot see how a person can be prevented from being a bookmaker's clerk, a bottle-shop attendant or a drink waitress at the week-end. Why shouldn't they be allowed to earn extra income? I can understand why an officer should not undertake outside work involving, say, the drawing of plans that might eventually come to the local authority for approval. The Government insists that public servants shall not have a second or part-time job, but how many members of this Government do not have another income or work in another job when they are not in this Assembly? As I said, there are two laws—one for us, and one for them—and the one for us is much better.

Mr Booth: How much longer will you carry on in this way?

Mr PREST: I know that it hurts the honourable member. In 1977 we had to introduce legislation to protect him and to keep him in this House. No wonder he has a soft spot. I seem to have hit his hip-pocket nerve.

The next provision gives a local authority power to impose a fee for a miscellaneous service that is rendered. This is a worthwhile amendment. I cannot see why the cost of accepting industrial refuse such as old car bodies should be borne by the general rate-payers. Car bodies are fairly bulky and soon fill up a dump area. In some areas it is costly to provide a council dump, especially when a bund wall has to be built to keep tidal water out and stop rubbish from polluting the creeks. In my area dumps are located on tidal flats, and the council has to build bund walls costing anything up to \$50,000. If the dumps are used for industrial purposes without the payment of a fee, and if car bodies are accepted, in no time the provision of more dumps becomes a costly proposition.

I am sure that when this legislation becomes law we will see many more unsightly car-wrecking graveyards such as the one near Southport. Old car bodies do nothing to enhance an area.

Mr Yewdale: Who owns that one?

Mr PREST: I said that I would not mention names, but if the cap fits, someone will wear it.

If a fee has to be paid, much more industrial waste will be dumped on the highway. We have a toothless, paper-tiger Litter Act. Maybe it will be amended to provide adequate fines for those who litter.

Mr Lee: That is not our responsibility.

Mr PREST: I am certain that many people would not pay a fee to dump a motor vehicle. Before long, many more old car bodies will be in full view of tourists and travellers. Recently when a new State high school was constructed a fence was erected around a nearby gully. There were no fewer than 10 car bodies protruding from the gully. That area was included in the playground of the high school.

I am pleased that the Bill will give the local authority power, in its discretion, to remit rates wholly or in part or grant remission of rates to any person who is in receipt of a pension under any law of the Commonwealth or of the State. I do not know how some people pay the rates that are charged by local authorities. They cause a great deal of concern to most pensioners.

Rates and charges impose heavy burdens on unemployed persons. There is no denying that some persons who are receiving unemployment or sickness benefits are in financial difficulties. Their plight causes me concern. Some of them are confronted with huge rentals demanded by landlords. Malcolm Fraser's saying, "Life was not meant to be easy" really applies to them.

The provision of pedestrian malls must be a function of a local authority under section 30 of the Act. We agree with that amendment.

I can see some merit in the proposal that two pieces of land which are virtually useless because they are too small can be joined together and held by one owner as long as the agreement is binding on successive owners of that land. The Minister may extend the time for giving notice of an application more than once before making a decision on a town planning application. I am told that the time taken by the Minister may not be an extension of the time, but it could be a safeguard, and I am happy to have the Act amended as requested.

The Bill refers to subdivision of land and the opening of new roads. It appears that a loophole a mile wide existed. We are only too happy to see that amendment being made.

The next proposal deals further with pedestrian malls. Previously the Governor in Council required a trial period of 12 months. That was not in the best interests of all concerned. If a decision is made to provide a pedestrian mall thorough investigations should be carried out because the provision of a mall of the standard required today is expensive. I am glad that the trial period is being dispensed with.

I also agree that motor vehicles and animals have no place in a mall. People should not be allowed to erect stalls or booths or park vehicles in connection with any business without obtaining approval. I agree that a penalty of \$500 should be imposed on people who disobey an order. Local authorities will be empowered to impose on-the-spot fines if vehicles are illegally parked inside malls. A mall should be safe for pedestrians and I can see no reason why motor vehicles should be allowed in them. The business people should be able to arrange for vehicles to service their stores early in the morning, so there is no need for vehicles to be there later in the day.

There is a car-hire firm inside the mall at Surfers Paradise, on the Gold Coast. People are allowed to take delivery of their vehicles inside the mall, and I do not think that is right. A person can get into a vehicle that he knows nothing about, and anything can happen, especially during the Christmas-New Year period.

The next amendment relates to the Townsville City Council. It gives the council the authority to introduce a new rate for those people conducting businesses inside the mall. It was an oversight on the part of the council, and it wants the position rectified. We are only too pleased to support the amendment.

There are many amendments dealing with local authority elections and, on looking through them, I cannot see anything really wrong with them. They seek only to bring the Act into line with present-day thinking. The first amendment seeks to increase, from \$4 to \$10, the maximum penalty for anyone who does not vote. The next one refers to the wearing of emblems or badges by a returning officer, a presiding officer or a poll clerk. We go along with that. I do not think it is necessary for those people to wear emblems or badges inside a polling booth. There are many other matters that do not worry us.

In another amendment provision is made for a returning officer, if he has time to do so, to note on copies of the rolls issued by him for use in the election the names of persons who have voted at the office of the local authority prior to polling day. That could be a big job for a polling officer. Most polling booths in the bigger centres have a number of rolls. If a returning officer marks the rolls, I am quite certain that it will be quite time-consuming. The amendment provides that he is to do this only if he has the time to do so. If he has the time, he is fortunate; if he has not, that is too bad. We go along with the rest of the amendments dealing with polling.

The last clause relates to the Beaudesert Shire Council. It is validating something that was done to the town plan in 1973. It has been pointed out that it was not

correct, and all we are doing here tonight is rectifying a mistake that was made in 1973. The Opposition is pleased to do so.

We are really not in conflict with any of the amendments that are proposed in this Bill. I have expressed our concern about the double standard in relation to the question of pecuniary interests and the double standard in relation to officers of local authorities. I do not think that these are all the amendments that should be made to the Local Government Act. Many more have to be made.

Local authorities throughout Queensland are experiencing many problems. The Woorcoo Shire in the Marborough-Hervey Bay area has been asking for a certain arrangement to be made. It has not been happy with a certain situation for the last three or four years. I do not know at this point of time whether anyone has gone to talk to those people. I sincerely hope that they have, because the problem is still there and, by all accounts, it will not go away.

There is a problem in relation to the administrative centre in the Livingstone Shire. I am told that the people there petitioned the Minister in relation to the site that was selected in one part of Yeppoon. When a new council was elected, the site was changed. It appears that the people in the area change the minutes of the previous council's meetings in the same way as they change their shoes.

Mr Yewdale interjected.

Mr PREST: Now that the member for Callide is an Independent and will be able to speak more freely and openly, he may be able to do something about the Livingstone Shire Council. He has been in local government and ought to know what goes on. It is in his electorate and the Opposition would be only too pleased if he could do something to satisfy those people.

In the Bowen Shire Council a gentleman of one division either resigned voluntarily or passed on, causing a vacancy in the local authority. The next in line was a member of the Labor Party. The remaining councillors stayed away from five consecutive meetings so that a quorum could not be achieved. I know that the Minister was written to in strong terms asking him to take action. I know that he has taken action but not in the way that the council requested.

Over the past day I have been attempting to bring to the attention of the House the problems within local government, particularly with amendments introduced into this House that erode the powers of local government. The Opposition and the Queensland Local Government Association have been saying that for some time.

Mr Frawley: Rubbish!

Mr PREST: I know that the brother of the honourable member for Caboolture is the mayor of Redcliffe. He is a different

type of fellow from the honourable member; he seems to be quite a nice fellow and has some ability. I am quite certain that he would think along the same lines as other members of local authorities who say that their powers are being eroded.

A special conference of the Local Government Association of Queensland was called last Thursday at which Mr Rogers condemned the present Government and, in particular, had some very strong words to say about the Premier. At the Townsville conference that was held some two years ago Mr Rogers once again had some words to say about the Premier—that Mr Iwasaki and others could get the ear of the Premier but never would he entertain the executive officers of the Queensland Local Government Association.

I now quote from the address of Mr Rogers—

“Ladies and Gentlemen: In opening this one day special conference, I wish to express my appreciation to the many Member Councils of our Association who are present here today. In addition we do have apologies from some Councils who have expressed support for the actions taken by the Executive but mainly because of distance have regretted their inability to attend and I am advised a number of Councils have appointed proxy delegates.

“I have attended every Queensland L.G.A. Conference since 1945 and have been very closely involved with the Association Executive for twenty years and I believe this is the first time, it has been necessary to convene a special one day conference.”

That was the first time that had to be done, so obviously they had to make a decision on a very important matter. The address continues—

“While the final decision to convene this conference was made by me, it was only after consultation with my vice Presidents, Cr. Sturrock and Cr. Barr. This resulted from a resolution carried at a full Executive meeting which was attended by all but one of the Presidents of the District Associations. This resolution directed me to take such action, if representations being made to the Premier were unsatisfactory.

“The purpose of this conference is to give consideration to what further action should be taken to express the objection of Local Authorities to the emasculation of the Local Government Department by the transfer of Local Government functions from the Department to other Government Departments.

“You may ask what actions have been taken to express Local Government’s concern at the actions of Cabinet and I report as follows.”

Mr Hinze: How many pages of that are you going to read? You can ask for it to be incorporated in “Hansard”.

Mr PREST: I am quite willing to do that if I can receive the approval of the Chair.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (Mr Miller): If the honourable member asks for my approval, I will give it to him.

Mr PREST: I seek leave of the House for the remainder of this document to be incorporated in “Hansard”.

(Leave granted.)

Whereupon the honourable member laid on the table the remainder of the document, which read as follows:—

On the 27 December, 1980 there was a report in the Courier Mail indicating some changes were to take place in the Department of Local Government.

On the 30th December, 1980, I directed a letter to the Honourable the Premier expressing our very real concern to the proposed changes and our confidence in Mr Hinze to administer Local Government efficiently and seeking an opportunity for Local Government to have discussions.

On the 9th January, 1981 the Premier’s Department replied and I quote:—“I am to inform you that your Association’s views on this matter have been noted by Mr Bjelke-Petersen”.

Then because of information coming to hand that important decisions were to be made during the Minister for Local Government’s absence overseas, I directed a letter be delivered to the Premier’s office seeking an opportunity for discussions with the Premier and any Ministers he may choose with the two Association Vice Presidents, the Treasurer and myself.

This letter was delivered on 12th January and as yet no reply has been received.

On the 11th February a Special Meeting of the Executive was convened. This meeting sought an immediate conference with the Premier, who was in Brisbane but unavailable to us. The same day the Premier’s Office was advised of the General Executive Meeting on 18th and 19th February and our request for a meeting with the Premier on either of those days was also declined. The Premier however, agreed to meet with us on the 25th February. Meantime, Orders-in-Council had been adopted by the Governor-in-Council to endorse the decisions of Cabinet. At the meeting with the Premier on the 25th the deputation of six lasted only 20 minutes.

On the 2nd March, 1981 I directed a personal letter to each member of State Parliament wherein they were advised of Local Government’s opposition to the actions of the Government and soliciting their support to oppose amendments to the legislation when they were before the House.

Two weeks later I telephoned the Premier seeking his response to the Deputation. The Premier simply reiterated what he had said to the Deputation. On the 24th March a further Special Meeting of the Executive was held to which invitations were extended to the Presidents of all District Associations and this meeting agreed unanimously that a further letter be sent to the Premier requesting that the decision transferring the functions be revoked and they again be placed under the control of the Minister and Department of Local Government.

The Premier, the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads, Police and Racing and the Minister for Water Resources and Aboriginal Affairs were requested to attend the special meeting of the Executive and District Association Presidents. No acknowledgement was received from the Premier, however, an apology was received from Mr Tomkins. Mr Hinze attended the meeting and some very frank exchanges took place.

On the 30th March a further letter went forward to the Premier. A reply was received from the Premier's office, indicating that if Local Government could prove conclusively any disadvantage, only then would consideration be given to reverting back to the previous situation.

I wish to make it clear that criticism from Local Authorities of the Cabinet decision to transfer administration of Town Water Supply and Sewerage to the Water Resources Commission under the portfolio of Mr Ken Tomkins and the transfer of control of Noise and Air Pollution to the portfolio of Mr Hewitt, are in no way political and perhaps the strongest criticisms are coming from Councils and Councillors and Alderman being recognised as Government supporters. Neither should it be considered that objections are coming from only large, cities, towns and urbanised Shires. Expressions of real concern have come from a wide cross section of Councils from the largest cities to the smallest shires.

Further it must be understood that criticism is not personal or levelled at the Ministers who hold the portfolios of the Departments in question. I have nothing but the highest regard for the Ministers concerned.

However, I cannot say I have the same attitude to Cabinet, where decisions are made, affecting Local Government without an opportunity for prior consultation and almost complete contempt for Local Government. This is quite simply a further manifestation of the Cabinet attitude of complete disregard for the important role Local Government plays in the development of this State.

Local Government is the level of Government that does more for the lifestyle and comfort of living than any other level of Government. Local Government can and does contribute more to decentralisation than other levels of Government by its willingness to provide for the needs of the people.

Candidates for election to Local Government require the same qualifications as candidates for other levels of Government and are elected by the same democratic procedures except that for election they are in most instances, dependant on their own personal presentation rather than Political Party support.

I have said many times that if elected members of Local Government placed their loyalties to Local Government above their political philosophies, Local Government would be the strongest force in the nation. This was most evident at the State Conference last year when Local Government presented a united front to the proposed method of providing rate remissions to pensioners. In that instance we were given the opportunity to express an opinion before legislation was enacted. Why the lack of consultation in the present issue?

Let us come now to the decisions of Cabinet which brought about the emasculation of the Local Government Department which has created so much concern and dismay amongst our Member Councils.

Town Water Supply and Sewerage are without question the responsibility of Local Government and should remain under control of the Local Government Department. I do not believe and I think it would be right to say your Executive does not believe Town Water Supply and Sewerage should be under the control of Water Resources, but we do say, if it does have to be controlled by Water Resources, then Water Resources should be under the Local Government Minister.

I could not think that anyone could be so naive as to expect cheaper water and I would predict that if this transfer of functions is to go unchallenged, then within ten years, Town Water and Sewerage will no longer be a function of Local Government, but will be controlled by Water Boards, under direction of a Statutory Commission with the Boards controlled by Public Servants who are neither responsible nor accountable to the citizens.

I think it would be right to say your Executive is aware that in certain circumstances Water Boards may be an advantage, but only in those areas where joint Local Authorities request them. Also such Boards should be fully composed of elected members of the Local Authorities involved, with possibly an Independent Chairman.

Ten years ago Local Government was a very minor administration in the Queensland Cabinet and almost always given to

a newly elected Minister. However, your Association with the support of the present Minister has raised its status to a very senior rating.

The Queensland Government has often stated that Local Government in Queensland operates under the best Local Government Act of all the States. I have supported this opinion, but today Local Government has been put back twenty five years or more and it would not surprise me if it was followed by slashing away further functions such as town planning and building regulations.

As a consequence of the Government's action, the manpower of the Local Government Department has been slashed from over 250 to 80, clearly substantiating the claim that the Department has been emasculated.

