

NOTE: There could be differences between this document and the official printed Hansard, Vol. 317

TUESDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 1991

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. Fouras, Ashgrove) read prayers and took the chair at 10 a.m.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following Bills reported by Mr Speaker—

Director of Prosecutions Act Amendment Bill;
Land Act and Another Act Amendment Bill;
Land Tax Act Amendment Bill (No. 2);
Public Accountants Registration (Repeal and Consequential Amendments) Bill;
Appropriation Bill (No. 2);
Building Units and Group Titles Act Amendment Bill;
Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill;
Workplace Health and Safety Act and Other Acts Amendment Bill;
The Criminal Code and Another Act Amendment Bill;
Education (Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority) Bill;
Local Authorities (1991 Elections) Bill;
City of Gold Coast (Harbour Town Zoning) Bill;
Local Government (Chinatown Mall) Act and Another Act Amendment Bill;
Traffic Act and Another Act Amendment Bill;
Tobacco Products (Licensing) Act Amendment Bill;
Referendums Legislation Amendment Bill;
Redland Shire Council (Clarification of Boundaries) Bill;
Corporations (Consequential Amendments) Bill;
Corporations (Queensland) Bill;
Debits Tax Bill;
Constitution (Duration of Legislative Assembly) Referendum Bill;
Coal Mining Industry Long Service Leave Act Amendment Bill;
Workers' Compensation Bill;
Local Government (Queen Street Underground Shopping Facilities) Bill;
Petroleum Act Amendment Bill;
Local Government Act and Other Acts Amendment Bill;
Foreign Ownership of Land Register Act Amendment Bill;
Community Services (Torres Strait) Act Amendment Bill;
Community Services (Aborigines) Act Amendment Bill.

PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO AMBULANCE SERVICES

Resignation of Mr T. Gilmore

Mr SPEAKER: I have to report that I have received from Mr Tom Gilmore, MLA, his resignation from the Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry into Ambulance Services, effective from 31 January 1991.

ELECTIONS TRIBUNAL**Judge for 1991**

Mr SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that a letter dated 4 December 1990 has been received from the Honourable the Chief Justice notifying that the Honourable Mr Justice Glen Norman Williams will be the judge to preside at the sittings of the Elections Tribunal for 1991.

PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO AMBULANCE SERVICES**First Report**

Mr SPEAKER: I have to report that, in accordance with the resolution of the Parliament agreed to on 29 November 1990, I have received the first report of the Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry into Ambulance Services and accompanying documents.

Ordered to be printed.

ELECTORAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMISSION**Reports**

Mr SPEAKER: I have to report that, in accordance with section 2.13 of the Electoral and Administrative Review Act 1989, I have received the *Report on Judicial Review of Administrative Decisions and Actions* and the *Report on Freedom of Information*.

Ordered to be printed.

GLADSTONE AND AREA WATER BOARD**Annual Report**

Mr SPEAKER: I have to report that, in accordance with section 46J (6) of the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977-1988, I have received the annual report of the Gladstone and Area Water Board for the year ended 30 June 1990.

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO ABORIGINAL DEATHS IN CUSTODY**Reports**

Mr SPEAKER: I have to report that, in accordance with the resolution of the Parliament passed during the session of 1901, I have received the following reports from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody—

Report of the inquiry into the death of the man who died in Brisbane Prison on 4 December 1980;
and

Report of the inquiry into the death of Barbara Ruth Tiers.

HANSARD**Supply of Cut Galleys to Members**

Mr SPEAKER: Since 1981 members have been supplied with a full copy of the previous day's proceedings as well as a cut galley of their speeches. In the interests of economy, as from 20 February 1991 the practice of supplying individual cut galleys will

be discontinued. To assist members the galley proofs will be paginated in the same manner as the weekly blue pamphlet and a table of contents will be inserted in the front of the document.

It is estimated that the elimination of this unnecessary duplication will effect cost-savings of the order of \$45,000 a year. The same time limit for the return of corrections to the Chief Hansard Reporter, that is by 4 p.m. the same day, will apply. Members wishing to submit corrections may do so in the same manner as they have always done, that is by telephoning the Chief Reporter, by photocopying the relevant pages and delivering them to Hansard, or by seeing the Chief Reporter personally.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Adoption Law Amendment

From **Mr FitzGerald** (71 signatories) praying for significant changes to the Adoption of Children Act Amendment Act 1990.

Similar petitions were received from **Mr Beattie** (98 signatories), **Mr Szczerbanik** (70 signatories), **Mr Sullivan** (29 signatories), **Mr Braddy** (97 signatories), **Mr Fenlon** (142 signatories), **Mr Nunn** (208 signatories), **Mr Santoro** (165 signatories), **Mr Foley** (33 signatories), **Mr Comben** (32 signatories) and **Mr Beanland** (286 signatories).

Davies Road, Boonooroo

From **Mr Dollin** (60 signatories) praying that the Parliament will have Davies Road, Boonooroo upgraded and sealed.

Death Penalty

From **Mr Dollin** (52 signatories) praying for changes in the laws regarding the death penalty.

Bank Hours, Holidays Act Amendment

From **Mr Palaszczuk** (18 signatories) praying that the Holidays Act be not amended to allow banks to open for business on Saturdays and certain public holidays.

A similar petition was received from **Mr Borbidge** (40 signatories).

Mundubbera Court House

From **Mr Harper** (516 signatories) praying that the operation of the Mundubbera Court House be continued.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

Regulations under—

Local Government Act 1936-1990

Local Government (Chinatown and The Valley Malls) Act 1984-1990

Fire Service Act 1990

Weapons Act 1990

Pawnbrokers Act 1984-1989

Hawkers Act 1984-1985

Second-hand Dealers and Collectors Act 1984-1985

- Firearms and Offensive Weapons Act 1979-1989
- Police Service Administration Act 1990
- Brands Act 1915-1989
- Fruit and Vegetables Act 1947-1988
- Hen Quotas Act 1973-1987
- Public Trustee Act 1979-1990
- Funeral Benefit Business Act 1982
- Credit Act 1987
- Business Names Act 1962-1990
- Friendly Societies Act 1913-1990
- River Improvement Trust Act 1940-1985
- Stock Act 1915-1989
- Water Resources Act 1989-1990
- Regulations to be observed on the appointment of Queen's Counsel
- Rules under the City of Brisbane Act 1924-1990
- Orders in Council under—
 - Ambulance Services Act 1967-1988
 - State Counter-Disaster Organization Act 1975-1978
 - City of Brisbane Market Act 1960-1985 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangement Act 1982-1989
 - Meat Industry Act 1965-1989
 - River Improvement Trust Act 1940-1985 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangement Act 1982-1989
 - Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949-1989
 - Sugar Experiment Stations Act 1900-1990
 - Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936-1990
 - Water Resources Act 1989-1990 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangement Act 1982-1989
 - Queensland Law Society Act 1952-1988
 - Judges' Salaries and Pensions Act 1967-1989
 - Credit Act 1987
 - Retirement Villages Act 1988
 - Magistrates Courts Act 1921-1989
 - The Supreme Court Act of 1921
 - Auctioneers and Agents Act 1971-1990
- Discussion paper—*Energy Policy Directions for Queensland into the 21st Century*
- Proclamations under—
 - Grain Research Foundation Act Amendment Act 1990
 - Swine Compensation Fund Acts Repeal Act 1990
 - Commercial Arbitration Act 1990
 - Director of Prosecutions Act Amendment Act 1990
 - The Criminal Code and Another Act Amendment Act 1990
 - Corporations (Queensland) Act 1990
 - Corporations (Consequential Amendments) Act 1990
 - Justices Act 1886-1990

Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act 1962-1989

Reports for the year ended 30 June 1990—

Director of Marketing

Grain Research Foundation

Queensland Barley Growers' Cooperative Association Limited

Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Organization

Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organization

Barley Marketing Board

Butter Marketing Board

Townsville/Thuringowa Water Supply Board

Accounting Standards Review Board

Report of the State Wheat Board for the year ended 30 September 1990

Report and financial statements of the Queensland Law Society Incorporated for the period 1 May 1989 to 30 April 1990

- (A) A proposal by the Governor in Council to revoke the setting apart and declaration as State Forest under the Forestry Act 1959-1990 of—
- (a) all that part of State Forest 915 described as Area 'A' as shown on plan FTY1592 prepared under the authority of the Conservator of Forests, Department of Primary Industries and containing in total an area of about 8.4 hectares;
 - (b) all those parts of State Forest 88 contained within stations E-26-27-28-G-F, 16-17-21-25-C-B-A, 5-8-H-G-9a-7a-5a and S-T-X on registered plan WT388 and containing in total an area of 94.1114 hectares;
 - (c) all that part of State Forest 387 described as lot 2 on plan HR2047 containing an area of 435.1 hectares;
 - (d) the whole of State Forest 354 containing an area of 2.023 hectares; and
- (B) a brief explanation of the proposal.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Third Report of Cooke Inquiry into Trade Unions

Hon. N. G. WARBURTON (Sandgate—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (10.10 a.m.), by leave: Honourable members are advised that, on Tuesday, 29 January 1991, I received the third report of the commissioner appointed to inquire into the activities of particular Queensland unions. The third report relates to the activities of the Federated Clerks Union of Australia (Central and Southern Queensland Branch) Union of Employees. Two copies of the report were immediately dispatched to the Attorney-General, who, at my request, sought certain advice from the Solicitor-General and, in addition, sought independent advice from the Director of Prosecutions as to whether or not criminal charges should be laid in one particular case.

The Solicitor-General is of the opinion that there is no material in Volume I of the report that could prejudice the fair trial of any person. However, his opinion is that the supplement that forms Volume III of the report should not be released at this stage. This approach is consistent with the decision of the High Court in *Balog v. Independent Commission of Corruption* (1990) 64 ALJR 400.

Accordingly, I table Volume I and Volume II, Parts A, B and C, of the third report, and move that they be printed.

Whereupon the documents were laid on the table, and ordered to be printed.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Death of Cattle, Whyalla Feedlot, Texas**

Hon. E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (10.12 a.m.), by leave: Honourable members will be aware of the tragic loss of more than 2 600 cattle at the Whyalla feedlot near Texas earlier this month. The deaths began without warning at about 2 p.m. on Saturday, 9 February. Officers from the Department of Primary Industries at Toowoomba were notified of the situation by the feedlot's management, and by Monday, 11 February, a specially formed DPI task force was working to establish a reason for the deaths, which, by that stage, had reached the 2 000 mark. While some laboratory results are outstanding, there appears little doubt that the animals died as a result of heat stress, caused mainly, my department has concluded, by an extreme rise in humidity levels between 6 and 11 February. At the start of that period, afternoon and evening storms resulted in substantial rainfall throughout the region, including Whyalla station. Information provided by the weather bureau and compiled from statistics gathered from nearby centres suggests that the storms provided no relief from maximum or minimum temperatures at Texas, ranging from 20 to 30 degrees. Recordings also show that between Wednesday, 6 February, and Friday, 8 February, humidity rose from 40 per cent to more than 80 per cent, with minimal compensating relief from air temperatures. In other words, over the 48 hours prior to the deaths, the humidity level more than doubled while the air temperature stayed at around the same level. Added to these conditions was the lack of any breeze. Humidity levels did not return to normal until Monday, 11 February; but, by then, the damage had been done.

My Veterinary Services Branch informs me that humidity is a critical factor in the survival of cattle, regardless of whether they are under cover or in the open. Indeed, Whyalla was not the only cattle industry enterprise to report deaths over that period of high heat and extreme humidity. In reaching a rational explanation for these deaths, I cannot impress upon members too greatly the impact of humidity. Australian cattle are conditioned to survive in extremes of temperature, whether it be a New South Wales southern highlands snowstorm or months of 40 degree-plus heat in Queensland's channel country. Heat is one thing; humidity is another. Cattle get no relief from humidity because they do not sweat in the same way as most other animals. It should also be noted that although the dead cattle were British breeds—Angus and Hereford—three-quarters of them were sourced from Queensland properties, so the theory of lack of acclimatisation does not hold. However, that fact reinforces the view that what was experienced was the effect on cattle of a climatic equivalent of a one-in-one hundred year flood.

Concern has been expressed by members of the public over the provision of shade at feedlots such as Whyalla. This matter is being addressed by Queensland feedlot operators and by my department. Trials using artificial shade material are in fact being conducted at Whyalla itself, and those results are being assessed by the owners.

Similar trials involving the DPI were already under way at another feedlot in the Condamine region. Should the provision of shade emerge as a positive factor in these trials or others, it shall not be ignored. Regrettably, there is a perception among some people—most of whom admit to never having visited a feedlot—that operators are reluctant to spend money in relation to animal welfare. Let me say that in the case of Whyalla—widely regarded as one of the best operations of its type in Australia—animal welfare is a priority and no judgment can be made from the circumstances surrounding the death of these cattle. After all, the operators have lost about \$3m as a result of this extraordinary incident and are determined to ensure that it does not happen again.

Last Friday, in Nelson, New Zealand, at a meeting of the Australian Agricultural Council, I was appointed to convene a national workshop to develop national guidelines for the establishment and operation of feedlots. This is an important task and one I accepted readily, as the feedlot industry—while being relatively new to this country—will become increasingly influential in the development of Queensland's beef industry

and, in turn, our economic fortunes. Beef is Queensland's biggest rural industry. Queensland is Australia's beef capital. However, the Goss Government is also aware of genuine public concerns on issues such as environmental impact, animal welfare and trade management. The workshop will be held before 1 May this year and will involve feedlotters, beef industry organisations, animal welfare groups, environmental groups, local authorities and Government agencies. The result will be a clearly defined, nationally consistent set of guidelines—and, consequently, regulations—to enhance the industry and maintain public confidence in an expanding form of rural enterprise.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, the Whyalla incident is of great concern to this Government, the beef industry and the community as a whole. Every effort is being made to ensure that a repetition of this event does not occur; but, in making that assertion, let me remind honourable members and the public that people can only do so much when confronted with the power of nature. In less than two months, possibly as many as 80 000 head of cattle have died as a result of rain and floods in northern Queensland. To those people who have a genuine concern for the welfare of animals, this loss is of monumental proportion when compared with events at Whyalla, and is another telling indication of just how powerless we can be in dealing with the vagaries of our climate.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Mr H. F. Newton

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development and Minister for the Arts) (10.17 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this State by the late Harold Francis Newton, a former member of the Parliament of Queensland.

2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the Parliament of Queensland in the loss they have sustained."

In paying tribute to Fred Newton, it is hard to go past the headline to an article in the *Australian* newspaper in July 1974 on the occasion of his election as Deputy Leader of the parliamentary Labor Party. In seven words that headline accurately captured the essence of Fred Newton's political career and much of his working life. It read—

"Newton is a battler for the underdog."

Fred Newton knew hardship and disadvantage from early in life. Born in Maryborough in 1921, he was one of eight children who, because of family financial pressures, spent three years of his childhood in Nudgee orphanage. Fred Newton was to recall 53 years later, on his election as Deputy Leader of the Labor Opposition, "The orphanage taught me to fend for myself." I did not serve in this Parliament with Fred Newton—most of the members of this House did not—but some of us did know him well, such as my deputy, Tom Burns, who can speak more from personal experience. I think that is important when recalling the contribution and the character of somebody as colourful as Fred Newton. He was educated at the South Brisbane State School and by the time he was 14 was working for a living as a farm labourer. Work in other rural industries followed as a youth and a young man. From 1942 to 1945, he gave war service to his country as a sapper with the Royal Australian Engineers. Following the war, Fred worked as an employee of the Darling Downs bacon factory, an experience about which he was later to comment—

"Lifting the sides of pigs, the raw bones on your arms all day, I learnt the value of unions and how people could be exploited without them."

A strike in the bacon factory in 1946 resulted in Fred's becoming a builder's labourer and the beginning of a long association with the Building Workers Industrial Union.

The following year, in 1947, he joined the Australian Labor Party. Between 1953 and his election to this House in 1960 as the member for Belmont, he worked as an organiser with the BWIU representing the union on the Queensland Central Executive of the Labor Party in the late 1950s. That was, of course, a turbulent period in Labor Party history, culminating in the split in 1957, during which Fred Newton voted in favour of the motion to expel the then Premier, Vince Gair.

Fred Newton entered this House with a convincing election result in the seat of Belmont, a seat which he held with a comfortable margin for the next 14 years. During his period as a member of this House, he spoke frequently and knowledgeably on the issue of industrial safety, particularly in the building industry. His contribution as a member was constructive, practical and always forthright. He was known to his parliamentary colleagues as "Fearless" Fred. He was a member of the parliamentary Labor Party's executive from 1966 until he lost his seat in the watershed State election of 1974 at which Labor was reduced to a mere 11 members. After selling real estate for a couple of years, Fred Newton worked as a general assistant with the State Library until his retirement in 1984. There he gained a reputation for diligence and efficiency. In his retirement, Fred was active in community work, notably for the Wynnum Returned Services League.

Throughout his 14-year parliamentary career, Fred Newton gave valuable service to this House. His contribution was overwhelmingly on behalf of those people who most needed a voice in this House, the people on whose behalf he spoke in his maiden speech in 1960 and the years that followed—

". . . working people, ordinary people, people paying rent, young working people, pensioners, small businessmen, small farmers, parents with schoolchildren, mothers trying to manage a family budget."

It is not too hard to see why Fred Newton enjoyed popular support, because more than most who aspire to the tribute, "He was a man of the people."

On behalf of the parliamentary Labor Party and the Government of Queensland, I extend sympathy and condolences to Fred Newton's family.

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Housing and Local Government) (10.22 a.m.): I join with the Premier in offering my condolences and those of my family and my colleagues to Fred Newton's family. As the Premier said, Harold Francis Newton—we used to call him "Fearless" Fred—was a good bloke. He was a battler. He really did it hard. He was born in 1921 in Maryborough into a family of eight children. When he was 10, his mum and dad could not keep him any more, so they made him a State ward and placed him, and his sister, Ada, in the Nudgee orphanage.

Those were very dark times in Queensland when, unfortunately, through no fault of their own, State wards were also deemed to owe a debt to the State. They were placed virtually in bondage because of circumstances well outside their control. At the age of 14, Fred was despatched as a farm labourer to a dairy farm in Pittsworth. Hundreds—possibly thousands—of unfortunate young Queenslanders suffered similar fates at such an impressionable age and stage of their lives. The dairy farm that Fred was sent to was sold and he was returned to the orphanage. He was then sent out again, this time to work as a farm labourer on a farm at Maryvale, near Warwick. At the age of 18 years, having finally completed his four years' State service, Fred left the orphanage to rejoin his family. Those years had made him a strong, independent, resourceful character. He found work on dairy and sugar farms and as a road worker at the local quarry. Working in the road gangs gave Fred his first taste of unionism, through the Australian Workers Union. He then enlisted in the army in 1942. Of course, the army was a relief for a lot of battlers like him, because it gave them some security. What sort of security is it when one has to join the army and go away to fight in a war to get oneself regular wages and decent conditions?

Fred spent a short period in my electorate. I always used to say to Fred that our lives were fairly mixed up together. We were organisers together. We worked on campaigns together. Fred's electorate came down into where the Lytton electorate now is. He served in Lytton. He worked at Dobby. We spent many a long lunch together. Fred was discharged from the army and worked in Townsville and at the KR Darling Downs bacon factory at Dobby. That year, he joined the AMIEU and soon found himself involved in the 1946 bacon factory strike. He then worked as a builders' labourer and joined that union, too, until he was accepted as a post-war reconstruction carpentry trainee. Under the scheme he went to work at Holland Park, building temporary American huts for the Queensland Housing Commission, and he joined the Building Workers Industrial Union.

Fred was becoming increasingly more involved in union affairs. A need arose in the BWIU for an additional organiser, and in mid-1954 Fred became a State organiser for the BWIU. That work took him all over the State and away from his family for long periods. When we had those long lunches, Fred used to say that he was impressed by the speech of Ben Chifley, which was later referred to as the "Light on the Hill" speech. Fred made that his aim in life. It was one of the last speeches that Ben Chifley made before his death. As I said, it was Fred's motivation for the rest of his life. Ben Chifley was a common man, an engine-driver who made good. He was a good model for Fred.

Fred joined the Manly branch of the Labor Party and held most of the positions in that branch. He became increasingly involved in ALP affairs. He was elected secretary of the Labor Day Celebrations Committee. He used to take great pride in the 1956 Labor Day march. Of course, 1956 was about the last of the Labor Days under a Labor Government. Fred organised that march. It was a great success—a success that he cherished to the end of his days. Fred gained ALP endorsement and was elected as the member for Belmont in the 1960 State election. Fred and I worked on many campaigns together. He was assistant State campaign director for nine municipal elections during the Clem Jones years. Clem was a tough taskmaster—I think that even Clem would admit that. Fred was involved in and the director of successful campaigns in State and Federal elections for the ALP. He used to leave this place and work as a volunteer for the Labor Party afterwards.

In July 1974, Fred was elected Deputy Leader of the State Opposition. He lost his seat in the December 1974 election when there was a great swing against the Labor Party. He had spent 15 years in the Parliament and contested six elections. Not long before he died, Fred said to me, "If we had had four-year terms, Tom, I would have had three elections, not six." Fred remained an ALP member until his death but was not an active participant. He believe, somewhat characteristically, that one is either all in or all out. Fred said that he would have loved to have been part of the Labor Party State election victory in December last year. That victory was one of his most cherished moments.

Fred was a great family man. His background of the orphanage and being sent out to work on the farms created in Fred a great belief in the family and in sticking together, looking after one's kids and sticking by one's kids. His wife Gwen was a really lovely lady. He had seven children: Daniel, Stephen, Rodney, Gordon, Carmel, Janelle and Colin. Fred had weathered a hard and tough childhood and he made good, but at the beginning of 1984 his life was shattered when it was found that Gwen had cancer. She finally succumbed to the disease in 1986. Those who knew Fred knew him for many things. He was an extremely humble and caring man whose harsh upbringing inspired him to fight for a better life for himself, for his family and for all those whom he had the capacity to help. Fred's humility remained with him throughout his life. His happy-go-lucky nature and his hard-working, fair day's work for a fair day's pay ideals, were two of his most obvious virtues, and those traits endeared him to all who knew him. When Fred believed in something, he believed in it with a real passion. He never lost sight of Ben Chifley's "Light on the Hill".

For Fred and Gwen their family was their lives, and their children are evidence of this unwavering devotion. Fred was one of those real down to earth Labor battlers from day one until his death. He never really sought any personal glory for himself, even when he nominated for and became Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Fred was a fighter for the underdog, those whom the system put down. He never forgot the rough and tough days of his childhood. Sometimes over a few beers Fred would reminisce bitterly about the hardships that he suffered as a State ward in bondage. How cruel it must have been at such a young age to be away from one's parents and to know that, even if one passed all one's exams, one was not even going to stand for Scholarship. Yet, at the same time, Fred would say that it was probably the making of him.

As higher tertiary standards are demanded, the Fred Newtons of this world become more and more a rarity in our Parliament. Those self-educated gladiators with only the grassroots degree of hard knocks are fading out, and it is sad. When we say goodbye to the Fred Newtons, we say goodbye also to the Ben Chifleys, the Arthur Calwells, the Eddie Wards, the Jack Duggans and others who worshipped that "Light on the Hill" and gave their lives, their sweat, for very little to take Australia closer towards it. I say, "Goodbye, Fred."

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (10.30 a.m.): On behalf of the Opposition, I support the sentiments expressed by the Premier and the Deputy Premier in honour of the late Harold Francis Newton, or Fred Newton, as he was known. At this juncture, I point out that I have the same information that has been given by the Premier and the Deputy Premier, but I would like to read it into the record to let it be known that we, too, have deep feelings for such a person. Even though I will be repeating a lot of what we have heard, I would like to have it on the record. I am aware that you, Mr Speaker, make a presentation to the family of the deceased of all the speeches that are made in a discussion of a condolence motion, and Opposition members would definitely wish to have their speeches recorded in that presentation.

The late Fred Newton was born in Maryborough on 12 July 1921. He was the son of a bush worker and typified, in the eyes of many, the traditional Labor parliamentarian. There are probably quite a few other parliamentarians—and I include members of the Country Party/National Party as well—who had the same sort of upbringing. From humble beginnings, including three years in a Nudgee orphanage, he rose to become a State organiser with the Building Workers Industrial Union and later Deputy Opposition Leader of the State parliamentary Labor Party. I certainly concur with what the Deputy Premier said, that it takes only a couple of seconds thought to realise what life would be like in an orphanage; indeed, one does not have to think for long about that. It must have been an extremely humble, hard and difficult time for a person at an very impressionable age. However, it is wonderful that we have such a system in this State and this nation whereby people can come from such humble beginnings and tough upbringings and make it almost to the top. I think that is something that we should cherish.

Fred Newton was educated at South Brisbane State School and, at the age of 21, began his war service as a sapper in the Royal Australian Engineers during World War II. After the war and some Commonwealth post-war training, he was employed as a carpenter at the Darling Downs Bacon Factory, which led to his involvement in the union movement. In 1953, he became a BWIU State organiser, and continued in that role until 1960, when he was elected as the member for Belmont, a seat he represented until 8 December 1974.

He was a member of the parliamentary Labor Party executive from 1966 to 1974, and on 1 July 1974—barely six months before he was defeated in the 1974 election—he became Deputy Opposition Leader. I certainly understand that, when the Labor Party finally won Government in December 1989, he, of course, was entitled to feel elated.

I am told that Fred Newton was a devoted family man, with he and his late wife, Gwen, raising five sons and two daughters. We again concur with the remarks that have been expressed about his devotion to his family. That has to show to all people that family must come first.

On behalf of the Opposition, I pass on to Fred Newton's family and friends our sincere condolences on his recent passing. While many Opposition members did not actually know Fred Newton, they certainly recognise, acknowledge and commend his services as a parliamentarian and his service as a representative of the people, which is what we are all about.

Mr BEANLAND (Toowong—Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.33 a.m.): I rise to support the remarks that have been previously expressed this morning. The members of the Liberal Party join in this motion of condolence and express their sincerest sympathies to the family of the late Fred Newton.

Fred certainly had a very clear and strong philosophical affinity with the trade union movement and the ALP. It has been pointed out this morning that he did not have an easy life, particularly during his childhood, but we have all noted the fact that, from those very humble beginnings, he did have a very successful career and a very successful life. I believe that it says a lot for the character of Fred Newton and the contributions that he made, not only to this place but also to the people of the State of Queensland.

I understand that on being elected Deputy Leader of the Opposition, he said:

"I could never imagine, with the life I've had, that I would reach this position. But I've always been one to take a look at a new step before I took it."

I suppose that, in some ways, Fred was summing up his life—the way he had led his life over so many years, and the way he was going to lead his life in the future.

I understand that he was kept busy in retirement as a community worker, particularly with the Wynnum RSL, and we know of his close affinity with that organisation.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Liberal Party, I join with other members of the House in extending our condolences to the family of the late Fred Newton.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.35 a.m.): I join in the motion of condolence moved by the Premier to the family of Fred Newton. Fred was the member for Belmont. The majority of the electorate that I now represent was formerly Fred's electorate.

In 1968, I joined the Carina Heights branch of the Labor Party, which was a branch in Fred's electorate. My earliest campaigning, which was carried out before I joined the party, was for Fred and also for Ray Lynch, who was the Labor alderman in that area.

My mum and dad were very good friends of Fred Newton and, on their behalf and also on behalf of all the branch members in my area who knew and liked Fred very, very much, I pass on my condolences to his family. Those branch members worked very hard for him over very many years.

Fred was a person whom I respected very much. My earliest recollections of Fred are of coming here to Parliament House in, I think, 1963 when I was still at primary school. Fred escorted our class around, and I can clearly recall that day. Fred had a red belt on. People talk about Fred's nickname. The nickname that I can remember is "Red Fred", and that is what people at the Camp Hill Hotel used to call him. Fred drank on the right-hand side of the bar with all the Labor Party people. It was called the "red corner". Bill Hewitt and all the Liberals drank on the other side of the bar, and that was affectionately referred to as the "blue corner". Fred and Bill Hewitt were very good friends. Indeed, Fred was very good friends with members of the National Party. I was pleased to see so many former members from both sides of this Parliament at Fred's funeral to show their respect for a person whom they obviously respected.

As I said, I came to Parliament House in, I think, 1963. That was the day on which I decided that I was going to become a member of Parliament. As a primary school pupil, I can clearly remember being shown around Parliament House by Fred. I went away and thought about it that night, and I decided then that I would become a member of Parliament. Fred knew of my ambitions from then on. I was certainly able to achieve that ambition.

As I said, Fred was well respected by his branch members and by his opposition. He was also well respected in his electorate. I now represent many of the constituents that he represented. I know the high regard in which those people held Fred. They are aware of the hard work that Fred did for them. Fred was a member of Parliament at a time when electorates were serviced differently from the way in which they are serviced today. In 1973, members were given electorate offices. Fred finished his career as a member in 1974, so his electorate had an electorate office for only one year. In the days prior to 1973, most of the work of members of Parliament was done either from their home or from Parliament House. As a result, they serviced their electorate in a far different way from that of today. Fred worked his electorate very hard. I know many people in my electorate still regard him very warmly and appreciate the work that he did for them. Fred did many things without seeking publicity for them. He went out and saw people. He ensured that people in his electorate who did not have money were given money. He gave them money out of his own pocket. He certainly looked after his electorate. I pass on my condolences and, as I said, the condolences of my mum and dad, to Fred's family.

Hon. E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (10.39 a.m.): Because I served with Fred Newton longer than any other member presently in this House, I would like to speak for a few moments in support of the contributions already made by members on both this side and the other side of the House. In common with the Deputy Premier, I personally knew Fred from the late 1950s, which was a period of change and development for the Labor Party in Queensland. Fred provided a good example to any young person, as I was then, of the straight pathway that had to be followed in relation to Labor Party politics at that time.

When, as a young man, I first became a member of this House in 1969, Fred took me under his wing in more ways than one. I became a member of his committee. He was a tremendous bloke because he had a great personal feeling for people. I think that, as members of Parliament, all of us would admit that that is one of the hardest things to acquire. He had a knowledge and understanding of and feeling for people. To be a successful member of Parliament, one must have those attributes. Fred had them buried deep within his own heart. Consequently, it was a great experience for me to work closely with him. Even after three years, when I ran into my own personal problems in the party, Fred was still a great confidant of mine, right through until the time that he lost his seat. He was a regular visitor to my home. Despite his earlier family problems, he still had a great love of his own family, not only a love of Gwen and his children, as has been expressed, but also a love of his mother, who lived just up the road from my place in Mackay, and his sister Ada and her family, whom I had known well for a long time. He was a regular visitor to the Mackay area. Whenever he visited Mackay, he would visit my home. In fact, having known him as nothing else but Fred, it was always strange for me to be in conversation with his mother and his sister and to hear him being referred to as Harold. We in Brisbane did not know who Harold Newton was, but everybody knew Fred.

As was typical of Fred, in 1974, when there was another very, very hard period being experienced within the Labor Party, Fred neglected his own area in order to get out and help others. That was the type of man he always was—prepared to extend the hand of help, of friendship, of love and kindness to everybody else. That is the deep feeling that I will always have for Fred Newton. He was a very "human" man, a very caring man and, above all else, a great worker.

Motion agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Criminal Justice Commission; Appointment of Editorial Committee

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (10.43 a.m.): In November 1990, the Criminal Justice Commission produced an issues paper titled *SP Bookmaking and Other Aspects of Criminal Activity in the Racing Industry*. On page 27 of that report, a mistake occurred

in terms of the illustration. The parliamentary committee has subsequently raised that issue with the commission and the commission has advised the parliamentary committee that an editorial committee under the chairmanship of Professor John Western has been appointed. The members of the committee will include the directors of the research and coordination division and the intelligence division. The editorial committee will include an additional member with expertise in the issue under discussion. A letter from the Chairman of the Criminal Justice Commission sets out four steps that will editorialise and deal with reports and issues papers when released. I seek leave to table for the information of members the letter from the commission to the committee.

Leave granted.

Whereupon the honourable member laid the document on the table.

QUESTION UPON NOTICE

Teacher Allocation, Brisbane South Region

Mr BRISKEY to ask the Minister for Education—

With reference to the provision of an extra 1 800 teachers in Queensland schools since December 1989—

(1) How many of these teachers have been allocated to the Brisbane South Region?

(2) How many of these teachers have been allocated to the high schools and primary schools in the Redlands electorate?

Mr BRADY: (1 and 2) It is true that, since the election of the Goss Government in December 1989, approximately 1 800 new teachers have been employed in Queensland State schools. In 1991, an extra 768 teachers will be employed Statewide, plus 102 foreign language teachers and teacher aides, and 18 extra teachers to assist with the Government's new literacy and numeracy initiative. This is further proof of the enormous changes that have occurred in our education system under this Government.

I know that it will please the member for Redlands, who was prior to his election to this Parliament a teacher employed by the Education Department, that the families in his electorate will benefit greatly from the employment of those extra teachers. Brisbane South region currently has 3 340 teachers. Excluding teachers employed at the Brisbane School of Distance Education, the number of teachers has been increased by 109 from 3 076 to 3 185. I am pleased to say that 13 of the 102 additional language teachers were employed in the Brisbane South region. Of those teachers allocated to that region, the number employed in primary and secondary schools in the Redlands electorate has been increased by 35 from 351 in December 1989 to 386 in February this year. An additional five language teachers have also been employed there.

I seek leave to table a break-down of enrolments and teacher numbers at each of the schools in the honourable member's electorate.

Leave granted.

Whereupon the honourable member laid the document on the table.

Mr BRADY: Those additional teachers are a very important part of the Goss Government's education strategy, because over the last two years, enrolments in the Redlands electorate have increased by 541 students to a total of 6 693. While other areas in Brisbane South have displayed static or declining enrolment trends, those in the Redlands electorate have grown significantly and staff have been provided to meet this increase. The pupil/teacher ratio has improved from 18.4 students per teacher to 17.7. This is positive proof that by providing extra teachers we are reducing class sizes and improving the quality of education that we are giving to young Queenslanders.

I appreciate the honourable member's interest in these matters and his continuing efforts on behalf of the students, parents and teachers of the Redlands electorate.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**Economic Management**

Mr COOPER: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to his sales pitch that he made to the Queensland business community prior to the last election. During that speech, which was made to the Institute of Management Consultants in Brisbane, the Premier stated—

"Just as Australian business has nothing to fear under the pragmatic economic management of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating and just as business has prospered under the economic stewardship of John Cain in Victoria and John Bannon in South Australia, so too will business prosper under a Goss Labor Government in Queensland."

