

**NOTE: There could be differences between this document and the official printed *Hansard*, Vol. 320**

**TUESDAY, 29 OCTOBER 1991**

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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—

Supreme Court of Queensland Bill;

South Bank Corporation Amendment Bill.

**QUESTIONS**

**Statement by Mr Speaker**

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, the rules governing questions are outlined in chapter VII of the Standing Rules and Orders. Standing Order 67A, which refers to questions to Ministers, states—

“ . . . Questions may be put to a Minister relating to public affairs with which he is officially connected, to proceedings pending—

that is, awaiting decision—

“in the Legislative Assembly, or to any matter of administration for which he is responsible.”

Standing Order 69 states—

“In putting a Question, no argument or opinion shall be offered, or any fact stated, except so far as is necessary to explain the Question.”

Standing Order 70 states—

“The following general rules shall apply to Answers:

(i) In answering a Question a Minister . . . shall not debate the subject to which it refers.

(ii) An Answer shall be relevant to the Question.

(iii) If, in the opinion of the Speaker, the Answer is too long, he may direct the Minister . . . to cease speaking.”

On Thursday, 24 October, points of order were taken on the Treasurer and the Minister for Education when answering questions on the Budget and relating to the Education Estimates which were to be debated that day. Honourable members, I feel it is opportune to give to the House a statement on the rules governing questions in this context. Over the years, a number of rulings have been given by Speakers in the Queensland Parliament. On 13 November 1929, Speaker Taylor ruled that questions relating to orders of the day are out of order and are not permissible. On 28 November 1930, Speaker Taylor also ruled that questions on matters not before the House cannot be put to private members. Questions not referring to a Bill or motion before the House can be put only to a Minister. On 21 October 1971, Speaker Nicholson ruled that questions must not relate to legislation before Parliament. On 14 November 1947, Speaker Brassington ruled that the object of questions is to seek information on matters concerned with the business of the House or public administration or other public matters. On 3 August 1944,

Speaker Brassington ruled that questions relating to the subject matter of a motion on the business paper would be disallowed.

There is obviously a degree of inconsistency with these rulings. According to Erskine May, 21st Edition, questions to Ministers must relate to matters for which Ministers are officially responsible. They must be asked for statements of their policy in relation to such matters, or for administration of legislative action. According to *House of Representatives Practice* at page 518, reference in questions to debates in the current session are out of order. This rule does not preclude questions on the subject matter of such debates but, rather, precludes reference to the debate itself and to specific statements made in it. It has also been held to be out of order to ask a question which refers to proceedings in Committee not reported to the House. However, no exception has been taken to questions merely coinciding in subject matter with respect to proceedings in Committee.

Questions cannot anticipate discussion upon an order of the day. A clear distinction can be made between this rule and the rule which permits questions to Ministers on "proceedings pending in the House". The principle established by rulings from the Chair is that questions seeking to elicit information about proceedings pending in the House are permissible provided they do not anticipate the discussion itself or invite a Minister to do so. The Queensland Legislative Assembly Standing Order 67A is similar to that of the House of Representatives concerning questions to Ministers and contains the similar phrase "proceedings pending in the Legislative Assembly". Standing Order 67A was inserted in the Standing Orders in 1983 following a report of the Standing Orders Committee and must, therefore, override all previous Speakers' rulings to the contrary. I therefore intend to allow questions to Ministers seeking to elicit information about proceedings pending in the House that are the responsibility of that Minister, provided they do not anticipate the discussion itself or invite the Minister to do so.

## ELECTORAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMISSION

### Report

**Mr SPEAKER:** I have to inform the House that today I have received from the Chairman of the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission his report on the protection of whistle-blowers.

Ordered to be printed.

## PETITIONS

The Acting Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

### Child-care Legislation

From **Ms Warner** (927 signatories) praying that the Parliament will support the Child Care Bill 1991 and promote the development of associated regulations.