The transfers included top line engineers and advisers in Town Water and Sewerage who, along with the Director, Mr. Jacobs, were readily available to discuss Councils' problems. It may be argued that they are readily available now, but certainly not in consultation with the Director of Local Government.

Many statements have been made, and made consistently, that leaves no doubt with your Executive and many other people in Local Government, that the changes were not made to bring all matters relating to water under one Department, but to allow the Minister for Local Government to add to his already over loaded responsibilities, the administration of racing.

To substantiate this, not only did they transfer to Water Resources the control of Town Water and Sewerage, but also transferred the responsibility of Noise Pollution and Air Pollution to the Minister for Environment.

When the deputation of six members of the Executive waited on the Premier and the Deputy Premier on February 25th, the Premier advised that Cabinet was concerned with the work load of the Hon. Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police and had given some consideration to taking away Main Roads. However, having decided against that, they had then agreed to have a trial period of stream-lining the administration of all water matters by putting them under Water Resources.

Your Executive wrote to the Hon. Ken Tomkins, Minister for Water Resources about this on the 2nd March, and I quote from the Minister's reply dated 9th March:

"Firstly let me inform you that I was not a party to any of the changes. I think it is fair to say that my colleague, the Hon. R. J. Hinze, M.L.A. when given the portfolios of Local Government, Main Roads, Racing and Police was over committed insofar as the administration of these portfolios was concerned."

In a subsequent telephone conversation with the Premier, the Premier again indicated his concern for the work load of Mr. Hinze and stated that he had suggested to Mr. Hinze that the Minister may be prepared to relinquish the Police portfolio. Mr. Hinze has apparently preferred not to relinquish control of the Police. However, when addressing a meeting of the executive and the Presidents of District Local Government Associations on the 24th March, Mr. Hinze vehemently denied any inability to deal with his work load and said that many decisions were made by Cabinet when he was out of Australia having a holiday.

One can only surmise that opportunity was taken during the Minister for Local Government's absence to emasculate his Department.

We must also assume from the comments of the two Ministers that neither were party to the change and Cabinet's decision would have been made without the support of two of their senior and long serving Ministers.

In conclusion, the Association has received many letters from Member Councils and District Association Presidents, some being copies of letters forwarded to the Premier, others requesting the Association to strongly oppose the transfer of functions and in every instance expressing concern and opposition to the emasculation of the Local Government Department. There have also been telegrams and a number of telephone calls supporting the Executive. In addition we are aware of letters that were forwarded direct to the Premier.

It would be correct to say we have always enjoyed the confidence of the Minister for Local Government the Honourable Russ Hinze and generally we have been given the opportunity to have discussions on proposed changes which affect Local Government.

However, in the transfer of Local Government functions which is of real concern to Member Councils, despite our requests to have discussions with the Premier it was more than eight weeks and not until Orders-in-Council had been approved that we were able to meet with the Premier. That is just not good enough.

I am aware that the Premier has many commitments, so do I, also your Executive are busy men. To be kept waiting till after so many decisions are made is unfair and unjust.

F. A. Rogers,
President.

Mr PREST: I do not wish to waste the time of the House. There is a tight schedule and we have had a very late night. We are pleased that the amendments have been introduced, but unfortunately we see in them a double standard. Although they are

necessary, I sincerely hope that they achieve the objectives they are aiming for. Unfortunately, I doubt it.

Mr INNES (Sherwood) (9.5 p.m.): In rising to speak briefly to the Bill, I observe that it is interesting that the Minister must listen to a member of the Australian Labor Party talking about divided loyalties and double standards. If any group is a specialist on that subject, it is the Queensland division of the Australian Labor Party.

Mr Moore: The old and the new.

Mr INNES: That is right.

I wish to cover, briefly, four matters. The honourable member for Port Curtis has rightly commented on the matter of pecuniary interest, with which he would have some passing familiarity, as a former member of local government, because of something that occurred in relation to an officer of his local authority a few years ago.

Mr Hinze: Gladstone.

Mr INNES: That is right.

Previously officers had only to reveal an interest in contracts. That clearly was not sufficient. Many allegations are made from time to time, I suppose, by disgruntled people. We have all heard allegations made about officers of local authorities who themselves have had interests in subdivisional land or have received favours. This amendment seeks to tighten the law by requiring officers as well as members of local authorities to declare the holding of any pecuniary interest. I do not think anybody in the House would complain about that.

The second matter I wish to make brief comment upon—and I will take those points of view a little further with the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act Amendment Bill—are the modifications to lawful conditions. They are to be applauded. It may be difficult to find a balance between the sorts that local authorities occasionally pull by way of extracting too much under the guise of public interest and the rights of the individual to use his land as he may. We will see a little more of that balance when we debate the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act Amendment Bill. However, such modifications as are present in this Bill are to be commended. I am referring to the amendment to section 33 (16C).

One further matter I make passing reference to is that of the pedestrian mall, whether pronounced "mol" or "mal". I think the pronunciation "mal" differentiates it from the unfortunate connotation of the other pronunciation. As I understand it, that is the correct pronunciation of "Pal Mal", which is probably the first and most famous example of a mall. From page 10 to page 12 of the Bill are almost three pages devoted to the convenience of extracting on-the-spot fines. The Local Government Act is complicated enough. Its amendments are frequent enough. It is

bulky enough. If there is a way one can find of reducing its bulk and verbiage, it would have to be commended. Unfortunately, the problem of local authorities trying to find easier ways to enforce or police their laws perpetually occurs, and here we have three pages shrouded with all the legalities of "upon receipt", "for the purpose of", "notwithstanding" and "subject to" devoted to the very simple matter of extracting an on-the-spot fine from somebody who parks in a pedestrian mall.

I am in no way criticising the draughtsman, because he has to find the words to stitch the situation up. But the Minister is also the Minister for Police, and I understand that the police have some reluctance to accept responsibility for policing parking in a pedestrian mall, which is a bit of a camel-like creature—neither fish nor fowl, nor road nor otherwise. In view of the Minister's divided responsibilities and rights, it might have been more convenient to include a provision in the Traffic Act and give the police or an authorised officer of the council power to police it in the normal fashion of an enforcement under the Traffic Act.

Three pages devoted to a very simple topic of enforcing and collecting an on-the-spot fine for parking in a pedestrian mall seems a little bit excessive and a little bit cumbersome to achieve a result that could have been achieved by a simple amendment under the Traffic Act. I would have thought that usually the police would be the people enforcing the law, because the most likely time for these parking offences to occur will be at night and at other times when council officers will not be present.

The last matter to which I wish to refer relates to town planning. Again, it is a matter of which I would ask the Minister publicly to take note. It was a matter with which I was familiar but had forgotten until I was reminded within the last 48 hours by somebody talking to me about a particular problem.

All honourable members have heard of Westfield Pty Ltd, a New South Wales company that has lately become interested in a substantial coal-mining lease. The company's normal occupation is that of manager and operator of shopping centres, and it operates the biggest and most successful shopping centre in Queensland at Indooroopilly Shoppingtown. That shopping centre is a roaring success, but some of the activities of Westfield Pty Ltd and relationships between it and its tenants leave much to be desired.

Perhaps it is qualified to enter the coal-mining field, because a certain amount of bulldozing goes on, the victims of which are the tenants of speciality shops at Indooroopilly Shoppingtown. I know that the honourable member for Rockhampton is interested in this area as president of the Queensland Consumers Association, but the

full answer might lie under different responsibilities and different Acts from the one that we are discussing at the moment, which is the responsibility of the Minister for Local Government.

I should like to refer to a typical clause in the lease of the tenants of speciality shops at Indooroopilly Shoppingtown, because it relates very directly to a matter of local government. A provision in the lease of many of those tenants is—

"The Lessor grants to the Lessee during the continuance of this Lease the non-exclusive right for its customers whilst shopping in the Shoppingtown to use the car parks within the Shoppingtown for the parking or passage of motor vehicles and for the vehicles of the Lessee and its suppliers to use the said car parks for ingress and egress from the demised premises whilst making deliveries thereto. It is expressly agreed and declared that no right of use of the said car parks is granted for the lessee and its vehicles or for the officers or employees or agents or licencees or invitees of the lessee and their vehicles other than aforesaid."

That means that the only rights associated with the lease are for customers to come to Shoppingtown and park in the car parks built there or for deliveries to be made and for vehicles to enter for the purpose of delivery and then leave. Expressly, there is an obligation that the tenant cannot park his own car there, nor can any of his employees.

Furthermore, it goes on to say—

"The Lessee will at all times use its best endeavours to prevent the said car parks being used by any such unauthorised persons and the Lessee covenants and agrees that it will within seven (7) days of being called upon so to do by the Lessor supply to the Lessor the make and registration number of any motor vehicles of the Lessee its officers or employees employed at the Shoppingtown and supply to the Lessor the names and addresses of the officers and employees of the Lessee at the demised premises and at the premises of any related or subsidiary company carrying on business within the Shoppingtown."

It is a provision of the City of Brisbane Town Plan and of the town plans of other cities and towns in Queensland that the building of a facility such as a shopping centre shall include adequate car-parking and that the ratio of car-parking allotments to the retail-shopping space shall provide spaces for the employees and staff of the tenants. That is the express intention of the law relating to the building of those premises and its initial concept.

Here we have the gall of these modern commercial retailing buccaneers who flout the law and require their tenants and the employees of those tenants to park their cars off the premises. I understand that

steps have been taken in a very forceful way to deter, apart from the problems of breaching the lease.

What happens is that the unfortunate people who happen to have residences around Shoppingtown have to put up with their frontages and vehicle driveways being impeded constantly from 7.30 in the morning by the hundreds of cars that are driven by the employees and tenants of the speciality shops.

Mr Yewdale: And the shoppers.

Mr INNES: And the shoppers. However, some control is exercised over the shoppers. If they are forced to park too far away, they will not shop there. The person who has the magnet of his livelihood will put up with some discomfort.

The requirement to which I have referred is absolutely wrong. It is totally inconsistent with and contrary to the desired intention of the City of Brisbane Town Plan and other town planning schemes in Queensland. Such a provision in a lease should be outlawed.

I ask the Minister to ensure that in any future amendments to the Act such provisions be outlawed. They are absolutely inconsistent with the intent of the town planning scheme and the initial concept of development of the property in question. This is a matter that should be ventilated and considered in the drawing up of any future amendments to the Local Government Act.

Mr YEWDALÉ (Rockhampton North) (9.18 p.m.): I rise to refer to the provision relating to the power of the local authority to remit and wholly discharge rates and charges levied on pensioner land-owners. The Bill refers to the type of pensioner. The Bill will allow the local authority the right to use its discretion in relation to rates and charges levied on those pensioner land-owners.

This provision is a very good one and it will help people who find themselves in financial difficulties. However, I wonder whether the provision will be applied in a pious manner by the local authorities. I wonder how far the provision will go. I can visualise local authorities stepping around this situation instead of allowing these remissions.

It is pertinent to refer to the decision of the Government made last year to provide a 20 per cent remission of rates to pensioners throughout Queensland. I shall not go into the tedious details of the local government conference, the arguments that occurred and the final wash-up of the subsidy that is made available by the Government.

It is pertinent to talk about Rockhampton, my home town. To some extent the Rockhampton City Council exploited the Government in relation to that 20 per cent. Eligible pensioners, with a pensioner's entitlement card, are expected to complete a

form annually showing that they are pensioners living at their principal place of residence and provide some other personal details. The Rockhampton City Council was allowing eligible pensioners an annual rate concession of 35 per cent. The Government provided 20 per cent on the basis that it was to be in addition to the concession allowed by local authorities throughout the State.

Many shires, particularly those in the country, did not provide a concession because it would have meant a loss in income when there were only a small number of landholders and quite a number of reasonably sized landholdings. Instead of adding the 20 per cent to the 35 per cent being allowed to eligible pensioners, the Rockhampton City Council decided to review the situation.

At the moment, even with the 20 per cent input from the Treasury, the city council is now allowing only 40 per cent concession on rates to eligible pensioners. I say with a clear conscience that that was a devious approach. I cannot understand how the council can justify its action seeing that it was allowing eligible pensioners a 35 per cent rebate and is now allowing only a 40 per cent rebate, when the 40 per cent includes the 20 per cent made available by the Government.

I cannot understand why the Treasurer or the Government does not do something about this situation. The council's actions are wrong in principle. As of July this year the council will allow an across-the-board rebate of 40 per cent to all eligible ratepayers, but that is only 5 per cent in addition to the council's rebate, despite the Government's making an extra 20 per cent available.

In the second half of last year the city council asked pensioners to provide a number of personal particulars about bank accounts. Any person with over \$10,000 in the bank had to provide bank account figures, particulars of shareholdings and any other interest or income, before becoming eligible for a 20 per cent rebate from the city council. I make it clear that it did not impose those requirements on the Government's 20 per cent subsidy, but Rockhampton's eligible ratepayers now get only an extra 5 per cent.

Another provision relates to fines imposed for non-voting in local authority elections. If we were to expand on non-voting in local authority elections and electoral rolls, we would be here until 1.30 a.m. I see nothing drastic in changing the fine for a non-voter from \$1 to \$10. In the light of today's money values, that is not unreasonable. Over the years, most honourable members have had experience with electoral rolls and non-voters. It cost me a considerable sum to send objection notices back to the Electoral Office for non-voters. It is appropriate that the former Justice Minister should be present. Without doubt he is aware of the circumstances relating to non-voters and

finer. If a local government is concerned about fining non-voters, it should, in collaboration with the Minister for Justice, who is in charge of electoral rolls, do something about the rolls.

We have heard talk about a combined Federal and State roll. Everybody commends that proposal and I hope that we very soon have the combined roll. Even with it, I do not know that all of the problems will be eliminated. Many electors find that mistakes have been made by polling clerks, for example, and we will never be able to eliminate human error.

As an example of what can happen I refer to what happened to three Rockhampton families when they tried to vote in the last election. Two of the families were in South Queensland and one family was in North Queensland. They approached the polling clerks and said they wanted to vote and that they resided in the electorate of Rockhampton North. They were told that they were enrolled in the Rockhampton electorate. Regrettably, my colleague the honourable member for Rockhampton got five of my votes. The electoral office was wrong. The residential addresses of those people were wrongly included in the Rockhampton electorate. The people argued with the polling clerks but the polling clerks insisted that they vote for the candidates in the Rockhampton electorate. At least they voted.

Subsequently they received a notice from the Principal Electoral Officer saying that they had not voted, whereas they had voted for candidates in the wrong electorate because of an error on the part of the polling clerks. That is an unusual example of how people can be declared non-voters.

I have no argument about the penalty that can be imposed on non-voters. There is a host of people who have other legitimate reasons for not voting, and fines are not imposed in many cases. The Minister should collaborate with the Minister for Justice on this matter. A lot of thought has been given to amending this Act and, if the other end of it is not tidied up, the problem will still exist.