I ask: does the Premier still stand by his ringing endorsement of those Labor leaders? Does he regret having virtually promised to do for Queensland what Cain did for Victoria? What assurances can the Premier give that similar examples of such disastrous economic mismanagement will not befall Queensland?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I suppose that some of those statements are reminiscent of that great hero of the conservative side of politics, John Elliott, who said that he was going to run Australia like a private company. I invite honourable members to ask the Elders share-holders about that. I do not recall the context of that speech. But let me assure honourable members that that is not a convenient memory lapse or a Freudian slip. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, in 1989 I received so many invitations to business functions that they all tended to blur after a while.

My colleagues in the Government and I are responsible for the business situation in Queensland. That record on which we can and should be judged is outstanding. Queensland business sought an assurance from this Government that a framework would be established in this State in which business could grow and prosper. That is what we have delivered. Business was sick and tired of the way in which the playing field had been tilted under the Nationals and, prior to that, under the coalition. Business was looking for a level playing field. At the same time it was looking for strong financial management and a commitment to economic growth. This Government has given and shown that commitment to economic growth.

As to this Government's first year in office—the test of any Government is its Budget. Our Budget was the only Budget of all States in Australia that did not introduce new taxes or increase taxes.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I know that it is a new year and we are somewhat exuberant. I ask honourable members not to interject en masse. If interjections are not answered, honourable members will not persist with them. The member for Surfers Paradise will cease interjecting.

Mr W. K. GOSS: There was a ringing endorsement by the business community of that Budget strategy based on no new taxes; based on changing priorities within the Budget; based on improved efficiency; based on a commitment to fund social infrastructure out of recurrent expenditure; and a commitment that borrowings would occur in respect of economic infrastructure to the extent that there was a revenue stream to service it. Those were the tightest financial controls of any State Budget. This Government delivered that. It is fair to say that, since that time, there has been a downturn in the national economy and, indeed, in the international economy. Last year, in Europe and New York, I had the opportunity to talk to leading members of the world's financial community who expressed concern about the state of the international economy. They acknowledged the impact that that would have on the Australian economy because of the extent to which Australia is linked to that. If the Leader of the Opposition had the guts, and if he had the support that he should have from Opposition members, last year or in

February this year he would have gone to America in accordance with his new entitlements that were granted by this Government. However, for some reason he did not go there. I urge him to take advantage of that trip. When he does so, he will receive a message similar to the one I received.

This Government has shown a commitment to doing all that it can for the Queensland economy in the context of the international economy and current Federal Government economic policy, which clearly needs a shot in the arm in terms of new blood. I can only hope that the 12 March statement will do something about that. We have shown that we are capable of doing something about it. Queensland is the only Australian State to do it with an accelerated capital works program to assist the building and construction industry as we move to a policy based on a countercyclical approach to capital works to provide a much-needed stimulus to the building and construction industry during the period of the downturn and, in addition, to give the corresponding pay-off to the taxpayer by getting a better return for the taxpayers' dollar because of the competitive environment that operates all too sadly in the building and construction industry. However, it is there and the Government is doing what it can to relieve it and to take maximum advantage of it on behalf of the taxpayers of this State. That is what the Government is doing for the economy. We are acting to the maximum of our capacity within the powers of the State Government in the current context.

State Bank of South Australia

Mr COOPER: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to the recent billion-dollar bail-out of the State Bank of South Australia, and I ask: can he confirm that he has on his staff a Mr Paul Woodland, a chief economic adviser, and is this the same Mr Woodland who was the chief economic adviser to the latest Labor exponent of economic demolition, the South Australian Premier, John Bannon?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I do have on my staff one Mr Paul Woodland, who is a Queenslander and a good Queenslander.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Warrego under Standing Order 123A.

Mr W. K. GOSS: He is an economist. He has worked in various places including Queensland, the Northern Territory and South Australia. He is a very capable economist.

An Opposition member: He worked for the State Bank.

Mr W. K. GOSS: No, he did not work for the State Bank or have anything to do with the State Bank. It would be fair to say that he shares my view in relation to the problems of banks in this country at the present time, that is, that State banks and, for that matter, the major national banks are largely the authors of their own misfortune because in the 1980s—in the decade of greed—

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition under Standing Order 123A. He has asked the question and he should sit back and listen to the answer.

Mr W. K. GOSS: In the decade of greed—and this applies to the national banks as well as to the State banks—ambitious banking executives suspended prudent lending practices as there was a mad competition in which success was judged on the banks' ability to lend and how much they could lend rather than on the quality of the portfolio. It is unfortunate that that extreme swing to one side by the pendulum is now being matched by an extreme swing to the other side, which is having an adverse effect on business today.

For the pure conservative politicians opposite, let me add one further comment in relation to the State Bank of South Australia. The principle that has long applied in

respect of the board of the State Bank of South Australia, as I understand it, is that the Government there adopted an arm's-length approach, appointed the best people from outside of South Australia and within South Australia to the board and relied on their commercial judgment. In other words, the Government relied on good, private sector people who became caught up in the same failures as occurred in other banks and, furthermore, placed on that board a representative of both the Labor side and the conservative side of politics to ensure freedom from political bias. It has been a spectacular failure, and I presume that it is that experience which the Leader of the Opposition and I share that has since made us both turn away from our expressed party policy to establish a State bank similar to the one that exists in South Australia. At least we did not give away \$300,000 of Queensland taxpayers' money on a submission and a report on how to set up a State bank. We were able to work it out for ourselves.

Meeting Between Government and Public Sector Unions

Mr PREST: I ask the Premier: is he aware of a request from the public sector unions in Queensland for a meeting with the Government to discuss the current public service reforms and is he willing to meet with representatives of those unions?

Mr W. K. GOSS: There has been some disquiet in the ranks of certain public sector union officials about the process of reform and change in the Queensland public sector. Some people find the process of reform and change unsettling. That is unfortunate, because reform and change they must and they will. As far as I am concerned, the public sector unions have a legitimate role to play. They have requested a meeting and we are prepared to meet with them. Both the Minister, Neville Warburton, and I will meet with the unions and we will discuss their concerns. Frankly, most of the concerns and the claims being professed by certain people are simply untrue. The package that has been put together by the advisers of myself and Mr Warburton, and include a former industrial commissioner and a former senior official of the POA, is a good package. We are prepared to review it after 12 months. The package carries with it substantial benefits for public sector employees in Queensland.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

CJC Investigation into Members' Travel Entitlements

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (11.00 a.m.): The man who rode into Government in this State on the great white charger of openness and honesty and accountability has proved beyond doubt over the past week that he is nothing but a charlatan. He has proved that he is a phoney and a carpetbagger and that he bends with the wind. Accountability is okay, Mr Speaker, as long as it is expedient and as long as it is done with mirrors.

This morning I wish to point out to the Premier and this House that what the Premier claims to be and what he really is are two absolutely different things. The beauty is that the damning comes straight from his own mouth. I am referring, of course, to the CJC investigation into the potentially illegal use and abuse of parliamentary travel entitlements by backbench members of this House from 1986 to 1989.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members I wish to advise, as you would be aware, that each member of this Parliament was provided with a full copy of the documentation which has been sent to the Criminal Justice Commission. At the time I believed that members deserved to be informed on a private basis on what was sent to the commission. I regret that the material provided to members also included information about other members. However, I wish to stress that each letter sent was strictly personal and confidential and I believe that all correspondence should remain so.

I suggest that because the matter of payments to members relating to daily travel allowances and travel expenses covered by the terms of Parliament elected during 1986 is currently before the Criminal Justice Commission, which will report to the Parliament on the matter, that any reference to this matter in debate, questions and discussions in the Matters of Public Interest debate is out of order.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I refer members to the report of the Select Committee of Privileges on sub judice in 1976 which states quite clearly as follows—

"Matters awaiting or under adjudication in all courts exercising a criminal jurisdiction should not be referred to."

It is the advice of the Crown Solicitor and the Clerk that the CJC is such a court. I will not countenance any dissent on this matter. Honourable members can raise it as a substantive motion, otherwise I will treat it as disrespect for the Chair. I now ask the Leader of the Opposition to discontinue his speech and I will now call—

Mr COOPER: I rise to a point of order. There is no matter that I have raised in this speech that deals with any personality or any matter referring to the CJC investigation. I am utilising highlights taken two or three years ago when the Premier was on this side of the House. The matters he raised were never ruled sub judice. Also, no matter raised by the CJC has ever been ruled sub judice at this time. I question you, Mr Speaker, as to why all of a sudden these matters are sub judice. Why one rule for them and one rule for us?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will listen to the Leader of the Opposition and, as long as he does not refer to matters that are under consideration by the CJC, I will allow him to continue. However, the moment he starts discussing matters that are being considered by the commission, I will rule that out of order and demand that he resume his seat.

Mr HARPER: I rise to a point of order and in doing so I find it difficult to know how the Speaker can know and understand what matters are before the Criminal Justice Commission. I also make the point that the media is able to freely report and discuss these matters and it would seem to me unfair and indeed quite illogical that the members of this Parliament do not have the same rights as the media in this State.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! In response to the point of order raised by the member for Auburn, I refer him to the principles used for sub judice in this House. In regard to civil matters, the rule applies when they are before the courts and in regard to criminal matters, the rule applies when they are under investigation. I have a report of the Select Committee of Privileges which states the following unequivocally—and I quote it again for the interest of honourable members—

"Matters awaiting or under adjudication in all courts exercising a criminal jurisdiction should not be referred to."

Mr Stephan: The CJC is not a court.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gympie will cease interjecting. I warn him for the last time under Standing Order 123A. It is the view of the Crown Solicitor and myself, based on all the advice I received, that the CJC inquiry is like a royal commission or a court and should be treated as such.

Debate interrupted.

PRIVILEGE

CJC Investigation into Members' Travel Entitlements

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.05 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. I take it by the ruling that you are inflicting on the House today that members of this Parliament will not have the right to raise in this

place what is being raised in the media and in the press every day of every week. The situation is that if your ruling, Mr Speaker, is applied and accepted, the press can report and write but members of this Parliament will be denied the opportunity within the precincts of this Chamber to raise exactly the same matters.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This House has a sub judice convention and I am applying that convention. It is as simple as that. I have given my ruling on the matter.

Mr BORBIDGE: Could you refer to the appropriate Standing Order that gives you the authority to do so, Mr Speaker? This is a cover up.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Surfers Paradise to withdraw that remark. It is a reflection on the Chair. I warn him under Standing Order 124. If he does not withdraw, he will have to take the consequences.

Mr BORBIDGE: I withdraw the comments that you find offensive, Mr Speaker, but I find it curious as to why the Government requires such protection.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to resume his seat.

Mr KATTER: I rise to a point of order. Either the matter is sub judice or it is not. If it is sub judice then a criminal prosecution must be going ahead against somebody. If you are saying today, Mr Speaker, that the matter is sub judice, then we will understand that criminal prosecutions are proceeding. If you say that the matter is not sub judice, then we will assume that there are no criminal prosecutions of any type proceeding at the present moment. I ask: what is the situation, please?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The matter is before the CJC which is a body exercising a criminal jurisdiction. It is as simple as that.

Mr KATTER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. I am finishing my statement. I will not accept any further points of order. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to continue but caution him that he is not entitled to speak about matters which are under investigation by the CJC.

Mr COOPER: I draw your attention to the clock, Mr Speaker, and I would like time to be heard. It is important that the matters that I wish to raise are raised in this House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has three minutes left.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Debate resumed.

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (11.07 a.m.): Thank you, Mr Speaker. There is an interesting parallel to this matter. While the Cooke inquiry proceeds, I notice that there are no sub judice issues; yet there is a very distinct parallel that can be drawn. Members of the Opposition have copped this for more than two years. I point out very clearly the examples used by the current Premier when he was the Leader of the Opposition. As far as everyone on the Opposition side of the Chamber is concerned, it is quite obvious that there is one rule for Government members and another for members of the Opposition. That is the way it appears.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that remark. It is a reflection on the Chair. If he does not withdraw it, I will warn him under Standing Order 124.

Mr COOPER: I will withdraw it, Mr Speaker, in deference to the Chair. The parameters of the investigations that are under way at this time——

An Opposition member: A cover-up.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego will withdraw that statement.

Mr HOBBS: Mr Speaker, I did not say a word.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Flinders will withdraw that statement.

Mr KATTER: Mr Speaker, whatever I said, I withdraw, in deference to allowing some time for expression of opinion by members on the Opposition side of the House.

Mr COOPER: It is extremely unfortunate that this has developed to the point of being an utter farce. Opposition members are extremely concerned about matters that should be, and need to be, raised in this Parliament. We know about the investigations that are being undertaken inside and outside Parliament. There is no need to repeat them in great detail now; but, put very simply, the point is that members were bound by regulation and a sense of honesty in their use of expenses and were to use those entitlements on parliamentary business only.

The central principle that is at stake here is one of honesty, which was established beyond doubt by the Fitzgerald process. While the Fitzgerald inquiry was under way, free debate and discussion continued in this Parliament. Unfortunately, it looks as though that will not be permitted now, which causes members of the Opposition the gravest concern.

Time expired.

Dump Site, Gardner Road, Rochedale

Ms POWER (Mansfield) (11.10 a.m.): Again I rise to address a matter that is of vital concern to both the electors of Mansfield and me. This matter is one that concerns the Brisbane City Council's decision to site and establish Brisbane's largest dump in Gardner Road, Rochedale. At the outset, I wish to make it perfectly clear that members of the Brisbane City Council's Liberal administration bear responsibility for the decision that has been made. They cannot try to lessen this outlandish act by clouding the issue and trying to shift the blame to the State Government or to anybody else. The Liberals and the Nationals might not understand the separation of powers yet, but members on the Government side of the House do. I have spoken previously on this issue, particularly when the proposal was first mooted. My concerns and those of the electors have not been allayed by any recent comments that the Lord Mayor or the city's Liberal administration have made. Indeed, comments made by the Lord Mayor leave me in no doubt that the residents of Mansfield will have their quality of life decreased by her decision to support this dump—or, as she would say, this engineered sanitary landfill site.

Firstly, I wish to address the comments relating to the NIMBY syndrome. I do not believe that the people of Rochedale have been motivated by the syndrome known as "Not In My Back Yard". Their concerns are serious, and they should be listened to. They have been told by the Lord Mayor that this will be the perfect dump, with no smells emanating from the site. They have been told that no-one needs to have any fears. Indeed, the Lord Mayor says that she would gladly live next door to it, but quickly adds that she has no wish to move from her present, comfortable abode. Let me say that elements of this proposal are less than perfect.

Pacific Waste Management have injected themselves into the election campaign through public advertising to prop up the Liberal Party. If Pacific Waste Management and its parent company can claim that it is in the public interest that awards for excellence are publicised, surely it is also in the public interest that Pacific Waste Management's parent company's record of law infringement is publicised. Over eight years,

the parent company of Pacific Waste Management—Waste Management Incorporated—accumulated fines and damages in the amount of \$48.617m for environmental breaches, price-fixing and alleged bribery. This very same group, known in Queensland as Pacific Waste Management, is claiming excellence in the provision of waste management facilities. In fact, for the last few weeks, most newspapers have carried full page advertisements telling people how good it will be. However, this company is not being frank, honest or open about its parent company's history. For example, in November 1990, Pacific Waste Incorporated paid \$19.5m to settle several claims of price-fixing in many States in the USA. At this point, I seek leave to table documents relating particularly to matters in Chicago where what is known as the "Bad Boys" Act covers these violations.

Leave granted.

Ms POWER: Another of the less-than-perfect side effects is the traffic chaos that will be created. If and when the dump is operational, more than 162 trucks a day will be ferrying rubbish from the four transfer stations to the Gardner Road site. This fact is not disputed by the Liberal administration. In fact, it has admitted as much. Another sign that all is not as perfect as people are meant to believe is that I believe that these trucks will find their way to the dump via the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road, Newnham Road and the Gateway Arterial Road, all of which are located within my electorate. For the benefit of the uninitiated, I point out that my electoral office is located on Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road. Let me assure fellow members that there is already enough traffic on this road, without having another 162 trucks zooming up and down the roads of Mansfield. The Minister for Transport and his department have been working diligently to upgrade this road. Perhaps they will now charge the council for any additional upgrading that may be required to provide a service for these extra vehicles. I am positive that a similarly short-sighted view has been adopted with respect to Newnham Road, which is a Brisbane City Council responsibility. This road is sadly in need of major upgrading and will become a nightmare if trucks use this particular route.

Mount Gravatt East State School, Mount Gravatt Special School and Saint Catherine's Primary School all have their frontages on Newnham Road, which compounds the problems. I am genuinely concerned for the future safety of children, parents and teachers. The increase in traffic will bring with it an increase in vehicle exhaust emission, noise and traffic dislocation, and the distinct possibility of an increase in serious accidents involving heavy vehicles, a prospect to which I do not look forward, but one that the Lord Mayor and the Liberal administration wholeheartedly embrace.

The Lord Mayor and the Liberals make much of the need to have full public consultation. Changes to the town plan in 1987 which took away the residents' right to object make a mockery of that concern. The Minister for Local Government has described that action as a clever trick. I agree with his assessment. The Liberals have tricked the 20 000 residents of my electorate, denying them the right to object and rewarding them with a super dump. Had objections been allowed, this proposal would have been knocked on the head because of the overwhelming flood of objection that would have landed on the desk of the town clerk, instead of the petitions that the Lord Mayor ignored and tossed in her rubbish bin.

The irony—perhaps "tragedy" is a better word—is that householders are unable to dump their rubbish directly at the Rochedale site. They will be forced to transport their rubbish to one of the transfer stations, the nearest being Chandler, and will be charged a fee—somewhere around \$15, I believe—for the privilege of depositing that rubbish. That means that those people who live next door to or in the same street as the Rochedale dump will have to drive 10 kilometres to the transfer station at Chandler and pay to deposit their rubbish, only to watch as the truck follows them all the way back home to dump their rubbish in the landfill beside their home. The Liberals would say that that is foresight, but to my mind it appears to be a lack of vision. Continuing in that vein, the residents of Mansfield have the pleasure of putting up with increased rates and an environmental levy, only to have a super dump sited in their backyard. This is surely a bitter pill to swallow.

It has taken some time, but the local alderman, Graham Quirk, finally stated, prior to that fateful council meeting, his opposition to the dump—mind you, only in the last week when he could gain some media coverage to boost his flagging political career. This is the alderman who has constantly voted with his Liberal cohorts to deny the Opposition the right to discuss the matter in council meetings over the past four months and who was a party to the clever tricks involving changes to the town plan. If his concern was so great, why did he not act earlier? For example, residents approached me in March 1990 with their fears, after they received no satisfaction from Alderman Quirk. Indeed, the action of the alderman was to try to squash the rumours and keep the matter out of media spotlight. A leading businessman in the area, who was thinking of buying a home in Gardner Road, rang Graham Quirk to ask for information. He was told by Alderman Quirk that there was nothing going on in Gardner Road that might affect the valuation of his home. I am afraid to say that that businessman has learnt a sorry lesson. Similarly, as it has become more and more obvious that the Gardner Road site would be selected, no consultation has occurred and no public meetings have been arranged by the council to discuss the ramifications of this proposal. Trying to get any information out of the council was like trying to get blood from a stone—almost impossible. I can only deduce that Alderman Quirk's opposition to the dump is a cynical, vote-grabbing exercise, because he could have, and should have, acted earlier to represent his ward. The other Liberal aldermen in the area, Gail Chiconi, Bob Ward and Graeme McDougall, prior to the decision being taken, took out an advertisement stating that they could be trusted to enact the people's will. While Quirk has failed his constituency, those other aldermen have deserted theirs.

Mr Mackenroth: We ought to get rid of those people and get someone who will represent our electors.

Ms POWER: It is about time, yes.

The Liberal aldermen say, "Trust me", while keeping their fingers crossed and hidden from view. It was again a clever, dirty trick. Even the National Party in Rochedale has become green. I commend it for that effort, but I remind the electors of the Rochedale area that members of that party have become green only lately. Those electors should be reminded of events at Kingston, Willawong and Redbank. It is sad to think that the council could be doing things now, such as introducing citywide recycling, instead of trialing it in selected suburbs, to alleviate that problem. Incentives and rebates should also be given to those individuals and companies who actively pursue waste minimisation techniques. That, coupled with new technology and a cooperative approach between councils and shires of south-east Queensland, is a much better long-term alternative than a dump sited in a residential area where the contractor gains extra revenue for the more rubbish it disposes of.

Whereupon the honourable member laid on the table the documents referred to.

Time expired.

Members' Travelling Expenses

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.20 a.m.): Today, the people of Queensland have witnessed once again the double standards and the duplicity of the Labor Party in Opposition and in Government. The Opposition demands some answers from the Premier, the man who is the champion of accountability in this State. Will the Premier seek assurances from all the members of his existing Cabinet that no Minister has fraudulently claimed daily travel allowances or travel entitlements when they have in fact not been travelling? The Opposition wants to know whether the rumours are true that one Minister of the Government learnt to fly and incurred the costs against his travel entitlements for charter?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have given a ruling. I ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to desist from talking about matters that are before the Criminal

Justice Commission. The whole matter of members' travelling expenses is before the Criminal Justice Commission. Earlier, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition asked me under which Standing Order I made my ruling. I inform him that there is no Standing Order, because the Privileges Committee report in 1976 did not recommend the framing of a Standing Order but provided guidelines for it. One of the guidelines states that current proceedings before a royal commission should not be referred to in motions. I point out that, on legal advice, the Criminal Justice Commission is the equivalent of a royal commission and I will not allow the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to continue to raise the matter.

Mr COOPER: I rise to a point of order. The issue raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was the very issue that the Premier raised two years ago in this House when he was Leader of the Opposition. At that stage, it was not ruled to be sub judice. Why is it being ruled to be sub judice now?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have made my ruling and I remain firm on that ruling. I will not allow any debate on matters that are now before the Criminal Justice Commission.

Mr Cooper: We are not talking about specifics.

Mr SPEAKER: Mr Borbidge was. I asked him to desist.

Mr LINGARD: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, you have admitted that there is no Standing Order. When no Standing Order exists, we refer to Westminster practice, which states that members may not talk about any matter before the courts, a royal commission or a commission of inquiry. I ask you, Mr Speaker, to outline how matters before the CJC relate to matters before the courts or a royal commission? It is your duty to outline how those matters before the CJC relate to matters before the courts.

Mr SPEAKER: The present inquiry by the CJC is equivalent to a matter before a court or a royal commission. All that members can do is dissent from my ruling by moving a substantive motion. I will not allow honourable members to debate this ad nauseam.

Mr BORBIDGE: With the utmost respect, Mr Speaker, earlier you quoted advice that you had received from the Crown Solicitor. May I request that you consult the Solicitor-General rather than the Crown Solicitor in respect of the rulings that you have made this morning. In the view of the Opposition, the Solicitor-General would be the appropriate person to be seeking legal advice from.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have made my ruling. I do not intend to change it.

Mr LINGARD: I rise to a point of order. The Opposition will now move a motion of dissent against Mr Speaker's ruling that the matters before the CJC are equivalent to matters before a court. The Opposition moves a motion of dissent from Mr Speaker's statement that the matters now before the CJC are similar to matters before the court. I move a motion of dissent against that statement.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That motion will have to be put on notice and debated within the required time. I accept the motion.

Mr BORBIDGE: The issues to which I was referring before—which, as a result of your ruling, Mr Speaker, I will not refer to again—obviously must be dealt with quickly. However, I will quote from a long list of comments by the Premier when he was Opposition Leader, and by his predecessor in that role, from which every possible political benefit was sought from allegations against then National Party Ministers, with no compunction whatsoever about the requirements of natural justice. It did not matter to the Premier whose feelings or basic human dignity got in the way. Here was a man on a mission, and his blood was up. Let us face it, fanning the lust for innuendo that existed at that time was his only campaign weapon. Either he achieved Government

through righteousness or he did not achieve it. For instance, on 4 October 1989, when the Premier was the Leader of the Opposition, he righteously asked the then Premier—

"I refer to reports that at least four current or former National Party Cabinet Ministers are to be charged with respect to ministerial expenses and cash advances, and I ask the Premier to advise the House of the standards or code of conduct of a Cooper Cabinet that apply when Ministers are summonsed or charged with a criminal offence and, specifically, are they subject to the Premier's standing them down from Cabinet?"

Those are the words of Wayne Goss. That would not need to be changed much at all in the current circumstances before being trotted out in this place by members on the Opposition side. On the following day the then Opposition Leader asked the following—

"I refer to a television news bulletin last night which reported that four present or former Cabinet Ministers have been requested by Special Prosecutor Drummond to provide further information to explain certain ministerial expenses and to the reported confirmation of this report from a Government source in a metropolitan newspaper this morning, and I ask: will he confirm this morning that he has been advised, officially or unofficially, to this effect? Secondly, will he apply, in respect of this situation, the same standards as his predecessor applied to Mr Hinze and Mr Lane, namely, to stand them down until the commissioner concerned can give an assurance that they will not be adversely named or further affected?"

Where is the Premier and where are the standards that the Premier espoused when he was in Opposition? His standards and his principles are out the door. I repeat that the Opposition would need to make only minor amendments to the proposition of the now Premier and then Leader of the Opposition.

Let us look at the now Premier's attitude when in Opposition back in November 1988. After former Minister Don Lane made his allegations before the Fitzgerald inquiry, Mr Goss called on the then Premier, Mike Ahern, to establish a commission of inquiry and stand aside while it was undertaken. The following day, 10 November, in the *Courier-Mail*, Mr Goss called for "this lot to be sacked on the spot". Where are the standards of Wayne Goss as Leader of the Labor Party and the Labor Government in this State? He had no compunction in referring to the 13 former Bjelke-Petersen Cabinet Ministers, including Mr Ahern, referred to in Mr Lane's allegations.

Mr Cooper: It wasn't sub judice then.

Mr BORBIDGE: It was not sub judice then.

Mr Goss went on to say that resignation was the "moral and proper course" and floated the proposition that he might seek a meeting with the Governor on the issue. He reportedly said—

"It is clearly a situation of crisis in the Government and a break-down in terms of public confidence in the integrity of public administration in this State."

Where are the Premier's concerns now?

On 15 November 1988, Mr Goss challenged the then Premier, Mr Ahern, to table guidelines under which Ministers were operating. He also called for two Ministers to be stood down if they were not prepared to table full details of their ministerial expenses. We are in year 2 of the Goss Labor Government and we still have not seen the guidelines for ministerial expenses, despite Mr Goss's protestations when he was in Opposition. Mr Goss said—

"The Opposition makes no allegation whatsoever. It simply says, 'The allegation has been made.' Can you answer it? Are you prepared to answer it?"

I remind the Premier that his rhetoric in Opposition falls a long way short of his actions in Government.

Where is the Premier? What has he got to say? Why was he running away from question-time? He says that this is different. He says that it is not the same. He says

that in the interests of natural justice there should not be speculation. He says that comment would be inappropriate. He wants it all to go away. He wants everyone to shut up. He wishes that it had never happened. I want to know if there was a phone call to London and whether the Premier told the acting Premier, Mr Burns, to pull up the shutters because this could get a little too close to home. Suddenly people under a cloud deserve a fair go. We have a born-again Premier—an amazingly transparent transformation. Now the boot is on the other foot. In Government, at great political cost to ourselves, we supported the Fitzgerald reform process. All we are saying today is that this man, who was elected on a platform of propriety and accountability in Government, has a responsibility to the people of this State.

Rockhampton Floods

Mr SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton North) (11.30 a.m.): I rise to report to the House on the recent floods which inundated Rockhampton.

Honourable members will be aware that cyclone Joy, which assured a bleak Christmas for the people in north Queensland, ultimately turned into a rain depression that caused severe problems for the people of Rockhampton. The tributaries of the mighty Fitzroy River basin were filled to capacity and Rockhampton itself continued to experience heavy rain. The result was the worst flooding in the city since 1954.

As the flood waters were rising, my family and I were holidaying in far-north Queensland and were therefore among those who had been cut off from Rockhampton. With the rail and road links all closed and the Rockhampton airport inundated, I was unable to return to my electorate by normal means of transport and had to wait until a helicopter from Gladstone was available. Unfortunately, my family had to stay behind. Many other Rockhamptonites faced the same problem and were forced to either delay their return indefinitely, catch the helicopter or return by boat via Gladstone. The helicopter ride revealed at first hand that there was virtually a single sheet of water from Raglan to north of Rockhampton. On my return to Rockhampton on Sunday, 6 January, I was greeted by a sight that could only be compared with a war zone. Military vehicles, army Blackhawk helicopters, police and SES personnel seemed to be everywhere.

Together with my parliamentary colleague, the honourable Paul Braddy, I quickly appraised the situation. We made visits to the various key areas, including the residential areas under flood. We also called at the Rockhampton Town Hall, where an emergency operations centre had been set up. The place was a hive of activity, with telephones constantly ringing and volunteers coming and going. I was soon advised that the Queensland Department of Family Services was operating that day, and honourable members should bear in mind that it was a Sunday. Upon visiting their office, I found regional director, Lex Burgess, and his staff busily assisting flood victims. I would therefore like to place on record my appreciation to Lex and his staff for the prompt manner in which they swung into action. The commitment I found that day has been ongoing and to this day officers of the department are active wherever possible in helping to alleviate the circumstances of flood victims.

Accompanied by my brother, Peter Schwarten, and a mate from Cairns, Andrew Girault, who had been stranded in Rockhampton, I then went to the Rockhampton showgrounds, which also was a hive of activity. The major activity there was the filling of sand bags, a task which was being coordinated by local identity, Mr John Day. Much of the hard yakka was being done by volunteer inmates from the Wacol and Rockhampton Correctional Centres under the supervision of Mr Ian Neil of the local correctional centre. Again I place on record my appreciation; a big vote of thanks to those prisoners who worked so hard and for so long to help the Rockhampton community. The natural thing for us to do was to pitch in and help load those sand bags, as did many Rockhampton City Council workers, doctors, nurses, teenagers, children and pensioners, and there was even a brewery rep from Powers Brewing working side by side with the prisoners. In no small way all of us were to be rewarded by the saving of the North Rockhampton Bowling Club, which I am sure gained enough coverage on television. It is certain that

without the sand bagging the bowling greens would have been destroyed and the avoidance of this costly fate was a tribute to all of those who helped club members in their round-the-clock operation.

The first peak of the flood occurred on Monday, 7 January, at 10 a.m. when the Fitzroy River rose to a height of 9.15 metres. The second peak took until Saturday, 12 January, to reach Rockhampton, when at 12 noon the river stood at 9.3 metres. It seemed to take forever for the floodwaters to recede. Throughout the crisis, daily briefings were held in the Rockhampton City Council Chamber so that all sections of the relief operations could be brought up to date with the latest developments. This effort was organised by Mr Peter Warren, who, on behalf of the Rockhampton City Council, coordinates the counter disaster operation. These daily meetings were attended by police officers, SES officials, public servants from the various State Government departments, army personnel, fire brigade and ambulance officers and local city and shire council officials. My colleague the Honourable Paul Braddy and I were among those meeting around the council table.

As honourable members could well imagine, significant parts of Rockhampton and north Rockhampton could only be reached by boat. Apart from the many private craft that were pressed into service, the Rockhampton City Council and the SES ran boat services to transport people and goods across the water. The very important function of refuse disposal was carried out in the flood affected areas by the tireless workers from the Rockhampton City Council Health Department, ably assisted by another one of my brothers, Alderman Stephen Schwarten. The Rockhampton City Council is blessed with the services of a number of highly talented people. Among these is council's chief environmental health officer, Mr Greg Merry, a man recently recognised by the Royal Society of Health in London, which has offered him the rare honour of a fellowship of their society. After the floods went down, it was largely through the efforts of Greg Merry and his council staff that a major outbreak of disease was averted. Not only were problem areas treated to prevent disease from spreading, but also the householders of each yard inundated by water were provided with sanitiser to both disinfect the area and relieve the stench. I can assure honourable members that the stench was particularly dreadful in areas where the water had stagnated for over two weeks.

A further health risk appeared in the form of the Dawson River black fly, a particularly nasty bit of work whose razor sharp teeth, although very small, often inflict severe wounds. To help combat this insect, Australia's foremost expert in the field, CSIRO entomologist Dr Bill Ballard, was brought in to advise the city council. No effort was spared either to prevent mosquitos from breeding. Only those honourable members who have experienced the aftermath of a flood can relate to the personal tragedy that the flood caused. I cite in particular the pathetic case of an elderly couple in my constituency, Mr and Mrs Les Cooper. The Coopers have resided in their York Street home for 45 years and are veterans of the big flood in 1954 and the smaller ones in 1983 and 1988. However, this time, even with the help of the Rockhampton City Council workers, they were unable to save many of their personal belongings—the waters rose so quickly. When the flood receded I walked around the Cooper's house and yard with them and faced the indescribable devastation.

Mr Elliott: Now you know how we felt out at Charleville.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes, I appreciate how the honourable member felt out in Charleville.

Thanks to the efforts of the good officers of the Department of Family Services, the Administrative Services Department, the Rockhampton City Council and the Rockhampton and District Flood Appeal, the Coopers and people like them are being assisted with their repairs. I have to advise the House that, unfortunately, fresh floodwaters have entered Rockhampton once again and the Coopers have yet again been forced to evacuate their home. While on the subject of the Rockhampton and District Flood Appeal, I want to make special mention of the Mayor of Rockhampton, Alderman Jim Webber, who was a tower of strength throughout the entire crisis. It was Jim Webber's initiative

to launch the appeal, which to date has raised some \$300,000. The council kicked the appeal off with a \$10,000 donation, which was closely followed by a \$50,000 donation from this Government. I thank all who have donated to this worthy cause and urge honourable members who have not yet donated to do so. I particularly want to thank the honourable member for Warrego who, with the Coles-Myer shopping chain, organised for a massive donation of mutton to be made available to Rockhampton flood victims. In the same manner I would also like to thank the operators and staff of WIN television and 4RO Rockhampton, who hosted a telethon which, on Sunday, 13 January, raised some \$200,000 towards the appeal. My colleague the honourable member for Broadsound and several of the Rockhampton City aldermen were tireless in their efforts to make that appeal the success that it was.