A similar petition was received from **Mr Beanland** (17 signatories).

### Child-care Centres

From **Ms Warner** (57 signatories) praying for regulations to be introduced to ensure that directors and group leaders of child-care centres hold at least a two-year early childhood qualification and for a reduction in total group size in all age groupings.

**Police Staffing, Mackay**

From **Mr Stephan** (20 signatories) praying for a review of budgetary allocations and staffing to ensure adequate levels of police services are maintained in Mackay.

**Public Assembly Legislation**

From **Mr Beanland** (209 signatories) praying that those aspects of the Public Assembly Bill allowing public demonstrations and "speakers corner" type activities in the Queen Street Mall be not proceeded with.

Petitions received.

**PAPERS**

The following papers were laid on the table, and ordered to be printed—

Reports for the year ended 30 June 1991—

Queensland Electricity Commission

Department of Environment and Heritage

National Trust of Queensland

Queensland Recreation Areas Management Board

Board of Architects of Queensland.

The following papers were laid on the table—

Orders in Council under—

Dairy Industry Act 1989

Fishing Industry Organization and Marketing Act 1982

Water Resources Act 1989

Canals Act 1958-1990

Fauna Conservation Act 1974

National Parks and Wildlife Act 1975

Supreme Court Act of 1921

Regulations under the Dairy Industry Act 1989

Report of the Queensland Hen Quota Committee for the year ended 28 June 1991.

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT****Drink-driving**

**Hon. D. J. HAMILL** (Ipswich—Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development) (10.09 a.m.), by leave: Each year, many Queenslanders are killed on our roads because of drink-drivers. In the first six months of this year, 41 per cent of fatalities tested for alcohol use showed a positive blood reading. This Government is continuing its strong campaign against drink-drivers. It was just a month ago that, along with the Police Minister, Mr Mackenroth, I launched Queensland's first booze bus. Booze buses not only increase the profile of the campaign against drink-driving but also improve greatly the utilisation of police resources.

Recently, the parliamentary Travelsafe Committee examined the issue of drink-driving offences and made a number of recommendations in regard to the issuing of on-the-spot fines for first-time drink-driving offenders. The Government is taking up a number of recommendations from the Travelsafe Committee's report. We have decided to introduce traffic offence notices for first-time drink-driving offenders. Appropriate amendments to the Traffic Act are currently being prepared. Drivers detected with a BAC reading below 0.15 will be issued with a traffic offence notice. This will replace the necessity for first-time offenders to appear before the court. The penalties for offenders in this range will be standard for all offenders. The penalty will include a fine and an automatic disqualification from driving. This removes the present unfair inconsistencies in penalties being handed out to first-time drink-driving offenders, a problem that was highlighted in the Travelsafe Committee report.

A report from the Department of Transport showed that, in 1989-90, out of more than 28 000 drink-driving offenders, 72 per cent were first offenders. This move will also save many thousands of valuable hours of police and court time presently involved in handling drink-driving offences. A first-time offender issued with a ticket for drink-driving will have the option of either paying the fine without a court appearance or contesting the matter before the court. This move is consistent with the Government's strong stand on road safety, and our commitment maximises the use of police resources in the interests of the community.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Drought Relief

**Hon. E. D. CASEY** (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (10.13 a.m.), by leave: For the information of the House, I am pleased to announce the latest results of the Government's ongoing review of drought relief assistance measures operating in Queensland. It is the Government's view that the efficiency and relevance of drought relief programs should be kept under constant review to ensure they are reaching the people who need help. In respect of that aim, I can inform members of three revised concessional arrangements now available for Queensland primary producers. They are—

increased rates for maximum fodder and water freight subsidies available to hired and private vehicles;

the two-year lifting of a provision under the 1987 Commonwealth/State Sugar Cane Growers' Adjustment Scheme which prevented recipients from seeking Rural Adjustment Scheme assistance for a period of seven years; and

the introduction of a 50 per cent freight subsidy on all grain used as the major component in the production of stock feed.