One proposal deals with a permit for developers. It is a difficult area to update and it is difficult to catch up with the people who try to beat the by-laws and regulations. From time to time I have to deal with objections from constituents who live in the newer housing areas. The local authority is allowing too many blocks of flats to be built in good-standard housing areas. I do not have to go into the effects of the presence of a multiplicity of flats in high-standard residential areas. I am not derogatory of the people who live in flats, but flats create problems such as young people riding motor bikes. People congregate in the streets on their way to and from work. That can cause a great deal of disruption.

The Rockhampton City Council is consistent. It requires notice-of-objection signs to be placed on allotments, but very often people do not take much notice of them. I do not know whether this is because of ignorance of the law. When eventually flats are erected on the allotments local residents want to do something about them. If only a couple of families living close by lodge an objection, the council's attitude is that as only a few people objected it will issue the permit. I suggest to the Minister that he look into the current requirements for the erection of signs indicating the proposed construction of flats.

While I am talking about notice-of-objection signs, I shall refer to the erection of stables. There is a problem in Rockhampton with the proliferation of stables in a particular area. Over a period, stables have been erected in an older area of Rockhampton, and people are continuing to make application to erect further stables in that area. The council has adopted an easy way out. It says to people "You cannot build stables in other areas of the city, but you can build them in the area where the other stables are." New stables are being erected further and further away from the existing stables. The only justification for building further stables in the area is that there are already other stables there. The council is making the situation worse.

I was recently involved in this matter. It was proposed to erect new stables in close proximity to a rather large primary school. With the humid weather in that area, flies and stench are a nuisance. Even though the by-laws provide that the stables have to be cleaned regularly and that lime must be spread on the ground, it is a low area and it holds a lot of water. Common sense prevailed in this case and the council refused the application to build new stables in the area.

The Bill also refers to car bodies, and provides that local authorities can impose a charge for removing car bodies from premises. This matter has always concerned me. Car bodies are ugly and make a place look untidy. They encourage vermin. In certain areas they hold water and are a breeding ground for mosquitoes. I can see nothing wrong with a council in any area giving notice that it will pick up car bodies with a crane and a large vehicle on a certain date. That is better than coming along to people and saying, "We are going to take that car body and it will cost you \$X."

By doing it on an organised basis, the council can reduce the cost to the person who has a car body to be removed. Many people do not have the means to shift a car body. If they call in a carrier or a crane to shift it, it will probably cost them \$30 or 40. The council could approach a home owner and say, "Look, we will have a vehicle covering this area next

Thursday or Friday. We will shift all the car bodies in the area and use them for reclamation purposes."

The other matter that I wish to briefly discuss relates to the question of noise abatement. Right from the start the Noise Abatement Act has had growing pains. I would like to compliment the Minister for Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services for sending to all members a communication indicating the areas of responsibility for local authorities, the police and his own department. I have spoken to him about that matter. It was a good decision on his part.

My experience with local authorities indicates that there is a tendency for local authority officers in the city of Rockhampton to avoid inquiring about complaints that are made in their area. They imply that they are not conversant with the requirements of the Act. I have found that police officers act in the same way. They do not want to become involved in matters that seem to be outside their normal police duties. I intend to raise the matter again with the local district police inspector and the council.

I have also spoken to the Minister about the forms that have to be forwarded to his department when a complaint is made by a resident. In a brief discussion with the Minister he indicated that when a person sends in a written complaint the procedure has been to send out a form for his completion. In effect, it means asking the person to repeat what he said in his written complaint to the department. The Minister has intimated to me that he will instruct his officers to repeal that section of the Act which requires the department to send out a form after a clear and precise complaint has been received. I believe that that is a commonsense approach.

I am not clear about the position with local authorities. A person can go to a city council office and submit a complaint. I do not believe that the council should ask for it to be put in writing so that it can be identified, filed and followed up. Recently I had a complaint about noise. I rang the city council and spoke to the Chief Health Inspector. He intimated that a form had to be completed and sent to the department. I asked him if I could send the constituent in to get the form, but I was told the council didn't have any. I asked him where they were available and was told they were available in Brisbane. He told me to get in touch with Brisbane, have the form sent to the constituent, get him to fill it in and then return it to Brisbane. I did this, the complaint was received, and in due course investigated and some corrective action taken.

City councils could act as a depot for forms, if I could use that term, in the community where persons could obtain them so that their complaints could be submitted. The city council could make the fact known

that it was holding a supply of the forms. That could apply to survey and valuation matters. I am not sure that the department dealing with those matters has an office in Rockhampton. The Minister has supplied forms to the members of this House; I do not think it is appropriate that they should remain in electorate offices.

I believe the matters I have raised are problems in the community. I ask the Minister to take cognisance of what I have said and give those matters consideration.

Mr WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (9.36 p.m.): A Bill to amend the Local Government Act always provides an interesting debate. In the past it has been one that dozens of members have entered, but tonight only a few Opposition members have spoken, and so far only one Government member.

That does not surprise me because I realise we are watching what one might call the dismembering of local government in this State. Although in the past most Ministers have been willing to empire-build, we have somewhat of a different character in the present Minister for Local Government who is slowly but surely destroying the local government structure. It may well be that he has too many other roles to play with his responsibility for racing, main roads and other matters in which he is deeply involved. He ought to start admitting what is happening. Those views are held not only by me. I notice in an article that appeared in the "Tableland Times"—

Mr Hinze: Is that your paper, too?

Mr WRIGHT: No, it is not mine. It does not have my quality, but this article has a quality that is just as high in terms of readership.

Sir Albert Abbott, the mayor of Mackay and also the president of the North Queensland Local Government Association, made some rather scathing remarks about what is happening to local authorities. I do not intend to read the article into "Hansard" but I urge members to look at it because that man is a National Party member who at one time stood for election as a member of the National Party and has been a vocal supporter of the Government. He now says straight out that councils must protest at the dismembering of the Department of Local Government, for it is without doubt another nail in the coffin of that so-called third tier of government—local government. I believe that sums up something of what is happening to local government in this State. It has been going on for a long time; it commenced with the Brisbane City Council.

Mr Hinze: I asked the Lord Mayor today whether he would like the popular vote to be returned to the Brisbane City Council and he said, "No."

Mr Warburton: The council would have liked to retain responsibility for electricity, though.

Mr WRIGHT: I bet it would have. The council would have liked to have some of the income-earning capacity that the Government has taken away. The Government made sure that councils have loads of financial responsibilities but no control over the purse.

Mr Lee: You wouldn't have a clue.

Mr WRIGHT: I am sure I do have a clue on this matter and I am sure other members will acknowledge that what I am saying is true.

Mr Lee: I accept that.

Mr WRIGHT: OK. I was about to reply to the honourable member, but now I will not.

I believe all members are concerned because this State has always had a three-tiered system of government. Whilst aspersions can be cast at who is in control at a Federal and State level, the local government level has retained a grass-roots approach and has been the one closest to the people—although I realise that members of this House play a significant role.

I use Sir Albert Abbott's term that we have seen a dismembering of local government. That is continuing. However, that is not the only problem. I see the problem of interference.

Mr Hinze: That is not true.

Mr Kruger: All local authorities have been saying that and yet the Minister says that it is not true.

Mr WRIGHT: I take the honourable member's point. It is a very valid one. Only one person says it is not happening—the Minister for Local Government. We have members of the Opposition, many of whom have had long experience in local government, saying it is happening, and members of the National Party and the Liberal Party admit that it is happening. Members in the local government area—the leaders at an association level—say it is happening. But the Minister says, "No, it is not." Surely he is not right in this instance while all of them are wrong. We have had Fred Rogers, Sir Alby Abbott—

Mr Hinze: Fred Rogers has been saying that for years. You know that yourself.

Mr WRIGHT: Yes, I know that, and I think he has had good grounds for saying it. He saw what was happening at the Brisbane City Council level. A long time ago I heard a statement by the member for Lytton when he was talking about Hitler. He said that a lot of people in those days stood back and said, "Look, I won't do anything. The lawyers aren't saying anything. The academics aren't saying anything. Religious leaders aren't saying anything." I do not remember the quotation exactly, but I remember the tenor of it: most people tend to stand back and cop it because it is not happening to them specifically.

That is what is happening in local government. I think the Minister has known that and has played one against the other. The Minister has sat back and said, "Let's 'do' the Brisbane City Council. Let's screw them"—to use a term that has a physical connotation that applies very well to what has been done—"and then let's turn on the local authorities." Again, that has been done very effectively, firstly, by changing the structure.

However, it is not just the structural changes that concern me: it is the sheer interference. That is the main point I wish to raise tonight. It is all very well for the Minister to talk about pecuniary interests for local authority members. We do not hear that for members of State Parliament. We certainly do not hear it for members of Cabinet. I am told that the Liberals now have some sort of declaration. If they enter Cabinet, they must dispose of all their shares. I remember the Treasurer saying something about that.

Mr Hinze: I disclosed mine last year over in the old building. I challenged the whole lot of you.

Mr WRIGHT: With due respect, the Minister's disclosure would have to be made minute by minute, considering some of the little deals he gets into. I am not referring to anywhere in particular, but I would say that his disclosures would have to be made minute by minute, hour by hour.

Mr Hinze: They would have to be disclosed hour by hour.

Mr WRIGHT: That is what I am saying.

It is the interference that concerns me greatly. The main issue I raise relates to Mooloolaba. Regrettably it involves a firm that has become associated with me—the Kern Corporation.

Mr Kruger: Haven't you spoken of them before?

Mr WRIGHT: Yes. It is getting to be like a "Blue Hills" serial.

Whenever we look at some of the problems that involve interference by the Minister for Local Government, the name "Kern" appears. There seems to be a strange association—not that I would dare think that the Minister would benefit in any pecuniary way, because he would no doubt declare what he had. At Mooloolaba a proposal was submitted to develop a 16-storey complex on what they call the Spit. There was strong popular opposition. The people were against it. Some 5 000 people signed a petition calling for a referendum on the issue. They were able to show that it was environmentally disastrous.

The area was flood prone. Back in the 1920s and 1930s, floods had broken through onto the area, which neither Kern nor its builder knew anything about. However, it

has been proven by photographs this very day. It was shown that the development would cause traffic problems and would cast shadows all over the caravan park and the nearby residential area.

In spite of all these environmental aspects and opposition at council level, the Minister himself intervened. I do not know why. We ought to be told why. Does the Minister have such special power that his wisdom is of Solomon and he can see, sitting in some ivory tower down here, that he knows better than the locals?

Mr Hinze: You are making a mistake, you know.

Mr WRIGHT: I have some questions I have been wanting to submit for weeks. I will raise them with the Minister now, because I will not get a chance to put them tomorrow. Perhaps the Minister can answer me by way of a ministerial statement, because I like the way he uses them. Is it correct that, after the local government referee upheld the decision by the Maroochy Shire Council to reject an application by the Kern Corporation under section 30B (3) of the State building law, and because of its relationship with section 32A of the Local Government Act, an approach was made to the Local Government Department by Kern's QC appealing against the referee's decision? The Minister can now answer the question.

Is it correct that, at the time, the Minister was in Longreach and that he sent an instruction that the case was to be reopened and heard again by the referee but that this time he was to consider only 30B (3) and that the environmental aspects of 32A were not to be considered? The Minister can answer later and give me complete details. I was really going to ask whether it was done by telex or telegram, and the Minister could weave his way round that one. Was the Minister in Longreach at the time? Did he intervene or interfere?

Is it correct that the building project was approved in its original form against the advice of experts and the wishes of residents; that there is insufficient car-parking; that the plan still does not comply with the council by-laws under the town plan; and that the project would not be approved by the Beach Protection Authority?

I do not wish to say that I disbelieve the Minister, because he and I have been friends for a long time, even when he was on the back benches, too. He told me some time ago in a debate that he had never had any private meetings with Barry Paul or anybody from Kerns other than meetings of an official nature in his departmental offices. That is what the Minister said; it is in "Hansard".

Mr Hinze: That would be true. I will tell you what I will do: I will take the question that you have asked and give you a complete answer tomorrow on the matters that you have brought out.

Mr WRIGHT: I want that.

Mr Hinze: A complete ministerial statement.

Mr WRIGHT: I begin to wonder whether the Minister has a bad memory, or whether sometimes my information is wrong. I was told on good authority that the Minister had in fact met Barry Paul and another person who could have been Eric Riding; that he met them in the Milano restaurant just before the end of last year; that he had a luncheon there. The Minister told me that he had not met Mr Paul before these matters were raised with him. Mr Barry Paul told me on television that the Minister had in fact invited—

Mr HINZE: I rise to a point of order. I do not wish to take up the time of the House in refuting these statements, but I have not met Riding in company with Barry Paul on any occasion.

Mr Wright: Well, the Minister met Barry Paul separately at the Milano.

Mr HINZE: Barry Paul would be a person who would come to my office—of course he would—or come to—

Mr Wright: I am talking about luncheon at the Milano.

Mr HINZE: I do not go to luncheons at the Milano. I am not inclined to accept invitations to lunch at the Milano. If I have met him at lunch at the Milano, it would be purely by accident, not by design.

Mr WRIGHT: I will accept that, Mr Deputy Speaker. I believe that the Minister is an honourable man. I do not always agree with the things that he decides, but I like to think that he deals very strictly with the truth.

Mr Hinze: I will give you full details tomorrow in a ministerial statement.

Mr WRIGHT: I believe that the Minister did intervene on this issue. I believe that he interfered in the Mooloolaba matter. I wish to know why he did. If there were good grounds for interfering, we would expect the honourable gentleman to do that.

Mr Hinze: Everything I did was under the Act on the recommendation of the Director of Local Government.

Mr WRIGHT: It may have been within the Act. The Minister has certain discretionary powers under the Act. But his task is also to listen to the people.

The Act also says that if 20 per cent of the people want to dissolve the council, the Minister can do that. Twenty per cent of the people wanted to dissolve the council, but the Minister did not do anything about it.

The Act also says that, at the request of 10 per cent of the people, a referendum may be held. Thirteen per cent of the

people requested a referendum to ensure that there was no high-rise right in this area. But what happened? The Minister's department said, "No".

It seems to me that the Act is applied when it suits the Minister; but when five or six thousand people are aggrieved and they want something stopped, the Minister does nothing about it.

Mr Hinze: What about the council?

Mr WRIGHT: In this instance, the council opposed it and opposed it till the Minister stepped in.

Mr Hinze: Why did I step in?

Mr WRIGHT: The honourable gentleman interfered or intervened. The people did not want it, and the council was told—and I have spoken to an alderman about the matter—that it had to comply with the directions of the Local Government Department. Perhaps the Minister can tell honourable members tomorrow exactly what his involvement has been. I am not suggesting that there is anything illegal or immoral, or whatever the case might be. It could be that the Minister has been wrongly advised.

Mr Hinze: No, I would not think so.

Mr WRIGHT: The information given to me is that the honourable gentleman intervened, and he has now set a major precedent. There is going to be a 16 or 17-storey building on The Spit. It is an environmental disaster, and the people do not want it. In the first instance, it was opposed by the council, and all sensible people disagreed with it. The locals were against the idea. Yet the Minister supported it. I want to know why.

Mr Kruger: They tell me that the waterfront up in Mooloolaba is like a giant mecano set. Cranes are going up everywhere.

Mr WRIGHT: I do not know about that, but in four or five days' time I will be heading up there. I have tried to get to Mooloolaba before this, but the other night I went to Townsville chasing another Kern matter.