As honourable members could well imagine, the flood significantly damaged Rockhampton's sporting facilities. Perhaps the greatest amount of damage was to the Callaghan Park racecourse. I think the damage bill could well run over the \$500,000 mark. I thank the Honourable the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing, Bob Gibbs, for his prompt visit to the city where, with his pledge of valuable financial assistance, he was able to boost the morale of the sporting fraternity. On the issue of ministerial visits—I again give my thanks to the Honourable the Premier, Wayne Goss, to the Honourable the Deputy Premier, Tom Burns, and to their Cabinet colleagues the Honourable Glen Milliner and the Honourable Terry Mackenroth, all of whom interrupted their own lives to share Rockhampton's plight first-hand. From my own perspective, I believe that these visits did much to boost the morale of our locals.

I am proud to say that the Government's own work force was in the forefront of rendering assistance to flood victims. Under the leadership of Ross Batley and Bruce Cory, the day-labour workers of the Department of Administrative Services worked virtually around the clock to check and report on damage to homes. The QIDC staff, particularly Dennis Schaumberg, also played an important role in assisting those small-businesspeople in the town who suffered as a result of the flood. The full cost to small-businesspeople may never be known, but I feel sure that I speak on behalf of every honourable member when I say I hope they soon recover from this disaster. Every disaster has its dark side, and it gives me no joy to report that four people lost their lives in the 1991 Rockhampton flood. Some despicable elements also preyed on the hardship of others, as there were several instances of looting in Rockhampton. I do not think that words can describe how I feel about individuals who engage in looting.

However, I want to end my remarks on a positive note. I must comment on the big effort made by Superintendent Graham Hohenhaus in his highly competent management of this disaster. Superintendent Hohenhaus, with his bright personality and his supportive manner, has earned the respect of the Rockhampton people. Mr Speaker, for the sake of the record, I seek leave to have incorporated in *Hansard* a list of all the unsung heroes who gave of their time to assist during the disaster.

Leave granted.

Spillman, R.C. Mt Morgan Police

Bjorkelund, P. Mt Morgan Police

Powell, G. Mt Morgan Police

Barnicoat, D. Deputy Controller, S.E.S. Mt Morgan

Barnicoat, R. S.E.S. Mt Morgan

Barnicoat, A. S.E.S. Mt Morgan

Barnicoat, C. S.E.S. Mt Morgan

Eilers, B. S.E.S. Mt Morgan

Law, D. S.E.S. Mt Morgan

Law, A. S.E.S. Mt Morgan

North, J. S.E.S. Mt Morgan

Noyle, J. S.E.S. Mt Morgan

Waterson, L. Health, Eventide
Ballard, C. S.E.S. Mt Morgan
Benjamin, C. S.E.S. Mt Morgan
Benjamin, J. S.E.S. Mt Morgan
James, T. Carrier, Mt Morgan
Rudd, T. Private Bouldercombe

ROCKHAMPTON S.E.S. PERSONNEL

Rhys Fraser (Local Controller) Lyle Dobbs (Deputy Controller)
Kev Hooper Jim Murray
Ken Morrison Rosemary Morrison
Ron Milne Helen Milne
Janelle Murray Wayne Carsburg
Graeae Darr Rick O'Brien
Darryl Rush Margaret Dobbs
Dave Nielsen Linda Frawley
Jo Hudson Nick Quigley
Arthur Brett Garry Moore
Michael Holmes Robert Black
Bernie Bond Max Crossley
John HassamDenice Hassam
Ken O'Brien Graham Rhodes
William Saw Stefan Zgodzinski
Rockhampton Grammar School (accommodation)
Red Cross (man caravan)
Salvation Army (food)
Wicen (radio)
Superintendent Graham Hohenhaus—disaster district coordinator
Peter Warren—Rockhampton City Council
Jim Webber—Rockhampton Mayor
Barry O'Sullivan—Rockhampton
Frank Symmonds—Transport Department
Don Muir—Transport Department
Gary Poulsen—Transport Department
Rhys Fraser—State Emergency Services
Lyle Dobbs—State Emergency Services
Graham Buxton—Rockhampton ambulance
Col McKay—Rockhampton ambulance
Lee Johnson—Fire services
Harvey Hunt—Rockhampton Base Hospital
Ken Carpenter—Rockhampton city
Peter Hielscher—Deputy city engineer
Ross Hielscher—Primary Industries
Kev McNicol—Primary Industries
Major Stan Hassai—Australian army
Greg Merry—Chief environmental health officer
Inspector Ross Beer—Queensland police
Acting Inspector Laurie Steedman—Queensland police
Peter Trupp—Queensland police

Graham Best—Capelec
 Leo Pukk—Capelec
 Ross Battey—Administrative Services
 Bruce Cory—Administrative Services
 Ian Neil—Rockhampton Correctional Centre
 Paul Wiechmann—Queensland Department of Housing
 Don Connolly—Queensland Department of Housing

ROCKHAMPTON POLICE

Graham Hohenhaus Peter McGregor
 Noel Melrose Stan Lean
 Shane Thomas Pat Lawton
 Steve Hemsley Keith Mearns
 Brian Rotts Robert Cushing
 Kit Williams Mark Treloar
 Brett Norris Ray Spillman
 Peter Bjorkelund Glen Powell
 Tim Wrightson
 Lions Club of Bouldercombe

VOLUNTEERS

White, G. Steley, D.
 Paine, D. Bills, R.
 Walker, M. Villiers, R.
 Tilt, D. Ryan, O.
 Boucher, T. Lean, T.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Finally, it gives me a great deal of pride to stand in this place to represent the City of Rockhampton. Once again, its people have demonstrated their resilience. They have shown that the true Aussie spirit is certainly alive and well. Although another flood has been predicted for Rockhampton in March, we hope that that will not occur. However, I am certain that, if such a flood does occur, the people of Rockhampton will be equal to the task and rally to the cause.

Mr Pearce: A great bunch of people.

Mr SCHWARTEN: They are a great bunch of people. They are unique in their ability to be able to stand up for themselves.

Time expired.

Public Sector Management Commission; Dr P. Coaldrake

Hon. N. J. HARPER (Auburn) (11.40 a.m.): Sadly, the Public Sector Management Commission, that independent body intended to streamline management and efficiency within the Queensland public service, has lost its way by becoming a mere pawn for the Labor Government. Its chairman, Dr Peter Coaldrake, that dedicated Labor personality who so effectively used his pre-election position to foster and develop support for the Labor Party through every media avenue available to him, has clearly demonstrated that he is merely the pawn of Wayne Goss. If that is disputed, it could be only on the basis that in fact it is Wayne Goss who is the pawn and Coaldrake the master. The academic refugees who have been granted a haven from the collapsing State Governments which they previously advised fail to understand the essential lesson that nothing teaches as well as experience. It is their failure and their lack of practical experience which have brought about the unprecedented demonstration of revolt presently being demonstrated by those who provide public services—the public sector—not excluding our Police Service, our hospital services and our educational services.

In the media, the Premier has denied any knowledge of Dr Coaldrake's being a member of the Australian Labor Party, although it would seem that Coaldrake has admitted to being a member of the ALP from the 1970s through to the mid-1980s or thereabouts. He apparently did not resign from the ALP but allowed his membership to lapse. Of course, the Premier has obviously suffered the same lapse of memory as he displayed in this House earlier today. Dr Coaldrake is reputed to have been involved, in the background, in the push to get Peter Beattie out of the secretary's role in the ALP and Wayne Swan into that position. It is indeed unfortunate that a person who has demonstrated such political and factional bias should be appointed to the chairmanship of a commission which, I point out, is a commission on the same level as the Criminal Justice Commission or the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission. Yet a person who has demonstrated such political and factional bias has been appointed to that chairmanship. The Premier himself has claimed that the Public Sector Management Commission completes a trilogy with the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission and the Criminal Justice Commission. Certainly, his Public Sector Management Commission has powers one would rightly expect to be the preserve of judicial bodies rather than of a management and administrative group. The Goss/Coaldrake regime has achieved what traditional Labor supporters could never have anticipated when they swung behind the trendy academic factions. Members on the Government benches should appreciate that the only significant industrial dispute in Queensland at present is the confrontation between trade unions and the Queensland Labor Government. I repeat that the only significant industrial dispute at present is between their Labor Government and their trade unions. What credit that must give to the Government!

The dispute is not about public sector reform, as the Premier would have us believe from his answer to a Dorothy Dixier this morning, it is about the right of Government employees to have access to the same umpire as private sector employees have. It is about a loss in confidence in a Government which has demonstrated vindictiveness to its employees for 14 months or so, a Government which has ridden roughshod over loyal, honest, capable employees. It is about a Government which has chosen to use punitive measures in an attempt to achieve improved efficiency within the public sector rather than to use incentives to achieve improved efficiency, work skills and management in that sector. In short, this industrial confrontation is about the consequences of legislation introduced by the Labor Party and opposed by thinking members on this side of the House 12 months ago, consequences which we foreshadowed then, consequences which are now evident to the unions as they realise that the Government they thought they could trust has dealt their members a king hit. Is it any wonder that the public service is angry? Is it any wonder that its anger is understood and supported by those who recognise that they will be next in line for a king hit?

Opposition members are committed to the restoration of fair public sector management. We will restore confidence in that management by ensuring direct union involvement through the appointment of a commissioner who has acknowledged, practical ability. The commission and the commissioners are undoubtedly supporters of the ALP. The Opposition asks: why not be open and honest and appoint someone who has demonstrated ability in that field, even though he or she may be closely linked with the Australian Labor Party?

The Opposition gives notice that the reign of the Goss camp followers will be short lived. Once again, merit will mean ability and will be determined impartially. The Opposition acknowledges that during the past three decades the successful development of Queensland with an economy that is recognised worldwide as the most responsible and soundest within the Australian federation has been achieved by a team which includes a responsible, efficient and stable public sector alongside responsible conservative Government; an honest and loyal public sector that has been harassed and dealt king hits over the period since Labor came to office in Queensland.

This Labor Government has turned its back on the workers who placed their confidence in the reforms that Labor promised. Day after day those reforms are being broken quite blatantly and arrogantly. Labor's faceless men of this decade are the Peter

Coaldrakes, the Glyn Davises and the Kevin Rudds—that entourage of academic refugees from States that have been falling by the wayside whilst the public servants of Queensland have played their part in achieving economic growth and stability that is unsurpassed elsewhere in Australia.

Perhaps comment on the recent appointment of Kevin Rudd is warranted, because the cronyism demonstrated by that appointment to head up a new, special department—a Big Brother enterprise to keep an eye on the Ministers and their executive officers whom the Premier cannot trust to do his bidding unsupervised—surely belies the claim of appointment on merit alone. The Premier employed a Commonwealth public servant as his principal police adviser and private secretary. He then established a special, most senior department—a super department—within the State Government and installed that Federal public servant as its permanent head. Like the proverbial mushroom, in the main the people of Queensland have been kept in the dark regarding Labor's year of the knife. However, those who work in the public sector know full well the double standards that have been set by this Labor Government in its period of euphoria.

Labor's overconfidence will surely be its downfall. This year, Labor will no longer be able to survive on the sound base that was left to it by the National Party Government. This year, Labor will have to struggle for survival on its own merits. There is every indication that those merits are very few and far between. The Opposition calls on this Labor Government to acknowledge the error of its Public Sector Management Act and Regulations, which were introduced recently, just as it is admitting its failures in so many other sectors. The Opposition calls on this Government to encourage public sector reform through cooperation rather than confrontation; through incentive rather than punitive measures. The Opposition calls on this Labor Government to belatedly acknowledge the validity of the Opposition's argument 12 months ago during debate on this legislation and to correct the chaos that its arrogance then and now is creating.

The Opposition notes with interest that the Premier announced today that he and the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations are prepared to meet with the Professional Officers Association and the State Service Union. However, that is similar to a statement that the Premier made a short time ago in a letter—

Time expired.

Collinsville Coalmine

Mr SMYTH (Bowen) (11.50 a.m.): The matter of importance that I bring before the House today is MIM's decision to impress upon this Government the fact that, during the past three years, it has incurred a loss of income and intends to close the Collinsville coalmine if particular conditions are not met by this Government and the unions that support the wage and salary earners at the Collinsville mine.

Mr FitzGerald: They are not going to close it.

Mr SMYTH: The Opposition Resource Industries spokesman believes that MIM does not intend to close the mine. However, that is different from what I was told.

This matter was first brought to my notice last year when the local manager of Collinsville Coal used the media to give notice to those involved that the mine had financial problems. At no time did the company contact me officially and at no time did the company contact this Government officially about the issues that it felt were hindering the financial viability of the operation.

Dr Watson: Come on! They have all put in stuff to do with the coal rail freights.

Mr SMYTH: The coal association approached the Government in relation to coal freight rates and asked for one table for all coalmines. That is what this Government is working towards.

At no time did MIM contact the Government in relation to the problem at the mine. During this Government's first 14 months in office, company officials made no

approach to discuss the two issues that are now levelled at the taxpayers of Queensland. Those issues include the restoration of land that has been disturbed by mining practices. Every company that signs a mining lease is aware that restoration is a provision of the Mining Act and that it must be carried out. In fact, since 1985, MIM at Collinsville has not carried out that responsibility.

The other issue that has been levelled at our Government has been aired in coalmining areas since its introduction by the National/Liberal Party Government of the early seventies. I refer to coal freight rates. These issues were brought to the notice of this Government by way of commercial blackmail. On January 22, Mount Isa Mines announced that, unless it received major concessions, it would close the Collinsville coalmine. The insecurity and uncertainty that the company forced upon the people of Collinsville was shameful. Workers and their families did not know where their future lay. On 14 October 1987, after Mr Muntz and Mr Katter promised that the power station was a viable concern for a number of years, the previous National Party Government closed the Collinsville Power Station and Collinsville became a one-industry town. If MIM closes Collinsville Coal, the town will fade away into a ghost town.

MIM put two ultimatums to the unions involved: one, that 150 personnel be retrenched and, two, that a restructuring of work practices was inevitable. As the union members have accepted the retrenchment of 150 workers and are working with the local company management to arrive at a suitable settlement on work practices, they must be commended for their approach. The demands put forward by MIM were extreme. The company claims that it has incurred a loss for the past three years. If that is so, why did MIM not approach the Government of the day three years ago? The freight rate agreement was signed by MIM only 18 months before it pressured this Government and the unions who look after the interests of their members at the Collinsville coalmine. Why did MIM sign the agreement at that time? Until late last year, MIM continued to employ wage and salary personnel. A few months later, workers who believed that they had a secure future were told that they would be retrenched. If the staffing level at Collinsville Coal was too high, why did the top management of MIM not insist on a system of natural attrition whereby the company would not employ staff to fill vacancies that had occurred during the past three years?

During its 32-year term in Government, the National Party did nothing for Collinsville except to enter into a media campaign—with Mr Katter the main star. I remember when Mr Katter made a statement to the Bowen Chamber of Commerce that he would tell the departments in Brisbane that the Collinsville Power Station would stay open. However, that power station was closed a year early, and I am sure that was because of his statement. As a member of Parliament and as a Minister in the former National Party Government, Mr Katter had no effect at all. If MIM closes its operations at Collinsville, local businesses will close. That closure will affect businesses in Bowen and in cities such as Mackay and Townsville. Because of a tightening-up on spending by families in the town, businesses in Collinsville have retrenched workers. Morale within that community is at a very low ebb.

MIM should have taken a different approach to the financial problem at Collinsville Coal. After the Labor Party won Government in 1989, MIM should have approached Treasurer Keith De Lacy and impressed upon him the importance of the operation at Collinsville not only to its financial gain but also to the area—the importance of the pit to the security of families within the town, the importance of the town to the income and structure of the Bowen Shire, and the importance of the pit for small businesses that have invested thousands of dollars in the area. If MIM had taken that approach, the people of Collinsville would not feel the insecurity that they now feel, and the Government would have had more time to work towards a suitable solution that would be of assistance to all involved.

Numerous approaches for assistance were made to the previous National Party Government, but nothing was forthcoming. In 1981, based on an expected expansion within the coal industry in 1982, MIM expanded. However, the opposite occurred, with

a reduction in coal prices and a downturn in the industry. That happened after MIM expanded the operations at Collinsville with an open-cut operation. In addition, the open-cut operation at Newlands commenced. MIM expanded and built the coal port at Abbott Point. At that time, the expected tonnage for the port had reached only half of its annual capacity of 12 million tonnes. Only 6 million tonnes of coal went through the port annually. After the company announcement on 22 January, MIM was assured by Premier Goss that the restoration of mining land would be waived to assist the company financially. In addition, by inspecting its records, Treasury has been evaluating the position of MIM.

On 29 January, I met with Premier Goss who assured me that what was important was finding a solution that would save the jobs of more than 700 workers and that would also save Collinsville. On 14 February, I met also with Treasurer De Lacy, a delegation from the Bowen Shire Council and businesspeople from Collinsville. The Treasurer assured me that his department had almost completed its assessment of the viability of Collinsville Coal and that within two weeks a package would be forthcoming. It is my guess that MIM intended to close Collinsville Coal and to lay the blame at the feet of the unions involved and the Labor Government. MIM did not expect the unions to agree to the extreme demands that were put to them during the past few weeks—demands that will have an effect on workers throughout the coalmining industry in this State for a long time to come. In addition, MIM did not expect the Government to indicate that, if the need was there, an assistance package would be forthcoming. We must be sure that the assistance package is assessed correctly. If it is not good enough for the company, the pit will close. If the value of the package is too high, it will be considered by other coalmining companies as a gift to MIM.

Mrs McCauley interjected.

Mr SMYTH: I thank the member for Callide. There are cries from Mr Beanland, the Leader of the Liberal Party, and from other voices in the Opposition to make the package public to the media. As well as anybody else in this State, we know that it is a commercial agreement. The former Government did not allow the freight rates to be aired throughout the industry. I am sure that this Government will not do that either. We must assure companies that their freight rate agreements are secure and that other companies cannot use them in a commercial venture. I am confident that the Government will put forward a suitable package. I certainly hope that MIM is fair dinkum when it says that it will keep the Collinsville coalmine open if it is given assistance from the Government. Within two weeks, we will see whether the company is fair dinkum.

Mr Katter: There is to be a meeting in Collinsville. Will you come to it?

Mr SMYTH: Yes, my friend. I attended the meeting that the honourable member attended in Bowen in relation to the power station.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for the Matters of Public Interest debate has now expired.

PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO AMBULANCE SERVICES

First Report

Mr ELDER (Manly) (12 noon), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That the House takes note of the first report of the Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry into Ambulance Services."

On 14 December last year, I tabled with the Clerk of the Parliament the first report of the Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry into Ambulance Services. Today's debate offers me the opportunity to thank those involved in preparing the report and, in particular, the all-party committee. My thanks go to the deputy chairman, Mr Tony

FitzGerald, for his guidance and support which, together with his wealth of experience, proved to be of great benefit to this committee. I thank all other committee members— John Sullivan, Warren Pitt, Tom Gilmore, Trevor Coomber and Dr John Flynn—because they all worked tirelessly and unselfishly in adopting a bipartisan approach to ensure the report dealt with and addressed the major issues before the committee. In a unanimous decision we have set out the blueprint for the future of the Queensland Ambulance Service. I thank each of them for his dedication and commitment to what was often a very difficult task.

On behalf of the committee, I also wish to thank the research director, Debbie McLoughlin, for her tireless efforts on our behalf. Without her invaluable support and professional approach, the work of the committee would have been considerably more difficult. I also thank the committee secretarial staff—in particular, Jan Shuttlewood, Rayna Tsourgas and Jan Warren—who spent many long hours painstakingly typing this report. The task of editing the report was undertaken by Margaret Kennedy, who also deserves our thanks for her thorough and competent work.

The committee was appointed by the Queensland Parliament on 21 March 1990 to inquire into and report on the present state of the Queensland Ambulance Service. The committee was given comprehensive terms of reference and was required to report back to Parliament by 31 December 1990. As I said in the report, the problems facing the ambulance service are not new. These problems were highlighted in several reports well before this committee was established. Mindful of this, the committee set about its task and commenced by undertaking a comparative study of ambulance services operating in other parts of Australia. The committee then conducted a full investigation of the Queensland service by visiting many ambulance centres throughout the State and holding private and public meetings.

Throughout the process of investigation and inquiry, the committee was also mindful that it was an instrument of the Queensland Parliament and not of Government or of a political party. Whenever possible committee members from a cross-section of parties were represented at these meetings with interested groups and individuals. As a group, the committee placed considerable value on the consultative approach in its work and sought to hold open, genuine and frank discussions with as many relevant groups and individuals as possible in the time available to conduct the inquiry. We also recognised the need to seek the views of a wide cross-section of the community and, in order to achieve those aims, the committee undertook a comprehensive informative process. The committee advertised throughout the State and called for written submissions on any matter relevant to the terms of reference. The committee wrote to over 400 organisations and individuals directly involved or having contact with ambulatory services, notifying them of the inquiry and inviting submissions. In addition, a number of public meetings were held at centres throughout the State. Separate meetings were also held with QATB committee members, superintendents and ambulance officers. In all, 68 QATB centres across the State were visited. The committee included visits and discussions with hospitals, hospitals boards and other emergency service providers. A number of in-camera hearings were held with organisations and personnel who play both a primary and supportive role in the provision of ambulance services in this State. In all, the committee received some 301 submissions from individuals, the community, employer and employee organisations, Government departments, QATB committees, hospitals boards and ambulance staff in response to those invitations and public announcements.

To evaluate the Queensland Ambulance Service more effectively, the committee saw the need to view and research how other ambulance services in Australia operated. To achieve this, the committee visited Tasmania, New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT. We held discussions on a wide and varied range of issues associated with the provision of ambulance services with departmental officers and ambulance staff in each of those States. Information was also sought and received from New Zealand and other States in Australia, that is, South Australia and Western Australia, and the Northern Territory. At this time, I wish to express the committee's appreciation to the staff and senior

officers of those interstate services for their cooperation and invaluable assistance in sharing their experience and expertise with our committee.

In continuing our evaluation of the service, we extensively researched all available literature on ambulance matters, including reports from previous inquiries. The committee is very grateful for the cooperation and assistance it received from the QATBs throughout Queensland. We are appreciative of the full and frank discussions that took place with those in the service, for without that open exchange of information, the committee would not have been able to carry out its inquiry effectively. In reviewing the past performance of the ambulance service in Queensland, the committee considered such issues as whether the QATBs pursued their objectives efficiently and effectively, whether the structure of the organisations was appropriate for their responsibilities and the extent to which the organisations assessed their needs, evaluated their performance and were prepared to change to improve their operations. All the evidence presented to this committee is detailed in this report.

The final and unanimous view of this committee was that major changes need to be made to the structure and operation of the present service. These major changes will ensure that the people of Queensland are truly provided with a Statewide service that can deliver a uniformly high standard of service in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Although there are 96 recommendations relating to the structure, funding, management, operation, staffing and training that provide a general direction for ambulance services, the major initiative recommended by this committee is the formation of a single Statewide service. This service should be structured on a regional operational basis under the control of a central authority, that authority being the Directorate of the Queensland Ambulance Service, which is to be established within the Bureau of Emergency Services. As a consequence of this, the Queensland Ambulance Service Board should be disbanded with the provision of all employees to be transferred to the Queensland Ambulance Service. Similarly, present ambulance area QATBs should be disbanded with all staff and property being transferred to the Queensland Ambulance Service.

The committee recognises that for many years local QATB committees have played an essential role in the establishment and maintenance of the ambulance service throughout the State. However, the size of the service and the increasing professionalism of ambulance work now require a much broader range of management skills. Nevertheless, the committee recognises the value of the community consultative mechanism and the importance that this be preserved. It has always been the committee's view that community input into the Queensland Ambulance Service should be maintained. The committee concluded that local ambulance committees should continue to play an advisory and public relations role within their respective communities and that liaison committees should be formed to have input into the planning and review of the region's ambulance service.

The regionalisation of the service will create a more efficient and equitable system by eliminating the problems inherent in having 96 separate, autonomous ambulance areas. The problem with the present system is that, rather than its being an evolution of a strategic plan to provide comprehensive ambulance cover for the State, it is in fact a product of uncoordinated and uncontrolled development and expansion, based primarily on the enthusiasm, support and financial capacity of particular individuals and, of course, their local communities. Consequently, some parts of this State are fully serviced and have fully trained, fully staffed and fully equipped organisations that can respond immediately to calls for assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year, whereas other parts of the State are provided with a limited, underresourced service that is unable to respond adequately to calls for assistance. Operations in many two-person centres and subcentres rely heavily on the back-up provided by the spouses of superintendents and senior officers whose unpaid work—although, in most cases, implicitly required—was found by the committee to be largely unrecognised by the QATB committees. In many areas across the State, vehicles and equipment were found to be inadequate to provide an efficient service. The committee holds serious concerns in relation to the levels of skills maintenance programs that are available to personnel. Widespread evidence

exists that operational demands constantly override and interfere with the training needs of staff. Many officers do not have access to training officers other than when they attend training school, which, in some cases, may be no more than once in four or five years. Some ambulance areas do not have a sufficiently large population base to be able to support the service through contributions, while others have many thousands of dollars of surplus funds invested. The ability of some areas to raise substantial funds through donations, bequests and fund-raising activities assists those areas to expand and develop their service. However, this has promoted inequity across the service, with poorer areas increasingly relying on Government funding to continue their operations. Residents of far-north Queensland—for example, the Aboriginal communities—are denied access to ambulance services and rely largely on the Royal Flying Doctor Service for emergency medical care. Other isolated communities in Queensland are forced to rely totally on the voluntary work of honorary officers.

Ambulance services have not kept pace with the level of demand in a number of faster-growing areas of this State, and no provision has been made for dealing adequately with the seasonal demands in Queensland, particularly in the tourist sector. The committee also found examples of ill-judged development. New centres had been built that, due to insufficient staff numbers, could be staffed for limited periods only. With each QATB committee determining its own service needs, there has been little progress towards a uniform standard of service across the State. The existence of 96 separate providers of service across this State has hindered the development of a fully professional service. The simple fact is that the structure of autonomous ambulance areas, managed by area committees, does not provide an efficient system of service delivery.

Other significant recommendations and initiatives concern staff training and the establishment of formalised, distinct career paths within the service. The introduction of new advanced life-support measures in the provision of training, as well as recognition of ambulance officer qualifications, will improve ambulance officer morale within the service and will bring the service into line with practices in other States. In the case of advanced life-support protocol, a number of officers in Queensland are trained in cardiac rhythm recognition and defibrillation. Others have the ability to use protocols associated with marine invertebrate envenomation and some drug therapy. Many officers expressed concern about the level of patient care that they were able to provide to the community. Many of them felt that current procedures prevented them from providing the level of care expected, and required, by the community. Many officers related incidents in which they felt lives could have been saved if they had been able to perform advanced life-support procedures. Many officers in country areas were more adamant in their calls for these procedures and protocols. They argued continually that patients suffered unnecessarily due to the prolonged time involved in reaching definitive care.

The committee saw the way in which advanced life-support protocols were used in other States. For example, when I visited Tasmania, I was able to see those officers in action on a cardiac response. The officers who have these skills were able to intervene rapidly, stabilise the patient and get the patient to definitive care. They were able to practise the techniques that save lives and that are presently unavailable to ambulance officers in this State. Interestingly, the 1980 committee of review recommendation called for a number of advanced life-support procedures to be introduced, but only a limited defibrillation program has been implemented. Many officers have expressed their frustration at the continual delays in the introduction of protocols in Queensland, particularly as they are available to their southern counterparts.

The committee believes that the Queensland public should not be deprived of potential life-saving measures and has recommended that these advanced life-support procedures be introduced as soon as possible. These include intravenous cannulation, endotracheal intubation, the application of mast suits and increased pharmacology ability for the administration of drugs for pain relief, coronary care and other medical emergencies. The single most important new procedure that should be introduced for all qualified officers—and I emphasise again "all qualified officers"—is defibrillation and cardiac monitoring. This technique has proven its worth in some parts of Queensland and should

be extended throughout the State as soon as possible. The committee believes that there is no room for elitism within the service. All officers should have the ability to train to this advanced level. Officers who achieve the advanced life-support standard should be integrated into the normal roster in each ambulance district. I note that that is the case in Tasmania, where advanced life-support officers are on call and on roster with qualified officers. Interestingly, that is also the case in Scotland. Scotland's chief ambulance officer, David Carrington, visited Australia and mentioned to me that the paramedic status should be avoided, that all officers should be trained to a high level, which is the practice in Scotland.

Earlier I mentioned honorary officers and that some centres throughout Queensland rely totally on voluntary work. At this time, I wish to respond to some of the concerns that have been expressed by a number of committees in regional areas. What they have had to say is somewhat alarmist because in most cases—as members of the committee will tell honourable members—it is untrue. It is certainly causing unnecessary distress to many subscribers in western districts and to those whose needs are covered by honorary officers. Members of local ambulance committees believe that, as a result of this report, there will no longer be a place for honorary staff in the ambulance. They claim that, when those honorary centres close, the residents of the districts and the travelling public will be completely devoid of the most elementary first aid and that lives could be lost due to the time factor involved in getting ambulance officers to emergencies that would normally be covered by honorary officers.

In the report, we recognise the valuable role that honorary officers play in providing ambulance services to isolated communities. However, we were concerned that the provision of an essential service is reliant on volunteers. Many of the officers respond to emergencies on their own, and we had major concerns about the level of training and support provided to those officers. Until recently, the QASB training school provided no formal training for honorary officers. Although we understand that the problem is being addressed, most of the costs incurred in the training school have to be carried by the honorary officers. If that is the case, there appears to be scope for compromise in patient-care standards in those situations. As we travelled throughout Queensland, we gained the general impression that there was considerable variation in the training of ambulance officers.

We recommended that the honorary ambulance officer system should be phased out gradually as target staffing levels for permanent fully qualified officers are achieved. We recommended that centres staffed totally by honorary officers should not be closed as a result of the implementation of this recommendation. The recommendation continued—

"For as long as honorary officers continue to carry out an operational role in the ambulance service, training to the level of the preparatory stage or equivalent should be required prior to 'on-road' work being undertaken."

We recommended that those centres should not be closed; in fact, that the training of officers should be enhanced, which is not what is being claimed at present throughout the service.

Because of time constraints, I have covered only a couple of points. No doubt, my colleagues will expand on other aspects of the report. However, I will again identify some key problem areas in the service. At present, the service has too many managers. There are 96 committees with seven members on each committee, making a total of 672 managers of the Queensland Ambulance Service. As we travelled throughout Queensland, we noted a considerable variance in the level of service from different centres. Ambulance officers in Queensland are not able to provide the same level of service as that provided by ambulance officers in other States of Australia. In Queensland, there is considerable duplication of administrative effort and an insufficient use of resources. There are no Statewide contracts for the purchase of supplies and equipment. Many ambulance centres have a shortage of staff and low staff morale. As well, a considerable inequity exists in the financial resources available to different centres.

In conclusion, I refer to my foreword in the report, which states—

"Throughout this Inquiry our paramount concern has been that the ambulance service exists to serve the needs of all the people of Queensland. In life and death situations one has the right to expect the benefit of an efficient service with up-to-date, high tech equipment and the assistance of uniformly skilled officers. We can only attain this uniformity of skills and services through implementing the main recommendation of this Report: to amalgamate the present 96 committees into a state-wide service.

The recommendations in this report provide a general direction for the ambulance service rather than a prescriptive blue print. We believe that a prescriptive approach would be counter-productive as regards the implementation process. Those responsible for implementing these recommendations will necessarily require some flexibility to tackle the task. An important part of the implementation of a state-wide organisation structure should be the review of appointments for all existing and newly created senior positions. However, the Committee believes that the seriousness and extent of the problems confronting the service at present requires strong measures and immediate action to be taken.

Despite the grave concerns expressed by many within the ambulance service as to the future of the service, the Committee believes that the implementation of recommendations made in this report will result in major improvements to the provision of ambulance services, provide an attractive career opportunity for staff, and increase the efficiency with which resources are used and managed, in short, a more effective service.

The main objective of my Committee in bringing down this Report has been to ensure that the people of Queensland, regardless of where they live, have the benefit of an ambulance service that is accessible to all and is of a uniformly high standard."

Hon. N. J. TURNER (Nicklin) (12.20 p.m.): As Opposition spokesman for Police and Emergency Services, I assure the member for Manly that, although an all-party committee of inquiry into ambulance services has been established, its report is *no fait accompli*. The honourable member should not be under the misapprehension that he has a mandate to implement any or all of the recommendations of that committee. This Parliament is the forum to debate the issues. I shall point out the ground swell of public opinion against these proposals from all areas of Queensland—not only from local committee members, but also from staff and communities in general.

The system proposed for Queensland has been tried in New South Wales and has failed. New South Wales is now proposing to return to the system that this report proposes to abolish in Queensland. None of our essential services is closer to the people than the ambulance, which has its origins in community self-help, and the breaking of that link should have no part in any reorganisation of the service.

Never before have I seen seven politicians from three different political parties agree unanimously on 96 points. One could believe that there would be some differing points of view. In fact, by obtaining total acceptance on 96 points, I believe that the committee has created history. The ambulance service is a demand system with flexibility. Under Government control, we could lose that flexibility. The QATB proved at the Brisbane Airport and at the bus crashes at Mareeba and Mount Tamborine that it can handle any situation. Why we would wish to change that service is beyond my comprehension. One of the first and most pertinent questions I would like answered is: what will it cost to set up and staff these regions? If we consider the history of centralisation in fire services, we will discover that fire boards, similar to ambulance centres, had money set aside. That money was all spent in setting up the bureaucracy. It called in all the loans outside Brisbane, and I believe it would be fair to say that the service provided has not improved. We hardly need the same situation in ambulance services. It is imperative that we know what it will cost to set up this new bureaucracy.

The biggest community concern is the possible reduction in services or, I should say, the very real possibility of losing facilities in many areas and regions. Perhaps it is worth pointing out that facilities are provided locally. If an area needs a centre, it must set up a fund-raising committee, obtain sponsorship, obtain a permit and raise funds, construct a building and engage staff, and be up and running before the Government invests any money. Furthermore, the assets are usually freehold and, as such, are community assets. Under the proposed regionalisation system, if it is believed that a centre cannot be justified, it can be closed down and the funds and equipment can be used elsewhere. In the few short weeks that I have been shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I could have filled an ambulance with faxes, letters, submissions and petitions signed by thousands of people expressing extreme concern at the proposals outlined in the report into ambulance services. If the ALP believes that the people of Queensland have been adequately consulted and their fears and concerns allayed, then it is out of touch with reality. The Government is using a sledge-hammer to crack a nut, but it will be the ALP that will proceed out of this Parliament if it implements the recommendations of the committee. That is the point I am making.