The site itself is 80 m from the high-water beach mark and only 65 m from the river-bank foreshore. So there is an environmental problem. The area is prone to flooding, traffic problems will arise, shadows will fall across adjacent land and the density of population will create a problem. The site is on the second busiest corner in Mooloolaba, and there is a height difficulty as well as a size difficulty. Yet in spite of all that, the Minister intervened. He has a responsibility to say why. What driving force is there behind the Minister to compel him to intervene on such a matter?

Mr Hinze: I hope you are in the House tomorrow when I pay the courtesy of replying.

Mr WRIGHT: I listen to the Minister, anyway. But I will be here.

The Minister has a responsibility not only to the House but to the people of Mooloolaba to explain why he rejected their wishes, why he rejected 5 600 petitioners who wanted a referendum to be held on the issue. Why did the Minister do that? The answer is simple: Because the law provides that if the people express a certain wish and if they have the numbers the council is bound to comply with their wish. That is why the Minister intervened.

He knew that the people had the numbers and that a referendum would be against the high-rise. He knew that by law the council is bound to carry out the wishes of the people. So he or someone in his department made sure that a referendum was not held. I must be careful in casting aspersions. Nevertheless, that happened. The Minister prevented the will of the people from being known on this matter; he refused to allow a referendum to be held.

However, we still know what the will of the people is, because in a very short time 5 600 signatures were collected. I will be happy to hear the Minister's reply tomorrow.

I should also point out that the Local Government Department has intervened in other matters, such as the Skateway proposal at Graham Road and Gympie Road. Why did the Local Government Court reject the council's stand on that one? To what extent was the Local Government Department involved? I am surprised over and over again by the extent of the department's involvement. However, when we want the Local Government Department to stand up and be counted on issues, it is not there.

This brings me to the most important argument that I want to develop tonight, namely, that concerning the shopping centre complexes. Already we have heard falsehoods told in the House by Sir William Knox. He said that we should not have any fears about the BP and Caltex groups. I have been told, however, that we have some real troubles here. A lot of misleading statements are being made, particularly in relation to shopping centres.

New shopping centres are being approved willy-nilly throughout the State. Normally some type of economic impact study is required before approval can be given. However, it seems that now it is not required. For some reason, the Minister is able to circumvent it.

There is an instance on Boyne Island, of which the member for Port Curtis is no doubt aware. A complex has been approved for Kern, yet it will destroy a number of shops a quarter of a mile away. A similar situation will arise at Atherton and at Toowoomba. The Minister and I had quite a tussle over the Toowoomba issue.

Mr Hinze: The council.

Mr WRIGHT: The Minister should forget about the council; we are talking about people.

Mr Hinze: On most occasions the councils are recommending in favour, and most of the councils are Labor councils.

Mr WRIGHT: I do not believe that that is so.

Mr Hinze: Take the Gold Coast. The Labor Party controls the Gold Coast Council.

Mr WRIGHT: I am talking about Toowoomba. The Toowoomba City Council is not Labor-controlled.

Mr Hinze: You have a fairly big Labor content in the Toowoomba City Council.

Mr WRIGHT: Oh, come on! The fact of the matter is that the Minister has approved a complex in Toowoomba only 100 m from an existing complex.

Does the Minister think at all about the small shopkeeper or the specialist shopkeeper in the complex? He seems to be supporting the proposal that these complexes should be allowed to go anywhere. His department seems to support that proposal.

Mr Hinze: Read tomorrow's newspaper.

Mr WRIGHT: What will the Minister be reported as doing?

Mr Hinze: You'll see.

Mr WRIGHT: I should like to think that the Minister is going to do something—and maybe he should tell the House about it. That is what is wrong with this place. He will tell the Press reporters, but he will not tell the Assembly. Members have to read the newspapers to find out what is going on. That is the way it has been done in the past. The Minister fell on his face with that by saying that he will put it in the Press and we will see it tomorrow.

People in shopping centres are getting wiped out. The honourable member for Sherwood spoke about parking tonight. I have been talking to people in the same area who suffer major difficulties. I have not heard the local authority saying anything about them. The place is not even opened till 8.30 a.m., and it is sometimes much later by the time the chains are taken down. That means that neither the staff nor the ordinary consumer can get in. The number of parking bays is being diminished by the new constructions which, no doubt, have been approved by the Minister's department. I am sure that the Minister and his officers are watching these things very carefully. Further traffic congestion problems are being created. I was given some figures tonight showing that because the Westfield proprietors do not open the parking facilities, traffic backs up in Musgrave Road, Station

Road, Moggill Road and Samford Street, which prevents local residents from getting into their yards.

Mr Hinze: The honourable member for Sherwood made the point.

Mr WRIGHT: He made a different point about the leases. I would like you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to give me a chance to talk about leases I have here. If we want to clear up some of the problems let us clean up some of the lawyers, with due respect to the member for Sherwood. While proprietors in the shopping centres are benefiting from the leases, legal rogues are producing them. Some figures were shown to me tonight about 17 leases, all virtually the same, being produced. It looks as if they were duplicated on the same machine, but they cost each of the proprietors between \$596 and \$600—for exactly the same lease. The only difference is a few additions at the end. The lawyers are inserting them. With due respect to the member for Sherwood, the point he made was a valid one, and I support what he said. The lawyers should have a social conscience on some of these matters. At Palmdale, the lawyers drew up the lease and, with the concurrence of the local landlord a proprietor has to pay \$400 before he sees the lease. If he does not want the lease, he forfeits his \$400. That is what is happening to our free-enterprise society. It is time that we protected proprietors of shops in shopping centres, and prevented numerous additional ones being built. I am told that a further two are to be built in North Rockhampton, another one in South Rockhampton, with others to be built on the south side of Brisbane.

Mr Hinze: You try telling the House why you don't want them.

Mr WRIGHT: The Toowoomba example was very relevant to them. A survey of some 900 people in Toowoomba showed that most of them thought that the existing retail outlets were sufficient for their needs. If the same housewives are told that the new shopping centres will mean increased costs, and 100 businessmen will be sent to the wall, they will really start thinking about it.

Mr Hinze: Will they?

Mr WRIGHT: Yes, they will. If the Minister were to see some of the leases and the fees that are being paid he would think differently. In fact, when the honourable member for Yeronga was a Minister, he pointed out that 75 per cent of small businessmen go broke in the first three years. Is that because of the unions? Bunkum! Is it because of a pay rise that the trade unions have fought for? Nonsense! It is because of big business and pressure from the landlords; because corporations like Westfield can increase rentals by 49 per cent. They can say to intending lessees, "Before you come in here you will look

at this lease and, if you take it, we will set the conditions." One of the conditions is that a neon sign costing in the vicinity of \$25,000 has to be erected. A condition I read tonight required the lessee to design the shop front to the corporation's specifications. Those honourable members who are interested may look at the lease I have here.

Mr Hinze: If people do not want to take up a lease they do not have to. No-one drags them in chains if they don't want to be in it.

Mr WRIGHT: I accept that, because the point is valid. No-one has to go into these leases; people can say no. I accept the Minister's point. However, when they have been in for three to five years, then the trouble starts.

I know of one instance right at this moment where a proprietor in a Brisbane shopping centre is in great difficulty because certain conditions are being imposed on him. If he does not forgo certain benefits he will not get other benefits. To my mind that is blackmail. I will not go into specifics because I am negotiating on the case tomorrow. I do not want to jeopardise the negotiations by making the case too public by naming the firm. I hope that it will have some common sense and come to the table. In another centre, one firm had to give away about 7 feet of shop frontage and yet the rental was increased by 25 per cent.

When some of the figures and conditions are examined it is obvious that regardless of the size or area of a shop, lessees do not pay on a proportionate basis for cleansing or water. One fellow I met last night does not even have water connected to his premises, but he pays water rates.

In another instance the shopping centre makes a profit out of the garbage collection. It apportions costs to the proprietors and it made something like \$22,000 profit on what it paid the refuse collectors. I am told that the same thing is happening with rates.

These things ought to be stopped. The best way to stop them is for the Minister for Local Government, who I know cannot overcome the problems in those areas, to start off with tough conditions when shopping centres are allowed to be constructed.

I thought that one of the conditions was that there should be some type of economic study, that we should have a look at the effect on other areas, including the strip shops and other complexes. But from what has happened in the past four or five months it seems that there is no such thing as an economic study. Whether the department wants it and the Minister or somebody else is stopping it, I do not know.

Mr Hinze: Last year I introduced legislation which specifically provided that an economic assessment be included in the application.

Mr WRIGHT: What does it really mean?

Mr Hinze: What does it mean?

Mr WRIGHT: I do not know. Take Boyne Island where so many stores are in jeopardy.

Mr Hinze: You are saying that there is no requirement and I am telling you that there is.

Mr WRIGHT: I know that there is a requirement. So many things are written into the law but it comes back very much to the discretionary power that is vested in the Minister or his department. It seems to come back to the interpretation of what that economic survey requires and what sort of details the Minister wants.

It seems that we will end up with a situation in Queensland where the ordinary small corner store, the retail outlet, the specialty store, the convenience store and the independent store will be wiped out. If those people do not end up in a complex they have no chance, and when they are in a complex they still have no chance because once their lease is up they are in trouble.

The complex owners will give them a lease for five years and then say, as they are saying to one person whose business is worth \$100,000, "Your lease comes up some time in December but we will not extend it." The person will say, "I want to sell. Even though my business is worth \$100,000 I can get someone to take it for \$80,000." The owners will say, "No. We cannot guarantee that purchaser an extension of your lease." That is blackmail. Either this Minister or one of the other Ministers must make an in-depth study of shopping complexes.

In Victoria there is an inquiry that the Minister might know about. Victoria wants some type of moratorium on the development of shopping complexes.

We need to go into all of the ramifications. It almost needs a parliamentary select committee to be established to find out the legal difficulties through the leases, the town planning difficulties, the environmental difficulties, the social impact problems, the traffic hazard problems and the economic devastation being caused.

Many of the proprietors are in a very awkward age group. They are 45 and sometimes 55 years old. They go into a small business. They believe that they will do well. They find after three to five years that they have done reasonably well but that their business is finished. They cannot sell it. They cannot obtain a further lease. They cannot assign what is left of their lease. So they lose everything.

It is virtually impossible for them to find other employment. Where could a 55-year-old man or woman find employment today? They have invested their life's savings. It could be \$45,000 or \$155,000. A man told me last night that his investment is \$300,000 and it is now in jeopardy.

I do not know how we can stop it, but this Parliament has to try because we are dealing with the immediate lives of some 150 000 business proprietors in this State. With the husbands and wives together we are talking about 300 000 people. Add their employees and we are talking about one million people who are somehow linked with small business in this State. This Government is allowing their demise. Why? Because not enough forethought has been given, not enough care is being taken, and not enough control is being enforced in the development of shopping complexes.

You, Mr Deputy Speaker, have had some interest in this matter. We need to protect the small businessman in this area either by town planning rules, through the Local Government Department, or by a new Act of Parliament which I would call the Commercial Tenancies Act. I think that that is the real way to overcome it.

I am hoping, at a later date, to be able to bring to Parliament other specific examples of the sort of problems that exist. The trouble is that when anybody enters a war, like the one that I am trying to wage with the big developers and the big complex proprietors, there are always some casualties. The battle can be won in the long term but there are always some casualties. It hurts when the casualties are husbands and wives who lose \$45,000, \$100,000 or, in the case I mentioned, \$300,000. There must be some controls.

I would like to think that the Minister for Local Government, who is one of the strong private enterprise people in this State—he has proven it with his own involvement in private enterprise—would make a stand for these people at the local government level. I ask him to carry out his investigations; not just to allow the applications of these complexes to go through willy-nilly, but to explain his own involvement and interference—why in fact he does it. If it is done on good grounds, we will be supporting him, and I personally will support him. If it is done just on the basis that he does not care or that his attitude to development is that it has to go on regardless of the circumstances, then I do not think he will have the support.

I say to the Minister—it is almost a warning to him—that this Government is facing a backlash, not from trade union people or employees but from the self-employed, the small business people. I warn him that there are about 300 000 people with a very strong political vote who are starting to organise themselves corporately in loose associations and financially. He is going to have a war on his hands. If he acts now, he can save these people a lot of distress and save himself a lot of political misery.

Mr BURNS (Lytton) (10.6 p.m.): One of the provisions of the Bill relates to industrial refuse. I am reminded of the problems that arose recently at Willawong in relation to the disposal of dangerous chemical and industrial wastes. When I thought of that

problem and how long the Willawong dump has been in existence, I wondered what used to happen to dangerous chemicals and industrial wastes not only in Brisbane but also in the local authority areas throughout the State. Where were those dangerous chemicals dumped before the Willawong dump opened? Were they dumped down at the old Murarrie dump or at Black's Camp at Wynnum or in any of the other dumps that are now sporting grounds around the area? What sort of controls have we had over the dumping of these liquid wastes?

Is it not time that we registered these so-called cleansing contractors, who have big trucks pumping this rubbish and major polluting material—this highly dangerous material in some cases—out of various industrial premises and carting it off somewhere? Is it a fact that after the local authorities increased the charges, because they required a certain amount of technical equipment to handle the material that is being dumped, some of these people then dumped this material illegally in our creeks and streams? Yes, it is a fact, because instances of that sort have already been shown.

We know ourselves that this is a fairly common trait in the average Australian citizen. Once the local dump is shifted a little way out of town, he will not cart his rubbish. It ends up by the side of the road. One only has to see the number of car bodies that are dumped alongside quiet bush tracks to realise how far people will go to avoid paying a few bob as a fee at a local dump.

What happened to all of this major industrial waste and dangerous material before the Willawong dump was developed? What happens with those types of waste in other provincial cities such as Toowoomba, Townsville or Rockhampton? What type of "Willawong" arrangements are there in those areas?

The member for Rockhampton North raised the question of rates. The matter of rates is dealt with in this Bill. I am concerned about a very small section of the community that seems to have missed out in the last submission from the Treasurer and others in relation to rate reductions sponsored by the Government. I am talking about people who are life tenants. There are not many of them. In my area there is a woman who cared for her mother all her life. When the mother died, the house was left to this woman to live in for the rest of her life, as long as she maintained it and paid the rates. A firm of lawyers in town have control over the house. When that woman dies, the ownership of the house is to be split amongst the other members of the family.

I have written to the Treasurer about this matter, and he has written back to me saying that this lady cannot receive any assistance by way of rate reductions because she does not own the property. When one fills out the form, one has to give the name of the owner of the property. She does not

own the property. As I say, it is under the control of a firm of lawyers. The house is not in her name, but she pays the rates on it. She is a pensioner. She has done nothing all her life but look after her mother. She is incapable of earning a living outside. She receives no rate assistance whatsoever.

I imagine that between 200 and 500 people in the community may fall into that group. That is not a lot of people for this Parliament to help. We have moved to help pensioners in general and today we are moving to help unmarried mothers. I completely agree with that. It seems to me to be fairly simple to extend that provision to people in a similar situation as the lady I mentioned and many other people—mostly women—who are in similar circumstances.

The honourable member for Rockhampton raised the question of town planning, on which I also wish to speak. Before I do that, however, I should say that it is about time that we began to take some care about rates in other circumstances. For example, the Redland Shire Council levies rates on Russell Island where a lot of people were sold land. At the time of sale roads were marked out on the island, and now when people go to build on the good blocks they are told by the council that there is no road there, that the trees have grown back. Although the council charges the landholders rates every year, it refuses out of hand to do anything about giving them some sort of road to their property. In fact, the council makes it very clear that most of the roads created by the original subdivision are unformed and virtually non-existent. They were created to provide only minimal access to the blocks for sale purposes and reverted to their natural state following cessation of maintenance by the developers.

Since the council took control of the island it has been progressively carrying out improvements, including the construction of gravel roads, bitumen roads and cross-street drainage. The council is at present concentrating on those areas where there are permanent residences. It is not required to construct access to any allotment. The council says that in this case the applicant's allotment was located far from any formed gravel roads and the cost of providing even a low-standard track would be prohibitive. The council says it does not have the funds available.

In this case a lady was sold a good block of land with marked road access. She has now been told by the council, "Bad luck, we cannot even put a rough track in for you." That lady cannot get to her property, so how will she get a builder to build a house? But she still faces up to the responsibility, as many others do on the island, of paying rates.

The Redland Shire Council is the new rip-off merchant of Russell Island. It is charging \$55 and \$60 a year for land that is under water and on which they will not allow people to build.

Mr Hinze: They have the right to apply a minimum rate.

Mr BURNS: They also have the right to discharge those blocks from the responsibility of rates or the minimum valuation. The Minister wrote to me and told me that.

But the council will not do that. What it is doing to a lot of people who have been ripped-off by smart alecs and rip-off real estate salesmen is showing no concern at all. Its only concern is to collect rates. In addition to that, it says to people who have a decent block that it will not build even a rough track.

Mr Akers: What general rate is she paying?

Mr BURNS: The minimum rate on the drainage problem blocks is about \$55 a year. I do not know what rates the particular lady is paying.

The Valuer-General has valued the blocks at \$50 and the council has struck a minimum rate of \$55 a year. If a person writes to the council and asks to develop the block they say, "No, just keep sending the \$55." Does the Minister think that is fair or reasonable? It is all right for the Minister to laugh, but if he owned one of the blocks—

Mr Innes: That is called the "sinking" fund.

Mr BURNS: I suppose it is.

What advice should I give them? I generally tell them to give the land back to the council, write off the bad debt and forget about it. But someone who has spent a couple of thousand dollars on a block on which he hopes some day to build lives in some hope. Nobody likes to give them away, so they continue to pay the \$55.

Mr Lee: You always tell them to flog it to some Tory.

Mr BURNS: If the honourable member wants to come over, I have a lot of blocks he can buy. He could slip over there tomorrow and I will have a lot of people willing to help him out.

I would like to see something done about this matter of minimum rating. I am sure the Department of Local Government should not just wipe its hands of such problems and say they belong to somebody else.

I now mention another little problem that these days many people have to put up with. I get a lot of complaints about very common local government problems such as uncontrollable dogs—the dogs that bite people in the street. I always remember an early case I had as a member of Parliament. Down at Lindum there was a massive dog that bit everyone who walked past. I rang the local policeman, who said, "Look, Tom, I can't do anything about it. Leave it alone. Forget about it." In the end I said to him, "What about going down and having a look

at it?" He said, "I can't do anything about it. There's nothing we can do." However, when he went down to look at it, the dog bit him. Surprisingly enough, it was then decided to shoot the dog.

I cannot get every policeman to go down to be bitten by the local dogs, but the kids are being bitten. People are locking dogs up underneath their houses and leaving them there all day, seven days a week. The dogs are not being treated well. In many cases the RQSPC will come out to these problems. The dogs are whining all day—and who could blame them for doing that when they are locked up in those circumstances? The neighbours have to put up with it. When both partners in the marriage are working—one during the day and one at night—the dogs are locked up overnight.

When one tries to get council officers to do something about it, they always have something more important to do. However, a person who lives in the house next door—a person who has to put up with the noise seven days a week, who happens to be an animal lover and who is a bit concerned about the treatment of the animals—says to himself, "It's about time something was done." If the ordinances, by-laws or regulations that we allow councils to make are not strong enough to allow something to be done about it, then someone should look at these problems that affect the ordinary man and woman very much in their own home.

Mr Lee: They are quite real.

Mr BURNS: They are, and they are quite worrying problems.

Mr Innes: The trouble is that the council pound fellows come round and get every innocent small dog that comes up and wags its tail and they leave the big ones to lope around.

Mr BURNS: Unfortunately, that is a problem. I have spoken to council pound operators about that. It is not really their fault. If dogs are running in the street and a complaint is made about a dog that is causing trouble, when they come down every dog that is out without the required collar is taken away. Not much can be done about that. Those fellows are carrying out their job. If they selectively picked out a couple of dogs, it is not hard to imagine the complaints there would be about that—"They took my dog, but they didn't take Mrs Smith's up the road."

Mrs Kyburz: I am sorry, but that is exactly what they do: they steal friendly dogs.

Mr BURNS: I am not going to enter into an argument over the pound keepers. What I want is a stricter regulation to control dogs, especially at night.

Let me return to the town-planning provisions of the Bill. My father loves to go fishing at Noosa. We have been going to Noosa for some years. Recently I have become more and more concerned about developments on the North Coast. I lived on the Gold Coast for years. My mum and dad lived down there for about 15 years. I saw the Gold Coast virtually destroyed by councils and planners making ad hoc decisions, allowing high-rise buildings that cast shadows over the beach and turning much of the area of the Gold Coast into a concrete jungle.

I know that many people are concerned about it. In Miami and Hawaii today the visiting tourist population to those high-rise concrete-jungle beach areas is decreasing each year. The business community in Hawaii this year is spending massive sums of money trying to entice more people to the resort areas. They are concerned that Hawaii has lost some of its charm.

Up at Noosa where, as I say, my dad is a very keen fisherman—and we have been going there with him for some time—there are some very beautiful areas.

Dr Lockwood: You are not going to tell the story about Easter, are you?

Mr BURNS: No, I am not, but I will talk about Noosa itself, what might happen to it and the problems that face the people there. There is currently a proposal by a major developer called Noosa Resort Corporation. I do not intend attacking them. I know that in many ways they are going about their business and promoting what they want to do. Someone has to look at the long-term planning of Noosa, but I do not believe that one private-enterprise group should be able to do it.

The Noosa Woods Caravan Park is a beautiful little part which used to be right on the bar at Noosa. Now, with the new bar that the Government has had to put in and the beach reclamation works, that is not so. However, the park is situated right at the end of Hastings Street—the heart of Noosa Heads itself—and out from the end of it is a large area that has been developed by the Government and revegetated. The sand is building up into a beautiful beach along there.

One can pick up newspaper after newspaper on the North Coast in which the Resort Corporation says that the Noosa surf clubhouse will be an essential part of the complex and redesigned and situated in a different position; that part of the Noosa Woods is to be leased to the developer for an accommodation building; and that the rest of the woods and The Spit are to be the best botanical gardens in Australia. Many people who have been going to Noosa for years and camping in that caravan park are a little surprised that a local developer

begins talking about building an accommodation block in Noosa Woods and taking over the surf club and shifting it somewhere else—just like that, out of the blue.

In the week that I was up there beginning a bit of a break with my dad, I read of the Minister for Local Government being up there with the council and saying to them, "I have had a meeting this morning with this major developer . . ." Let me quote from the reports of the Minister's meeting with the council. They say—

" . . . he had no idea what council thought of the project and he felt that council should be blunt and tell him exactly what they thought as the Government had given substantial guarantees to the firm concerned and he was required to report to Cabinet in the next few months."

Mr Hinze: Conditional guarantees.

Mr BURNS: That is not in the notes of the meeting that the Minister had with the council.

Mr Hinze: Conditional guarantees.

Mr BURNS: The notes continue—

"He said he wished to know if Council considered it has the time, expertise and knowledge of requirements to undertake a development of such magnitude of that envisaged."

I will take that point, because councils, whether they happen to be the Gold Coast City Council, the Landsborough Shire Council, the Maroochy Shire Council, or the Noosa Shire Council, face major problems. Many of them are small councils in little areas that were peaceful and had a charm of their own, and people came there because of the charm of the area.

The developers then saw a chance of making a quid out of it, and they wanted to put high-rise in and change it. The little council then found massive development proposals put before it. There was not a lot of expertise in the council, especially amongst the councillors, and in many instances it did not have the money to spend to obtain the services of top town-planning experts. The councillors did not have the knowledge or the expertise to foresee the quantity of water, the roads, the electricity supply and other infrastructure that would have to be paid for by ratepayers to sustain the development. That is an argument that can be accepted.

However, for the Minister to go along and then say to the council, "You set up a committee of two or three, because we, as a government, have made a few deals with these people"—I will say "conditional deals", if that will satisfy the Minister—is not acceptable. How have the people been consulted?

Mr Hinze: Their interests are being looked after.

Mr BURNS: I see the honourable member for Cooroorra in the Chamber, and I know that he takes an interest in the area. I am not arguing about the local men, I am simply expressing the feeling that I got when I was there on holiday.

Mr Hinze: I do not think you have any worries.

Mr BURNS: I think they have.

Mr Hinze: I do not think that you have.

Mr BURNS: Knowing the Minister all too well, as I do, I am worried.

Mr Warburton: I would be worried about the conditions.

Mr BURNS: Yes. I am worried that the Minister was able to suggest to the council that if it agreed in principle to the Noosa Resort Corporation proposals the Government would be prepared to assist financially with the infrastructure required for such a development and enter a franchise agreement similar to that for the Iwasaki development. Again I am reading from the minutes of the special meeting held on 13 March 1981, pages 5 and 6.

The Minister also said that he would have to be in a position to make a recommendation to Cabinet shortly as funds were tied up and the Government had made a commitment. He said that if the council was not agreeable, then he could not see any franchise agreement being proceeded with. I make it clear that I am selecting pieces from the minutes.

Not only the council was involved. While I was at Noosa, a meeting of about 400 people was held. As I understand it, all the local newspapers reported that those people were fairly unhappy about the proposal. I went to the business people with whom I usually deal on the few occasions that I go to Noosa, and I found an attitude similar to that reported in the Press. Most people were concerned.

Mr Simpson: They did frighten the residents and ratepayers into thinking that they were going to have their freehold land taken from them and that the beaches were going to be closed.

Mr BURNS: Some of the statements of Mr Ken Taylor and his partner scared them. Mr Taylor made it clear that an international-class resort would be built encompassing major changes to Hastings Street and surrounding areas. I am quoting from the local paper, which goes on to say—

“Gone will be the jumble of buildings in Hastings Street, gone the chaotic parking, gone the Noosa Woods camp. The restaurants and boutiques will remain, newly designed to fit the whole.”

Mr Simpson: But not the beaches, not the river, not the freehold land.

Mr BURNS: That is not what it says.

They own a good part of the beach side of the land and substantial holdings on Motel Hill, and they own the other side of Hastings Street. If they get a franchise agreement similar to the Iwasaki agreement, the honourable member will not be able to say, “Not the beach, not the freehold land.” Already they are reported in the newspapers as talking about shifting the surf club and building accommodation blocks on the Noosa Woods Caravan Park. These things have not been denied by the Government.

Mr Simpson: They are not shifting the surf club.

Mr BURNS: The local paper says they are, and it is not denied.

Mr Simpson: You know how easy it is to get a load of rubbish printed in the newspaper.

Mr BURNS: I should think that an article such as this, with the headline, “Noosa could be world’s top resort. Consortium plans multi million redevelopment” spread all over the front page would contain a correct report.

That report says—

“The Noosa Surf Club to be an essential part of the complex, though redesigned and in a different location.”

That has never been denied.

Mr Simpson: That is absolutely without foundation.

Mr BURNS: We will give you the opportunity to say something on this matter.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Miller): Order! The honourable member for Lytton will address the Chair.

Mr BURNS: I thought he was getting into me, Mr Deputy Speaker. I think you should be protecting me rather than the honourable member. However, I will accept your ruling.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will protect the honourable member when he addresses the Chair.

Mr BURNS: I believe that town plans are revised about every seven years. When a new town plan is decided for this area, in effect it will last right until the late 1980s. The plan that councils are bringing down has to last for some time.

Reference could be made to the creation of beach protection zones in that area. Anyone who knows Noosa—the local member would know it fairly well, as would other members who go there—would know that the beach in front of the surf club and in front of Hastings Street has virtually been washed away, because of the decision taken some years ago to drop rocks in there. The only decent beach is the one that has been restored near the bar itself.

Surely we should be looking at a different type of town plan for a seaside resort—not that Noosa is a seaside resort any more. It no longer has the peaceful charm that it had years ago. Noosa is now an international resort. We have heard talk about Arab millionaires and other people with big money going up there and spending millions of dollars. The Resort Corporation bought a whole development at Munna Point from the old developers and they are holding it with a view to building an international style resort. Noosa is no longer a peaceful seaside resort; it is a major resort area.

Town plans for resort areas should not be similar to town plans for cities. Surely something different is needed. I have in mind a resort plan that will provide for beach protection zones and hillside areas, such as those at Noosa that were part of the charm of the area.

What is occurring at Noosa is occurring also at Caloundra, Maroochydore and Mooloolaba. We are seeing this rapid development of our coastal areas. The councils in these areas are facing problems. Furthermore, the people who live in those areas are facing problems.

The Maroochy Shire Council has made two or three high-rise decisions that I believe do not comply with the by-laws. The first concerns "Alexandra" on the corner of The Esplanade and Mayfield Street, Alexandra Headlands. On the Mayfield Street side, the street boundary clearance has been reduced to less than half the statutory requirements. Why would that be done for a massive high-rise building?

Next, there is "Mylos" on the corner of Parker and Maroubra Streets and Alexandra Parade. On the Maroubra Street side the boundary clearance has been reduced by one-third. These two breaches reduce the legal views of the Pacific Ocean that should have been available to people opposite these buildings.

Other breaches at "Mylos" are the clearance of 4.5 m, which should have been 6 or possibly 7.5 m, and so on. Although by-laws cover such developments, some people seem to be able to obtain a relaxation of those by-laws. The councillors themselves know that there is major opposition to high-rise developments. Many people believe that high-rises will convert coastal areas into the concrete jungles that exist overseas. High-rises destroy the charm and beauty of areas. I come back to the point on town planning that we must try to help the councils. I am against any form of Iwasaki franchise for the Noosa area.

At any time I should be pleased to see the Local Government Department strengthen the hand of a local authority rather than weaken it by saying, "You do not have the expertise, we will take it over and handle it." If a local authority does not have the expertise, the Minister should provide it with assistance through one of his officers.

Mr Hinze: That is exactly what I did.

Mr BURNS: That is not exactly what those minutes show you did.

Mr Hinze: They are not minutes.