The Government has listened to the Opposition and the ground swell of public opinion on the adoption issue, and I give it credit for that. However, it has misread the mood of the electorate at large if it proceeds to implement the recommendations contained in the report. One aspect that appears to be totally rejected is any move towards phasing out or eliminating the system of honorary ambulance bearers. Not only is it regarded as a recruitment area and training ground for the dedicated ambulance staff throughout Queensland but also there is a very grave and well-founded fear that bureaucracy, which has such an appalling record in remote areas, will inevitably result in the closure of honorary ambulance services in remote regions of Queensland. Honorary officers have been part of centre staff establishments probably since the inception of the ambulance service in Queensland. These officers have played a vital role in the provision of an ambulance service to the public, and they continue to do so. I am concerned that if the honorary system is abolished, the quality of the service presently provided will deteriorate. I draw the attention of the Government to the fact that the honorary system has provided adult staff recruitments in many centres in Queensland, and these officers have in turn served the ambulance service loyally and well by providing good patient care with a kind and caring attitude. Entry to the honorary ranks has allowed these persons to judge for themselves their future ability to handle a position within the service. Natural attrition usually weeded out those persons who did not have the necessary qualities to join the permanent service, and those so weeded out continued with their normal form of employment without loss of job. Recent developments in honorary officer training have further enhanced their skills. Future recruits in the permanent ambulance service will be much more capable of providing good patient care.

Staff appointments under the proposal are another matter causing serious concern. It would appear that Queensland superintendents would be overlooked when staff are appointed to senior positions. Redundancy packages should be made available to staff who may be casualties following the introduction of any or all of the recommendations. Ancillary staff would become redundant and administrative staff who had been involved in the provision of ambulance services could have their jobs placed in jeopardy. The provision and disposition of money is possibly one of the most contentious and sensitive issues. Where trust moneys are held exclusively for the benefit of a particular centre, or where moneys or assets have been bequeathed to a particular centre, those moneys should remain for the exclusive use of that centre. It is my contention that donors only give money for a particular area, and future donors will not support an ambulance service if it is found that moneys or equipment are being transferred to other centres, for whatever reason. Community support as we now know it will be lost forever, and that should be of serious concern to all who are interested in this legislation or in this particular report.

Mr Ardill: What would you do in the case of Mary Kathleen? The place closed down.

Mr TURNER: I am talking about the whole of Queensland, not one specific area. Consideration has to be given to the impact of this report on the whole of Queensland. I am echoing the sentiments of people right throughout the length and breadth of this State, not just my own.

Mr Stephan: The loss of funding is going to be a problem when they don't contribute to the local centre.

Mr TURNER: The member for Gympie is quite correct. The Government does not realise that there is going to be a loss of funds. Where is that money going to come from? Is another levy going to be imposed on the taxpayers of this State? Will the money be raised from poker machines, Footy TAB or some other form of gambling?

If it is perceived that funds are to leave a district, there will be a great ground swell of resentment, and those responsible will be called to account by the public at large. Most areas of the State are of the opinion that the committee system will cease to operate if an attempt is made to form them into what one can only describe as Clayton's committees, to be known as community liaison committees, whose role, it is perceived, will be one of fund-raising only. The Government will find it nearly impossible to fill appointments to these committees, which will act as fund-raisers for the Government. Since the inception of the ambulance service in Queensland nearly 100 years ago, unpaid, dedicated people have operated these committees. Not only will these committees not fill the role of liaison committees but also they will raise virtually no funds from a community which no longer views the ambulance service as local but rather as just another Government department.

The *Toowoomba Chronicle* of 6 August 1990 contains an article about the attendance of the Honourable Minister at the opening of the new ambulance centre at Crows Nest. It states—

"Three years of dedicated fund-raising came to fruition on Saturday with the opening of the Crows Nest QATB Sub-centre.

Queensland Minister for Police and Emergency Services Mr Terry Mackenroth opened the new building, which began operation in June.

Mr Mackenroth congratulated the Crows Nest community on their fund-raising effort.

'The number of people here today reflects the importance the community puts on this centre,' he said.

An estimated 500 people were in attendance."

The article goes on—

"The centre, which cost almost \$600,000, includes a three-bedroomed residence, the main building, an adjoining flatette for relieving staff, accommodation for four vehicles, modern equipment and one ambulance vehicle.

Chairman of the fund-raising committee Mr Geoff Patch said the new building was a milestone in the history of the area.

'This building is proof that a combined effort by a community can achieve great things,' he said.

The centre was opened free of debt . . ."

I think this indicates the importance of community input and support for a local centre or a local venture.

The closure of casualty rooms has concerned many staff. The implications of the removal of casualty rooms from ambulance centres are extreme. Not only are they used as a training ground for ambulance officers but also many people present themselves to them seeking advice or minor treatments.

I must say that some parts of the report are worth considering and possibly implementing. However, in saying that, I believe that the current board must be

maintained and given more teeth. How can we possibly throw away 98 years of experience? The board could possibly be restructured using a more multipartisan approach, with possibly four representatives from the community, one departmental representative, one union representative, a superintendents' representative and a chairman appointed by the Minister. I think there should be one employer, with a uniform training program for staff. There could be some regionalisation in some areas in order to effect efficiencies. Where there may be two centres very close together, there could then be one administrative centre and two operational centres, instead of two of each.

If savings can be made and demonstrated, we must accept some regionalisation. However, I believe it is imperative that we keep community involvement. Many centres and areas have lost out through reductions in Government fire and police services, and courthouses and hospital outpatient clinics have been taken away. We cannot have a further erosion of services, especially in remote country areas. The very survival of those communities is at risk.

One recommendation is that interhospital transport requests should be carried out on a regional basis. If this is allowed to occur, it is envisaged that considerable delays will be experienced and a degree of animosity could develop between the referring doctor and the ambulance service. Interhospital requests could quite easily be handled at a district or even a local level, which would eliminate delays due to staffing matters. It is doubtful that regional staff would be available 24 hours per day, seven days per week, whereas it is envisaged that district and local centres would maintain a 24-hour service.

Another area of serious concern that has been brought to my attention is that, whilst the Minister has given an assurance that nothing will be put in progress until this report is debated in Parliament, in fact processes have already been put in place on how financial control will transfer. I have been advised that the industrial officer of the QATB is to transfer to the bureau in March and that a high level of reorganisation seems to have been put in hand before this report has even reached this Parliament.

In conclusion, I request answers from the Government to the questions that I have raised in the interests of the public of Queensland.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave) (12.32 p.m.): I regard it as a privilege to have been able to serve on the Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry into Ambulance Services in Queensland. Prior to the period of the inquiry, like most other Queenslanders, I was, by and large, ignorant of the internal workings of the QATB. There was, of course, an awareness of the valuable contribution made by the organisation and its officers to the delivery of prehospital care to the people of this State. I was also acutely aware, having lived and worked in small communities all my life, of the special bond which exists between the service and the various communities it serves. The terms "our QATB centre" or "our ambulance service" epitomise the strength of that bond. While holding those views, which were by and large positive, many people, myself included, could not help noticing that the delivery of ambulance services in this State was under extraordinary pressure. The constant search for funds, the shortage of equipment and the inability to provide and maintain adequate staffing levels, all contributed to a feeling of disquiet in what is after all an essential service.

The initial reaction to the recommendations made in the report has, in the case of the general public, been quite positive, yet understandably subdued. A rather more enthusiastic response has come from those on the job—the officers themselves. Not unexpectedly, the most vocal criticism has emanated from the various committees, many of which have been responsible for emotive and premature comment. Whilst I can understand that they may be uneasy about aspects of the report which impact directly on the role they play, it is unfortunate that their contribution to the public debate is centring on such a narrow section of the recommendations. There is also the tendency to localise matters and address issues on a parochial basis rather than do what the select committee, under the terms of its charter, was required to do: consider the delivery of ambulance services to all Queenslanders. I would urge local committees to come to grips with the recommendations in the context of the broader thrust of the report. The

continuation of the present introverted approach by committees is to my mind one of the major contributing factors to the problems of poor coordination and the overall structural inefficiency of the system as we know it.

Having said this, though, I hasten to add that it should not be interpreted that I believe the deficiencies of the system were solely brought about by the hundreds of community-minded citizens who constitute local QATB committees. These people operate to the best of their ability under constraints over which, in many cases, they have no control. They do in fact deserve our collective gratitude for their efforts. Circumstances have changed considerably since the committee system was first initiated. The service has grown almost exponentially, which has brought with it a greater need for more highly developed management skills. The existence of 96 different employing authorities, each with its own fiscal and employment charter, does nothing to ensure the available resources, both physical and human, are applied in the most appropriate manner.

Side by side with those concerns is the understanding that the service will, to a large extent, be judged by the public on its ability to deliver a competent level of clinical care. The degree to which the present structure is able to deliver the necessary initial training and ongoing professional development came under close scrutiny by the committee of inquiry. Having taken into account the many valuable submissions relating to training and having observed at first hand the mechanism under which training took place here in Queensland and interstate, the inescapable conclusion was that under present conditions the ambulance service in Queensland does not have a training and professional development formula capable of meeting present needs, let alone those to be placed upon the service in the future. It is this aspect of the report that I wish to address today.

I quote from the Eric White Associates findings of 1985 wherein it was stated—

"52% of QATB officers are dissatisfied with current training practices, and 40% nominated training for higher standards as their first area of choice for improvements to the Service."

Those findings were backed up by the QASB's own internal review only a year later. Although by 1990 the board had taken some steps to come to grips with the situation, the parliamentary committee found the 1985 report by Eric White Associates to be just as pertinent today. In my opinion, the situation has worsened, resulting in a crisis of confidence with officers themselves and a growing concern in the general public. Although the QASB has made great strides—and this point is freely acknowledged—there remain a number of fundamental problems which require urgent consideration. The central role played by the QASB training school provides only one means of delivery. Also in existence are other training programs which, unfortunately, are not sufficiently in sync with the central activity. Committee training officers and the assistant inspectors of committees conduct courses, as does the Redlands QATB, for superintendents. Each goes about its business to all intents and purposes independently. There is no recognisable functional coordination, which results in a situation whereby scheduling of courses, identification of integrated objectives and clear nomination of content remain a mystery.

At the heart of the problem is the fact that courses—and, by the way, some of them are excellent in both design and delivery—are not accessible to the service as a whole. The lack of training personnel and their less than rational deployment are seen as a major stumbling block. Some 71 centres do not in fact have training officers. Admittedly, attempts have been made to address the problem on a regional basis, but the success of this varies from zone to zone and can at best be described as patchy. Of concern to the committee of inquiry was the fact that committee-based training officers in effect served two masters at the same time—the QATB training school and their particular centre committee. As a result of this, the achievement of the goals and objectives of a uniform training regime was seriously hampered through differing interpretations of content and standard. Such a situation is clearly unacceptable. Consequently, the committee of inquiry has recommended the reorganisation of training to develop a more coordinated and cohesive system. The advent of a single employing authority will go a long way towards

this, but the delivery of training itself needs to be clearly defined administratively. There exists, however, the need for one training authority to draw together the various existing component groups.

It has been recommended that this training section be part of the proposed QAS directorate providing benefits to the service as a whole. These would include the establishment of uniform standards of training and assessment. As well, there is the need for the service to avoid the degree of unnecessary duplication of resources as is presently the case. There is also the need for the establishment of a clear chain of command from the top down and vice versa. The remedy of the less than satisfactory situation in which differing industrial awards now cover training officers employed by the local QATB committee and the QASB itself will reduce problems. Long overdue is the redressing of the inequitable circumstance whereby wide variations exist in accessibility to training. The appointment of regional training cadres will no doubt be welcomed by all officers serving outside the major population centres. At present, no training officer is able to discern a clear career path and this uncertainty has in many cases acted as a deterrent to motivated officers who would have taken this important route.

I draw the attention of members to the difficulties being experienced at all levels in the matter of actually being able to attend courses. Although the number of courses available has been dramatically increased in recent years, the service has been unable to match these with those desiring a place. In fact, the backlog has now reached quite serious proportions. It would appear that the system of application and enrolment currently in use leaves much to be desired. As the situation now stands, centres are circularised with a list of available courses and the various committees are invited to nominate officers to attend. Because the attendance level at courses offered is dependent upon the needs or otherwise of the committee, the training school is therefore faced with the problem of overenrolment or, as is sometimes the case, underenrolment. The resolution of these problems is both time-consuming and wasteful as the training school becomes involved in protracted negotiations with a large number of committees to ensure the course is filled and that those most in need of the course actually attend. A major difficulty then arises with the committee having virtually final say over whether or not an officer attends a particular course. Submissions made to the inquiry would indicate reasons such as availability of relief, the opinion of the committee as to the necessity for a particular level of training and, most disturbingly, personal relations between the members of some committees and officers in their employ. One would have thought that, in the best interests of the State as a whole, the QASB would have had the power to direct committees to send particular officers. Unfortunately, the situation is not as clear-cut as that. Committees, as employing authorities and being responsible for the expense of sending officers to courses, argued the decision should remain in their hands. In this day and age, such a stand-off is intolerable. So long as this situation continues, there is no guarantee that officers will be able to complete the various stages of their training within the required time-frame. Therefore, streamlining of the training section with an identified chain of command under a single employing authority is long overdue.

I turn now to the conclusion reached by the inquiry that the structure of the training program now being used fails to meet adequately the functional needs of the service. Over recent years, the service entered an era in which recruitment no longer is significantly dependent on the honorary officer as the accepted entry point. The new recruits undertake preparatory training of five weeks, not having had the wealth of experience previously acquired by honorary officers seeking permanent status. Additionally, a serious imbalance of opportunity exists between recruits who have been inducted into the service at a country centre and those who are brought into the service in the metropolitan area. Metropolitan recruits have the benefit of a broader induction period brought about by the variety and depth of experiences with which they come in contact. This difference is further exacerbated after the preparatory course when the metropolitan recruit has greater access to constant supervision by a skills maintenance officer. Because of geography and consequent isolation, the country recruit will not be able to consolidate his or her

preparatory training to the same degree as that of the metropolitan recruit. There is no doubt in my mind that the institution of an Associate Diploma in Applied Science (Ambulance) is long overdue. Its introduction will go a long way towards eliminating the degree of ad hocery which currently exists. In my opinion, the QASB has been remiss in delaying its introduction. One serious negative side effect of this has been the lack of portability of qualifications, which has restricted employment opportunities in other States. Conversely, Queensland has tended to discourage highly trained interstate transferees by insisting they undergo basic levels of training before being accepted. Surely an induction into the Queensland service culture is all that is required if an applicant has proven his or her skills elsewhere.

Although it is generally accepted that the training school, albeit under extreme difficulty, was able to provide for Queensland officers a basic training regime which compared favourably with that in other States, the same cannot be said about the system's ability to adequately provide in-service training for its officers or build on those basic skills. The committee of inquiry found that there was a marked difference between the instructions of the QASB in relation to skills maintenance and the actual onground delivery at centre level. In our investigations as we moved around the State, there was little evidence that centres were in fact undertaking a conscientious skills maintenance program on a structurally defined basis. As a consequence, the lives of Queenslanders are put at risk. The professional development of officers was also hindered. It was of some concern to me that formal and informal mechanisms had not been developed to take advantage of hospitals as a source of in-servicing. The opportunity to foster better relations and gain access to hands-on experience, especially in the case of advanced skills, has all but been ignored.

The committee of inquiry has been sharply critical of training facilities—and rightly so. The physical constraints of the present site are patently obvious. Lack of space only places further unacceptable demands on finances and human resources. The requirement to at times run three courses simultaneously has resulted in the need to rent space. Added to this is the pressing need to have access to affordable accommodation for those who attend courses. Evidence given to the inquiry would indicate that a figure of just on \$1m annually is currently expended to secure motel accommodation. As detailed in the report, an adequate central training facility is therefore a high priority.

The committee of inquiry has recommended the establishment of an ambulance training academy. Having due regard to the cost of such a facility, it may be prudent to investigate the feasibility of utilising a campus on a shared basis with other emergency services. Although I recognise the existence of certain needs that are peculiar to each of the emergency services, there is obviously a great deal of scope for sharing. Facilities such as class room accommodation, simulated exercise areas and student accommodation can serve ambulance, police, fire and SES requirements. The economic benefits of that sort of arrangement are patently obvious. Also of importance is the opportunity to make advances in the development of improved relations between the various services. In the past, the need for emergency services to act at the scene of an incident on a coordinated and complementary basis has been amply demonstrated. Joint training and a shared service culture could play an important role in this respect. I have indicated that the present central training centre is not adequate. The conditions in most non-metropolitan areas are even more critical. Although the committee of inquiry was fortunate enough to inspect excellent, fully equipped training units in some centres, that was the exception rather than the rule. Over 50 centres in this State have no training rooms at all for their officers. Obviously, only lip-service is being paid to skills maintenance and other aspects of in-servicing. The committee of inquiry has taken the view that, wherever possible, in-servicing should be accomplished at a regional level with the establishment of quality training facilities at designated regional headquarters. Decentralisation of elements of ongoing training would have the twin benefits of being far more economical and providing a greater degree of accessibility of courses.

For the ambulance service to operate as a progressive and vibrant organisational entity, not only must it be staffed by well-trained and highly motivated officers but due

attention must also be given to those in management positions. My observation is that the service has not developed an adequate mechanism to assist those currently playing an administrative role and those aspiring to do so to gain the necessary background and qualifications. The need for competent supervisors and managers is recognised, but to date the challenge has not been met. The committee of inquiry has recommended the institution of courses designed to initially develop those skills and to add to them on an ongoing basis. Because of the experience that seniority usually brings, I have great respect for it as one determinant in the promotion equation. However, I hasten to add that seniority alone is not capable of providing the level of managerial expertise that is necessary in a modern ambulance service. Recognised academic courses that are presently available, and others that are yet to be developed, must play an increasingly important role in this respect. In fact, I suggest that it is in the best interests of the service and the people of Queensland to remove any barriers that would limit the education of ambulance officers, whatever their level within the service.

I place on record my appreciation of the valuable contributions of my fellow committee of inquiry members, namely, Messrs Elder, Flynn, Sullivan, FitzGerald, Gilmore and Coomber. To present to the House a report that is unanimously endorsed by members of all three parties who undertook the inquiry is a clear indication of the need for change. I commend the report to the House.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (12.48 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I join in this debate on the motion that the House take note of the report of the Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry into Ambulance Services. The report, which was handed to Mr Speaker before Christmas, was formally presented to the House today.

As the Deputy Chairman of that committee, with an open mind I went about the task of inquiring into all aspects of ambulance services in Queensland. My family has a background in the ambulance service. For 24 years my father served as a member of an ambulance committee in a local community. In common with most people who have an interest in their local areas, over a long period I have had close contact with the ambulance service in my local area and have always been a subscriber to the ambulance service. I have always been interested in first aid. In fact, my wife obtained a bronze medallion for first aid. Perhaps from a selfish point of view, I was rather pleased that she attained those necessary first-aid and life-preservation skills that many people should have.

During the inquiry into the ambulance service it became obvious that the service has grown over many years. Many people believe that Queensland has the best service that the community can supply. I did not want to dispute that. I wanted to investigate the facts for myself. As a member of the committee I formed the opinion that necessary structural changes must be made to provide the best service that the community can afford. As the Chairman of the committee, Jim Elder, said, this is a unanimous report. Whether or not it is unanimous, I will stand by any report that I present to this Parliament. I support this report before the Parliament. It is now up to the Government to act upon and implement the report as it sees fit and to face the criticism and debate that will ensue in this Parliament. I believe that the Government will be questioned about the report.

Mr Mackenroth: If I did implement your report, would you come and ride shotgun for me?

Mr FITZGERALD: The Minister is aware that there has been a fair bit of controversy in the community in relation to the report.

Mr Mackenroth: Some of it has not been true, either.

Mr FITZGERALD: The Minister says that some of that criticism has not been true. I fully agree with him on that.

The community's reaction to the report does not surprise me. I knew that the recommendation about the future of committees would be extremely controversial.

However, the majority of people in the ambulance service in Queensland support most of the recommendations in the report. Criticism has been levelled at some aspects of it. However, most of the people in the service agree with 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the recommendations. Some of them agree with everything except two or three recommendations. I got back to the basics of understanding the ambulance service and asked: how can we implement this report if the present autonomous committee structure remains in place?

In his speech, Mr Turner, the member for Nicklin, said that there should be one employer. However, I have trouble with the idea of having the present committee structure and one single employer. Many committee members have told me that, if they are to be the employer and if their power to hire and fire is taken away, they will be absolutely gutted—I use that term in inverted commas—and will not have the power or the structure to enforce discipline and to carry out the wishes of the contributors who elect them. I agree with those people that what is proposed is a basic structural change. If that change were to occur, I ask: what role have the committees? It is recognised widely in the community and, I am sure, by the committee members that committees have played and fulfilled a role as a local liaison group between professional officers and the community at large.

The report contains a provision for a community liaison group—a committee—to continue under slightly different ground rules, which I am sure will be a success. However, many of the present committee members will not see their role as being a member of that committee. They have fulfilled a great role in the past and, if they no longer wish to serve a restructured or changed ambulance service, so be it. That is their right. I pay tribute to those people who, over the years, have contributed so much to the ambulance service. It has been said before that they have done so with no financial benefit to themselves. When the Minister was in Opposition, he said that the boards and the local committees did not serve a useful purpose. Very early in his ministerial career, the Minister was put right when he examined the fire services and the fire boards. He has discovered also that the members of the ambulance committees work for no salary, receive no return and work for the love of the service and the community. I accept that those people have definitely acted for the good of their community.

One result of the report is public debate. When the committee travelled and called for public meetings in some of the northern provincial cities, I was surprised that virtually nobody outside of the ambulance service attended. The contributors were notified by notices in the newspapers, yet the only ones who attended those meetings were spouses of ambulance officers or committee members. Naturally, they were interested in the service. However, I was surprised at how poorly those meetings were attended. The parliamentary committee decided then that it would not call for public meetings in every town that it visited. It received virtually no response in Townsville, Rockhampton and, I think, Cairns. I do not know the reason for that. Probably, the people have allowed the local committees to run the service and they are happy enough with the service provided and that therefore they thought, "What is a parliamentary committee of inquiry?" Now, public debate on the ambulance service is raging. That is excellent. In order to have an informed debate, it is up to the people involved with the ambulance service to inform the public of the facts and the points that are raised in the report.

I know that I am moving around all over the place in the points that I am addressing, but one of the topics that has arisen is funding and how dependent the local communities are on fund-raising activities. Fundamentally, I do not believe that we should rely on charitable donations of money to provide an ambulance service and a health-care service to people in Queensland. If the Government backs away from service provision by donation, it will cost it money. It is right and proper that local communities should have the right to provide extra facilities for their local areas. They should have the right to make donations of equipment to ambulance services as they do to local auxiliary hospitals. The fundamental, essential life-saving equipment should be provided to all people in Queensland at a Government cost, or at a community cost—a contributor cost. That is basically what the report says.

Mr Mackenroth: Some of that fund-raising going to the committees is fairly small.

Mr FITZGERALD: As the Minister says, some of the people say that they will no longer support their local centres through fund-raising activities. Page 17 of the report states that the total funding for 1989-90 was almost \$72m. Fund-raising and benefits accounted for \$1.6m and donations and bequests totalled \$2.7m—that is out of a \$72m budget. The Minister will agree that the budget is quite tight. Most of us admit that a lot more than that is needed to provide fully trained ambulance officers to serve all of the State with reasonable equipment and to a reasonable standard. We all agree that ambulance services are slightly underfunded. I agree with those committee members who say that fund-raising activities will cease, or decrease markedly, if the report's recommendations are implemented. The Government must accept that. I certainly accept it. No doubt, certain support will be found in communities. I am sure that a community will provide something if it wants benefits for its local area.

Mr Mackenroth: Some of those people who do fund-raising really enjoy fund-raising.

Mr FITZGERALD: That is true. Often, professional officers have been doing the fund-raising. I do not support the idea that professional ambulance officers—who are paid, trained officers in advanced life-saving skills—should be down town, on the beat, doing fund-raising.

Sitting suspended from 12.59 to 2.30 p.m.

Mr FITZGERALD: Before lunch, I covered certain aspects of the report that is before the House. I now wish to turn to other aspects of ambulance services.

There is no doubt that the general public, and in particular a patient requiring ambulance services, judge that service on the type of service they receive from the officer when he first turns up on the scene. A patient does not judge the service by the assets that the organisation has behind it or the type of vehicle the officers turn up in. The service is judged on a person-to-person relationship. A patient's friends and relatives and the patient himself or herself will judge the organisation on the type of service he or she receives from that ambulance officer. Over the years there has been a great change in the skills that these officers possess. Originally officers were correctly known as drivers and bearers because quite often they only possessed first aid skills and that was all they were expected to possess. They were not required to provide any prehospital care except to make sure, by using the minimum skills that they possessed, that the patient stayed alive and to get that patient into a hospital as fast as possible. In fact, the term that was often used was "scoop and run". They would get the patient on board and go. However, modern medical advice is that there is a great deal that can be done to stabilise a patient that will not only improve the patient's chances of survival, but also improve the quality of life that that patient will enjoy after recovering from his or her injuries. The right prehospital care must be provided.

These officers are now known as ambulance officers and as technology has improved they are required to possess more and more skills. Ambulance officers in other States, such as New South Wales and Victoria, are paramedics and many doctors will admit that these paramedic officers possess greater skills than they when dealing with a traumatised patient. The recommendation of this report is that a specific paramedic force is not set up in Queensland, but that all ambulance officers are given the opportunity to achieve more skills themselves so that they become highly skilled officers. This is the correct way to go. There should not be an elitist group in Queensland that would only service a very small percentage of the population. The service in Queensland should be available to all people and these officers can move around Queensland. In that way their skills and their desire to improve their skills will be passed on to the junior officers serving with them.

Most people in the community are not aware of what an ambulance officer can do and this is the reason why I welcome this public debate concerning ambulance services.

I suggest to people that they ask their local ambulance committees what skills its officers possess for use in the local community. Previously the member for Manly, Mr Jim Elder, who is the chairman of the committee, referred to some of the advanced life skills that these officers are now required to possess. He mentioned defibrillation, that is, putting an electric charge through a patient with a heart condition which restarts the heart and prevents cardiac arrest. Out west in the country areas there is a great need for ambulance officers to be skilled in cannulation, which is the provision of fluid into the veins of traumatised victims, particularly those who have lost a lot of blood. That was one matter I was particularly interested in when the committee considered services in the western regions. The problem for officers trained in these techniques is that unless they continue to use and practise those skills, they will lose them. They will not be as proficient as they would be if they were continually training. The emphasis is quite strong throughout this report that there is a need to continue training and to continue upgrading the skills of ambulance officers.

The committee visited hospitals and spoke to hospital staff. A few of the doctors working in the accident and emergency sections of hospitals were very supportive of the proposition that ambulance officers be able to observe what happens in those sections and be able to practise some of their skills under medical supervision. Some ambulance officers complained to us that when they take a patient to a hospital, they hand that patient over to the doctor or nursing staff and they do not know anything else about what happens to that patient. It would be a great improvement in patient care if later on the ambulance officer who treated that patient is given some idea as to exactly what was diagnosed as the problem. The ambulance officer could then look at his skills and say, "Perhaps I was wrong there. Maybe I should have been looking for that." This would provide a better patient/care-giver relationship and would be beneficial for the total community. These are the sorts of things that we must continue to strive for. I know that at the present time the ambulance service is striving to achieve these things, but there are many impediments in some places to the skills being passed on. It does not happen everywhere and in some places it happens to a greater degree than in others. Another skill referred to is intubation. Some ambulance officers must be able to clear a patient's airways by putting tubes down his or her throat. There has been a great deal of debate on this subject, and its advisability has been discussed with medical people. I am convinced that many of our officers can attain and maintain those skills. Another skill relates to the use of mast suits and the treatment of victims suffering from shock. In some areas these skills are very necessary but they must be acquired by the officers and passed on to their juniors.

The ambulance service should be judged on the type of support it can give to maintaining life in all areas. Another matter that has been considered is the turnout. I know that many country people are particularly concerned that an ambulance service be maintained in their area. They are very proud of their local ambulance committee which has provided them with a service throughout the years. It is very important that there should be a turnout. If a major trauma occurs it is quite obvious that a single-man station can only provide a certain amount of care in his area. In sparsely populated regions it will be financially impossible to provide a service to all areas. However, protocols and a system must be established so that, when ambulance officers turn out to provide primary care, back-up officers come from the nearest major town. I think that that form of service could be improved quite easily. Some of the committees throughout the State are very supportive of each other, but that support is very much on an ad-hoc basis.

Another area of concern is the tasking of services. The ambulance service provides a number of services, including emergency services and the transportation of patients to hospitals and to doctors. I am convinced that much of the tasking that is carried on in country areas can be improved significantly. I envisage that a deal of change will take place in the services that are offered presently. For example, the many older ambulance officers who may have great difficulty in learning new and more complex skills that are now available to be passed on to ambulance officers may opt to become transport drivers

for clinic runs. I think it is important that these gentlemen—there are very few ladies who have been involved in this work for any length of time—find a worthwhile role in the ambulance services. Another aspect of ambulance services presently being investigated by the committee are the aero-medical evacuations and aerial ambulance services. These are very complex matters and will be the subject of another report to this House.

In conclusion, let me say that it has been a pleasure to serve on the committee. I have enjoyed acquiring knowledge while I have been a member, and I am quite willing to listen to the debate that is raging in the community at present. I welcome discussion on ambulance services because I believe that every Queensland has the right to know what type of service is being provided in Queensland at present and the direction that those services are likely to take in the next few years. I am quite convinced that unless changes are made to the service, it will start to deteriorate. Although I have been quite pleased with the skills that have been attained by ambulance officers, I believe that the structure of the ambulance service has been a problem. I do not blame the committees or officers of the service for the problems, but I believe that the structure needed to be changed.

Time expired.

Dr FLYNN (Toowoomba North) (2.39 p.m.): At the outset, I wish to record that I enjoyed serving on the committee of inquiry into ambulance services, which is the first substantive job given to me by this Parliament. I also acknowledge the hard work done by all the other members of the committee and thank them especially for their forbearance with me and for making special efforts to arrange meetings and hearings at a time that suited the number of commitments that made last year a very busy one for me. I know that, at times, it was difficult for all concerned.

In speaking to this report, I wish to highlight a few of the major recommendations—some because I have taken a particular interest in them, and others because they are important and are causing concern in the community at the moment, especially in smaller rural areas. I feel particularly qualified to talk about that concern because last Saturday I attended a public meeting with the citizens of Millmerran and representatives from a number of QATB committees in that area. A large number of concerns were expressed to me, and they should be dealt with by explanation and, to some degree, by implementation of the report's recommendations, if the Minister decides to take that action.

Because recommendation 3 is of special interest to me, I will deal with it first. The committee recommended that the Queensland ambulance service should remain within the jurisdiction and responsibility of the Bureau of Emergency Services. The committee was charged with the task of deciding where the ambulance service best fitted into the framework of Government. Our first choice, of course, was the Health Department because, for most of its history, the ambulance service had been under that department's control. This is also the case in most other Australian States, except Tasmania, where, in common with Queensland, over the last two years it has been part of the emergency services department. This task was not as straightforward as it seemed. I started out thinking that it probably did not matter which department was in control of the ambulance service, as long as it was restructured and given the resources that it needed. However, the position of the ambulance service is unique because it has a dual role. This role is quite well explained in the text of Chapter 5. Certainly, its most important role is as an emergency service. Everybody's view of the ambulance service is an ambulance with its lights flashing, taking a seriously ill or injured person to hospital as fast as possible, and that is an emergency service. However, the bulk of the work of the ambulance service is probably the transportation of people either between hospitals for definitive treatment or to clinic appointments to see various specialists. This more mundane work forms the bulk of ambulance service jobs. In the committee's view, that work is best performed by the ambulance service and should be carried out by the ambulance service in the future. Obviously, that role will require a great deal of interaction with health facilities

in Queensland. I am happy with the recommendation that will ensure that the ambulance service remains a distinct entity within the Bureau of Emergency Services. I say that because the committee's investigations discovered throughout the ambulance service the widely held view that, during the period ambulance services were under the control of the Department of Health, professional development of ambulance officers and the image of the service as an important emergency service had been downplayed. The reason was probably that the ambulance service was part of a megadepartment such as Health, which had a megabudget, and because that department was always bursting at the seams to provide health facilities that the community needs and expects. Ambulance services have always been regarded as a fairly small, peripheral part of that department. During any restructuring of ambulance services, it should be remembered that the service would be best left in the Bureau of Emergency Services to allow professional development of the staff to take place. Certainly, that is what most officers in the ambulance service think. Having said that, I should also point out that in the implementation of this report allowing the ambulance service to remain with the bureau, special consideration should be given, first and foremost, to boundaries.

If the Minister accepts our key recommendation to set up a Statewide ambulance service with a regionalised structure, he and his department will have to decide upon boundaries. In the past 12 months, the Government has implemented the regionalisation of many departments in terms of putting Government employees back into provincial towns and major country centres. In choosing boundaries, if the ambulance service were administered by the Department of Health, the new regionalised Health boundaries would be used. If the ambulance service remains in Emergency Services, there will be a temptation to use automatically the boundaries set for all the other emergency services. During the implementation of this report, I urge the Minister and his department to examine carefully the guidelines that the committee sets down as the important considerations for any boundaries for ambulance services in a regionalised structure. The key considerations are patient referral patterns as they now exist, networks of communication and cooperation that have already grown up between neighbouring QATBs and also community of interest. When administrative and operational boundaries are set, it is important that those key points are considered and that there is not merely a knee-jerk response. Our committee felt that it did not have the expertise to offer a definitive solution for the boundaries of any future regionalised ambulance service in Queensland. Appendix 6 of the report contains a model for discussion and is provided as a guide. It takes into consideration the important parameters I have mentioned and should be considered.

I turn to the key recommendations in chapter 6. By far the most important recommendation of the committee is 8.1, which reads—

"The present ambulance areas, as constituted under the Ambulance Services Act 1967, should be abolished.

A single state-wide ambulance service should be formed.

The name for this service should be 'Queensland Ambulance Service'."