Mr BURNS: Well, I do not know what they are. They are the notes of the meeting that were kept by the council. They are available. The Minister knows that what I said is not untrue. They are notes of what the Minister said. They are in the Minister's style. When I read through them, knowing the Minister, I said, "This is the Minister, all right. There is no doubt about the authenticity of the minutes." They made very clear to me where the Minister stood on the issue. So far as I can see the Minister favours an Iwasaki-style franchise there. I hope that he does not.

Hon. R. J. HINZE (South Coast—Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police) (10.31 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contribution to this debate. In the time available I will reply to the points raised.

The honourable member for Port Curtis referred to a number of issues, but was generally in agreement with the provisions of the Bill. I remind honourable members that the provisions contained in this Bill were fully discussed with the Local Government Association executive. The executive was in agreement with the Government's thinking behind these provisions.

The honourable member claimed that some members of local authorities have failed to disclose pecuniary interests which could conflict with their public office. If evidence is supplied to me in support of these claims I will have the matter examined.

The question of whether a person has a pecuniary interest is a personal matter. The department's advice has always been that any member of a local authority in doubt about his position should seek private legal advice.

The honourable member for Sherwood also was in agreement with provisions of the Bill and made special reference to provisions dealing with the disclosure of pecuniary interest, and amendments relating to the imposition of conditions by a local authority when dealing with town planning applications.

He asked whether the powers and provisions dealing with on-the-spot fines should be simplified. I will give further consideration to this matter and to particular points raised by the honourable member.

He also sought clarification of certain conditions imposed in leases granted by Westfield Shopping Town at Indooroopilly. Under the leases employees of speciality shops are precluded from parking in areas set aside for this particular purpose at the shopping centre. He claims that this is contrary to the interests of the Brisbane Town Plan. I give the honourable member an assurance that I will have this matter examined.

The Bill strengthens the requirements for disclosure of pecuniary interests by members and officers of local authorities. Obviously this is a necessary and desirable provision and is supported by the Local Government Association.

The honourable member alleged that there had been an erosion of the autonomy enjoyed by local authorities in Queensland. I refute this and remind honourable members that the powers of local authorities in Queensland in many areas are on a stronger footing than similar provisions in other States. This Bill enhances the powers of local authorities.

The honourable member mentioned the limitation imposed on officers of a local authority in undertaking remunerative work outside local authority service. This is consistent with a number of local authority by-laws and with Public Service regulations. Cases involving an alleged conflict of interest relating to this question have been drawn to my attention in the past. However, the Bill still provides for outside employment if prior approval is granted by the local authority.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North referred to fines for non-voting in local authority elections. The Bill increases the relevant penalty to the same level as the penalty for non-voting at State elections. I am sure honourable members would agree that this is a realistic and reasonable provision. He also alleged that there were errors on voter rolls. Local authority voters' rolls are compiled from the State electoral roll. These rolls of course are outside the scope of this Bill and are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North commented on the State pensioner rebate scheme and the Rockhampton City Council. I stress that the State scheme is quite independent of the local authority scheme. Each authority must answer to its own electors if it reduces its rate concessions because of the State scheme.

The honourable member also spoke about flats in residential areas in Rockhampton. He stated that their construction is subject to the consent of the council after advertising and objection procedures. A right of appeal to the Local Government Court is available. The erection of stables in residential areas would be subject to the same procedures and appeal.

The honourable member for Rockhampton claimed that I am destroying the local government structure. He referred to changes made to the Local Government Department. I remind him that the department is not Local Government. The change in the department did not result in any change in the functions of local government.

The honourable member raised the question of the Kern development at Mooloolaba and certain other shopping developments. As

I said previously, I shall make a full ministerial statement in reply to the honourable member on these matters tomorrow.

Mr Warburton: Will that be before or after you table the Order in Council?

Mr HINZE: It is funny how, at this time of night, I cannot hear interjections.

The honourable member for Lytton raised questions relating to the dumping of dangerous materials. These matters are outside the scope of the Bill. The dumping of refuse on land is a Health Department matter. The dumping of wastes into watercourses is a matter that comes under the Clean Waters Act, which is administered by the Minister for Water Resources and Aboriginal and Island Affairs.

The honourable member also raised the case of a woman ratepayer who does not get a rate rebate under the State scheme. I suggest that he take this matter up with the Treasurer.

He made one or two other comments that I shall reply to. I am rather concerned at the attitude of the Redland Shire towards its ratepayers on Russell Island. We made provision in the Act to allow the council to secure quite substantial rate receipts from the Russell Island area. I believe that the people living on the island are entitled to something better than they are getting. I might have to intervene to some extent or have discussions with the council about that matter.

His last point concerned the Noosa development. I say emphatically that the honourable member should not be too concerned. I was only up there to help the council. I made it quite clear that my officers are available to sit with the council and discuss with its officers and the developers the possibility of the project reaching fruition. At that point of time there was a conditional guarantee, I understand, given through the Treasurer. I believe that it has now lapsed and that the guarantee no longer exists. I cannot go any further at this stage.

I am concerned that some statements I made believing that we were in committee were published. I suggested that we were in committee so that I could give them certain information that I would not have given them otherwise. They abused the privilege. That is why the honourable member was able to read some erroneous Press statements about what took place.

I have tried to answer most of the points raised by honourable members this evening.

Motion (Mr Hinze) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

Mr Powell (Isis) in the chair

Clauses 1 to 26, and schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

CITY OF BRISBANE TOWN PLANNING ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE

Debate resumed from 7 May (see p. 1054) on Mr Hinze's motion—

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

Mr PREST (Port Curtis) (10.40 p.m.): This Bill contains only two amendments to the Act. The first relates to the power of the Brisbane City Council to impose conditions when dealing with an application for consent to use land for a purpose permissible under the Brisbane Town Plan, only with such consent. As the Minister is giving power to the Brisbane City Council on this occasion, I guess we could be forgiven for being cautious about what is the real meaning behind the Bill. The Brisbane City Council has been a very responsible local authority for a long time, and I am sure that it will continue to be one. It is controlled by the Australian Labor Party. We will support these two amendments.

However, I hope that we will never see any high-handedness where a local authority uses its power to the extreme and forces people to take the decision on an application to court. I believe that it is always better to have harmony and understanding between the applicant and the council. I have found that in almost all instances the matter can be talked over. The land is given freely to the council at virtually no cost to it, except for the cost of survey, etc. Very seldom is the court asked to determine a case. I believe that fair-minded people in the past have been co-operative and have been willing to talk when requested to do so by the council. The council has always been ready to talk to applicants, and they have usually reached an acceptable settlement.

I hope that the council does not become too demanding, wave the book of rules too often and force people to appeal to the Local Government Court, because when that happens it becomes costly to both parties and only the legal eagles benefit. Quite an amount of money is involved in costs when cases are taken to court. Once there is any mention of court action, the applicant sees the matter in two lights: He is touched by either the conditions set down by the council or by the real professional touchers, the lawyers.

The second amendment relates to court costs. It seeks to bring uniformity under the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act, the Local Government Act and the Building Act. At this point of time I agree to this

amendment. As I said previously, the intention of those two amendments is fair. On this occasion I support both amendments.

Hon. R. J. HINZE (South Coast—Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police) (10.43 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable member for Port Curtis for his contribution. He referred to the harmony that exists between the council and the applicants, and to the way in which the council conducts its affairs with the department. I confirm what he has said. Having been the Minister in charge of this portfolio now since 1974, and having dealt with all the Lord Mayors who have been in office during that period—Clem Jones, Brian Walsh and Frank Sleeman—I can say that the relationship has been a most cordial one. I do not believe that anyone could suggest that it has been otherwise. As we are on opposite sides of the political fence it might be thought that on occasions the Government would be in conflict with the council, but that has not been the case. When the council believes that slight amendments are needed to the Act, such as those covered by the Bill, we are ever ready to give our support.

This is a major development that will enhance the beauty of the city of Brisbane. It could not get off the ground without an amendment being made to the Act. That is the reason the Bill is presented to the House. It is connected with court costs; it is a sensible amendment and I have much pleasure in commending it to the House.

Motion (Mr Hinze) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

Mr Powell (Isis) in the chair

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (RATEABLE VALUE ADJUSTMENT) BILL

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE

Debate resumed from 12 May (see p. 1110) on Mr Hinze's motion—

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

Mr PREST (Port Curtis) (10.47 p.m.): For this House to be debating the second reading of this Bill tonight is unjust and inconsiderate to ratepayers, local authorities and also the Opposition. The Opposition asked that this Bill lay on the table of the House for seven days so that the citizens of Queensland could be consulted before its content was debated.

Because of yesterday's long sitting hours and the number of important Bills that were dealt with, I believe that the Opposition

should have been allowed a little longer to study this Bill. Bills such as this should not be rushed through the House, but the Parliament will adjourn tomorrow. The Government shows no consideration for the Opposition and the citizens are being treated with contempt. I state to the people of Queensland and to local authorities that I have not had time for an in-depth look at this Bill; however I will do the best I can for the ratepayers of Queensland.

The Opposition saw this Bill for the first time some 30 hours ago, and for most of that time we have been in the House debating other local government Bills. All members know that we sat till 1.30 this morning.

This Bill is in keeping with legislation that was introduced into this Parliament in 1962. That another Bill such as this one has to be introduced is unbelievable. This Bill is being introduced for the same reasons as the 1962 legislation. I firmly believe that we are again trying to control major increases in rates. However, we are starting at the wrong end. We should be looking at ways and means of introducing amendments to the Valuation of Land Act to change the system of valuation. We should be making certain that the valuations do not escalate to unrealistic levels.

I read the debate that took place on the earlier legislation on 13 March 1962. Mr Pat Hanlon, the member for Baroona, said—

"From the brief and rather confusing explanation that the Minister gave when introducing the Bill one point stands out very clearly, that the Government are interested in one thing only, in endeavouring to extricate themselves from the political results of re-valuations made under the Valuation of Land Act."

The same thing has happened on this occasion. The methods being used do not seem to suit the circumstances. They should be changed.

I have seen notices issued after the latest revaluation. In some of my own local authorities the increases have been alarming—in some areas, by thousands of per cent. Even my own area, although not the highest in the State, has experienced extremely high—some say unreasonable—increases. I will cite some of the figures supplied to me. At Ambrose, a very small country town in the Calliope Shire—it is more or less only a siding—the increase was 3 557.4 per cent. One could just about buy the whole of Ambrose for such an amount of money. The increase in Yarwun was 1 805.4 per cent—another big increase. The valuation at Mt Larcom rose by 983.9 per cent.

Although prices of land in these areas have escalated—bearing in mind that the latest valuations were fixed as at 31 December 1979—since we legislated for the Rundle agreement land sales in those areas have been at a much greater pace and the increases have been much steeper. It appears to me that the Government through this

Bill is trying to cover up mistakes that have been made in valuations. We should be considering changes in the method of valuing property. It is unreasonable that any property should have its valuation increased by thousands of per cent in the last six or eight years. Although I do not have the Press cuttings with me tonight, I am quite certain that I read in one of the daily newspapers that a property's valuation had risen by 15 000 per cent. That made headlines.

I am concerned that in the Minister's speech there was this reference—

"The basic purpose of this Bill is to provide means by which the impact of revaluations upon the ratepayer, and particularly the immediate impact of such revaluations, may be reduced . . .

"Valuations are determined largely on comparable sales, and in recent years land prices in many local authority areas in Queensland have increased dramatically. As a result, valuations of land have increased substantially in both urban and rural areas and this is causing concern to many landholders because of actual or expected rate increases due to revaluations."

I firmly believe that valuers have been wrong in increasing valuations in some areas simply because a speculator, real estate agent, land shark or even a fool, should I say, pays an inflated price. That is not the true value of that block of land.

Believe me, Mr Speaker, many people are dealing in real estate today, and the Taxation Department, and perhaps the Police Department, would be well advised to investigate their past. It would be interesting to find where some of the money comes from and how it is obtained.

The Minister stated—

"A similar situation existed in 1962 and in order to alleviate the impact on ratepayers at that time a Bill similar to this one was introduced into the House. However, the 1962 Act applied only to lands in certain local authority areas which had been completely valued or revalued by the Valuer-General by a valuation proclaimed in force on and from 30 June 1960, 1961 or 1963."

The situation then was similar to the situation today, because land prices had increased greatly. An article in "Local Government", submitted in a personal capacity by Alderman Wightman of the Redcliffe City Council, said—

"The Function of a Local Authority

"To provide essential services in a community, each ratepayer pays for his share of the services received, such as water, sewerage or sanitary and garbage disposal etc . . .

" . . . With all these attendant advantages we are faced with a problem that touches the individual most, that is in the realm of property ownership. The unrealistic values consequent on the post-war upsurge

of feverish production and sale of land, the public's response in land speculation thus creating false values, which has since been proved by the 1961 recession, consequently placing a heavy burden on the ratepayer.

"This problem is varied in its execution and all Local Authorities are faced with this dilemma and are seeking ways to resolve an iniquitous method of unimproved land taxes for Local Authority purposes. Taxing the ratepayer according to the price a purchaser pays for his land, a price which has proved of necessity and out of all proportion, should not be a relative factor in regard to Local Authorities' rating purposes."

That was back in 1962, and the Bill remained in force only until the next complete valuation came into operation. Therefore, it had a very limited life. The Bill now before the House is somewhat different, because it will apply from year to year.

One of the things that does concern me in the Minister's speech is that he says—

"I would add that, in the absence of an application by a local authority, the local authority will certainly be consulted if a proposal comes forward to apply the Act to its area."

I do not know who the proposal would come from. Would it come from any land-owner in the area of the local authority who is objecting to the proposed increase, or would it have to come from a particular body?

Under the provisions of the Bill, the Minister has the right, through the Governor in Council, to tell a local authority that it can decide how rates should be applied, or the local authority itself may apply to the Minister for his approval. The Bill applies only for a certain period, and one of the methods provided for is similar to that used in 1962. The old value and the new value of the land are added together and divided by two. Instead of having to pay the full amount of rates, a person will have to meet only a 50 per cent increase in the relevant year. It seems to me that that may be all right. The Government is attempting to cover up an error that has been made in the assessment of valuations.

Many people are now buying real estate as an investment, and it turns over quite freely. As long as they are making a profit, they do not care.

Sometimes I think that a valuation should be based on the last sale of the land and that the rate should be charged according to that valuation. That could have a bearing on the sale price of land. People would know that if they paid a high price for their land their rates would be assessed according to that price, which becomes the value.

Mr Warburton: If they need this type of legislation their system of valuation is wrong.

Mr PREST: That is quite right. As I said before, we are starting at the wrong end. We should not be getting the valuation down. If a true valuation has been struck by the Valuer-General, that should be the valuation. However, it is being reduced by 50 per cent for this year. That is being done in an attempt to give the impression that things are not as bad as they look.

When people were advised of the new valuations they were given a piece of paper showing last year's valuation and this year's valuation. They were also given the present rates and what are estimated to be the future rates. If the average for the town does not go up, a land-owner will not experience any problems. The point is, however, that people who bought five, six or seven years ago have got away with a very cheap rate or alternatively have not paid their fair share of the rates.

Now that a local authority election is in the offing, those local authorities that are ashamed of the rates that they will be forced to levy as the result of the revaluations will make certain that they tell their ratepayers, "Our rate increase was not so bad after all. It was the revaluation that made your rates go up. We played our part. We brought your valuation down. Instead of assessing the rates on the true valuation, we reduced it by 50 per cent." That is what is happening. I am quite certain that the amendments will cover up mistakes that the department has made.