I will not deal with all the evidence, but during our investigations we received abundant evidence that that should be the case. First and foremost, I point out that we received a considerable amount of evidence that having the current 96 separate committee areas adversely impacts on patient care. Above all, when we are considering the ambulance service, although career structure and administrative efficiency are vitally important, the primary consideration is patient care. We received abundant evidence that the only consideration in an ambulance vehicle responding to an emergency, or even a routine transport, should be the nearest available vehicle. The current committee system and boundary system interferes with that. Other members have mentioned many other advantages of one Statewide ambulance service.

Recommendation 8 is one of the key recommendations that is causing a certain amount of concern in rural areas such as Millmerran. It sounds like a very radical proposal, but it is not. At present, a number of local committee members are presenting evidence to

the media that the proposal is radical because it abolishes committees and takes all their power and transfers it to the Government. When we were travelling around Queensland, that is not what they were telling us. The committees were complaining that they did not have any power left. Earlier, the Opposition spokesman stated that the proposals, if implemented, would establish Clayton's committees. I would not use that term. However, that is probably what we have now—Clayton's committees. Before 1985, the committees were body corporates and owned the assets, the land, the stations and the vehicles and employed the staff. Since 1985 and the establishment of the QASB by the former Government, quite rightly the QASB has gradually usurped most of the major decision-making power of those committees. The former Government acted. Because the 96 separate committees were going in 96 separate directions, there was no uniformity in policy, in equipment or in service provided.

The committees are still body corporates and still legally own the assets. By and large, they no longer employ the staff. The decision to employ senior staff such as superintendents and deputy superintendents is made by the board, sometimes on the recommendation of the committee. Some local committees employ other staff, although the board decides on staff levels. A committee cannot move from a two-man centre to a three-man centre without the board's approval. The committee has to justify that movement in economic terms and in terms of need for an additional officer. Likewise, the committees cannot spend any significant sum of their money without approval by the board. They cannot undertake a capital works project without the approval of the board. Even if money comes from bequests and donations, unless the purpose is specifically designated, a committee has to seek approval from the board for expenditure of more than \$500 and approval from the Minister for expenditure of more than \$1,000. When we travelled throughout Queensland, we heard that the committees have been emasculated by the board and that they now function as community liaison and advisory committees. I feel that they still have an important input in that role. As a result of the recommendations of our committee, those committees will continue in that role. The move to a Statewide ambulance service is not radical at all.

As a natural consequence of that recommendation, if it is accepted and implemented, most of the recommendations to which I shall refer automatically flow. Those recommendations are—

"9.1 All staff employed and all property presently owned by QATBs should be transferred to the QAS.

9.2 Any financial and other liabilities and obligations of any QATB committee should become liabilities and obligations of the QAS.

9.3 All funds presently held by QATB committees should be transferred to the QAS."

If we have a different legal entity in charge, obviously, from an administrative point of view, those things must occur. Recommendation 9.4 states—

"In regard to trust fund moneys comprised of bequests, the QAS should be responsible for ensuring that the directions and restrictions which donors have placed upon their bequest are preserved."

We have said that that should happen. Recommendation 9.5 states—

"All other moneys in trust funds derived from undirected bequests, donations or gifts should be transferred to an appropriate regional trust fund where it would be used for the purpose of enhancing the ambulance service within that region."

The people of Millmerran wanted money that was raised in their area to be spent in Millmerran. I think that that is fair enough. As I explained to the people of Millmerran, these recommendations are specific. They are clear guidelines as to what, in the committee's view, should happen to the ambulance service in Queensland. This report is not an Act of Parliament. Our committee was not given the job of implementing the report or writing the legislation. I think that the concern of the people of Millmerran in that regard can quite easily be accommodated in the writing of an Act. A couple of

models can be used in regard to how to deal with the money raised. Under the New South Wales system, funds raised by local centres are held at a regional level in a special trust fund designated for that centre and that centre only. The Government could even follow the p. and c. model, under which the Government owns the school buildings but has no control over the school p. and c. bank account. Either of those models can be accommodated easily in the implementation of this report and the writing of the Act. I urge the Minister to consider both of those points.

I want to turn now to some of the other matters that were raised at Millmerran. I have already outlined the major points, which I think can be dealt with quite easily. After an hour or two of discussion with a number of people at Millmerran and after answering a lot of questions, mostly from QATB committee people, finally a woman identifying herself as a Millmerran housewife got up and said to me, "I don't really care how it works. I just don't trust your Government to leave our ambulance service here." I think that that is the problem. That sort of reaction has got nothing to do with this report. That woman acknowledged that the sort of system that the committee has proposed can work and can work quite well. It comes down to a matter of political distrust. Obviously, that woman is from a rural community that probably has a different political viewpoint to this Government and is a little bit suspicious about the new Government. All I could do to reassure her was to say that nowhere does this quite lengthy report identify ambulance centres in Queensland that should not be there or that have too many staff. If anything, the evidence in some of the country regions was the opposite. When it came right down to it, all I could say to that woman was that I know that there is not a map in the Premier's office on which Millmerran has a red ring round it and the word "exterminate" written next to it. It will probably be a little while before some country people believe that, but it is the truth, and in time they will find that out.

After a certain amount of prompting from the chairman of the Millmerran QATB calling for a speaker to tell the truth about what ambulance services were like in New South Wales, a person got up and gave a very negative portrayal of the ambulance service at Tenterfield. Basically, the complaint was that after-hours the ambulance officers at Tenterfield had to be woken up with a Bell pager rather than a telephone and also that the ambulance officers at Tenterfield were 9 to 5 Government employees who did not care about their work or the community. Obviously, our committee did not visit Tenterfield, so I can make no comment about the particular status of the ambulance officers there. However, I certainly want to knock right on the head the suggestion that because one is a Government employee, one does not care about one's job, one does not work hard and one does not care about the community. I have found that that is not the case.

Mr Elliott: Philosophically, though, do you feel it is better to have Government officers than to have voluntary officers?

Dr FLYNN: I think that full-time professionals are needed in the ambulance service, as is the case now. I think it is far preferable that they are employees of a Government rather than 96 separate QATB committees.

From time to time the view is articulated in the community that Government workers do not care about what they do. It is certainly not my experience. During my time as a member of this Parliament, I have had more and more to do with a whole range of Government workers. Recently, most notable amongst those Government workers has been the staff of the Department of Housing in Toowoomba, who never seem to go home before 7 o'clock, although their designated ceasing-time is 5 o'clock. It is just not the case that they do not care. Another point that was made was that the size of bureaucracy will increase. Again, the committee is not in charge of implementing this report. Somebody opened up our guide for the suggested model of the central organisation for the directorate on page 90 of the report, counted up the number of positions there, multiplied it by an arbitrary number in his head, because he thought each of those people was important and therefore they would have to have a staff of

four, five or six, and made the assumption that the central directorate had been expanded from a full-time staff of 32 to 150. That is just not the case. As I pointed out, there are a number of positions in that suggested flow chart, which is really only a guide anyway, that would be filled by people currently serving either on the board as full-time staff or within its associated administration. Obviously, an important task in the implementation of this report will be to make sure that that staff does not grow.

I just want to raise one matter in relation to funding. In the short term the Government will no doubt rely on improving the current mix of funding. The current mix of funding is about 35 per cent Government expenditure through direct Government grants, 46 per cent from subscriptions, only 2 per cent from fund-raising and a number of other sources, including transport fees. One thing that concerns me and that the committee identified is this new trend towards health funds offering cheap insurance to young people for ambulance cover. They are able to do that because they only pay out in the rare event of a young person being injured and needing an ambulance. They do not really contribute to the upkeep. Some people in Millmerran seem to think that under our dastardly socialist proposals they might opt out and join a scheme like that. I pointed out to them that many of them would not be eligible anyway, because the health insurance funds are not prepared to take much of a risk. Apart from that, if that trend continues, this Government will have to act and impose a levy on voluntary health funds, as happens in New South Wales. That is not a consequence of this report. It is a consequence of what is happening now. Our current subscription system is under threat from the increase in this sort of funding. If it continues to grow, the Government will have to put a stop to it, whether this report is implemented or not.

Time expired.

Mr COOMBER (Currumbin) (3 p.m.): At the outset I must say that I have enjoyed being part of this committee. I believe that the committee has taken an apolitical look at the provision of ambulance services in Queensland. It has worked extremely well under the chairmanship of Jim Elder and I have particularly enjoyed the objectivity of the member for Lockyer, Mr FitzGerald. I would like to take some time today to make some comments on those areas of the report that I think are important. The Queensland Ambulance Services Board has issued a statement of purpose for ambulance services, which reads—

"Queensland's Ambulance Services exist to provide pre-hospital care and specialised medical transport to the sick and injured."

The parliamentary committee was not convinced that all QATB committees and staff were aware of such a statement and that, if they were, they applied it to the setting of objectives and priorities for service in their areas. If an organisation does not keep its sense of purpose firmly in place, the danger is that the functions carried out by the organisation tend to become its actual goals. Thus, the original purpose is lost.

I found that such a situation has occurred within the QATB. A secondary and undefined purpose of providing non-urgent transport of ambulatory patients for day-care hospital or clinic treatment has become a dominant influence on the organisation. This has caused frustration to those who feel that the ability of the organisation to provide adequate prehospital care in trauma or medical emergency situations is hindered by the volume of resources allocated to clinic transport work. It would appear that QATB services have been substantially directed by the demands of user organisations such as hospitals. Changes in hospital practices, whereby patients spend less time as in-patients and more as outpatients attending day clinics, as well as the policy of limiting the provision of specialised medical services to major metropolitan hospitals, have had a major impact on the size and type of service required of the QATB. The committee also observed a good deal of disquiet throughout the State on the abuse of ambulance transport services. Although all zones have adopted policies on ambulance transport, the common complaint is that these are not enforced. Policies are of no use unless they are applied and their implementation regularly evaluated.

The present system of ambulance services is not a result of a deliberate strategic plan for the comprehensive provision of an effective and efficient essential service. It is, instead, a product of an uncoordinated and uncontrolled development and expansion based on the enthusiasm, support and financial capacity of certain individuals and their local community. Some parts of the State are serviced by a fully trained, fully staffed and fully equipped organisation that can respond immediately to calls of assistance 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, whereas others are provided with a limited, underresourced service that is unable to respond adequately to all calls for assistance. The existence of 96 separate providers across the State has hindered the development of a fully professional ambulance service. The present structure does not encourage local committees to consider the implications of their decisions beyond their area, thus precluding economy of scale efficiencies that may have applied in the acquisition of resources. Although rationalisation of service provision was recommended in the 1980 review, little has since been achieved. By 1990, through a process of amalgamation the number of ambulance committees had been reduced by only four. Operations in many two-man centres and subcentres rely heavily on the backup provided by the spouses of superintendents and senior officers whose unpaid work is largely unrecognised by QATB committees, while being implicitly required.

As regards the objective of providing an economical ambulance service, it is true to say that many QATB committees are operating on shoestring budgets. The practice of engaging professional ambulance officers in fund-raising activities is not regarded as economical, nor is the duplication of expensive resources such as buildings, vehicles and communication equipment by centres in close proximity to each other. There is no formal centralised purchasing of basic requirements for the service such as uniforms or office supplies. Some ambulance areas do not have a large enough population base to be able to support the service through contributions, while others may have thousands of dollars in surplus funds invested. Importantly, that is particularly reflected in south-east Queensland. The ability of some areas to raise substantial funds through donations, bequests and fund-raising activities assists those areas to expand and develop their service; however, it has promoted inequity across the State, and also inequity across the service, with the poorer areas increasingly relying on Government funding to continue their operations.

With each QATB committee determining its own service needs, there has been little progress towards a uniform standard of service. The QASB has attempted to introduce structures and systems to achieve standardisation of service provision through such means as its staff training courses, the formulation of model rules for QATB committees, and providing for uniform contribution rates, vehicle depreciation and accounting practices. Many of these measures have been resisted by QATB committees, which has made Statewide efficiencies and uniformity difficult to achieve in practice. The introduction of an insurance policy covering all QATB committees in 1987 was a notable exception.

The committee looked at and researched what it felt was the role of ambulance services and found that in many cases there was a dual role, but that the primary function was the provision of prehospital emergency care. This is the one task that more than anything else defines ambulance services. The rapid response to urgent requests for emergency medical treatment and transport to a place of definitive care is the primary function. Although emergency cases comprise only a small percentage of the total case load, it is the potential for reducing mortality and alleviating further suffering through rapid intervention that provides the focus for ambulance operations.

The committee also found that another function was interhospital transportation. In this field, the role of the ambulance is to transfer patients between places of definitive care. There was a need to be seen as the provider of clinic transport, to provide transport for patients to clinics for day surgery. Also, there was a function in patient extrication from road rescues. This function involves using a range of rescue equipment to provide rapid access to patients who may be trapped in wreckage. Rescue recovery requires a

sound knowledge of patients' needs to ensure that further injury does not occur and a thorough knowledge of rescue procedures to avoid injury to the rescue workers themselves.

Historically, ambulance services have been administratively placed under the Minister for Health. Ambulance services have been perceived as an adjunct to health services, principally by virtue of their function as providers of patient transport. It is only recently that ambulance officers have been able to shed the title "ambulance bearer", which emphasises the officer's role of driver rather than of skilled practitioner in prehospital emergency care. However, in discussions with hospital and Health Department officers, the committee found that the perception of ambulance officers as bearers still prevailed. Ambulance officers not only regard this view as demeaning to them but also feel it demonstrates the community's ignorance of the range of their skills and of many of their roles. The overwhelming view of ambulance officers is that while the ambulance service remained a responsibility of the Health Department, it was impossible for it to develop its own identity or for officers to achieve recognition as professionals. At the same time, regardless of which Government department administers ambulance services, close, continuing, effective cooperation and coordination between the ambulance service and health-care service organisations is essential for optimum patient care and the greatest efficiency in the use of resources. Many of the submissions received by the committee addressed the issue of whether ambulance services should be administered by the Health Department or the Bureau of Emergency Services within the Police Department. The overwhelming majority of ambulance service staff argued that the ambulance service had started to forge a corporate identity since being part of the Emergency Services portfolio and hence it wished to remain there. I agree with those feelings of the ambulance officers.

The committee also investigated the role of ambulance services in relation to other emergency services. As the ambulance service's function is to provide primary responses to accident or other medical emergency situations, it needs to be closely coordinated with other primary response agencies which aim to protect and preserve life and property. In other words, some of the other emergency services with which ambulance services interact are the police, the fire services, the State Emergency Service, Air Sea Rescue and the Surf Life Saving Association's helicopter rescue services. Generally, the committee found that ambulance interaction with the police, the fire services and the SES tended to be on a needs basis. There were few major problems in country areas, but in the metropolitan area, where interaction is more frequent, problems have arisen. Ambulance officers cited examples of action being taken by fire officers in patient extrication situations which put at risk the lives of patients and ambulance officers. Attempts have been made to clarify the difficulties associated with this happening.

The committee also found much inconsistency across the State as to which agency—ambulance, fire or the SES—was best equipped and prepared to carry out the rescue function. Urgency in the use of rescue equipment is demanded by ambulance work for the protection and preservation of lives. If ambulance officers are to be in control of patient care, they require the means to access trapped patients. The committee believed that consideration should be given to the ambulance service having primary responsibility for patient extrication work. Police should retain the role of coordination of the various services at the incident site. Ambulance centres tend to provide a more extensive network of fully staffed 24-hour service in rural areas than either the fire services or the SES centres.

Much has been said today about the role of committees. As a person who was born in western Queensland and educated in many parts of Queensland, I appreciate some of the comments by the member for Nicklin as to the importance of committees in the community. The committee found that much of the criticism of QATB committees made in submissions, discussions and hearings was and could be substantiated. In particular, although most committee members had good intentions in their support of the QATB, managerial ability and the involvement in and understanding of ambulance operations varied considerably. Consequently, the committee found that some QATB committees operated effectively but many were out of their depth dealing with the

complexities of managing a sophisticated emergency service. These committees played a rubber-stamp role, relying almost entirely on the superintendent to ensure adequate management. On the other hand, some committees scrutinised the work of their superintendent to such a degree that it effectively prevented the superintendent from carrying out his professional role. The committee also found that the QATB committee members and staff had a divergence of views about the role and function of the local committee. This has led to conflicts between the superintendent and the committee and between the committee and the QASB.

I turn now to the recommendations which, after they have been amended or receive the blessing of this Parliament, will alter the structure of ambulance services in Queensland. I refer to recommendation 8, part of which is that a "single state-wide ambulance service should be formed". The committee's recommendation is that that service should be named the Queensland Ambulance Service. The following recommendation is that "all staff employed and all property presently owned by the QATBs" be transferred under that one umbrella as well.

One aspect of the inquiry that I found particularly interesting was the exercise in determining what vehicles would be used. A Gold Coast resident wrote in his submission that he had observed no fewer than seven different types of ambulance design as he went past the vehicles which were parked outside a suburban ambulance station. The committee also received frequent complaints about vehicles and equipment. One of the main issues raised was the age of the vehicles. Although the board has recommended that all vehicles should be replaced after 10 years, I saw vehicles in western Queensland that were some 14 and 21 years old. If my memory is correct, the vehicles in Chinchilla were some 25 years old. Many of those vehicles came from interstate. No doubt they performed a function, but they did not provide services similar to those provided in metropolitan areas.

The committee also received complaints about the large number of types of vehicles. The greater the number of different types of vehicles at any given centre, the greater the additional and unnecessary familiarisation and learning that is required of ambulance officers. The committee also received complaints about the insufficient number of clinic vehicles. Although I accept that there is no likelihood of achieving consensus on the issue of vehicle design, I believe that appropriate mechanisms must be established to allow professional and operational staff to have an input into vehicle design matters. Staffing levels were an interesting part of the committee's investigations. The committee noted that many of the current staffing problems are identical to those highlighted by the 1980 committee of review. It is clear that QATB committees and the board have been aware of staff shortages, high rates of resignation and difficulties in attracting people to the service. However, very little effort has been made to redress those problems, and that effort has been unsuccessful. The committee endorses the recommendations of the 1980 committee of review, which strongly favoured a minimum two-person response for all emergencies, and recognises the increased costs associated with that recommendation.

The committee acknowledged that many rural residents do not enjoy the same level of service as do residents in major metropolitan areas. Although the committee accepts that two-person crews for all situations represents the ideal practice, the distances, settlement patterns and workload levels of some areas will almost always prevent that goal from being achieved in all parts of the State. Although one-officer responses occur in remoter parts of the State, I believe that an ambulance service is better than no ambulance service at all.

I believe that it is important to provide a career structure for members of the ambulance service. Until now there has been no central authority for employment or for determining promotions, apart from the positions of superintendent and deputy superintendent. Career progression requires officers to resign from one centre and be re-employed by another centre in a new location. At each QATB centre visited the committee found examples of officers moving their families the length and breadth of the State on numerous occasions to gain promotion. A common complaint made to the

committee by ambulance staff was that there was no incentive to seek promotion. That was partly due to the reasons that I have already outlined and also because there was no reimbursement of transfer expenses. I was told that one officer at Roma had established a special bank account specifically for funding future promotional transfers. That perhaps speaks for itself.

As to funding—prior to my election I stood on an election rostrum at Palm Beach with the ALP candidate of the day. Apparently the ALP's policy was that this Government would find some \$200m to completely fund the ambulance services. That was not a recommendation of this joint-party report before the House. The recommendations that have been put forward by the committee are not agreed to in principle by the Liberal Party. The Minister has stated in the press that he will not support any form of Medicare levy. It will be interesting to see what the final form of funding will take for the revitalised Queensland ambulance service when the legislation finally comes before this House.

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (3.19 p.m.): I was pleased to gain experience as a member of the committee that inquired into ambulance services in Queensland last year. I was pleased also to work with the parliamentary members of that committee, and Debra McLoughlin, who did quite an extraordinary job and worked quite extraordinary hours to assemble the report.

After the committee had its final meeting and had ratified each clause of the report one by one, it gave me some pride to be able to shake Jim Elder by the hand and say, "Jim, congratulations. I believe we have got a good report." I stand by that today. I suppose it is fair to say that there has been a fair bit of public comment about this report. Not a lot of it has been highly informed. Much of it has been uncomplimentary. I believe that is probably a sad reflection to a degree on some of the people who have made those comments. I suggest that the vast majority of people who have made uncomplimentary comments about the report have not read it. In fact, I am prepared to bet that the vast majority of those people have not even bothered to read the report's recommendations.

I do not intend to go through the report in some detail. I intend to talk about what was apparently a perceived need for change, the way that the committee went about it and the things that it tried to achieve. It is fair to say that it was Labor Party policy that there be an investigation into ambulance services in Queensland. This Labor Government put in place the committee of inquiry. I believe that at that time any party political influence on that inquiry ended. In the early days of the inquiry, I went to some trouble to go to the chairman of the committee, Mr Elder, and asked him, "Do you have a political agenda or are we able to undertake this inquiry fairly and appropriately and come up with a proper result?" At that time, he assured me that there was no political agenda whatsoever, that he had been given no riding orders. I am proud to say that I was able to give him the same assurance: that neither Mr Fitzgerald nor I had been given a political agenda to serve but that we should be able to proceed forthwith without fear or favour of any man or any organisation to produce a report that we considered to be the way in which ambulance services should proceed into the year 2000 and beyond.

The need apparently was that there was a perception that ambulance services in Queensland at this time—and certainly at that time—were somewhat fragmented and that there was a lack of uniformity across the service. The easiest way to describe what we attempted to do after having looked at ambulance services within Queensland and interstate is to say that we chose not to try to put band-aids on an existing carcass but to consider all bets to be off, to consider all conventional wisdom, all conventional understanding of ambulance services, to be off. We were to approach this with a new brush, if you will, and to paint a new canvas that would show in the long term a whole new structure. I suppose that people who were involved in ambulance services for many years could be offended at that. However, there is no reason for them to be offended, because they presided over an ambulance service that had grown like Topsy over many,

many years, in many cases undirected. It happened to be a good idea at the time, convenient at the time or able to be afforded at the time.

Queensland is a large and decentralised State. I venture to say that it is almost impossible to design an ambulance service that is adequate or appropriate for the whole of such a decentralised State, which has great distances within it and such a diverse population and diverse needs in terms of industry, agriculture and the way in which our communities are structured. Brisbane is the metropolitan centre of Queensland; its population is probably greater than that of the rest of Queensland, yet it covers a very small geographical area. It would be a simple matter indeed to design an ambulance service to cover Brisbane adequately and properly. It would be a simple matter to design a proper and adequate ambulance service for the remote areas of Queensland or, once again, for the provincial cities in Queensland. However, to combine all three and our industrial needs into a single, functional and adequate ambulance service is a very difficult task indeed. We had that task.

We believed, and I believe today, that it is important that ambulance services—it does not matter whether they are in Queensland or Victoria—be provided equally to all of the people in the State that they seek to serve. After all, the people that we seek to serve are the client group. We must not mould our ambulance services around the needs of those people on committees. We must not mould our ambulance services around those people who work for the service. We must mould our ambulance services around the needs of the people who are on the side of the road and are looking for medical aid. We must also combine those services with the other quasi-medical needs of people in Queensland, such as interhospital transportation and other matters. In order to provide an equal service, it is absolutely imperative that the service has ambulance vehicles which are of a standard design and have no inadequacies. It is all very well for an ambulance committee to raise lots of funds, to work very hard, to do all the things that ambulance committees have done, to buy themselves an ambulance vehicle and to then cling grimly to that ambulance vehicle because they purchased it. The question must be asked: is that an adequate vehicle to provide the kind of ambulance service to which we aspire? Is the equipment in that ambulance vehicle the appropriate type of equipment to provide the service to which we aspire? Standardisation of vehicular design, standardisation of the equipment within the vehicles and, most importantly, standardisation of training of ambulance officers must be first and foremost in the establishment of a proper ambulance service for this State. I have said previously that all of those matters combine to serve the client, to serve the individual who is in need. Our ego, our determination for self-preservation or any other peripheral matter cannot and should not be involved in our consideration of ambulance services.

Recently, much has been said about honorary ambulance officers. I have been most disappointed with some of the comments that have been made about our report in respect of honorary ambulance officers. The honoraries of the ambulance service in Queensland are highly dedicated and highly regarded people, who for many years have given a tremendous service to ambulance throughout this State. It is from that pool of honoraries that the ambulance service has gained the employment of many fine ambulance officers. Our report was very carefully worded to ensure that we did not offend those honoraries. We said that they should be phased out over a period as professional ambulance officers were trained adequately and in sufficient numbers to fill the gaps. We also said very carefully—

Mr Mackenroth: It does not mean you have to sack them or get rid of them.

Mr GILMORE: Of course, we will not sack them. We hold them in high esteem.

We also said that no honorary centre should close by virtue of the implementation of the recommendations of this report. I emphasise that criticism above all the other criticisms, because it indicates to me that so many people who are criticising this report have either not read it or have selectively chosen very small sections out of it in an attempt to take this report to task and turn it on its ear. One has to question why.

In the few moments remaining to me, I wish to raise a couple of other matters concerning the implementation of this report. I am glad that the Minister is now in the Chamber, because I would like him to hear what I have to say. There has been much said, particularly in the part of Queensland that I represent, about the ownership of property, that is, property bought with the funds raised by people running chook raffles and Christmas hamper raffles and other fund-raising activities.

Mr Littleproud: Beneficiaries from wills.

Mr GILMORE: Yes, beneficiaries from wills, and whatever else. These people have bought a piece of property, saved more money, built a little ambulance station and equipped it with a motor car. They are terrified that after the implementation of this report, the Government will move in some mysterious way to take that land and property from the community. They are afraid that the Government will take over this asset and, if at some time in the future the Government chooses to close the ambulance down for whatever reason, it will sell the property.

Mr Mackenroth: I understand those fears, but they are not realistic. The Government is not really going to go out there and start closing down ambulance centres.

Mr GILMORE: I thank the Minister for his contribution, and I am happy to have it recorded. He perceives that the Government will not move in that way.

Mr Mackenroth: You know we won't, but the problem is what you rightly said—the perceptions of those people in those sorts of communities and getting that through to them. What they don't explain to them when they say that the Government is going to take over their property is that they cannot build a garage without my approval.

Mr GILMORE: That is entirely right.

Mr Mackenroth: They can't do an extension or an alteration to a building without getting my approval.

Mr GILMORE: And the property is ultimately the property of this State.

Mr Mackenroth: It has to come over my desk, and I have to give my approval to do all those things. What sort of ownership have they got now?

Mr GILMORE: That is entirely true. Some people out there in these little communities are concerned that, having raised this money and built this asset, in some mysterious way they will lose it in the future. I suggest that it would be a brave Government indeed that would act to take away assets that have been built up by a small community through donations or raising money through the sale of raffle tickets.

Similarly, grave concerns have been expressed about the ownership and the future distribution of funds, that is, funds held in cash form which have been raised through raffles and other means. Of course, this money has to have a corporate owner. The committee has recommended that those committees no longer have any substantial power and that those funds go to the responsible State body. However, it was the impression of all members on that committee that those funds would always be earmarked and retained by those individual areas as a proprietary asset and spent in those areas. That was the committee's view, and it was certainly my view. I am sorry if we did not dot the i's and cross the t's. However, it was not possible to go into every contingency in such a report.

Dr Flynn: We didn't have to write the Act. We weren't trying to write the Act.

Mr GILMORE: No, we were not trying to write the Act. We were not writing a prescriptive document. We were writing a directive—a direction in which we perceived that ambulance services should go. Once again, I wish to place on the record of this Parliament that the committee understood that these small communities should not lose their assets of cash, land and buildings that they have worked so hard to acquire. I

believe that, if this report is adopted either in part or in whole, the Government should move in that way.

I am always asked the question as to what happens to funds that are raised in the future for the purchase of individual items for local ambulance services. It is trenchant rubbish to suggest that the members of any committee would work very hard to raise money for what they perceive to be a local need, and then have it snatched away and spent in some mysterious corner of the State. No person would pursue the collection of money in such circumstances, and obviously the QAS and the Government would not act in such a way. I wish to place on record that it was never the intention of the committee that that should happen.

The last area I wish to cover concerns compulsory contributions. I note that recently the Minister made a comment in the press to the effect that he was not in favour of compulsory contributions. I have to record that I personally believe—and I am not in any way imposing my opinion on the other members of the committee—that the only way we can have a proper and adequate ambulance service in this State is through compulsory contributions. I cannot believe that any organisation such as this, which is entirely based as an insurance body for all the people who live in this State, should be funded by only 30 per cent of the community and that the rest of the community should bludge upon it; nor can I tolerate a situation in which members of the community use this service in an emergency and then flee the scene and fail to pay the bill. One of the matters that came before the committee—and it was a matter of great concern to us—was that very large numbers of ambulance committees throughout the State were virtually impecunious because of the outstanding debts of a number of groups of people who traditionally and habitually fail to pay the bill for the cost of transportation in times of emergency.

In a debate such as this and after six speakers have made their speeches, little remains to be said except that I offer my support for this report. As I said at the beginning, I believe it is a good, even-handed and balanced report that has been written without fear or favour. It should be read as a report for the whole of Queensland and not as a report to be interpreted in any parochial sense. It cannot be read in a parochial sense. It must be seen as a holistic, overall report and as a statement of what the committee believes the future of ambulance services in Queensland should be.

Mr RANDELL (Mirani) (3.37 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to the report. I commend the previous speaker for the excellent speech he made. I might disagree with him on some matters, but I hope that we do not become bad friends. I know that we will not.

Mr Beattie: He would not do that.

Mr RANDELL: I will come to the member for Brisbane Central in a moment. It is the privilege of honourable members in this Parliament to say what they think.

I congratulate members of the committee on their hard work and on their commitment to the task they undertook. There is no doubt that the report is well thought out, but members of the committee should be aware, first and foremost, of the great controversy the report has caused in the community. Today, I wish to concentrate on the ambulance service that is provided in my electorate and throughout the Mackay area. I can inform the House that my constituents are not very happy.

I will cite comments made by the Mayor of Mackay, Alderman Peter Jardine, in a letter published in a newspaper. He stated—

"Mackay residents should take an interest in proposals now under discussion relating to the future of ambulance services. Under local management, the ambulance service has operated efficiently and has been responsible and accountable to local community needs.

This will change if the service was centralised within a conglomerate State bureaucracy. Efficiency would suffer, and locals would no longer have access to those who manage the service.

The trend towards the centralisation of locally managed services is disturbing and residents should express their views on this matter before Government decisions are finalised."

The Mayor of Mackay probably does not think along the same political lines as I do, but this issue has caused the greatest concern in the community that I have encountered in my 11 years as a parliamentarian. Never before have I been bombarded with so many petitions, letters and telephone calls at my electorate office and at my home. I am continually receiving complaints, irrespective of whether people are reading the report correctly or not. It is the right of any citizen in this State to read a report and disagree with it if he wishes, and let me be the first to say so. It is my duty to inform the House of the concerns of my constituents.

People are concerned about the way they see the changes affecting not only the community as a whole but also personnel in the ambulance service, their jobs and their families. Moreover, they are concerned about the way the changes will affect people as individuals. Let me say that the Mackay area has a very good ambulance service that is provided by the centre and all the substations throughout the region. I pay the highest tribute possible to the service performed by all the officers who comprise the ambulance service in that region. Almost without exception, they perform functions that are far above their normal duties and what should be expected of them. The changes foreshadowed by this report have certainly been met with trepidation and alarm and even with hostility. People in the Mackay area regard the ambulance service as a service that belongs to them. They work to provide funds for the service and they regard it as being their own and not belonging to anybody else. I can inform the House that those people do not trust this Government to do the right thing by retaining a service that is tried and true. They expect that this Government will replace it with a nightmare of red tape and bureaucracy.

I understand that the Minister wrote to a constituent in my area stating that he would read the report, listen to the debate in Parliament and then bring down legislation. Apparently he was heard commenting on the report during the ABC news at 7 o'clock and saying that a lot of QATB committees were making noises and that he did not know whether he would listen to them. He went on to say that they would certainly not influence his decision. Had the Minister made up his mind even before the matter was debated?

Dr Flynn: He has had a month or two to read the report. I am sure he has read it.

Mr RANDELL: But why should he make that statement publicly? Why should the Minister say that the committees can say whatever they like, but he will do whatever he likes? That indicates that the Minister is not willing to listen to the people. Let me say that the people of my electorate have worked damn hard to support the ambulance service in my area because they appreciate the tremendously good work that has been done. I wonder how many lives have been saved and how much suffering has been relieved by the standards set by the Mackay QATB and the men and women who operate it?

Mr Elder: How much more can be saved? How many more can be saved?

Mr RANDELL: I cannot hear the honourable member who interjects, and time is slipping away. Areas such as Sarina, Carmila, Finch Hatton, Nebo, Coppabella and St Lawrence are all tight-knit country communities. The people have worked hard to retain the service they have come to know, trust and have faith in.

Mr Pearce interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! There is too much audible conversation. I am having difficulty hearing the member for Mirani.

Mr RANDELL: Although the township of St Lawrence is not in my electorate, I know a lot of people who are involved. I hope that the member for Broadsound will rise and speak on their behalf during this debate. I know that he will. It is no wonder that people regard the service as belonging to them. While it remains that way, they will be prepared to work, raise funds and generally ensure that ambulance services are available to everyone in the region and beyond. Whatever happens in the Mackay area will affect people right throughout the region. If the Government starts to make dramatic changes and disrupts the service, I believe, along with other people, that standards could decline unless the service has public support and unless people rally behind the service as they always have. If this happened, I would be the first to say that it was not the fault of the officers in the service. However, they could be hamstrung by restricted practices imposed by bureaucrats who have no long or practical knowledge.

I am not saying that all changes would be bad. However, I am saying that there needs to be wider consultation, wider research and more local input before any changes are implemented.

Mr Szczerbanik: Is that mayor on the committee as well?

Mr RANDELL: I wonder what the honourable member is talking about.

I will now inform the House of some of the concerns that have been expressed. Perhaps at a later stage the Minister may address them. At any rate, I hope that he will take them into account before he introduces legislation. The first and foremost concern of all members should be the well-being of the citizens of this State, particularly those who live in country areas such as the one I represent. Before any legislation is introduced, all concerns should be addressed and wider consultation should take place. However, consultation is no good unless a genuine commitment is given to take the concerns seriously. The Minister should not think that all country people are stupid. He should be prepared to listen seriously to their concerns before he makes changes that could prove, in the long run, to be detrimental to the well-being and health needs of country people.

Mr Beattie: Who said any of them were stupid?

Mr RANDELL: The member for Brisbane Central does not need to say anything.

Mr Beattie: I never said that any of them were.

Mr RANDELL: I will get to the member for Brisbane Central in a moment.

My primary concern is what will happen to local committees in terms of the proposal that has been foreshadowed. Will they be abolished? Will control of the ambulance service in local areas be assumed by a State body? Will local ambulance services become a rubber stamp? Will this report mean that the Mackay district will be placed under the control of a bureaucracy centred in Townsville?

Mr Ardill: Why didn't you read the report before you got up?

Mr RANDELL: Members of this Parliament have been elected to bring the concerns of their electorate to the notice of Ministers. I want questions answered and I want these concerns taken into account. That is quite unacceptable to me.

Mr Ardill interjected.

Mr RANDELL: The honourable member lives in Brisbane. He does not have a clue about what occurs in country areas.

We can talk about the report, but the important part is the legislation that comes before the House. The honourable member does not know what form that legislation will take. People who have read the report thoroughly have expressed concern to me. If

the ambulance service is to be regionalised, one of those regions should be based at Mackay.

Another area of concern relates to whether we will see the abolition of the honorary system currently operating in small centres. I draw the attention of honourable members to the small town of Coppabella, which has a fully equipped ambulance housed in a building supplied by Queensland Railways and operated solely by honorary staff employed by Queensland Railways. The honorary staff are all current first aid certificate holders and receive training from the training officers from the Mackay QATB. I might add that the Coppabella ambulance committee works very hard. That committee is typical of the committees at St Lawrence, Nebo and Carmila. The ambulance committee landed in Mackay at 11 o'clock at night and did not even consult with the local committee.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. That statement is not correct. In fact, because flights were delayed, we did arrive in Mackay at 11 o'clock that night. However, we spent the next day in Mackay speaking to the superintendent, the ambulance officers and the entire committee.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! The member for Mirani will continue.

Mr RANDELL: That is different from what I heard. I wonder if the honourable member spoke to any of the townspeople who were concerned.

The committee at Coppabella raises between \$5,000 and \$10,000 a year by conducting raffles, sales, hoy and dances to ensure that the costs are met to keep a vehicle at Coppabella. Those people dedicate money and time to retain that local service which they consider as their service. The funds they have raised and which have been donated belong to the community and should not be taken over by a Government department. A reasonable concern exists that, once bureaucrats control an organisation such as the ambulance, it may be considered that the service is no longer necessary due to a small workload and we could see that service disbanded or withdrawn. When we examine the track record of this Government, we realise that that is exactly what will occur. There is also a fear that, if that happens, the present funds and properties will be taken over and sold off to cover the shortfall of other services. I point out also that, as in many other cases, the Nebo and Coppabella ambulances service not only their own towns and surrounding properties, but also the travelling public on the Peak Downs highway between Moranbah and other mining towns near Mackay. If those services are to be disbanded—no-one can tell me that they will not be——

Mr Elder: Where did it say in the report?

Mr RANDELL: The member is under a misapprehension. He has brought down a report, but legislation will come before this House. Will you be bringing that legislation in?

Mr Elder: Where did the report say?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! As the mover of this motion, the honourable member for Manly has a right of reply. He will have an opportunity to answer any comments at that time.

Mr RANDELL: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! As well, the honourable member will make his comments through the Chair.

Mr RANDELL: I will do that, Mr Deputy Speaker. However, I have been provoked by the honourable member for Manly. I am pleased that you have advised him as to the procedures in this place.

If the Government introduces legislation that ensures that ambulance services in small towns will be disbanded, places such as Coppabella, which services the Peak Downs

highway, will be left not only without an ambulance service but, more importantly, without an ambulance vehicle on the spot. Honourable members can say what they like about this report, but the legislation that is introduced will be the important issue. When we examine the track record of this Government, we realise that it will close down the small ambulance services that are not financially viable.

I will quote from a letter that I received from a constituent in Coppabella, who stated—

"It seems that the recommendations being submitted are a step backwards for some of us and are not ensuring future development of services as has been stated. The majority of people in Coppabella"—

the honourable member for Brisbane Central would know this—

"an isolated railway depot, and people of the mining centres, are avid supporters of Labor. Are we to assume we are being sold out by a Government we helped put into power?"

Why are people concerned about this report? We should be addressing those concerns. I hope that the Government does that. If recommendations are implemented without more serious thought and consultation, I will receive more letters from constituents along similar lines to that which I have cited.

Another concern is that Queensland ambulance officers will not be considered for senior positions because it is considered that their qualifications are inadequate and they are not sufficiently qualified to hold senior positions. Can the member for Manly, who interjected earlier, assure me that they will be considered? It is considered—I fully concur with this—that it is a real slap in the face to many capable Queensland officers that southerners, who are not familiar with the problems of a vast State such as Queensland and whose only qualifications are academic, will be put in positions of power to plot the future direction for the ambulance service in Queensland. Will that happen? Can Government members guarantee it will not happen? Perhaps some of those changes will have no significance in large centres such as Brisbane, Townsville and other cities, but in the rural areas around Mackay and the subcentres that have been mentioned the impact of such changes could be disastrous.

Another point of concern is the cost of the changes. I have never seen a change yet, particularly one that this State Government has implemented, that would not cost more. I note that all the changes proposed by the reviewer have not been costed. If they have, nobody has told us what those costs are.

Mr Elliott: Like a pig in a poke.

Mr RANDELL: That is absolutely right, like a pig in a poke.

It is absolutely certain, with increasing bureaucracy and associated clerical staff—and these things seem to run out of hand and increase year by year as people find more and more reasons why they should have more and more staff, office space, cars and computers—that costs will increase. Will there be a watchdog to keep an eye on the cost? I believe that the costs could be massive. I understand that changes along these lines have been implemented in New South Wales and Victoria and have failed. In fact, New South Wales is now looking to the present system in Queensland as a guide to implementing another system.

Mr Elder: No, they are not. That's untrue again.

Mr RANDELL: I have been told that. When the honourable member sums up, he can make his point.

Another matter that has been raised with me relates to what will occur when a person makes a specific bequest to an ambulance service decreeing that money or a facility be used in a particular area. If changes in the system occur, what will happen to those bequests? What will happen in those cases needs to be spelt out clearly.

The *Daily Mercury* of 26 January 1991 quoted a report from the chairman of the Mackay and District Ambulance Committee, Dr Ken Franklin. I understand that the committee met him. Anyone who knows Dr Franklin is aware that he is a man of integrity. He spent many years backing the ambulance service in Mackay. The article states—

"Dr Franklin said the following recommendations from the report would disadvantage severely the ambulance service in Mackay and Queensland:

1. The elected committees of the QATB would be disbanded. There would be no local control of ambulance services. Committees would be stripped of all of their present power."

I wonder whether that is fact. It goes on—

"2. The Mackay area would come under the control of the Townsville region."

As I have said, if there is going to be any change, let there be a region based on Mackay, which is big enough and important enough. I think that that should happen. The article continues—

- "3. The Queensland Ambulance Services Board would be abolished and replaced with a commissioner of ambulance services followed by a deputy commissioner and eight regional superintendents and deputy superintendents."

That is where it is going to be enlarged. It goes on—

"It was believed that the commissioner would be appointed and in place by April 1.

'None of the top positions are likely to be filled by Queensland officers as they are not considered to be sufficiently qualified to hold these positions. So they will go to southern candidates,' Dr Franklin said."

I think that the member for Manly has left the Chamber. He might be able to shed some light on that later on. The article continues—

"Dr Franklin said there would no longer be any place for honorary staff in the ambulance service.

'These people have been one of the greatest assets utilised by the Mackay committee for the recruitment of quality ambulance officers.

The Mackay ambulance district has three honorary sub centres at St Lawrence, Nebo and Coppabella.' "

I can certainly back him up on that. It goes on—

"The residents of those districts and the travelling public will be devoid of the most elementary first aid when those honorary centres close.' "

Perhaps I should substitute the word "if" for the word "when", because I have been assured today that those centres will not be closed. Until honourable members see legislation, they will not know what is going to happen. The article continues—

" 'Lives could be lost due to the time factor in having ambulances responding to emergencies now covered by honorary centres.'

He said that at present there was a consultant touring ambulance centre examining all the financial matters so that there would be in place a scheme on July 1 to transfer all funds, land and buildings and trust funds to the government body.

'I believe that much of the buildings, land and trust funds have been purchased by or been donated by the people of Mackay and I do not believe that they belong to the government or to the Queensland tax payer.' "

Is a Government body going to walk in and just take all that over? The article goes on—

" 'I am particularly concerned that more than \$100 000 in cash, currently held in Mackay Committee's Trust Fund, being donations and specifically made to our

area's ambulance service will be lost to the State and not spent as intended here in the Mackay area.

It is also possible that when the bureaucrats think that an ambulance service is no longer necessary in an area these services will be discontinued. In these circumstances, the property will be sold and the proceeds placed in the general fund. I have great fears for some sub centres.' "

Mackay probably cannot afford an ambulance service but the need is there, socially and otherwise, and that ambulance service should be provided. It should not be determined simply according to economic factors. The article continues—

"Dr Franklin said the ambulance service in Queensland had been in the majority of cases a well run operation providing a good service to the people of Queensland using a minimum of tax payers funds (\$28 million last year).

'Difficulties do exist at the present time due to government starving the committee of funds. This \$28 million represents 20 cents in the dollar of funds raised by local committees. The aim of the government this year was to see that as many committees as possible would be totally bereft of funds by June 30 this year.

The Mackay committee over the past 87 years has provided the people of Mackay with an ambulance second to none in this State.' "

I can certainly vouch for that. It goes on—

" 'We have always been a regionalised area, with training facilities equal to any in the State. We provide training to the staff of other committees in our region. We also provide mechanical services and back up cars to our neighbours. We have provided relieving staff to our surrounding committees in any emergency.

Under proposed arrangements, Mackay district will lose its regional status and will become subordinate to Townsville. All of the assets, knowledge and experience accumulated since 1903 will be lost to the people of the district forever.

All the changes proposed by the review have not been costed (or if they have, nobody is willing to admit to it).

With increasing bureaucracy and associated clerical staff necessary to run the organisation, wage costs will be massive.' "

That is the message put out by Dr Franklin.

That puts in a nutshell all of the concerns felt by the general public in the Mackay region. I once again ask this Government to go back to the drawing board or at least show a genuine commitment to addressing those concerns.

Mr SULLIVAN (Glass House) (3.56 p.m.): Honourable members have just heard the first disappointing speech in this debate. I will return to Mr Randell's remarks later. I say "disappointing", because obviously the honourable member has not bothered to read the report. He has made that admission. He has also not bothered to find out the facts from the report to allay the fears of his constituents—

Mr RANDELL: I rise to a point of order. I ask for a withdrawal of that remark. I did not admit that. I have read the summary of the report.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! Will the honourable member withdraw the remark?

Mr SULLIVAN: I will withdraw the words that offend the honourable member. However, I will say that his reading must have been very scant.

Membership of the Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry into Ambulance Services has been one of the great satisfactions of my first term in the Queensland Parliament. One former member of this Parliament marvelled that such a committee of inquiry should exist at all. When he was interviewed in his present capacity as an ambulance committee member, he indicated that in his 17 years in this place he had

seen nothing like it. However, if we accept, as I do, that committees offer us a better way to approach the business of the Parliament, then we must also take a better approach to committees. Preliminary research quickly established the magnitude of the task set the committee by the Parliament, and at the first or second meeting of the committee the services of a second staff person were sought. That request was denied, and it had unfortunate consequences. The first of those consequences is that the committee was not able to complete its work on term of reference (h) covering aerial aspects of ambulance and aero health retrievals. That term of reference will form the basis of a second report to the Parliament in April. The absence of that material from this report is, in my view, the only weakness of the report. Secondly, the committee's research director, Debra McLoughlin, was effectively denied for eight months any life outside of her work for the committee. Sheer necessity required that she work long hours seven days a week. It is a tribute to her dedication and commitment that she did so uncomplainingly. It is an indictment on us all that we cheerfully allowed her to do so.

This inquiry has taught us all that if our committees are to be effective, then we must—I repeat must—resource them appropriately. I also thank the other members of the committee: chairman Jim Elder, deputy chairman Tony FitzGerald, Tom Gilmore, John Flynn, Warren Pitt and Trevor Coomber, who throughout the many visits to centres, meetings and hearings bore even my most infuriating idiosyncrasies with extreme good grace. I also express my appreciation to all those people connected with the ambulance whom I met in the course of the inquiry and whose cooperation has made this report possible.

I found it very noticeable, as we spoke with people connected with various aspects of the ambulance services in Queensland, that their aspirations for the service and the horizons of their imagination were, in the main, limited to undelivered aspects of the 1980 *Report on Ambulance Services in Queensland*. This limitation in aspirations was coupled with an unhealthy level of cynicism concerning the likely outcome of our inquiry. Quite simply, there was a feeling that here again was another investigation into the ambulance service that in terms of improving their service would do nothing. The ambulance service has been subject to a number of reviews over the years. I am very happy to say that I believe that this unanimous report of the committee will form the basis of the most fundamental, and overdue, changes in the operation of Queensland's ambulance services. Changes for the better; changes that will make our service delivery second to none.

Whilst visiting Queensland in 1910, Dr Alexander Graeme Bell voiced the opinion that Queensland ambulances were worthy of emulation, that they were in fact world-leaders. Sadly, this has not remained the case. The service provided to the Queensland community by our QATBs is no longer the best in the world. This report graphically illustrates that fact in Table 8.6, Advanced Life Support Protocols, on page 121. Queensland is poorly serviced by comparison with the other Australian States. Only the St John Ambulance States of South Australia and Western Australia are as lacking in services as Queensland is, and even then they have a better range of services than Queensland has.

New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory have two levels of ambulance officer, one of those being officers who have training and skills in advanced life-support protocols, and are known variously as ALS officers, MICA officers, or by the term that we do not like, paramedics. In the Australian Capital Territory, all officers are provided with skills generally available to those more highly trained officers from New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory. It is that approach which we have recommended for Queensland. A State with our geography demands that in the northern and western regions, where people can be hours away from definitive medical care, we ensure that our ambulance officers are capable of providing the best emergency care possible. The approach that we have suggested in recommendation 29 will ensure that this demand is met. The people outside the major metropolitan centres will receive the same level of service as people in the cities.

The comparative improvement in the training delivered to Queensland's ambulance officers can be seen as the major achievement of the Queensland Ambulance Service Board. However, the skills provided are too few, and we heard evidence of many cases in which officers have not been sent for training as a result of staffing or financial constraints.

The QASB has listed as one of the disadvantages of the present system a lack of an effective career path for uniformed staff, due in part to the multiplicity of employers. With no central authority for employment or for determining promotions, apart from superintendent and deputy superintendent positions, career progression requires an officer to resign from one centre and employer and to be re-employed by another centre in a new location. In every QATB centre visited, the committee found examples of officers moving their families the length and breadth of the State numerous times to gain promotion. There is little scope for advancement within the single QATBs when more than one third of them employ fewer than four persons. Officers must often take the gamble with their career advancement by taking up the position of superintendent in a two or three-person centre located in an isolated area. The dilemma for them is that at smaller centres there tends to be not as much work and fewer opportunities for skill development, so that applicants from such centres who seek higher positions in larger centres frequently compare unfavourably with applicants from the larger centres. Officers were also critical of the limited advancement availability for those who wished to continue performing onroad duties. Officers tended to enter the service because of a commitment to patient care and yet were forced to apply for senior positions, which predominantly involve an administrative role, to gain advancement. A consequence of this is that many officers are carrying out administrative functions for which they have received little or, in the main, no training.

A common complaint made to the committee by ambulance staff was that there was no incentive to seek promotional transfers. This was due in part to the fact that for any positions other than superintendent or deputy superintendent, no reimbursement of transfer expenses is paid. This was found to place a considerable financial strain on officers and their families. One officer even told the committee that he had established a special bank account specifically for funding future promotional transfers. Although the board chairman personally supported the reimbursement of transfer costs on the proviso that the assisted officer serve a qualifying period at the new centre, no moves had been taken to introduce such a system. Quite simply, a single employing authority should determine the number of staff and the number of positions at particular classifications that are required for the entire service. This would allow officers to transfer throughout the State to seek promotion. All staff should be employed under the same terms and conditions and all be given an opportunity to pursue a career within the service.

Staff turnover rates in the ambulance service exceed those of both the police and fire services. When police resignations are discussed in the wake of the Fitzgerald report, the community concern is that low morale is the major factor. In March 1990, Detective Sergeant Charlie Grimpel said that police were leaving their service for a number of reasons but "the main one would be morale". So it is with ambulance officers and yet there has been no similar public concern expressed. It is my view that the committee system has been responsible for the low morale amongst uniformed ambulance officers. In no more concrete way can this be demonstrated than by looking at the weekly wage rates for ambulance officers. After three years as an ambulance officer in Queensland, a person will receive \$414.80 per week. That compares with \$418.60 per week received by a probationary officer in New South Wales; and with the \$427.40 per week received by an ambulance officer with 37 weeks of service in Victoria; or with the \$446.15 per week received by a certificated ambulance officer in Tasmania.

Recommendation 58 provides that salary levels in Queensland be reviewed to ensure that they are comparable to those in other States. The disciplinary methods of the QATB committee are another way in which staff morale has been eroded. I am aware of one case in which a centre superintendent initiated a disciplinary action against an officer. That superintendent then decided if the action should proceed—if in fact the officer had

a case to answer—and, as secretary of the committee, that superintendent was one of the people who heard the action, decided the outcome and set the penalty. That system denies justice to the employee and is tailor-made to ensure low morale among the work force. Our committee has recommended that a proper grievance and appeals mechanism be established. The professional standing of ambulance officers amongst other health-care professionals is, by and large, quite low. This is not universal, for there are isolated pockets in which the medical profession is supportive of ambulance officers. However, it is more usual that professional jealousies have caused friction, generally to the detriment of the ambulance officer. Ambulances are no longer "scoop and run" operations—nor can they, or would they wish to, lay claim to the motto of a New York-based ambulance, which is, "You call, we haul, that's all."

The establishment of an ambulance academy and the introduction of the qualification of Associate Diploma of Applied Science (Ambulance) will raise the professional standing of ambulance officers, clearly establish verifiable levels of expertise and properly place ambulance officers in the chain of health care. It is important to me that it is recognised that the ambulance is the first part of emergency health care, not the last part of any accident or emergency situation.

Funding arrangements for the ambulance are of concern to everyone. The option of a Statewide levy received the overwhelming support of most people who addressed that question in their submissions to the inquiry. This report indicates the committee view that a compulsory levy should be the ultimate means by which the ambulance service is funded. The Minister has stated publicly, no doubt in response to some prompting, that he favoured further efforts to boost receipts from the elective subscriptions that currently make up the bulk of the public's contribution. Notwithstanding that, it must be stated that in 1989-90 funds from contributions, fees, bequests and fund-raising totalled only \$42m, while a 0.25 per cent levy attached to the Medicare levy would raise in excess of \$60m. I believe that while people are able to elect to pay or not to pay, there will be those who will gamble that they do not need to contribute. The result of that will necessarily be reduced funds available for the ambulance service which, in turn, will impose limitations on the service provided.

I am aware of the campaign being waged by elements of the committees against the adoption of these recommendations. By and large, this campaign appears to deliberately misrepresent the thrust of this report, to the end that it would seek to retain the committee system. As honourable members have heard, the QASB has, over the last few years, usurped virtually all the powers of the committees, which are required to refer most decisions to the board for approval. By and large, the committees retain the power to select new employees for their centres, and to interfere in the day-to-day management of the centres. If we accept, as the Opposition spokesman does, that a single employer is the way that the service must proceed, then one has to ask if we need a committee to interfere in the efficient running of an ambulance centre. The committees we have at present are more often than not appointed without a ballot, so low is the public interest. Table 6.1 on page 72 makes some interesting reading. When elections are held voter turn-out is appalling. As I approached this committee of inquiry I believed I would meet very many dedicated people in the service, both as employees and as volunteers. I am happy to say that that belief was vindicated. However, in recent times, certain of the people involved have shown their true colours. Their opposition to the general thrust of this report shows them to be far less interested in the provision of an ambulance service than in the preservation of their own self-importance.

Earlier today, the Opposition spokesman, the member for Nicklin, Mr Turner, spoke in this debate. His speech showed that he is a victim of that farrago of lies, trickery and deceit put forward by some of the people opposing this report. He indicated that New South Wales was changing its ambulance service back to what exists in Queensland at present. That is not so. In fact, in 1990 New South Wales enacted legislation which re-established a central board. Off the top of my head, I think the make-up of that central

board is five ministerial appointments—two of whom have managerial qualifications—one public servant and one employee of the service. It is important to note that the New South Wales Act did not re-establish local committees.

Dr Flynn: Basically they are just making a distinct entity again.

Mr SULLIVAN: I agree. As the honourable member for Toowoomba North said, New South Wales is, in its own inimitable way, making it a unique entity.

In speaking about honoraries, Mr Turner showed that he had not either read or believed recommendations 47 and 48 of the report. This report is not about abolishing honoraries, and that has been said several times today. I refer the honourable member to recommendation 47, which states—

"Consideration should be given to the introduction of permanent part-time ambulance officer positions."

An Opposition member: What do you mean by that?

Mr SULLIVAN: I am glad that the honourable member asked what is meant by that. What is envisaged is a system similar to that operating in the fire service where, rather than volunteers giving their time for no reward, people are rewarded. They could be called auxiliaries. The people who are active in the ambulance service should be seen to be receiving compensation for their time and, subsequently, training to ensure that they can carry out the task appropriately.

Mr Turner spoke also about interhospital transfers being centrally operated. He is almost right. A central coordination of interhospital transfers can ensure that two vehicles, each carrying a single patient, are not on the same road heading in the same direction at the same time. Although this task would be coordinated centrally, there is no suggestion that it will not be carried out locally. The honourable member mentioned trust funds. He obviously did not refer to recommendation 9. Recommendation 9.4, which refers specifically to trust funds, states—

"In regard to trust fund moneys comprised of bequests, the QAS should be responsible for ensuring that the directions and restrictions which donors have placed upon their bequest are preserved."

Recommendation 9.5 states—

"All other moneys in trust funds derived from undirected bequests, donations or gifts should be transferred to an appropriate regional trust fund where it would be used for the purpose of enhancing the ambulance service within that region."

That is rather than within the State generally. Recommendation 9.2 states—

"Any financial and other liabilities and obligations of any QATB committee should become liabilities and obligations of the QAS."

Ninety-five per cent of officers in Queensland ambulance centres which the committee visited stated that they will be in the red within three years—if they are not there already. One wonders what it is that this Government is taking from them. It is taking a debt from them. The recommendation of a single ambulance service for the State will relieve the community of a large degree of worry.

Mr Turner discussed committees being set up totally as fund-raisers. The committee was at great pains to ensure that that will not be the case and stated that fund-raising will not be an obligation of local committees. Those committees, which have a means of communication with the regional director and the directorate, are not required to participate in fund-raising if they do not wish to do so. However, should they take on a fund-raising activity, the money that they raise will be spent in their areas.

I do not wish to argue with the member for Mirani about the value or lack of value of the ambulance service at Mackay. However, it must be understood that not all ambulance services in Queensland are of the same standard. The only way that the

services that are lacking can be brought up to the level of the better ones is to create a single ambulance service.

Time expired.

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham) (4.17 p.m.): If the idea of a single ambulance service is such a marvellous idea—as the members for Glass House and Toowoomba North and the chairman of the parliamentary committee have endeavoured to indicate—why is there such a tremendous ground swell of opposition to that concept? I am not talking solely about my local areas of Millmerran, Pittsworth or Oakey where people are diametrically opposed to the idea.

Mr Livingstone: They support it in Ipswich West.

Mr ELLIOTT: Let me consider some other areas. Some of the members who represent the northern areas of the State would do well to take note of the areas from which some of that opposition is coming. It is obvious that people in the north of the State have a very real opposition to a single ambulance service.

I was interested in the comments made by the member for Bowen. Mr Greg Lee of 41 Gordon Street, Bowen, wrote to his local newspaper and indicated that if the people of that area do not believe that a single ambulance service will be a problem, they should cut out his letter from the newspaper, pin it on their walls and, in two or three years' time, ask themselves whether or not he was correct. I have always believed that members should listen carefully to what people at the grassroots level of their electorates are saying. They should take account of the feeling within the community. I am not saying for one minute that that is all that members should do. Obviously they must be far-sighted enough to try to shape and direct things in a particular way.

The committee's report contains some very good recommendations. It would be wrong for anyone to suggest that they are all bad. Recommendation 47 is probably very sensible. I agree with the previous speaker, who said that some honourable members should consider that recommendation because it represents common sense. It states—

"Consideration should be given to the introduction of permanent part-time ambulance officer positions."

That has some merit, particularly in country areas. I would be the first to admit that the service provided in some areas is not as good as it should be. However, if the Government throws out the baby with the bath water, it will create problems like those that it created in other sectors. This Government will live to rue the day that it changed the system of fire brigades and hospitals boards in this State. I believe that is a reasonable analogy. The Government has the cute idea that it can take public servants and give them other jobs—put professional people into jobs that for many years have been carried on the shoulders of the community. The Government believes that by putting trained and professional people into those roles, it will provide a better service. That is a load of codswallop. It sounds great in theory, but when it comes to practice and application on the ground, the people with the dedication—even the old ladies who make scones and, in many instances, the people who drive ambulances on a voluntary basis—are the ones who will provide the dedicated service. Because of subscriber numbers and the distances involved, many areas will not be able to sustain an operation with high overheads.

Mr Elder: They cannot sustain it now.

Mr ELLIOTT: That is right. They are having enough trouble now. This Government--particularly its Ministers—is saying, "Trust us. We will deliver the goods." We trusted the Government. The Government said that we would not have any trouble with the services provided at courthouses and at hospitals, for example, with outpatients. More courthouses have been earmarked to be closed or have already been closed in my electorate than in any other electorate. Why should I trust the Government? The Government has done us over; it has duded us. The Government has taken away courthouses in country towns. It is taking away our services. It will knock off the DPI.

The Government will not touch all of the fat cats at the top of the DPI structure who push paper around desks. It will touch the productive people at the bottom end of the chain, those people who really work for a living, who get out there at 5 o'clock in the morning when they do not have to do so. When I put in my strip-cropping system, those people were out there early in the morning at their own expense, because they wanted to get it done and because they are genuine people.

The same type of people are involved in the ambulance service. The Government will employ so-called professionals who will work to rule. The good old Minister for "Revenge" will make sure that union people are involved in the ambulance service. No non-union members will have anything to do with it. The ambulance service employees will be union people who want to be paid right on the dot. They will not want to work a minute's overtime.

Mr Schwarten: Why shouldn't they be paid?

Mr ELLIOTT: The honourable member should get back to bashing people up in the flooded area. He would do well to look after all of the people in his electorate. No-one in the system at the moment provides anything that he or she is not very happy to provide. Most of the people are being paid but not necessarily as a result of union regulations. The Government will put into place a grandiose scheme that will cost the Government—me and every other taxpayer in this State—a fortune. That will be the bottom line. It will not matter how well-meaning people such as my colleague the member for Lockyer, for whom I have the highest regard, are or whether they have the best intentions; unfortunately, it is the socialists on the Government side who will implement the scheme. They will be the people who will say, "Trust me", and then dud us, as they did with the courthouses. Why on earth would anyone come into this place and be naive enough to think that Government members will deliver what they say they will deliver? How many times must we be done over before we will learn what those people are all about? They are centralists.

Dr Flynn: At least I came out to Millmerran to talk to your constituents. You were not there.

Mr ELLIOTT: I was very pleased that the honourable member could be there.

Dr Flynn: I went out there to listen to their concerns, but you were not there to hear them.

Mr ELLIOTT: I was at the Clifton Show with my colleague the member for Warwick. I had a long-standing commitment to be there. I would have loved to have been at Millmerran and to have listened to what the honourable member said. It is funny that he should raise that matter. I won the brick-carrying competition at the Clifton Show.

Mr Schwarten: Did you get first prize or second?

Mr ELLIOTT: I received a blue ribbon and a little trophy, which I will display at home. I beat all of the young fellows. The honourable member asked a silly question, and he got an answer that he did not really expect. I would have been delighted to have been at Millmerran with the honourable member for Toowoomba North. I was particularly interested in that matter. It is obvious that those people in Millmerran are diametrically opposed to the Government's proposal. The first place that I wanted to be at was Millmerran so that I could listen to what the honourable member had to say. The meeting was taped by the public authorities, and I will receive a tape-recorded copy. I will have the joy of being able to listen to the honourable member.

Dr Flynn: I recommend it.

Mr ELLIOTT: It is recommended listening? That is good. We have overcome that problem, anyway. I will hear what the honourable member said without having been there.

Mr Nunn: Could we have a video of you carrying the bricks?

Mr ELLIOTT: Someone may have a video, but I doubt whether the honourable member will receive a copy. To be more serious, let us consider the history of centralist Governments of a socialist nature, particularly in more modern times. Most honourable members—with a few rare exceptions, such as the old timber workers who have been around a little longer—have not been in this place for very long, so I will relate the history from the term of the Whitlam Government onwards. Whitlam did his level best to do the same sort of thing. Honourable members may remember his concept of setting up committees throughout the country as a forerunner to regional government. That is what the dedicated socialists in this place are all about. Let us be quite honest. They believe in centralism. They hate the fact that those people involved in the ambulance service work for nothing and want to do things for the community. Government members believe that those people are taking jobs away from unionists and that unionists should be in those jobs working to rule and not working a minute's overtime.

A Government member interjected.

Mr ELLIOTT: I was an AWU member. Unlike many people on this side of the House, I held an AWU ticket.

Mr Elder: You would not have held it for long.

Mr ELLIOTT: I held it for a long time. I worked in the wool sheds in western Queensland. However, I had too much entrepreneurial flair for them. I used to kill all the sheep and clean out the loos for extra money.

Mr Schwarten: They reckon that you were shearing wet sheep.

Mr ELLIOTT: No. I do not have as many grey hairs as my old mate over here. That was the honourable member, not me. The days of black sheep were before my time. I used to watch all the honourable member's people chasing people around in land rovers and shooting at them. That was the sort of thing one could expect from them.

I am straying away from the debate and will return to the real issues. It is fair to say that the report contains many good recommendations. People in my electorate are not one-eyed and do not suggest that the committee has wasted its time or that it has not come up with any reasonable recommendations. People will support many of these recommendations and will probably go along with 85 or 90 per cent of them. However, the Government is throwing the baby out with the bath water; it is not content merely to fix up the reasonable system that already exists to overcome some of the problems. It wants to reinvent the wheel. This Government wants to centralise control for everything. It wants to get its clutches on everything, grab everything and keep everything for itself. This is another area of influence for the Government which might gain a lot of new Labor voters. If people think that this Government shapes their whole destiny, perhaps they will be misguided enough to vote Labor—that is really the thrust of the recommendations that the Government will implement. Honourable members should watch when the legislation is introduced into this House, because that is the way in which the legislation will be framed.

My colleague the member for Tablelands and the other good people who have been working on this committee have good intentions, but the member for South Coast——

Mr Coomber: Currumbin.

Mr ELLIOTT: Yes, Currumbin. They keep changing the names and make it very difficult to keep up.

Mr Nunn: There will be a few changes out your way shortly.

Mr ELLIOTT: That is a possibility, but the National Party rolls with the punches very well. When the whips are cracking, we will be there and prepared to take on any of you fellows out in those areas.

I will return to the point that it comes down to the fact that the grassroots approach must be maintained. It is absolutely essential that, whatever the Government does with this legislation, the local committees are kept intact in some way, shape or form. As soon as the Government loses the goodwill of the local population, the ball game is over—the Government is history; it will get no support. The Government cannot go in with such high-minded and heavy-handed tactics, take over these people's funds and tell them that all of these assets are no longer theirs. In recent times I was closely involved with the Millmerran ambulance committee. A house was for sale in the area and the committee was having trouble getting permission to buy it. We oiled a few wheels and tried to help them.

A Government member: Greased a few palms.

Mr ELLIOTT: No. It was a perfectly normal and legitimate exercise. In fact, another house came up for sale and the committee was able to buy that one. It was an excellent exercise. The house was not suitable for residential purposes. No-one could ask anyone to live there permanently and bring up a family in it. It was just not suitable. That is an upgrading in that area.

People are very concerned about what the Government is doing and will not take it lying down. The Government thinks it has seen a bit of revolt in the ranks of the public servants because it is doing them over left, right and centre. I am sure that at the last election many of them voted for the Labor Party believing that it would look after them and do good things for them. Now a lot of failed socialists from the south have come to Queensland and taken positions in the public service. The Government is bringing in all these imports.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hollis): Order! I ask the honourable member to return to the motion.

Mr ELLIOTT: The Government has put people of its own ilk into these positions. I would not be surprised if it brings some failed character from Canberra to run this show, too. People are talking about advertising Australiawide in an attempt to bring someone in from outside Queensland. There are plenty of good people in Queensland who have the ability to run the show; the Government need not go out of Queensland. It needs public knowledge. The real strength of public participation is that the grassroots level of the public knows if the local bloke is pulling his weight. Honourable members here in Brisbane do not have a clue what is going on up in Millmerran just as I do not have a clue what is going on in Henry's area. That makes a lot of sense.

Mr Springborg: Henry doesn't, either.

Mr ELLIOTT: Henry does not always look after it as well as he might.

There is a philosophy within the Labor Party that it knows best and that therefore it will always appoint someone who has the right sort of background. The Government will shove someone in there to look after it and run it the way it wants it run. The person appointed will ensure that that is the way it is done. If the Government moves away from the local people, who are prepared to give their all and have that local knowledge, and the local superintendent of the ambulance service is not pulling his weight—getting on the grog or doing something highly unsatisfactory regarding the operations of the QATB—then members can bet their lives that the locals will know. The next time there is a meeting the locals will say, "Do you know that Joe Bloggs is doing this, that and the other thing? Pull him into gear or else kick him out." That is what must happen and that is why, whatever else is said about the system that has existed in this State for years and years, it has worked, although I am sure that members could pinpoint some areas and say that this or that is not working.