Mr Moore: So what?

Mr PREST: So what! A person who wants to pay a high price for land should be prepared to pay high rates.

Mr Moore: Would you have a differential between two adjacent blocks, one bought 30 years ago and the other bought yesterday? How could that apply?

Mr PREST: The honourable member should be listening, and he is not. That is what I have been saying. Why should people who live in a particular area have their valuations increased because some speculator or real estate agent has paid a high price for land in that area?

The Government should look at the Act to determine a method of rating that will give a fairer result.

Mr Moore: You pay rates according to the services you get. They have nothing to do with the value of land.

Mr PREST: We are not talking about the value or the cost of services provided; we are talking about rates that will apply to the unimproved value.

As I said, we are starting at the wrong end of the street. Although this measure may be only a temporary one, the Minister can say to a local authority, "You can either assess rates in accordance with the Bill or you cannot."

Because local authority elections are looming next year, local authorities are frightened by what people may say if they are rated on the true land valuation increases. What we are doing tonight is only covering up a mistake, but I will now resume my seat and listen with interest to what the other speakers have to say.

Mr TENNI (Barron River) (11.6 p.m.): I have pleasure in speaking to the Bill. Like the honourable member for Port Curtis, I am very concerned about the valuation of land in Queensland. But unlike the honourable member for Port Curtis, I know that Queensland is not the only State in Australia which has land valuation problems. After touring all the States in Australia I can assure the honourable member that New South Wales, a State governed by the party of which he is a member, has similar problems, and has been unable to find an answer to them. As late as last week I was told very reliably that Tasmania, although it is not affected by such large increases in land values, is facing similar problems.

Every State in Australia is in trouble. It is useless for the honourable member for Port Curtis to infer that only Queensland faces valuation problems. People of the same political persuasion as the honourable member in New South Wales and Tasmania are experiencing the same trouble, and they, like the honourable member, do not know how to get out of the trouble. And neither do we at this stage. We are honest about it.

I am sure that all the little Labor people in the electorate of the honourable member for Port Curtis will be pleased to know that he believes land should be rated on its last sale price. Young people who are about to be married and buy their first block of land will surely be impressed by the honourable member's suggestion that they should pay rates on the last sale price of land. That is exactly what the honourable member said. I am sure that the people who believe that they are being represented properly by the Labor Party will be very unhappy when they hear what the honourable member for Port Curtis said they will pay if he and his party have their way.

What a shocking state of affairs it is that a party that professes to represent the little Labor people in Queensland will penalise them with high rates because they are unfortunate enough to buy a block of land. That is what Labor's shadow spokesman recommended. I will not forget that at the next election, just as I am sure a lot of little Labor people will not forget it. The Labor Party's attitude is so unreal it is unbelievable, but that is typical of its attitude to the small people.

I should like the Minister to spell out clearly and precisely if the rateable adjustment means that shires such as the Douglas shire, in which land values went stupid in 1976, causing completely unrealistic new valuations, can add the valuations made in

1969 or 1970, to the latest valuations and then divide by two. I must know the answer to that.

Mr Vaughan: To whom are you talking?

Mr TENNI: I am talking to Mr Speaker, which is the correct procedure in this House.

Mr Vaughan: To which Minister?

Mr TENNI: Apparently Opposition members do not even know the correct rules of debate.

Through you, Mr Speaker, I ask the Minister whether that is the correct procedure, because it is very important to the people whom I represent. If that is the correct procedure, we will help many of the little people whom the honourable member for Port Curtis does not want to help. We will help many pensioners and little people in the shire and council areas that I represent, and that is what I stand for. I like to look after the little people as well as the other people. That is one very big point.

My views on the Valuation of Land Act are well known. I do not feed a dog that bites me; I get rid of it. The Valuation of Land Act has been biting me in this Parliament for 6½ years. We should get rid of it if we cannot do something about it. Some submissions were made to the previous Minister. The new Minister has seen them. I should like him to act quickly on those submissions and do something.

It is not his department's fault; it is our fault because we do not have better legislation. It is our fault because the present legislation prescribes how land must be valued. I believe that the recommendations that were put forward are good, solid and sound, and they should be effected as quickly as possible. Otherwise we must get rid of the dog that is biting us.

I have only just experienced this problem again. The Mulgrave Shire Council got its new valuations. The chairman was reported in the Press as saying, "Don't blame us. Blame the State Government. It fixed the valuations. We strike the rate in the dollar." We cop this all the time.

Let the councils do their own valuations. Let them appoint valuers who know the areas and what is going on in the areas. Let the valuations be approved by the Minister or by Executive Council, but let the councils be responsible for their own problems.

Mr Hewitt: The Local Government Association totally rejects that suggestion.

Mr TENNI: I know. What a good way out of it! I was the chairman of a council. If someone tried to put that on me, I would reject it because I would not be able to blame somebody else in the future. That is common sense. Anybody who wants to look at it politically should either ignore the local councils or do something about the Act so that we will not have this trouble and are

not forced to do things such as we are doing tonight to help the little people out. It is a very serious situation.

How silly can it be when a person can claim for the development of a block that took place 50 years ago? He can still have the cost of that development deducted from the valuation. A farmer can claim his tax over a 10-year period. Surely after 10 years we should revert to the status quo. That is one small thing that would help to fix more equitable valuations in a shire or city. Many things could be done.

If I were a farmer, which I am not, why should I, because I am growing 20 t of tobacco, have a higher valuation than the fellow next door who is not growing tobacco? What has that to do with the valuation of land? That should go.

Whatever the Minister does, he should not take any notice of the honourable member for Port Curtis who recommended that the little people be penalised by setting the valuations at the last sale price.

I thank the Minister for doing something through the Local Government Act to help the people of the Barron River electorate. I look forward to the passing of the Bill.

Mr FOURAS (South Brisbane) (11.14 p.m.): It is obvious that the system of setting valuations is in a shocking state of disrepair, or we would not have this Bill before us. We should look at legislation such as this on three bases—equity, efficiency and simplicity.

Lack of equity is the most important ground on which the Bill should be condemned. In the case where valuations decreased, the rateable value is the fresh unimproved value. That is the only equitable clause in the Bill. We should not worry about the level of valuations; we should look at what valuations do. They establish the size of the cake on which rateable values can be set to get funds to run local authorities.

When we try to alleviate the burden on some people, somebody else has to pay. We have been told that the sole purpose of the Bill is to alleviate the anticipated rate burden on ratepayers subjected to above-average increases.

Let us have a look at some of the increases. I have done my sums in this matter and I hope that honourable members will listen to some of the figures that I give. With a 40 per cent increase, under the present system a ratepayer would pay 66 per cent of his previous rate bill. Under the new system, he will pay 76 per cent. So he will pay 10 per cent more than he would have paid under the present system. If any honourable members want to query my figures, I will have a sizeable bet with them that they are correct. I must qualify this and say that I am talking about the Brisbane metropolitan area, where the average increase was 114 per cent.

Let us have a look at a 60 per cent increase. Under this present system, if the rates are set to raise the same amount of money and do not take inflation into account, a ratepayer would pay only 75 per cent of the rates he paid previously. Under the new scheme he will have to pay 83 per cent, or an 8 per cent increase.

The figures are very similar for increases around the 100 per cent mark. We get sizeable discrepancies only when we look at increases above 300 per cent. If the valuation of a ratepayer in the Brisbane metropolitan area was increased by 300 per cent recently, his bill would have increased by 187 per cent under the present scheme, whereas under the new scheme it will rise by only 159 per cent.

I now take a 400 per cent increase. A ratepayer would pay 234 per cent under the present scheme. Under the new scheme he will pay 191 per cent, which is a saving of 43 per cent.

I now look at a 500 per cent increase. In that instance the bill would have gone up by 280 per cent under the present scheme, whereas under the new scheme it will increase by 223 per cent, which is a saving of 57 per cent.

The gross inequity arises in the Brisbane metropolitan area when people at one end of the scale will pay more than they would have paid, and other people will pay less. Where is the equity in that? I see the member for Carnarvon is trying to wind me down. I will not sit down quickly when I have something to say. I will take the time of this House to put my point of view.

The increases in my electorate of South Brisbane were, on average, between 40 and 60 per cent. So by this Bill the Government is saying to my electorate, "You will be penalised 10 per cent more than you would have paid", and those benefits will go to somebody else. My argument rests on that point. On the basis of equity, this is a most disgraceful and inequitable Bill.

Let us have a look at other situations. Let us look at the question of simplicity or efficiency. This Bill gives the Governor in Council the right of divine intervention. Is it not marvellous that we in this Parliament give the authority quite readily to the Governor in Council to say to a local authority, "Whether you want it or not, you are going to use this particular system."? What a shocking situation! The Government is using this subordinate piece of legislation, which affects the rights of individuals in our society and the right of people to take decisions, to impose its will on local authorities. I think that it is against the charter of any Parliament, and it is certainly against the charter of any Government. I think that it is a shocking situation. It lacks all the ingredients of good government. I cannot speak strongly enough against that. It is shocking that this provision should be introduced.

Mr Katter: It will be shocking if you talk much longer.

Mr FOURAS: Mr Speaker, I must object to interjections from the other side of the Chamber. If members want to go to sleep, they can do so, but I am going to have my say.

Let us have a look at what has happened in some situations. As I said previously, if the system was fair dinkum there would be no need for this Bill. Valuations should be struck on the equitable basis of unimproved value. That would enable the local authorities to strike their rates and get their resources. But that is not the position. The system contains a great number of anomalies. I believe that people in my electorate have for many years been paying more than their share of rates. When I moved from Wishart I left a block of land that was valued at only about \$3,000 to go to one that was valued at \$8,000. Because of the length of time that it has taken for the valuations to be done, for the last eight years the person who is now living in my old home at Wishart has been paying nearly one-third of the rates that I commenced to pay when I moved to the house at South Brisbane.

For too long ratepayers in inner city suburbs have been paying too great a slice of the rates. There are reasons for that, but I can see no justification at all for coming out now and saying to people such as those who bought my old home at Wishart, "You have had it good for five to eight years, but as you have had a 400 per cent or 500 per cent increase in valuation we will give you some remissions." Valuation increases of that order have occurred in some places. The Government is saying to those people that it will give them a 57 per cent decrease. When the valuation of my block at Wishart was \$3,000, some seven years ago the block next to me sold for \$16,000. I believe that the values were very similar. So far for those five to eight years the people who lived in suburbs such as that were not paying their fair share. I believe this point must be made very strongly and I am sorry that I am labouring it. The point has to be made because the position is grossly unfair.

A lot of unit development is occurring in my electorate. In such cases people buy houses and do not worry about their financial return. They pay a very large price for the house and then move on and buy another one and rent it out. The dwellings are used for domestic rental. However, because the area is zoned B residential very few sales occur. When the valuer values the area very few sales can be used on which the rateable value is based. That leads to distorted valuations in areas such as Highgate Hill and Kangaroo Point. I believe I must acquaint the House with this matter.

I hope much more can be done than introduce this Bill, which concerns me very much. It is not like the 1962 Act. It does not have limited life; it has life until the Parliament does something about it. This is not a once-off matter, it is something that will perpetuate inequities and perpetuate a system that lacks simplicity. The Bill has nothing to recommend it.

I urge the Minister for Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services to do something to overcome this. If the matter continues for another eight years, then the gainers and the losers will be even further apart. Every time the Government amends legislation to improve the lot of one person, invariably that is done at the expense of somebody else. This Bill is to the financial detriment of people in my electorate and many other electorates. I hope that this does not continue year after year.

Mr KATTER (Flinders) (11.23 p.m.): I wish to state very firmly to the Opposition—

Mr Fitzgerald: And briefly.

Mr KATTER: Yes, briefly.

The Opposition is wandering around in a dream not quite knowing what this Bill is about. Very specifically, this Bill is about what is called the "Mission Beach syndrome". Some 10 or 15 years ago a lot of little old people retired to Mission Beach and paid \$200 or \$300 for a piece of land with a beautiful view, with native palms waving in the background and the ocean in front. What happened was that a lot of people from down South such as Dame Zara Bate, Don Dunstan and a lot of others said that the area was a very nice one and that they would buy it.

Money was no problem to them. If they liked a particular piece of land they simply paid what they thought was a fair price for it—in Melbourne. The net result has been that pieces of land in the area have been sold for \$25,000 and \$35,000. Unfortunately what has happened to the little old people who live next door to the Dame Zara Bates and the Don Dunstans of this world is that they are suddenly hit with rates of up to \$2,000 and \$3,000 a year.

Mr Burns: There's something wrong with the valuations, then.

Mr KATTER: No. That is where the member for Lytton is wrong. The problem arises in the Innisfail Shire because the rest of the valuations have stayed static. In fact, I am told that the valuations of the tobacco farms have actually gone down.

Identical circumstances have arisen in Charters Towers. In the space of the last five years, valuations of the small acreages surrounding the town have risen from an average of \$200 for a 10-acre block to \$17,000. The problem is not that increase.

The problem is that the other three-quarters of the shire has risen by only 10 or 20 per cent. The result is that the people close to Charters Towers have suddenly been hit with an 8 500 per cent increase while the people further out have had an increase of only 10 per cent.

Mr Vaughan: You're free enterprise, aren't you?

Mr KATTER: I am a private enterprise person; I am not a free enterprise person.

Let me state very firmly to the House that the problem we are trying to solve is the Mission Beach syndrome. It is hard to find an answer to this problem. Ministers have been wandering round with this problem for the last 10 years. I pay a great tribute to the Minister for Local Government because in the space of three weeks he produced a formula which, whilst it does not solve the problem, reduces it considerably.

Mr Burns: For some.

Mr KATTER: No, not some. Let me explain it to the Opposition in detail, because they do not understand the problem. The problem is that those people bought a piece of land there expecting their general rates to be \$50 or \$100 a year. That was so in the Dalrymple Shire and, as I understand it, there were similar circumstances further north in the Northern Beaches area. It must be remembered that most of the people whom we are talking about are retired and on fixed incomes. Their rates suddenly jumped from \$50 to \$1,000. Old people on fixed incomes—pensioners—can simply not readjust their incomes. If they had known that change was in the pipeline, they would not have bought the land there. It is the sudden change that they cannot cope with.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr KATTER: I wish the Opposition would just listen. The remarks they are making are foolish. They are totally missing the mark. I am trying to explain the reason why we are doing this. We cannot alter the change. What we can do is alter its suddenness so that the rates imposed on a retired person, instead of suddenly jumping from \$50 to \$1,000, will, it is to be hoped, increase to no more than \$300, \$400 or \$500. We are cutting down on the rate of change.

The principle of valuation is probably reasonable. Where land valuations are skyrocketing—as is happening in Charters Towers, where people are sitting on 20 or 30 acres close to town—there should be some pressure on those people to cut up that land. I think everyone in the House would agree with that. I think we are all agreed about the general principle that valuations should be taxed—and that is what rates are: taxation on the value of

land. If people are sitting on good farming land and doing nothing with it, we should apply economic pressure on them to utilise that very valuable resource—the land. I think it achieves that purpose.