If the Government takes this approach and sets up a grandiose vehicle that costs a fortune because of the high salaries that will have to be paid, Queensland will finish up in the same position with the ambulance service as it is with hospital boards and fire services. That will be an unmitigated disaster. I, for one, will not support any thrust

along those lines. I support 100 per cent the community attitudes that come from my electorate. I sensed them some time ago, but they have come to a head since Christmas-time. People are voicing their concerns to me regularly; I support the local attitudes.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (4.37 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to join in this debate on the report of the Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry into Ambulance Services. At the outset, I commend the committee for its primary objectives, which are stated as follows—

"To contribute to the reduction of mortality and morbidity by the provision of a professional standard of pre-hospital emergency care accessible to all throughout the community. This should include:

- providing rapid response to requests for assistance in any kind of emergency
- providing specialised transport facilities . . .
- providing specialised skills to maintain life . . . "

Very few people would disagree with those primary objectives. The committee also listed the following criteria: accessibility, flexibility, quality, needs, technological feasibility, efficiency, coordination, accountability and cost-effectiveness. These are certainly well worth considering, but it is the method recommended by the committee for achieving these aims that has gone awry.

Presently, this Government is in the process of regionalisation. I cannot help saying that as it applies to fire services and hospital services, the regionalisation program is no better than a dog's breakfast. The question must be asked: has the Government's present policy delivered a better standard of service to the community than was provided in the past? I can assure the Minister that it has not. Several hospitals boards have been eliminated, which has resulted in a loss of interest by many people in the community in the functioning of hospitals boards. Again, the question must be asked: is this type of change for the benefit and betterment of the community, or is it simply change for the sake of change? In terms of the provision of ambulance services, I cannot help but think that this report represents change for the sake of change and also for the sake of implementing regionalisation in various areas of service provided in this State.

This Government's policy has sown the seeds of doubt in people's minds. Those who looked to the Government for guidance and who have been promised guidelines by this Government have received uncertainty instead. These people have developed a sense of frustration in trying to determine what the future will hold. Doubt is also in the minds of many people who are presently involved in ambulance services. To date, the Government has provided no clear guidelines and has given no firm indication of the direction that ambulance services will take. The Government's attitude is that people should wait until the report is tabled and the recommendations are implemented, and then they will find out what is going to happen. Under those conditions, is it any wonder that very real and very grave doubts have arisen in the minds of people who are uncertain about the Government's intentions?

Why does the Government think that Queensland needs regionalisation? Why is a centralised organisational structure needed in addition to regions, districts and community centres? How does a regionalised system operate? To whom will people involved in community centres turn for advice? Will they turn to the district office, or to the regional office? Will it be the case that the district office will ask the regional office, which will then ask the central agency for advice? When the decision is made, will the reverse sequence apply, step by step? The Government's policy on regionalisation is nothing more nor less than a proliferation of bureaucracy. It will result in an increased number of public servants shuffling paper from one department to another and from one region to another.

The member for Manly mentioned low staff morale in ambulance services throughout this State. I wonder what this report will do to lift that morale? The member said that low staff morale had been a problem for quite a period and was unprecedented. If the

proposed changes result in benefit to the community, perhaps they will lift morale when they are implemented.

Cooperation between emergency services is critical on occasions such as rescues and disasters. I hope that honourable members realise that a significant degree of cooperation presently exists between rescue and emergency services in this State, particularly in circumstances involving fire services. Recommendation 6.2 suggests that sufficient ambulances be fitted with appropriate rescue equipment. While I have no doubt about the need for this equipment, surely the Government should be looking to an extension of cooperation between the various emergency services to ensure that the services that presently are equipped with rescue facilities are in a position to be able to utilise this equipment whenever required. The Government should also ensure that when an emergency arises, officers at the scene do not have to wait for authority from a regional director who may have to travel for half an hour to oversee the utilisation of equipment such as the jaws of life, as it is commonly known. Presently, emergency services are able to utilise specialised equipment whenever it is needed, and that has been the case for a long period. It has never previously been necessary for a regional or district officer to attend the scene of a rescue before equipment of that type is used. Increased support and cooperation between services are certainly needed for rescue work.

Recommendation 9.3 states—

"All funds presently held by QATB committees should be transferred to the QAS."

I notice that recommendation 9.4 relates closely to that recommendation, and states—

"In regard to trust fund moneys comprised of bequests, the QAS should be responsible for ensuring that the directions and restrictions which donors have placed upon their bequest are preserved."

Recommendation 9.5 goes a little bit further, and states—

"All other moneys in trust funds derived from undirected bequests, donations or gifts should be transferred to an appropriate regional trust fund . . ."

To my mind, those who bequeath funds to a certain centre and who had the expectation that the funds would be utilised in a particular centre in return for past services would not necessarily want the funds to be applied for the benefit of other centres or regions. Under the conditions laid down by the recommendations to which I have previously referred, people will be less inclined towards contributing funds for ambulance services if the funds are to be applied across-the-board instead of to the local centre. This constitutes a very real problem because those conditions will result in a reduction of contributions from the community. I believe that the Government should encourage community contributions rather than bring about a decrease in the level of community funding.

I turn to the functions of community liaison committees, which the report recommends should provide advice to the district officer in charge on local ambulance services in terms of its quality and quantity; to provide advice to the regional superintendent; to plan, undertake and promote community participation in and awareness of ambulance services; and to plan and undertake fund-raising activities, if desired, for the purposes of purchasing specific items of equipment. I am particularly concerned with the fund-raising activities. There is no guarantee that funds raised will remain in the centre for which they have been raised to improve services offered.

I turn now to two-officer crews on ambulance vehicles. When the present Government was in Opposition, it made numerous requests for two-man crews. There is a recommendation that a minimum of two-officer crews should attend all emergency calls and, in cases of one-person stations, back-up from the nearest station should be provided. The recommendation refers to all emergency calls. Who will decide whether it is an emergency? For example, when an accident occurs, a relation or close friend of an injured person will ring the police and the ambulance and claim that it is an emergency. However, in those circumstances some people panic. Many calls that are claimed to be an emergency

are found to be not so serious when the ambulance officer arrives at the scene. If two-officer crews attend more accidents, that will cause a blow-out of the cost of the service. At present, a local ambulance officer is in a position to assess accurately what is an emergency and what is not. Not only will the costs escalate, but also there will be more calls for two-man crews. One-person stations will require a back-up from the nearest station. Some back-up stations are half an hour to an hour's drive away from other stations. When a two-officer crew is required, more staff will be required to provide sufficient staff to cater for emergency calls.

I am concerned at the proposal that positions of honorary ambulance officers should be phased out gradually. In the past, those officers have played an important role in small centres. They carry out their duties for enjoyment, for an interest and to contribute to the community. Many honorary ambulance officers eventually become permanent ambulance officers. However, in the meantime, they obtain practical experience under strict supervision. As well, they receive great satisfaction and contribute a great deal to the ambulance centre. I note the recommendation that training to the level of the preparatory stage or equivalent should be required prior to on-road work being undertaken. Any responsible honorary officer would have undergone the necessary training to be prepared for the work to be performed.

I turn now to funding. At present, in the ambulance service building approvals and constructions have halted completely. A moratorium has been placed on the construction of new buildings. I wonder how long that will continue and how much support the ambulance service can expect from the community when approval has been granted to raise large sums of money but no approval has been given for construction of the building. Earlier, an honourable member stated that the Minister must approve construction. However, there should not be a delay of six or 12 months before the Minister determines whether a project will proceed. What will occur administratively when two ambulance centres combine their services? If the ambulance service is to expect support from the community, building construction cannot be delayed indefinitely.

As the member for Cunningham stated earlier, there is grave doubt about the recommendations and much concern in the community at what is occurring with the ambulance service. If Government members do not believe me, they should talk to the people in the community. I realise that, before releasing its report, the committee travelled extensively throughout Queensland and the rest of Australia, and that its members spoke to many people. However, why have they decided to fix something that is not broken? Some members have stated that the present system has not been working. I question whether the system proposed in the committee's report will work.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego) (4.51 p.m.): It is my pleasure to join this debate. The people in my area have some serious concerns which, of course, is the reason why I am speaking today. Throughout my electorate public meetings have been called by interested people. The other day in Blackall 150 people attended a meeting. This week, a meeting will be held in Tambo. Others are planned over the next few weeks. That demonstrates the serious concern amongst members of the public. I endorse the remarks of the previous two speakers, the member for Gympie and the member for Cunningham. I felt that the member for Cunningham spoke extremely well and covered many of the issues that I wished to cover. However, I want to make some additional points that I believe are fairly pertinent to the argument.

Basically, what the Opposition is saying is that the implementation of this report will have serious consequences. There is no local input. Donations will dry up. Voluntary assistance will wane and kill off local spirit. The recommendation in regard to honorary ambulance bearers, who have been the backbone of the service, particularly in the smaller towns, is quite serious. In the past, being an honorary ambulance officer or bearer was often a stepping stone to becoming a paid ambulance officer. I very much doubt whether the new system will allow that to happen. Many people do not have the necessary academic qualifications for the job but they would do an excellent job—in fact probably a far better job—than somebody who did have those qualifications. I think that must be

borne in mind. I accept the need for additional training of people who work in any field, particularly in the ambulance service. However, one of the biggest problems that we face is that it is very difficult to attract to inland areas professional staff or even people who have tertiary qualifications. It appears to me that in many cases the more qualifications one has, the quicker one heads to the coast. Local authorities, engineering firms and the ambulance service have difficulty obtaining staff because people do not want to go out to the drier areas which do not have the facilities that are available on the coast.

Mr Elliott: It's impossible to get doctors to work out there.

Mr HOBBS: That is right. It is the same with doctors.

This is a problem that the Government must bear in mind. I am not sure what the answer is. However, in regard to the ambulance service, the answer is certainly not doing away with the honorary ambulance bearers. I realise that the report does cover that aspect to a certain extent. However, I think that perhaps it is a little bit too hard. The ambulance services in smaller towns in my area, particularly, say, Augathella, Morven, Tambo, Isisford, Jericho and Jundah, would have to close down if the honorary ambulance officers were not able to carry on in the same capacity as at present. There would simply be nobody there to do the job. What it all boils down to is that when one is dying beside the road somebody in an ambulance who has some expertise is far better than nobody.

The committee system is also important. I certainly oppose totally a centralised system. This is a bit similar to what the Government has been instituting in regard to the hospitals boards, fire brigade boards and so on. It is no different. There is no real input by locals. I have received letters from people in my area on this issue. I understand that the member for Mirani also mentioned that many people in his electorate have written to him about it. I am in the same boat. People in my area are very concerned. Letters are pouring in to my office. I will read some of them. A letter from the Mitchell Ambulance Committee states—

"Although lip service is paid to the retention of committees as consultative bodies, there is no doubt that any committee which continues to exist under the proposed system, will be a 'toothless tiger' powerless to make any meaningful response to local area needs."

Another letter from the Blackall area that covers the matter reasonably well states—

"(a) A centralized state-run system would not be as well tuned to the needs of the town and country folk who know the needs, and roads and rivers of their own areas. It is important that local people are involved in the service.

(b) We have worked many years to get the buildings and facilities we want, and our community has supported us because they know the money could save their lives, and the committee can decide what services the area needs best. It is very, very unjust to rob a community of its hard won ambulance facilities, and the cash saved and put by to make sure that buildings are new and equipment the best."

Those are just some of the views of the people who are out in the field, the ones who will be affected. People will work voluntarily for the ambulance service but they will not work voluntarily for the Government. As I see it, voluntary assistance will certainly wane. The committees are really no more than Clayton's committees that will be left over—

Dr Flynn: You'll lose 2 per cent of the total funding if that happens.

Mr HOBBS: As the member for Cunningham said, that is all very well, provided that the funding does turn up. What members of the Government are saying is, "Trust us.", and the Opposition does not. That is the problem out in the field. These letters have not been written by me. They have been written by people out in the field who

have genuine concerns. Perhaps the honourable member can explain them away. However, at this stage people have real concerns that need to be addressed today in this Parliament.

In regard to financing, the Opposition basically says that donations will dry up. Unless and until people can see that they will get a better service, these funds will certainly dry up and eventually, of course, subscriptions will go up. If subscriptions do not go up, the Government contribution must go up. If that does not go up, obviously donations have got to go up. Somewhere along the line somebody has to pay. The Opposition wants to know who that is going to be. Another important aspect is that many people go out and raise money voluntarily by holding rodeos, sports days and so on. Many ladies groups do a lot of work to raise money for their local ambulance service and hospital and their enthusiasm will wane.

The people of Mitchell are concerned about the question of assets being transferred to the Government from the community. They are concerned about the funds that they have put together being transferred away from their area. One letter I received states—

"The Minister, the Honourable Terry Mackenroth in a letter circulated to all centres on 4 February, 1991 went to great pains to point out that under recommendation 15(3) 'That all trust monies of a particular community Liaison Committee should be used for the enhancement of Ambulance Services solely in this area'.

This statement conveniently overlooks Recommendation 9.5 in the same report which states 'All other monies in trust funds derived from indirect requests, donations or gifts should be transferred to an appropriate Regional Trust Fund where it can be used for the purpose of enhancing the ambulance services within that region'."

That is one of their concerns. They do not really believe that the money and the funds that they have put together will stay entirely in their area.

Mr Sullivan: Is that Mitchell?

Mr HOBBS: That one is Mitchell, yes.

Mr Sullivan: I spoke to Mitchell about a week and a half ago. I think we have allayed that fear.

Mr HOBBS: I received this letter just last week.

Mr Sullivan: What is the date?

Mr HOBBS: 15 February.

Mr Sullivan: I am sorry. I did not allay their fear. The simple fact is that the two recommendations refer to funds at a different stage. Recommendation 15 refers to the community liaison committees, which are not formed until the existing committees cease to exist, and recommendation 9 refers to funds currently held by existing committees which are going to be disbanded.

Mr HOBBS: I hope that that may help them in some way.

The interest on funds held is another aspect that people have spoken to me about. If there are funds in trust, basically earning interest, what happens to that interest? Who uses that interest? I understand that ministerial approval has to be obtained to use the interest on those funds. Would that be correct? Do honourable members opposite know?

Dr Flynn: At the moment?

Mr HOBBS: Will that change?

Mr Elder: We have recommended that in the report. We do not know whether the Government will implement that.

Mr HOBBS: So we do not know yet. We hope that it would change, but that is the position and that is also a worry for those people.

Another concern is that there are insurance companies that are insuring against people not having a subscription rather than not having ambulance cover. At the present moment, the Queensland Teachers Credit Union has a scheme which probably encourages people not to subscribe to the ambulance service. Those people can put out a few dollars and, if they get caught anywhere throughout Queensland, they are covered. I can understand why people would use that policy, and that is a concern in the marketplace.

Dr Flynn: The committee recognised that concern and addressed it in the recommendations.

Mr HOBBS: Okay.

Some of the smaller stations that I mentioned earlier, and probably even some of the bigger ones as well, would basically close down in the evening, probably after 5 p.m.

Dr Flynn: That is not in the report!

Mr HOBBS: No, but I am addressing the implications of that down the track. The report recommends a controller somewhere. There will be a phone system that will transfer on to the major centre and that call will be returned to the particular ambulance bearer, or whatever the case may be, if that person is there. However, if an ambulance officer is working 9 to 5, one can presume that after 5 p.m. he could be anywhere.

In remote locations it is very important to have an officer who has some knowledge of the local area. For instance, many properties have similar names. People talk about Springvale, Springdale and Springfield; they talk about Southhampton Downs, Sunny Downs, Stirling Downs and other properties that are located miles and miles apart. It is very easy for confusion to arise and for an ambulance officer to go in the wrong direction. I pass that concern of the local community on to honourable members. I believe that concern needs to be addressed if controllers are to send ambulances out to properties when they are not really sure where they are located, whereas local officers have an idea of the location of those properties. I am not sure whether this is correct, but I did hear that at present in Mackay a fireman is taking the ambulance calls. I hope that he is able to assist people with respect to emergency service advice over the telephone, as required.

I understand that, at present, there are 96 superintendent positions in Queensland and that those officers will be applying for approximately 28 positions that have been advertised nationwide. I wonder why we have not got enough officers in Queensland, especially with that number of superintendents? Surely Queensland has sufficiently qualified persons who understand the requirements of our ambulance services! I also understand that certain qualifications have been specified for those 28 positions advertised, that they will require a diploma in science and technology. I ask the question: in Queensland, how many of our superintendents have had the opportunity to gain those qualifications?

Earlier I mentioned the position in New South Wales. Perhaps the argument has been answered in that that State is not returning entirely to a regionalised system. Maybe it is, maybe it is not. However, I understand that the New South Wales system is returning basically to an area basis. To a certain degree, it will be a case of looking after the one area.

There are a couple of other quick points that I wish to make. The letter I received from Mitchell contains a summary that I would like to read because I believe it is very important in the general observations section. It states—

"The Mitchell Committee recognizes that some aspects researched in this Report may well fit reasonably comfortably within the metropolitan area however, it clearly fails to provide any specified relief for difficulties felt by rural areas established in obtaining the services of suitable personnel."

Dr Flynn: It will help them get staff at Mitchell.

Mr HOBBS: The honourable member does not live out there. One just cannot recruit those people.

Dr Flynn: I have been there.

Mr HOBBS: Let me finish this quote. It further states—

"I add that the Mitchell Centre has been trying for some six (6) months to obtain the services of a Senior Ambulance Officer in town. A recent call for the vacant Supervisor's position attracted no applications."

Dr Flynn: Our report will help that with a Statewide service, a career structure, a single employer and being able to send people from the neighbouring regional centre to work.

Mr HOBBS: We hope the honourable member is right. At present, the system is not working. I do not know whether that system will work. Time will tell.

Mr Sullivan: The current system has got Mitchell in trouble, not the system we are recommending. The system we are recommending overcomes that difficulty. I can't see how you can support their contention.

Mr HOBBS: I will be very surprised if the proposed system overcomes that problem. I am willing to give it a go. The honourable member has said that it will work. I am saying maybe it will not. The people are saying it will not work. That is what it is all about. I am passing on their point of view. The people of Blackall sent me a letter asking me to assure them that the report as it stands will not become legislation.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Peak Downs) (5.08 p.m.): Firstly, I express some degree of appreciation to all members of the committee because I believe they have tried to tackle a problem that is most difficult to solve. I do not think any of us will be totally happy with the final report. However, I might add that before the final report was ever envisaged, we were not happy, either. So we have had to get together to try to come up with a solution. My role today will be to give credit where it is due but at the same time point out some concerns of the people in the Central Highlands. I had always thought that having 96 committees represented a fair way in which to operate the ambulance service in Queensland, because those committees contained the expertise of local people, their enthusiasm and their general ability. In addition, they had the welfare of the particular area at heart.

Firstly, the committees were to be abolished. We are now led to believe that they will remain but they will have very little authority. I ask that all members in their deliberations ensure that these committees are not downgraded to the extent that they have little authority and still have to run chook raffles and so on. If that happens, the people who over the years have worked so hard on the better committees will simply give up; they will not remain there. Their positions on an ambulance committee could be taken by others who, for different reasons, may want to enhance their personal standing or whatever.

I turn now to the ambulance committees in the Central Highlands areas of Emerald and Clermont, which are in my electorate. I would like to congratulate ever so sincerely the members of those committees who have worked so hard. In fact, they have been excellent committees. Their efforts have resulted in the Central Highlands ambulance personnel in general being so enormously well accepted. I congratulate the superintendents, the bearers and, of course, those people who have been honorary bearers. I also compliment the community on its support and the support given to the ambulance service by the spouses of the ambulance workers. It has really been an enormously well-combined effort. The Central Highlands has had special difficulties with which to deal in that enormous expansion has been required to service the mining communities. Again, I pay tribute to the miners who have contributed very generously to the ambulance services provided. One little effort made by the Emerald ambulance committee was the placing of a subcentre in the Central Highlands gemfields. I can remember that, when I

first mooted that that should be done and that a health centre should be established in the gemfields, I was pooh-poohed largely by the Labor candidate in the last election. I won the seat. The establishment of that centre has proved to be a very, very successful move. Not only the outpatient centre but also the ambulance centre has been enormously well supported. To the people associated with those centres I pay a very special tribute.

Government members interjected.

Mr LESTER: I simply say to those members opposite who are trying to interject in a small way that those people are indeed triers who would expect the support of members opposite, not one or two of the inane remarks that I heard a moment ago. I point out that I said "one or two"; I did not include everybody opposite.

I believe that the suggestion of cutting the committees' authority is an insult to them. The Government has to either get rid of them altogether and take control of the lot or give them full authority to run the service. I do not believe it can be done by half-measures. It is a bit like the remarks made by the Minister for Transport who, when speaking about the toll road, said, "Some of you can pay and some of you can't." That did not really go over too well. There is still quite some confusion about that matter. If the Government is to abolish the committees and cut their authority, it has to ensure that it supplies them with full funding. The last thing we want to see is committees being cut out or their authority being taken away, yet still expect the community and the ambulance bearers to work hard to raise funds. The raising of funds is an issue that has to be addressed. It is not an easy issue to solve. It is probable that most members would have different opinions as to whether or not it should be done in a certain way.

If we are serious, there must be some form of compulsory funding. After all, an ambulance service provides a very important benefit to everyone. I am concerned that ambulance bearers and those who provide such good care during times of accidents and other instances are never repaid for what they do. The present funding system is not fair to some people. Although many people pay fees for ambulance services and support raffles conducted by ambulance committees, many people obtain the services free of charge.

Recently, organisations such as the Queensland Graingrowers Association and the Teachers Union have introduced health fund coverage for ambulance services. Therefore, they do not have to contribute directly to the operation of ambulance services. We cannot have our cake and eat it, too. We must bite the bullet and do something constructive and fair to all concerned. That is the good, old Rotary motto: is it fair to all concerned? Some form of compulsory funding is fair to all concerned. I am not sure whether that should involve a charge of \$30 per ambulance or a levy on each person. Great care would have to be taken when introducing a system of compulsory funding. Other compulsory funding set-ups such as Medicare and Medibank have not worked terribly well. People who contribute to Medicare must also contribute to a private health fund if they wish to obtain reasonable benefits in the event of their being unfortunate enough to be admitted to hospital. Medicare is not really working. To some extent the costs are blowing out. I am not necessarily blaming the Australian Government for that, because almost all over the world health-care costs have blown out. The very same situation could apply to the ambulance service. I ask the committee to consider seriously how the service is to be funded and how people will obtain value for their dollars.

Sometimes I get a little worried about public service groups that organise various functions. Some of them like to empire build and, before we know it, a large group of people is administering something that needs only a few people to administer it. Even if the ambulance service were contracted out to a private organisation, that could create problems. We will have to face that difficulty like good men and women.

I turn now to one group that has created a particular fund. I do not intend to be specific, because those people know what I am talking about. Miners in one particular

mining town contribute \$5 per week from their salaries to provide ambulance health-care type buildings in that town. I would have thought that that would be a trust set-up. I would not like to see that money taken away from those miners. We will have to deal with that problem. If the Government does take that money away from those miners, it will incur the wrath of the mining unions, just as it has incurred the wrath of the public service unions. However, the mining unions can be quite distinct in how they deal with problems. It could well be that those unions would withdraw their support from Labor members in mining towns.

Mr Smyth: They certainly withdrew their support from you.

Mr LESTER: I believe that I have stood the test of time with miners and have won on every occasion. Honourable members would be surprised by the extent of the support that I receive from them. Many people from Moranbah visit me because they are not too keen on talking to the member for Bowen. It seems that he is trying to deflect me from this important issue. I have tried to present this issue seriously and to give constructive, bipartisan support wherever necessary. At the same time, I have tried to point out some of the difficulties. Mr Speaker, I am sure you would agree that I have been fair to all members.

I hope that the regional set-up in Rockhampton works properly and does not forget the smaller centres. Members have been told that every ambulance centre in Queensland will remain. I do not intend to argue about that. However, over the years, every Government in Australia, including the Commonwealth Government, has guaranteed services such as this. However, when the economic hand has started to bite, those services have been removed. Approximately two years ago, the National Party State Government dared to become involved in the changing of some railway services. Mr Hamill, who was then the Opposition Transport spokesman, was most caustic of what that Government was doing. However, that Government was an amateur compared with what Mr Hamill is doing now.

The National Party does not receive many votes from country electorates. With an electoral redistribution, it will receive even fewer votes. Therefore, it will not matter much to the voting public whether the National Party lives or dies. It intends to live. The promise that has been made should very definitely be honoured.

I ask also that the Parliament work very, very hard on a redundancy package for those unfortunate superintendents and others who may not find it possible to continue with the system or who may not wish to continue with the system. An aged superintendent who has worked very well and very hard over a long period but does not have the qualifications for which the ambulance service currently advertises throughout Australia may feel ill at ease. Those people might decide to opt out of the system, and the outstanding and excellent service that they have given should not be forgotten. Parliament should not rush into this new education revolution, this technological, forward-planning type of advancement. We should allow the system to filter the changes. In other words, we should not cut the throats of the people who have served so well, so truly and for so long. Because they ran chook raffles, etc., they should not be regarded as menial persons. In fact, it showed their true character. It showed a definite dedication to the ambulance service and to the saving of lives. People such as old Charlie Fixter were out there selling tickets. He has since retired. He was so jolly good that people even took their pet dogs to him when they were hurt. He fixed them all.

Government members interjected.

Mr LESTER: That is an example of what happens in smaller towns. An ambulance officer gains the utmost respect of everybody. In relation to the comment that I made about pet dogs—those who tried to make fun of that comment should reflect on the difficulties faced by people who live in mining towns. Many of the women live there without their relatives, and particularly without their mothers. When a dog gets hurt, it is a big thing to them. There is no vet down the road as there is in the cities. Obviously, fellows such as Charlie Fixter did a lot of good work. However, he had his priorities

right and, if a human had a problem, I do not have to tell honourable members who received first preference. Those are the matters about which honourable members should not forget. I ask very, very sincerely that a redundancy package of the best possible order be given—not something simply to pay them off—

Mr Gibbs interjected.

Mr LESTER: I am not cruel to my dog. God help us. I often wonder about the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing. I hope that his sport is not kicking dogs or doing other things to dogs that I read about in the newspapers. I hope that he does not do anything that he should not be doing to greyhounds, either. I am sure that he is an honourable gentleman, and I am sure that he is now sorry that he dared to make a remark with an implication directed towards me.

Mr Gibbs: I withdraw.

Mr LESTER: That is the spirit of Parliament. That is great! Here we have a man who made a comment, I think seriously, realised his folly after it was explained to him and had the good nature and the manliness to withdraw it. I do not know what the Minister is doing now—flying kites. Perhaps he is looking for ministerial promotion. He would be flying a kite if he were looking for that. I know that I am not supposed to talk about promotions in the Government, because that seems to be a sensitive issue. I would not dare to go off the subject now because I might offend you, Mr Speaker.

Honourable members must consider very seriously the career structure of future ambulance officers. We must ensure that TAFE colleges, in conjunction with ambulance authorities, health authorities and other people who have relevant knowledge, set up suitable courses for Queensland's ambulance officers. The courses could be similar to those being undertaken by nurses. Full-time courses could be offered that would result ultimately in expertly qualified ambulance officers. At the same time, other courses should be offered that would enhance the expertise of serving officers. Let us not throw out those officers who do not have such a good education, who would be frightened of these courses but who, by sheer dedication and hard work, have done an outstanding job. Let us ensure that they are able to continue in the service and gain promotion. The changes do not have to be made in one hit. The new education and the new technology can be phased in. However, as with all tasks, people with practical experience are necessary. We sometimes go wrong when we introduce new technology but forget about the practical people.

Mr ELDER (Manly) (5.28 p.m.), in reply: I thank in particular the Ambulance Services Committee members for their contributions today. I felt that they dealt with the debate with the bipartisan approach that they have adopted during our time together on the committee. I am very appreciative of their support. I have found that none of the other members who have spoken in the debate has been able to find a factual flaw in the debate. I am very surprised at that. I personally do not believe that they have read the report.

Most of the questions that honourable members raised would have been easily answered if they had followed the report. Quite clearly, members have been pushing the cause of a small, deliberate campaign that is being conducted by some committees and which is being directed by one of the regional zonal representatives. He has been giving information out to those committees, and that campaign is alarmist and full of untruths. It has been causing some concern and distress in the community, particularly amongst subscribers. Some of these points have been raised today during this debate and I, for one, am at a loss to understand where these concerns have come from. They certainly have not come from the report.

Opposition members have referred to top positions in the service being filled by southern candidates. I cannot recall anywhere in the report where we have suggested that, yet Opposition members make that implication. I am sure that officers in the Queensland service would be disappointed with the approach of these committee members

and that zonal representative. Opposition members talked about the Government establishing a southern hierarchy. I cannot recall recommending that in the report, nor can any other committee member. I am surprised that it has been raised again.

Opposition members referred to the New South Wales system and Queensland going back to that system. That is another untruth. The only change that has taken place in the New South Wales system—and I think this was mentioned by the member for Glass House—was that that State has gone back to a central board. That is the only change. Some comment was made about fund-raising in New South Wales and how the money was stripped from the communities after it was raised and sent back to the central authority. That is not the case either. The simple fact is that the funds are raised and held in a central trust. They are held in a separate ledger for the communities, and the way it would operate in Queensland would be no different.

The member for Mirani talked about honoraries. I think that I and other members of the committee explained the honorary position quite clearly during our speeches. We did say that we recognised the role, and that it was a valuable one. At the time, the only thing that concerned us was the fact that voluntary workers are providing essential services in these areas. We were concerned about the level of training and support that those officers actually had. We have not recommended that they should be stopped immediately, which is the implication that has been made today by some members of the Opposition. In its report the committee recommended—

"The honorary ambulance officer system should be phased out gradually as target staffing levels for permanent fully qualified officers are achieved."

None of the honorary centres, including the ones mentioned by the members of the Opposition today, will be closed as a result of the implementation of this recommendation. That speaks for itself. Opposition members obviously have not read the report. The recommendation goes on to state—

"For as long as honorary officers continue to carry out an operational role in the ambulance service, training to the level of the preparatory stage or equivalent should be required prior to 'on-road' work being undertaken."

In other words, the committee is saying that it recognises the problem and these officers' operational ability should be enhanced. That will give the people living in rural centres a better service than the one they presently have.

Mr Ardill: All positive stuff.

Mr ELDER: It is all positive, and I am amazed that Opposition members have not read the report. Had they done so, I would not have to try to correct some of the inaccuracies that they have delivered.

The member for Mirani also mentioned the St Lawrence centre and the fact that it was a great honorary centre. The fact is that St Lawrence wants a permanent service. The member for Broadsound knows that because the Broadsound Shire Council and the community have written, asking for a permanent service. They want to move away from the honorary system and enhance their service. They do not want to retract on it.

A few members of the Opposition—and I will try to cover the points as best I can—referred to the directorate being expensive. I do not believe that it will be any more expensive than the present QASB system that is in place. All that will happen is that they will change roles and no extra expense will be involved. At some stage the member for Cunningham stated that he was prepared to support community committees to the hilt. If he does so, all I can say is that he is prepared to compromise patient care, because that is what is being compromised under the present system. He is prepared to compromise patient care instead of looking at the real problems within the service. I am sure that at no time has the honourable member looked at the problems within the service in his electorate. I know he has not read the report because, if he had done so, he would not have brought a number of those points forward. He went on to say that the parliamentary committee itself could be considered centralist. I am sure that his

colleagues who have put forward this unanimous report do not consider themselves to be centralist. We undertook the task with an open mind and the recommendations are based on serving the best interests of Queenslanders as we see them. I am sure his colleagues were very disappointed that he painted them as centralists or socialists, although I am not.

The member for Gympie followed the same rhetoric that was delivered earlier. Obviously he read the same material that has come through these committees. He said that at the moment ambulance officers' morale was at its lowest point. I assure him that after this report was released ambulance officers' morale became quite buoyant. In fact, ambulance officers around the State have contacted all members of this committee congratulating them on the substance of the report. I can counter that statement from personal experience. All the honourable member needs to do is visit the centres in his electorate and ask those ambulance officers what they feel about the report, and he will get the true answer on it.

Mr Foley: They were in transports of delight.

Mr ELDER: I certainly would not have put it that way, but I know Mr Foley would. I appreciate the comment. The member for Gympie also referred to two-officer call-outs and the response that was needed in backing up that service. The committee saw that as a problem, but it was not prepared to compromise its position on it. I repeat: at the end of the day, patient care is compromised if short-cuts are taken. In its recommendations the committee was not prepared to take short-cuts and believes that all emergency responses should be two-officer call-outs.

The member for Warrego referred to honoraries. I have addressed that matter and my colleagues the member for Toowoomba North and the member for Glass House have straightened out the member for Warrego on that matter. The honourable member made the comment that it was difficult to attract qualified staff into the western regions. That is one of the biggest pitfalls in the present service. It is difficult, and we recognise that. The only way to address that matter is to do so in a regionalised form so that the problem can be overcome by permanent officers being released after being rostered into those areas. The problem is that there is a shortage in those regions and the committee realises that the people who will benefit most from the reforms and recommendations are those living in rural communities. If they do not benefit by extra staff, they will benefit through the extra training of officers in advanced life-support skills. People in the rural areas require that support more so than people living in the cities. We are very close to definitive care. We are very close to hospitals, but people living in the bush are not. In rural sectors there is a need for officers who are fully trained and have advanced life-support skills to ensure that patients in Queensland are delivered to hospitals in a far better condition than they are at present.

One of the committee's many concerns related to the aspect of training. Members of the committee appreciated the points that were raised by officers in the west. They said that, at present, because they feel that they cannot deliver the service that is required, they are pining for the types of training techniques and protocols that have been mentioned.

I will not restate the position in relation to trust funds. I simply advise honourable members to read the recommendations contained in the report. In that way, they will understand implicitly what the committee means when it states that there will be a transfer of trust funds. All those centres that are recipients of bequests will have the money spent in that particular centre, along with other trust funds that apply to the region. I believe those concerns have been addressed in the recommendations.

All that I can say about the member for Peak Downs is that I have appreciated his constructive and bipartisan support during the debate. He said that the Government should not rush into forward planning. He advocated the use of increased education and strategic planning. I do not think that Queensland has rushed anywhere for the last 32 years, and it is about time that this State showed a spurt in relation to ambulance

services. However, I still hope that the member's local ambulance officer will look after his pooch when his pooch is in some difficulty. I would hate to see that service being withdrawn.

As I said earlier in the debate, all the committee ever set out to do and all it perceived as its main objective was ensuring that the people of Queensland, wherever they may live and regardless of where they live, will have a service that is accessible to all and at a uniformly high standard.