The third purpose it achieves is the same as a graduated tax scale. What we are doing is taxing the rich. Those who have very valuable land are taxed at a different rate. The local government tax, if I may call it that, is more for them than it is for the poor people living on land that is not nearly as valuable. So there is a good reason for the basic principle. We should probably adhere to that basic principle and leave it alone. However, the problem that arises is the sudden dramatic change in valuation. That is the problem we are overcoming here. This Bill will solve the problem at Mission Beach, it will solve the problem in the Northern Beaches area, it will solve the problem for us in Charters Towers and it will solve the problem in any other areas where there is a sudden, ridiculous and dramatic rise in valuations.

They are the reasons why we are introducing this Bill. If there is any humanity in the world—if we look at the problem that exists in the Northern Beaches area of the Barron River electorate, Charters Towers or any one of 100 places in Queensland—

Mr Vaughan: Nudgee Beach.

Mr KATTER: Yes, Nudgee Beach—it will be realised that this is a problem that we cannot walk away from. We cannot walk away from the problem and leave retired people on pensions or fixed incomes to the ugly fate of simply being forced out onto the streets.

Mr EATON (Mourilyan) (11.30 p.m.): The Government does not wish us to speak in this debate, so I will come straight to the point.

The Minister is aware that in the Herberton Shire and many other shires rates have been unfair, unjust, out of balance and not in proportion to the values that should have been placed on an area. To emphasise the point I am making, I point out that a property with an area of 100 acres increased in value from \$700 to \$16,000 and another property with an area of 50 acres increased from \$700 to \$15,000. If any honourable member desires to see the valuation numbers, I have here a book full of them that they can look at. I dealt with 78 people in Herberton between 9 o'clock in the morning and 10 o'clock at night, filling out objections and explaining the situation to them.

Mr Hinze: Would you be in favour of the Bill?

Mr EATON: It could be of assistance in some places. The Government has done nothing for so long that everything has got out of hand. The best I can say about the Bill is that it is only a temporary measure designed to give relief to a badly administered department.

Valuations were not consistent, and I wonder whether the valuers were not trained properly or not instructed properly. Let me give an example. A property on a secondary road on which there was forestry timber and no water and with which very little could be done was valued at \$9,000, whereas a property of similar size on the Kennedy Highway comprising good arable land suitable for dairying or agriculture was valued at \$8,000—\$1,000 less. Valuations such as that not only cause concern to ratepayers but also worry councillors who have to strike a rate in the dollar. No matter which way they go about it, they cannot achieve an equitable distribution of the rate burden.

Ratepayers in the Herberton Shire believe that the whole system needs to be upgraded. It is unjust, unfair and unworkable.

Mr Katter: But this change will help.

Mr EATON: As I said, there could be a short-term benefit in some areas. I appeal to the Government to either do away with the present system of valuation or upgrade it to ensure that any increases that occur give a fair and equitable distribution of the rate burden.

There are two shires in my electorate, the Herberton Shire and the Johnstone Shire. The ratepayers agree that they must foot the bill, that the councils need so much money and that it must be obtained from the ratepayers.

There are heads of department and qualified men who could, if they were given time by the Government to do the work, come up with the answers. When people in some areas have been treated very unjustly and people in other areas have been treated fairly, councils have a very difficult job in administering a shire. There is evidence not only in the Herberton Shire but throughout the State that the system is going downhill and is becoming virtually unworkable. In fact, the Government has introduced the Bill because it acknowledges the mess that the valuation system is in today and the effect that that is having on local authorities.

I conclude by saying that the Bill would not have been introduced unless its introduction was warranted.

Mr AKERS (Pine Rivers) (11.33 p.m.): I support the Bill for what it is—a very short-term answer to a very serious problem. It will modify—and I emphasise “modify”—the effect of new valuations. It will even

out only the current revaluation; it will not have any effect on the next revaluation of any of the areas about which honourable members are speaking. The maximum period for which it can work in any shire is five or six years. It must be only a precursor to a major review of the Local Government Act and the method of financing local government in Queensland. That is the basis of the whole problem. We are talking about the income from general rates levied by local authorities, and the problem must be resolved. As the honourable member for Mourilyan said, the Bill is a perfect example of the real need for positive action to be taken.

A serious social problem arises in Queensland as the result of enormous variations and the flow-on effect on rates. General rates based on the valuation of a property were introduced at a time when councils were responsible only for roads. The condition of the road in front of a property had a very strong bearing on the value of that property. Therefore, it had very clear relevance to the rates paid on that property.

Since that time, however, councils have started to become involved in other activities, such as libraries, immunisation, parks, playgrounds, sporting fields, football fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, expensive community centres, child-minding centres, town-planning, and so on. Those items have very little relevance to the value of a property and therefore have little relevance to the general rates that should be paid.

The situation is further confused by the availability of sewerage, water and garbage services to a property. They increase the value of the property, thereby increasing the general rate. However, those services are not paid for out of the revenue collected by way of the general rate. That adds to the total of the bill and that has a very serious effect on people. Although the general rate is increased as the result of the provision of those services, there is no real connection between them and the value of a property.

Tonight the Valuation of Land Act has had severe criticism levelled at it—I believe quite rightly. Over many years, various Governments have totally emasculated the Act because it is no longer relevant. Generally speaking, there is nothing wrong with the valuations assessed on properties. Very few people would sell their property at a price below the valuation assessed on that property. However, that is not relevant to this debate.

Mr Prest: That is what they base it on—sales.

Mr AKERS: That is what I am saying, and sales are totally irrelevant to what the general rate should be now.

Generally, valuations are correct valuations. I have not seen too many that have been reassessed after they have been through the appeal process.

The Bill does not provide an answer. No change to the Act will compensate for the disastrous effects referred to by the member for Flinders. He said that a few years ago people used to pay rates amounting to \$30 or \$40 and that now, because millionaires have moved in near them, they are paying as much as \$1,000 or \$1,500 by way of rates. No change to the present system will overcome that problem. Many Ministers have tried to change it and have failed. Their counterparts in other States have failed also.

What is needed is the appointment of a select committee of this Parliament to investigate the serious problems that exist. Every speech made tonight has highlighted the problems. The Opposition spokesman proposed one scheme; he was immediately shot down by somebody else; and so it went on. I hope that the first item that appears under General Business on the Business Papers for the next session is a motion for the appointment of a select committee to examine the system of valuation in this State and the financing of local government generally.

Mr BURNS (Lytton) (11.38 p.m.): When the revaluations for my area were issued by the Valuer-General, the form that was sent to ratepayers showed the current valuation of their land, the new valuation, the old rates and the new rates. A land-owner was able to work out whether he would be disadvantaged by having to pay more as the result of the 114 per cent average increase that was applied.

Many people looked at their revaluation notices and decided that they would not lodge an objection. They said to themselves, "My valuation has not gone up by 114 per cent, so I will not be paying more." In fact, certain land-owners in my area would have had a reduction in rates.

Those people will not be advantaged by the Bill; it will be an advantage only to those people who bought a block of land for \$1,000 and now have a valuation of \$20,000 placed on it—in other words, those with a substantial increase in valuation. A great number of people will pay more as a result of the introduction of this Bill. In my area, for example, we have been arguing for a long time that the valuations of land adjacent to the polluting industries at Murarrie should be lowered.

We believe that the department's valuation of that land can be unreal in view of the pollution problems that the people have to contend with and the failure of the Government to do something about them. In the last five to six years a new estate was developed in the area. When the land was put on the market it brought some remarkable prices. When one visits the area on a good day there is no pollution and it is a nice spot. The land brought a good price.

The point made by the honourable member for Flinders and others is valid in that area, too. I remember that our last Chief Reporter (Mr Baxter McCarthy) Harold Dean and others, bought land at Hollywell a long time ago. They sat on that land when it was served by dirt roads and had very few facilities. When the Runaway Bay subdivision was developed, land was sold for \$50,000 a block and the valuation of Baxter McCarthy's land increased in accordance with sales in the area. No consideration was given to the years that he was there without services or the fact that he had planned to retire there, which was a point made by the honourable member for Flinders. The increased values created a problem.

We should not allow the Valuer-General's Department to continue to value land on the basis of comparable sales in an area. Too many people with substantial sums of money want to buy a particular block and will pay well above its value. Earlier I was talking about the Noosa Resort Corporation, which inflated the price of land in that area. Blocks of land on Noosa Sound that sold four or five years ago for \$30,000 or \$40,000, are now selling for \$100,000 to \$120,000. The increased rates caused by the \$90,000 increase in prices, without this averaging system, would have put many retired people out of their homes.

I am concerned about the average fellow in my area to whom I have said, "Your rates will not go up. You will not be affected adversely by the valuation, so don't object." After the objection period has expired, we are changing the system. Under the averaging system he may pay a bit more, but it is too late to object.

As the honourable member for South Brisbane said, we can surely make provision to help those who are adversely affected by the large increases in valuation, but at the same time we should provide that no-one at the bottom has to pay more. If we are moving to help one section, why should we not help all sections?

I am not opposed to the averaging system that is designed to overcome the problem caused by the Government's failure to do something about our land valuation system over the years. At the same time, I object to helping only one section—and it is usually the silver tails who have the big, high-value blocks of land. There are many little people at Mission Beach or Runaway Bay. Many other people who bought land for \$50,000 or \$60,000 could afford to do so, but their rates will be reduced. At the same time, people at Cannon Hill, Murarrie and other places, who have to put up with pollution, are to be treated differently.

Mr HARPER (Auburn) (11.43 p.m.): The whole point about the Bill is that it allows local government to take the initiative in smoothing out the crest that arises from the market pressures on land sales. The option is open to local government, if it chooses to exercise it, and it is open to the Minister. The principle whereby a fresh

unimproved value does not exceed the former unimproved value—and when talking in generalisations we do not include the odd new value that does not exceed the previous value—will further tend towards a mean level of rateable values. It is a further smoothing of the crests and troughs. The options will be available at the discretion of local authorities or the Minister.

The Bill introduces the term “adjusted rateable value” to describe the value resulting from an arithmetical exercise with the unimproved value for the same parcel of land determined at two dates, probably five or seven years apart.

The meaning of the term “unimproved value” is not altered. Most of us know that it is a hypothetical value calculated to reflect the market price of land in an unimproved state. It merely sets out to relieve the ratepayers who are caught up in escalating land values which improve their capital asset but do nothing to improve their tangible income. It provides local government with just one more avenue by which to adjust the imposition on those of its residents who are obliged to make a direct financial contribution to local responsibilities.

I trust that the Government's intent in this legislation will be achieved. Anybody who has had experience of the attitude of the Valuer-General's Department—and I am talking about the department, not particular Ministers or Valuer-Generals—could be excused for having some scepticism in this regard.

We have witnessed attempts by this Government in previous Parliaments to provide, through a different Act, an impartial chairman for so-called without-prejudice conferences. It was a very well-intentioned move which in practice has become a complete farce and an expensive one at that. The intention was quite clear. It could have made a significant contribution to valuation practices. It has not done so because the intent of the Government has not been realised. I say quite definitely that the abuse of the Government's intent does very little to boost confidence in the Valuer-General, and again I am referring to the office and not to the man.

I hope that the Government's aims in this Bill will not suffer the same fate when the Bill is implemented. In this case, much will depend on the attitudes of local authorities. As time progresses, much will depend also on the attitudes of valuers, because they are most important. A valuer can be sent out into the field to do a job, but he has to exercise his prerogatives in determining values, in looking at sales and in making interpretations. If he goes out with the wrong attitude, it could be detrimental to the objects of this Government.

I congratulate the Minister on tackling a difficult problem with objectivity. If the Government's intent is thwarted, I have no doubt that the Minister will acknowledge the

need for remedies to be found to bring about the Government's intent in introducing the Bill.

Hon. R. J. HINZE (South Coast—Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police) (11.47 p.m.), in reply: With the lateness of the hour in mind I shall be brief. I thank honourable members for their contributions, for restricting their speech times and, in some cases, refraining from speaking at all.

The basic purpose of the Bill is to provide a means by which the impact of revaluations upon the ratepayer, and particularly the immediate impact of such revaluations, may be reduced. Considerable interest has been shown in the legislation by all honourable members and indeed the people of Queensland, particularly in the light of recent valuations.

The honourable member for Port Curtis referred to the Bill being designed to cover up valuation mistakes. I cannot agree with that. The Valuer-General is making valuations pursuant to the Valuation of Land Act. As in every other State, the valuation system is not perfect. We acknowledge that and say that the Bill will assist local authorities and many ratepayers.

The question has been asked by the honourable member for Barron River whether this Bill could apply to a local authority area where a revaluation was made before the Act came into force or, say, even one, two, three or more years ago. The answer is that the Bill has been worded so that it will apply in any situation, provided that the Governor in Council declares that the Act will apply to the particular local authority area as from 1 July in any year. The Act will apply only as from 1 July in a financial year, and to rates levied after that date. Of course the Bill also provides that a further declaration can be made that the Act no longer apply to a local authority area.

The essential points of the Bill are based on the
$$\frac{A + B}{2}$$
 formula for calculation of

an adjusted rateable value, where A is the fresh unimproved value and B is the former unimproved value. The fresh unimproved value is the valuation of such land which last took effect, either by way of a complete valuation of the area or by an interim valuation subsequent to that complete valuation. The former unimproved value is defined as the rateable value prior to the fresh unimproved value taking effect by way of a complete valuation.

The legislation is prospective in that it can apply only to rates levied after the Act is declared to apply to a particular local authority area. However, the adjusted rateable value is determined by the comparison with the fresh unimproved value and former unimproved value as defined, at the time of levy.

I foreshadow an amendment to clause 3 covering the definitions of former unimproved value, and interim valuation.

The member for South Brisbane (Mr Fouras) questioned the effect of this Bill on those ratepayers who receive a reduced valuation or a small percentage increase. It is true that the savings to ratepayers under this Bill will be picked up by all of the ratepayers. I said that in my second-reading speech. However, the equity of the present situation is also questionable. The case of the old established residents must also be considered in those cases where they have been hit by massive increases.

The honourable member for Flinders clearly explained this situation. The honourable member for Lytton raised the same point. I repeat that if concessions are made, they have to be met by the ratepayers as a whole. The little people have been writing to me about massive valuation increases, and central business areas will be in the category that loses a little of its rate reductions.

Those are the contributions to which I wish to refer at this point in time.

Motion (Mr Hinze) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

Mr Powell (Isis) in the chair; Hon. R. J. Hinze (South Coast—Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—Interpretation—

Mr HINZE (11.52 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

“At page 2, line 31, after the word ‘value’ insert the words—

‘by way of complete valuation of the Area’”;
and

“At page 2, line 40, after the word ‘value’ insert the words—

‘made by way of complete valuation of the Area’.”

Certain terms used in the Bill are defined. The terms as defined are self-explanatory. It will be noted that the term “local authority” includes Brisbane and reference in the Bill to a valuation made by the Valuer-General is stated to be to the end result of an objection or appeal lodged against such valuation.

Amendments (Mr Hinze) agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 7, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

THIRD READING

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

The House adjourned at 11.57 p.m.