Motion agreed to.

BRISBANE CRICKET GROUND ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (5.39 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to amend the Brisbane Cricket Ground Act 1958-1986 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr De Lacy, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (5.40 p.m.): I move—

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

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the Brisbane Cricket Ground Act in certain respects. This is necessary to simplify the various commercial arrangements entered into by Suncorp Insurance and Finance and the Brisbane Cricket Ground Trust over the course of their long business association. This relationship has seen Suncorp fund the major rehabilitation of the Gabba in the mid-1970s as well as the trust's day-to-day operations. By the very ongoing nature of this relationship, arrangements have evolved in an unduly complicated manner and need to be rationalised. Moreover, in view of the statutory nature of the trust, there is a need for certain transactions to be finalised through legislation. The Government has closely reviewed the restructuring proposal put forward by Suncorp and the trust, and is satisfied that there are no financial implications for the Government or, for that matter, the public at large.

From this brief overview of the matter, members can see that the proposal is not a contentious one. Let me expand somewhat on the three issues involved in the overall financial restructure. Each is in some way connected with the decision taken in the mid-1970s to rehabilitate the Gabba. The first involves the construction of the Clem Jones stand and the Gabba Greyhound Racing Club area. This was known as the commercial lands project and was financed by Suncorp under a long-term commercial borrowing arrangement. At that time, the trust had no power under the Act to grant a mortgage over its assets as security for the loan. To get around this problem in the time available, the parties agreed that Suncorp would instead be given title to the commercial lands for a minimum period of 40 years. It is now proposed to amend the Act to give the trust the statutory power to mortgage its assets. Of course, this only puts the trust on a normal commercial footing. The amount outstanding on this project, along with other smaller loans, can then be consolidated into a new loan of approximately \$1.5m. This would be secured under a single mortgage facility. It is important to note that Suncorp will have no greater claim against the trust than it already had under the previous arrangement. However, it will now be in a different form—a mortgage over the trust's assets in general, rather than title to specific assets.

The second issue flows from the first. As soon as this new security arrangement is in place, it will no longer be necessary for Suncorp to hold title to the commercial lands. That title can therefore be returned to the trust. This also requires an amendment to the Act.

The third issue involves the construction of the Gabba Towers building in Vulture Street. As part of the overall financing arrangements, the parties agreed that a 2 500 square metre parcel of trust land would be sold to Suncorp to enable the construction of Gabba Towers. This land was not required by the trust at that time for its normal operations; nor was it seen to be of strategic value for future development for cricket ground purposes. In those circumstances, the trust was empowered under the Act to seek approval from the Governor in Council to sell the land. The transfer price was set by the Valuer-General and was based on a commercial market valuation. Although the trust received consideration for this land in 1976, the transfer of title has not yet been completed. Nevertheless, the parties have acted on the understanding that the deal was conclusive and binding. It is only a matter of history that they have never taken the final step of requesting that the transfer be formalised by legislative amendment.

In conclusion, let me say that I am sure that members will agree that the proposals are reasonably straightforward and not contentious in any way. They simply involve either a tidying-up or a simplification of past commercial arrangements entered into by the trust and Suncorp. They have no financial implications for the Government and in no way change the relationship between the parties involved.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

SUPERANNUATION (MISCELLANEOUS ACTS) AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (5.45 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to amend miscellaneous Acts relating to superannuation."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr De Lacy, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (5.46 p.m.): I move—

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

The purpose of this Bill is to introduce amendments of an administrative nature to the superannuation schemes of Queensland Crown employees and members of Parliament.

The amendments are required—

to provide an option for existing members of the State Service Superannuation Scheme to transfer to the new State Public Sector Superannuation Scheme, which is referred to as Q Super;

to overcome an anomaly in the Commonwealth superannuation taxation legislation which results in certain superannuation moneys in the Queensland Government schemes being doubly taxed;

to ensure that the superannuation funds comply with Commonwealth superannuation standards regulations thus obviating taxation penalties;

to provide an option for industrial commissioners to forgo entitlements under the judges' pension scheme in favour of joining Q Super; and

to facilitate the administration of the schemes in consequence of the imposition of Commonwealth regulatory requirements and the establishment of Q Super.

Under the amendments proposed, persons in the State Service Superannuation Scheme will have a period, to be prescribed by Order in Council, in which they can elect to transfer to the Q Super scheme. The trustees of Q Super have recommended a six month transfer period from 1 July to 31 December this year.

Q Super was established after detailed negotiations with public sector unions and has been welcomed by Government employees. Q Super provides all employees, including those who resign before retirement age, with a share of the Government's superannuation contributions. Previously, members who resigned and who took their own contributions out of the State service scheme lost their entitlement to Government subsidy. Q Super therefore represents a significant improvement in benefits for these people by ensuring that the Government contribution is preserved for them for their eventual retirement from the work force. This has been achieved without increasing the per member cost of superannuation through efficiency of scheme design.

As provided in the Bill, the transfer to Q Super will be voluntary. It is planned that all State Service Superannuation Scheme members be provided with a personalised comparison statement to assist them in making their decision of whether to remain in their existing scheme or to transfer to Q Super.

Amendments to the parliamentary, State service, public employees portability and State public sector superannuation Acts are required to enable the Crown proportion of a benefit to be paid to the member directly from consolidated revenue rather than through the superannuation funds. Where the money is paid through the superannuation funds as currently, it can, by an anomaly in the income taxation legislation, be subject to double taxation.

Changes are proposed to the State service, police and parliamentary schemes to reflect Commonwealth Government requirements. These schemes will not be allowed to pay a pension benefit that the Commonwealth declares is excessive. The Commonwealth regulations require that the excess amount of pension must be converted to a lump sum and paid to the beneficiary. Provisions are contained in the Bill to require the trustees of the scheme to comply with the determinations of the Commonwealth Insurance and Superannuation Commission in this regard. The Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act must be amended in a further respect to ensure compliance with Commonwealth regulations.

These regulations provide that, with effect from 1 July 1990, concessional taxed superannuation funds are forbidden from receiving contributions from members who are over the age of 65 years, unless the person had attained 60 years of age at 1 July 1990, in which case contributions must not continue beyond the age of 70 years.

To ensure that the parliamentary contributory superannuation fund is not taxed at penalty rates, a provision is included whereby members over the ages prescribed pay their personal contributions to the Treasurer for credit to the Consolidated Revenue Fund and, on cessation, these persons will receive a larger proportion of their benefit from that fund. The overall benefit levels, however, will not be changed.

Industrial commissioners will also have the opportunity of joining Q Super. Presently, industrial commissioners appointed from outside Government service are provided with entitlements under the judges' pension scheme. Commissioners appointed from within the Government, however, already have the option of maintaining membership of the State Service Superannuation Scheme or coming under the judges' pension arrangements. Because career moves are now more common, the judges' pension scheme, which provides benefits only if the minimum retirement age of 60 is attained, is not always appropriate. The proposed amendment to the Industrial Relations Act will allow all new appointees as commissioners from outside Government service three months in which to forgo the

judges' pension scheme benefits in order to join Q Super. Existing industrial commissioners currently covered under the judges' pension scheme will have a similar three-month option from the commencement of the proposed Act.

Other minor provisions in the Bill include—

an amendment to remove the now unnecessary barrier which forbids current members of the State service scheme who are employees of the Agent-General's Office in London from having the right to elect to take a lump-sum benefit in lieu of pension;

a provision to bring the boards of the three major Government employees' schemes—State Super, Gosuper and Q Super—which have a common membership basis, into line;

the transfer of the day-to-day administration of the police scheme from the Police Department to the Government Superannuation Office to allow that scheme to take advantage of the Government Superannuation Office's computerised administration systems—the existing police superannuation board will continue to be responsible for the administration of the Act;

a means by which the rates of interest paid on benefits by the State service and police schemes can be established on a longer term, smoothed basis rather than being determined annually. This will overcome sharp fluctuations in interest rates;

the insertion of a general provision to cover the cases of persons who, following the transfer of a function of the Queensland Crown to another Government or body, are transferred from Queensland Government service. The Governor in Council, by Order in Council, will set the necessary provisions either for the member to remain in the State Service Superannuation Scheme or for the member's transfer to another superannuation scheme.

The amendments proposed in the Bill will generally apply from the date of royal assent, other than the amendment to the parliamentary scheme in respect of the ages of members contributing, which must apply from 1 July 1990 to meet Commonwealth regulations; and the provision to transfer the administration of the police scheme to the Government Superannuation Office, which will occur on a date to be proclaimed, after necessary procedures have been determined.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

RACING AND BETTING ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Wolston—Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (5.52 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to amend the Racing and Betting Act 1980-1990 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Gibbs, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Wolston—Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (5.53 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill has been generated as a result of valid concerns from within the racing industry about the depleted number of book-makers operating on Queensland racetracks.

It is the Government's intention to reduce pressure on book-makers and improve their viability by reducing the overall cost of book-making. This will be achieved by abolishing betting tax and the club levy and reducing book-makers' turn-over tax to one per cent. Abolition of tax on betting tickets issued by book-makers will result in an annual saving to book-makers of about \$110,000. The reduction in book-makers' turn-over tax will save them \$1.5m and the elimination of the club levy paid by book-makers will save \$3m.

These measures will ensure that book-makers are better able to compete with the totalisator by offering more competitive prices, and consequently their numbers may increase. The racegoing public will be the ultimate beneficiary, which in turn will increase attendances at tracks, thereby benefiting the industry as a whole. Book-makers are an integral part of the racing industry in this country and a colorful feature of race meetings. The Government accepts that, in the short term, there will be some loss to clubs. However, the reduction in the book-makers' tax is part of a wider series of initiatives by this Government which will build a stronger racing industry and stronger race clubs.

Already, the TAB has made the far-sighted commercial decision to purchase radio station 4IP for \$1.6m. The TAB estimates it can operate the station at a considerable saving to the amount at present paid to radio station 4BC. That station accounts for the great majority of the \$3m the TAB at present pays for radio broadcasts. I am confident that, within 12 months, the TAB will broadcast Statewide for the first time, another initiative which will boost turn-over and in turn be reflected in the amount of money distributed back among the racing industry.

As the Government will no longer be collecting the betting ticket tax, it is no longer necessary for the Government to be the sole provider of the tickets. It is proposed the Government Printer will continue to print the tickets on a commercial basis but that office will not necessarily have a monopoly to do so.

Debate, on motion of Mr Veivers, adjourned.

ADOPTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. A. M. WARNER (South Brisbane—Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) (5.56 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to amend certain Acts in relation to the adoption of children, and for related purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Ms Warner, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. A. M. WARNER (South Brisbane—Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) (5.57 p.m.): I move—

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

The Adoption of Children Act Amendment Act 1990 was passed by this Parliament in May 1990. It provided unqualified access to identifying information for birth parents and adult adoptees after 1 March 1991. It also provided for those people to lodge an objection to contact by their birth relative.

The provisions of the Act have caused much public comment, and the Government has decided to make some further amendments to the Adoption of Children Act. In particular, many people have expressed fear and distress over the possible disruption caused by contact with, or release of information to, a birth relative. While overseas and interstate experience leads me to believe these fears are baseless, Government cannot

ignore them and must respond to the distress that is being experienced. These further amendments to the Adoption of Children Act, then, should redress public concern over the balance between the right to information and the right to privacy.

This Bill provides that adult adopted persons and birth parents may either lodge an objection to contact and to the disclosure of identifying information to their birth relative or they may lodge an objection to contact only. Further, where the initial amendment provided that an objection should last for a period of up to five years unless revoked, this amendment allows any objection to stand indefinitely unless revoked by the person who lodged the objection.

My department will, at the expressed wishes of persons lodging an objection, be prepared to pass on any non-identifying information to that person's birth relative, including the reasons why an objection was lodged. Additionally, my department will, again at the request of people lodging objections, be prepared to advise that person when their birth relative applies for identifying information. These arrangements have been made at the request of many birth parents and adult adopted people.

An amendment to the Adoption of Children Amendment Regulations 1990 will follow, and this will remove the requirement for objectors to pay an administrative fee of \$50 on lodgment of their objection. Those objections to contact that have already been lodged will remain valid and any fees paid will be refunded in full. Those seeking information will be required to pay a \$50 fee. However, if their birth relative has lodged an objection to the release of the information, that information will not be released and the \$50 fee will be refunded in full.

Identifying information will now become available on 1 June 1991. This will provide persons affected with a further three months in which to lodge objections, if they so wish. Objections to the release of identifying information will be able to be lodged as soon as the necessary forms have been printed.

Honourable members, adoption legislation is a complex area, and so to ensure there can be no misunderstandings I would like to outline what these changes will mean for those concerned. Adopted persons will, from 1 June, be able to apply for identifying information about themselves. This identifying information will include the name and the date of birth of their birth parent; under certain circumstances, the names and dates of birth of birth relatives; and a certified copy of their original certificate. This information will be disclosed to the adopted persons unless their birth parents have objected to the disclosure of identifying information.

From 1 June, birth parents can also apply for identifying information about their adult adopted sons or daughters. For birth parents identifying information means the name, after adoption, of their adult sons or daughters, the name at the time of adoption of the adoptive parents, a certified copy of the original birth entry, and a certified copy of the amended birth entry. This information will be disclosed to the birth parent unless the adopted person has objected to the release of the identifying information. Both birth parents and adult adopted persons, from 1 June, will be able to lodge either an objection to contact or an objection to the release of information as well as to contact. There will be no cost associated with the lodging of objections.

Parties who have obtained identifying information through the department and knowingly breach an objection to contact will be subject to the penalty provisions; that is a \$6,000 fine or two years' imprisonment. The Government believes that these further amendments will effectively balance the right of privacy of birth parents and adult adoptees with their rights to information.

Debate, on motion of Mr Slack, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Attorney-General) (6.02 p.m.): I move—
"That the House do now adjourn."

ALP St Patrick's Day Lucky Door Prize

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (6.02 p.m.): I take this opportunity to bring to the notice of the Parliament a most important matter, that being the conduct of an illegal art union by the Australian Labor Party. On 16 March this year, the Australian Labor Party will be holding a giant St Patrick's Day party at the venue known as Friday's at the Riverside. There will be a lucky door prize of a return trip for two to Europe, including Ireland. The ALP intends to sell somewhat more than 33 000 tickets in this lucky door prize, which clearly indicates that it is indeed an art union and not a lucky door prize. The advertising material unabashedly states that one can be eligible to win the lucky door prize simply by purchasing a ticket in it. A purchaser does not have to attend the party in order to win the prize. Further, printed on the butts of the tickets is an important message that states—

"Tick the box. If attending party, separate admission ticket will be posted."

It also states that the winner will be notified by mail.

There can be no doubt that the Australian Labor Party does not qualify under the Art Unions and Amusements Act 1976-1988 as an organisation which may be authorised to conduct an art union. It is therefore patently obvious that the Australian Labor Party has quite openly and arrogantly chosen to flout the law and run a major art union with the potential to raise some \$350,000 under the thin disguise of a door prize to a barbecue. So arrogant indeed is this action that the promoter of this illegal art union is Mr Greg Moran, State organiser of the Australian Labor Party, and the telephone number which is the contact number for the issue of further tickets is the headquarters of the Australian Labor Party.

One must now question the role of the Premier in this sordid, illegal affair. The Premier is a practising solicitor and must therefore be aware of the law pertaining to the conduct of art unions. It stretches credibility to suggest that the Premier would not have known of such a major undertaking by his political party. I question why the Premier, in his position of the most senior member of the Australian Labor Party in this State, did not counsel his party against this action, and why he did not indeed veto the whole idea as patently illegal. His lack of action therefore smacks of arrogance and corruption in Government.

For the information of this Parliament, I table photocopies of tickets for the lucky door prize and advertising material for the Labor Party's giant St Patrick's Day party. Tomorrow, I will be contacting the Director-General of the Department of Justice with a complaint against the Australian Labor Party in this matter, and I will be requesting that he investigate this matter with a view to the prosecution of officers of the Australian Labor Party and any other person who is concerned in the matter.

Whereupon the honourable member laid the documents on the table.

Closure of McDonnell and East Store in Rockhampton

Mr SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton North) (6.06 p.m.): Tonight, I rise in the Adjournment debate to bring to the attention of the House what I believe was the scurrilous and underhanded attitude taken by the company of McDonnell and East in closing down its Rockhampton operations. It is pleasing to see that the member who represents the area of Warwick is also in the Chamber tonight.

Mr FitzGerald: And Toowoomba.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes. It is pleasing to see that both those gentlemen are here tonight. I invite them to agree with me when I say that this is probably one of the greatest underhanded efforts that has ever been put together by a company that has hitherto had a pretty good name in this State.

The citizens of Rockhampton learnt of the closure of their McDonnell and East store via the local paper, *The Morning Bulletin*, in an article on 31 December last written by Alex Wake. The opening remarks in that article state—

"About 80 full-time and part-time staff were sacked after a shock decision by McDonnell & East to close its Rockhampton store on the weekend.

The chain's managing director, Mr Brian Beirne, visited the city to announce the closure of the Rockhampton store, as well as those in Toowoomba, Warwick and Southport.

...

Only last week McDonnell & East put an advertising feature in *The Morning Bulletin*, saying the chain had been accepted well by Rockhampton shoppers."

The way that the Rockhampton shoppers were repaid for their loyalty in supporting that company was to have it taken away from them.

Not only did it cost the city 80 pay packets of 80 loyal employees—many of those employees, by the way, being people who had given up secure jobs to work for McDonnell and East because they prided themselves on such a great company name—but also the company that built the Rockhampton Shopping Fair where the store was sited had been more than generous in throwing out some support to McDonnell and East to come to Rockhampton. For a start, the company concerned fitted out the shop at a cost of some \$3m, and it did so in return for a 20-year lease. A local firm, J. M. Kelly's, built the Shopping Fair in Rockhampton, and it is a credit to that local business that it is the success that it is. I can well understand Jeff Murphy, who is the principal of that company, coming into an arrangement such as that because he thought 20 years down the track would be enough incentive to have any company stay there; he put the \$3m up only to be smacked in the face with it. It was not as if the company gave any sort of notice to those people concerned. On the Saturday morning, the henchman Beirne arrived in Rockhampton and told the company director, a gentleman by the name of Good, that it was, "Goodnight Irene, close the doors; we will be closing them at 12 o'clock today. Tell the staff the carnival is over." That was virtually the message that he conveyed to those people.

Mr Livingstone: It is disgraceful.

Mr SCHWARTEN: It is disgraceful. That is the sort of notice that was given to those people. That is the loyalty that was reciprocated by the company.

Mr Heath: The directors of McDonnell and East are so careless about this that they said in the paper they had no idea how many people they were putting out of work.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I take that interjection. I have heard that story before. They did not have any care about it. One of the principals of that company, John Gibbs, assured me that it was not his decision but that the banks had actually told the company that they would not extend it any more credit. What a shocking accusation to make against his own company. As far as I am concerned, that is a matter for McDonnell and East. However, I am most concerned about the way in which it was done. The people involved literally worked their insides out over Christmas. As I understand it, the shops returned very good profits over the Christmas period. On the Friday before, the people were told by Mr Good that the company was having a few distressing problems but that, with a bit of hard work, it would all be ironed out. One can well understand the frustration, the upset and the disappointment of those workers who the next day were told to get out of the building.

The local members, including the Mayor, Jim Webber, and Keith Wright, tried to salvage something out of the situation. They had a meeting with John Gibbs and he advised them that nothing could be done. I tried to assist Mr Gibbs by putting him in contact with the QIDC. To this date, he has not got back to me. That shows how fair dinkum he is in trying to resolve this problem.

Time expired.

Poker Machines

Mr VEIVERS (Southport) (6.09 p.m.): This House will soon debate the introduction of poker machines to clubs and pubs throughout the State. I will be having plenty to say when the legislation comes in, but I am afraid that I have to jump the gun a bit today. I have to do that because of the garbage I heard on Nick Bosley's program on the ABC yesterday morning. I could not believe it when I heard Mr Colin Lamont paraded as some sort of do-gooder pleading the case for all the licensed clubs belonging to his association--a simple servant of the clubs looking to see that they get what is best for them. What rubbish! Mr Lamont is no more impartial in this debate than the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing. They both have pretty big reasons for wanting the pokies up and running as fast as possible. For the Minister, it is milking a bit more money out of the people of Queensland to pay for Labor's big spending. For Mr Lamont, it is delivering what his masters demand. I am not referring to his masters in the licensed clubs, because he does not work for them. I am talking about his masters in the poker machine industry. That is who he is working for, and that is who he has been working for all along. I know it, the Minister knows it, the clubs know it and the public should know it. Colin Lamont does not represent clubs. There is no way that he is a disinterested spectator in the pokies debate. Colin Lamont represents the push by sections of the poker machine industry to get on the gravy train the Minister is hoping to provide.

Do not take my word for it; take the word of the Criminal Justice Commission. It knows a bit about what goes on. In its report, the CJC said about Lamont and the Registered and Licensed Clubs Association—

"Lamont, while president of the RLCA was paid an amount of \$30,000 by the Ainsworth organisation. Lamont states that this money was in respect of a consultancy, that it was declared to the Taxation Commissioner and the RLCA, and that the RLCA saw no conflict of interest.

An analysis of the newspaper Club News and public statements made by or contributed to Lamont raises the question of whether it is the poker machine lobby and in particular Ainsworth that is being represented rather than licensed clubs."

Of course, the CJC is not too popular with the Labor Government right now, and it is a bit too enthusiastic about a certain investigation. Never mind, it did a pretty fair job when it had a look at the pokies industry and the people in it. The Labor Party was not too fussed about that report. Maybe that was because of what it said about a few people. In fact, the Criminal Justice Commission made pretty clear what the Labor Party already knew. Mr Lamont's association is not a group representative of the licensed clubs of this State. It is nothing more than a privately registered business name. Its purpose is to represent one section of the poker machine industry. It operates from Mr Lamont's home and it represents Lamont and probably Len Ainsworth of Aristocrat and Caspalp fame. Government members who have been around for a while will remember them all. Ainsworth is the one who slipped the Australian Labor Party \$30,000 through a slush fund called Caspalp. I am sure we all remember the Premier agreeing in the House last year that Caspalp probably stood for Casey, pokies and the ALP—you bet it did!

Of course, Ainsworth did not pay up on bodge invoices out of any sense of charity. Maybe his associates convinced him that the then Opposition Leader and the ALP were about to win an election. Maybe he thought they would deliver a nice, new earner for the Aristocrat company. It seems a bit of a coincidence that Ainsworth, Lamont and a Mr Ted Vibert were in contact with the then Opposition Leader around the time Caspalp got lucky. That was also when the ALP swallowed the pokie lobby's claim that there was heaps of revenue in the one-armed bandits. Now, isn't that odd! Well, the Minister for pokies is still talking big numbers about the benefits and Mr Lamont is still hanging around this end of town. He is not coming down here to see the Opposition, that is for sure. He has hated the National Party ever since he lost his seat in this

House. He is probably not coming here to see the Liberals, either, because they did not find him another seat he could win. He is probably here to keep an eye on the legislation that this Government plans to pass very soon—the legislation that will expose the people of Queensland to all the misery pokies can cause. The public purse will not benefit much. There are only so many gambling dollars to go around. But the ALP will have delivered on that long-ago promise and the poker machine industry will get fat on the millions that the Government will spend buying machines.

That is not what Mr Lamont and the Government are saying, of course. To listen to them, we can all give up work and sit back. The Government and the clubs will be able to look after us all with the massive largess the pokies will make possible. Mr Lamont's joy knew no bounds when Labor took office. Within a few short weeks, the *Sunday Mail* had so many quotes from him that it needed most of the front page to print them. There was no Criminal Justice Commission reporting uncomfortable findings; no mention of an ALP slush fund; no backflips over how to handle the pitiful victims of poker machines. There will be no bonanza for most of the clubs and there will be very little for the pubs which install poker machines. Mr Lamont knows that, but he is still running around promising. That is what he is paid to do. It is what he has been paid to do for a very long time. It is his job to make sure that Labor in Queensland comes through for the poker machine industry.

Rail Services to Pinkenba

Mr HEATH (Nundah) (6.14 p.m.): It appears that the member for Southport is practising to call the horse races instead of the football. Tonight, I intend to talk about trains. For many years, residents along the Pinkenba train line, which runs through my electorate in the suburbs of Clayfield, Hendra and Ascot and continues on to Hamilton and Doomben, have tolerated a passenger service that has possibly been adequate but has caused regular complaints about its lack of frequency.

Virtually immediately following the December 1989 election I began to receive calls from residents asking whether more train services could be run. Although those requests never reached plague proportions, they have been very regular, very steady and consistent ever since. In response to early requests, in December 1989 I asked Queensland Railways to perform a study to ascertain whether increased services were necessary. Its method on that occasion was to weigh the numbers of passengers using the existing services against the cost of running those services. The conclusion was that extra services were unjustified. However, the requests received by my office did not cease. It seemed to me that that method of survey did not spread far enough to obtain an indication from the surrounding community of the numbers of people who would use the trains if more services were available at commonly required or requested times.

The upshot of all that was that in October 1990 I distributed to letterboxes in about one-quarter of my electorate a survey asking, in essence, whether residents would use the trains if there were more services and at what times and days they would like extra services to be run. A very large response was received to that survey. Sixty per cent of the respondents who said that they did not now use the trains said that they would use them if the service on the Pinkenba line was improved. My office collated a wealth of statistics from the surveys and forwarded a substantial submission to the Minister for Transport. I have had long discussions with officials from Queensland Railways. The outcome of all that is that I can now announce a two-month trial of extra electric passenger train services on the Pinkenba line beginning on 4 March. The times and days for the new train services are closely aligned with those most requested by residents in the survey. The two most requested changes were a Monday to Friday later evening service to assist workers returning home from the city and a Sunday service. For some years there have been no passenger trains on the line on Sundays. The trial will provide four trains on Sundays to allow local residents to travel to the city to shop or to attend whatever leisure activities they wish to undertake. I stress that there will be no changes to the current services or timetable during the trial. All the trial services are in addition

to the currently operating trains. Of course, the trial must be a success if the services are to be continued on a permanent basis. I have again written to all residents in my electorate. Queensland Railways has agreed to publicise the trial in the press and on the trains and stations themselves.

One of the reasons that I have advanced to urge residents to use the trains—and I was very pleased that it was mentioned many times on the surveys that were returned to me—is the environmental advantages of electric train travel compared with motor vehicle use in cities. That it was mentioned so often on the surveys shows that people are well aware of suburban pollution problems including vehicle exhaust emissions, noise, congestion and the use of oil-based products during a time of uncertainty of oil supplies. Electric trains are faster than cars on the journey from my electorate to the city centre. They are air-conditioned, comfortable and much easier to park than a car.

I thank the Minister for Transport and Queensland Railways for their agreement in getting this far. I hope that the trial will be a success and that, in the future, residents near the Pinkenba train line will be able to enjoy an enhanced rail service.

Abused Child Trust

Mr SLACK (Burnett) (6.19 p.m.): Last week, all honourable members received a letter from the Abused Child Trust which included a brief outline of the work undertaken by the trust. On page 7 of the *Sunday Sun* of 17 February 1991, there appeared a report that the charity has collapsed and is being taken over by the Government. Following that report, I rang the Director for Clinical Services, Beverley Fitzgerald, who, I understand, is an officer of the Family Services Department, and made arrangements to visit Contact House, where I spoke with staff who are both employed and voluntary. I also visited the offices at Argyle Place, Breakfast Creek. The office was well appointed. Consequently, I felt that the trust must have been doing very well to be able to afford such offices. However, I was to learn that the trust had been given a three-year lease of the premises free of charge. The secretary who met me was unemployed and had voluntarily donated her time on a full-time basis, which is to be commended.

Many donations have been made to the trust by industry, service organisations and people—both professional and others—who have expertise and have given willingly of their time for a very worthwhile cause. In the past, the Government has also been prepared to contribute in a limited way. Recently, the trust has run into trouble with funding, which could largely be attributed to the present economic conditions. There is no doubt that its problems are not due to mismanagement or lack of commitment on the part of its personnel.

Recently, two officers from the Family Services Department conducted extensive investigations and, at the end of the day, indicated to the executive of the board their support of the trust's achievements. They indicated quite clearly that they believed that there was no further avenue for the clinical program or the organisational structure to be trimmed. They found the whole operation to be efficient and effectively run.

In mid-1990, the trust realised that it would be facing financial difficulties. It provided a full submission to the Premier and requested assistance. One can imagine its dismay when it read the report in the *Sunday Sun*, in which the Premier stated—

"It is unacceptable to have a private organisation demanding \$350,000 on 48 hours' notice and threatening to turn their clients into the street if the Government doesn't jump."

That statement placed a slight on the professionalism of the people operating and supporting the trust, when the evidence clearly shows that the Premier's claim is not correct. The statement that "this organisation is well meaning but from its commencement has been unable to manage its own affairs or keep to a budget" was also considered to be grossly unfair. The material as presented to me does not support the Premier's statement.

Although donations have not met all operating costs, the contributions from private sources have been substantial. Those funds have helped the centre to operate at a minimum cost to Government. If the trust closed down, that voluntary contribution in time, finance and donations of many kinds will be lost. Approximately 5 800 man-hours were given in one area alone. There is no doubt that the direct and indirect cost to Government to look after the families and children now being catered for by the trust will be much higher for this Government if the amount of money and the assistance that the trust is asking for is not forthcoming and the trust folds.

To me, it is a tragedy that the Government, per the press report, has declined to support the trust. The question that should be asked is: why? Why was the Premier so offhand and unsympathetic in his comments? To add insult to injury, the press report acted as a notice of closure to the trust. Surely, that is not the way in which a caring Government that is committed to socially just causes should act. What happens to the children and parents who gain assistance through the trust, over half of whom have been referred to the trust by Government agencies? In reality, the Department of Family Services does not have the resources to do properly what it is committed to do without taking on that extra responsibility. No doubt, the Government is trying to cut costs and is reluctant to commit further funds. Surely, however, social justice demands a commitment in that area, otherwise many of those children will eventually end up in foster homes, become homeless children or, for some, become inmates in correctional centres. What is the reason for the ill-considered approach? Could it be that because it is a privately run trust the Government has a dogmatic philosophical opposition to such an organisation?

The other explanation that comes to mind is that the Premier has not been properly briefed on the request made by the trust. However, if the Government is going to allow the trust to fold, I believe that the Premier or the Minister for Family Services should outline to the House as a matter of urgency what will happen to the disadvantaged families that are being helped by the trust. Will they be allowed to go away and be conveniently forgotten, or will the Department of Family Services provide the service that is provided presently by the trust? It should be outlined also what is to become of the confidential files and what is to become of the staff who are presently employed by the trust.

Gulf of Carpentaria Flood

Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (6.23 p.m.): I will speak briefly about those of my constituents who live in the Gulf of Carpentaria and who for more than five weeks have suffered major disruptions to their lives as a result of flooding. The climatic extremes of this State were alluded to today by the Minister for Primary Industries when he discussed the death of cattle at feedlots and by the member for Rockhampton North when he spoke about the flooding problems in Rockhampton. Last week, I was in Rockhampton when there was additional flooding, so I have had limited first-hand experience of the problems there. In this State of climatic extremes, given the privations experienced across a large percentage of Queensland in the past 12 months as a result of natural disasters, I pay tribute to those people who have stoically met the challenges of recent flooding. Undoubtedly, the worst-affected area has been the Carpentaria Shire. I have been reliably informed by people who live there that, at the peak of the flooding, 55 000 square kilometres of land was under water, which is a fairly large body of water by any measurement. Also affected have been the shires of Burke, Mornington, Croydon and Etheridge and the community of Doomadgee.

Fortunately, until now the main towns in those shires have largely escaped the direct impact of flooding. However, the rural properties in the shires have not been so lucky. They have suffered inundation to houses and buildings, damage to fences and other property improvements and major stock losses. Local authorities face major difficulties, particularly in assessing and making good damage to shire roads. Road transport to the gulf was first disrupted on 8 January when the Einasleigh River flooded the road between Mount Surprise and Georgetown. Prior to that, the presence of cyclone

Joy off the far-northern coast before Christmas affected retail and commercial operations of small businesses in that area. Since early in January, most of the towns there have not had a regular supply of groceries, fruit and vegetables and other items. That has not only tested the patience of the residents but also severely curtailed the operations of those businesspeople, which has resulted in considerable loss of trade and profits. It has also taxed, however, the ability of counter-disaster agencies to meet emergency relief needs. Natural disaster conditions have been exacerbated by the closure of airstrips, the breaking down of specially chartered aircraft and the capsizing of a barge carrying much-needed supplies off Weipa some weeks ago. To everyone's relief, no lives were lost or injuries sustained in that incident.

Undoubtedly, one feels a certain sense of helplessness in circumstances such as those, which are beyond anyone's control but which add persistently to feelings of impatience and frustration in those whose carefully laid plans seem thwarted or those who are constantly unable over such a long period to return to any sort of normal life. I admire the resilience of the people who endure what, at times, seems unendurable and who have maintained good spirit and humour in the face of such adversity. No doubt, tempers have flared and, at times, people have seemed to despair. However, they have then bounced back and gone about the task at hand. I express my appreciation to the Director of the State Emergency Service, Alan Windsor, and his staff both in Brisbane and regional centres, particularly Cairns and Mount Isa. To Government Ministers, especially Mr Mackenroth, Mr Casey, Mr De Lacy and Mr Smith, and their staff who have either visited the area personally or attended to my inquiries and concerns on behalf of the people of the gulf and pledged ongoing support, I also express my gratitude.

Most importantly, however, I acknowledge the hard work of the SES, shire officials, police and other organisations in towns such as Georgetown, Forsayth, Einasleigh, Croydon, Normanton, Karumba, Burketown, Doomadgee and Mornington Island. Industry organisations such as the Cattlemen's Union and the Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Organisation in Karumba have also played a role. Individuals are too numerous to mention, but I acknowledge the contribution that they have made to alleviating the difficulties experienced by members of their communities. The floods in the gulf are not over. Large areas are still under water and major problems still exist. Rain continues to fall and the threat of further flooding continues. I hope that the situation does not deteriorate, but no-one can predict the weather. Nevertheless, I place on record my thoughts and my appreciation to those people who I have mentioned and those people who have made great efforts on behalf of the people throughout the Gulf of Carpentaria to help out with what has to date been a difficult situation.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 6.29 p.m.