These revised arrangements will be welcomed by primary producers as further evidence of the Government's commitment to providing relevant and efficient drought assistance. The Government has increased the freight subsidy available to eligible private and hired vehicles and introduced a weight per volume component for the first time. The latter aspect is in recognition of the widespread use of large volume/low weight fodder products such as cottonseed and round hay bales. The new rates, to apply from 1 July or the date of declaration after that, also acknowledge increases in the cost of transport. Details will be made available through DPI offices and my department's 008 Drought Information Centre number, (008) 808 555.

Sugarcane-growers are facing difficulties, which in some cases can no longer be addressed under the terms of a 1987 interest subsidy scheme agreed to by the previous

State Government and the Commonwealth. Therefore, the Goss Government has agreed to allow producers receiving that assistance access over a two-year period to more generous programs available through the Rural Adjustment Scheme. This proposal has the strong support of Queensland Canegrowers, and is warranted in view of the poor season which looks like cutting production by more than 20 per cent this year. Finally, the extension of freight subsidies to grain used in the manufacture of stock feed is designed to keep the price of feed grain and fodder down as much as possible, and recognises anomalies that have arisen because of the need to import feed grain from a number of sources.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Absence of Ministers during Question-time

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (10.15 a.m.), by leave: I inform the House that the Minister for Health and the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development will be absent from question-time today.

Mr SANTORO having given notice of a motion—

**Mr SANTORO:** Further, I give notice that I shall continue with this exercise in the days and months to come.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Merthyr has the opportunity to give notice of a motion, but he is not entitled to comment on it. In future, I will rule that to be grossly disorderly.

## QUESTION UPON NOTICE

### Clifford Park Racecourse

Dr FLYNN asked the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing—

“With reference to Clifford Park Racecourse—

(1) Is he aware of the importance of this racecourse as a training venue for the thoroughbred racing industry as a whole, and the additional maintenance costs as a result?

(2) Will he undertake a review of the special function and needs of this racing track?”

**Mr GIBBS:** (1) I can assure the honourable member that I am well aware of the importance of Clifford Park Racecourse. As well as providing the venue for 60 race meetings each year, it is the training facility for approximately 500 horses. This requires the upkeep and maintenance of training tracks for slow and fast gallops, barrier trials and education of young horses. Horses trained in Toowoomba start at metropolitan clubs in Brisbane, the north and south coast and Ipswich, as well as at country clubs such as Dalby, Warwick and many other smaller clubs on the downs.

(2) Maintenance of training centres and their importance in the industry's infrastructure were issues raised in the Green Paper on racing industry reform. I have already had discussions with the Chairman of the Toowoomba Turf Club, Mr Neville Stewart, and I am very sympathetic to the club's proposals. I have advised him to make application for financial assistance from the Racing Development Fund. I am pleased to inform the honourable member that I am very impressed with the performance of the Toowoomba club, which is continuing to show a progressive attitude. That is further

exemplified by its current application before the TAB to introduce twilight racing in 1992. Those meetings would commence at 4 p.m. and link with races from Perth that are being covered in Toowoomba. I can assure the honourable member that I am doing my utmost to facilitate this initiative. I might add that the special functions of Toowoomba and other similar venues around the State will be further considered by a special advisory committee proposed in the new management structure of the industry.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Drug Use and Penalties

**Mr COOPER:** I direct a question to the Premier. An Australian Federal Police report attributes a rise in the trafficking and use of narcotics—notably heroin and cocaine—in Queensland directly to the removal of mandatory life sentences for trafficking by his Government, making the Gold Coast “the heroin capital of Australia”. I ask: does he now accept that the clearly widespread perception that his Government is soft on drugs has contributed to increased abuse of drugs and the law, and has increased the already dire threat drugs pose to our society, particularly our youth? Will he provide Parliament with a list of convicted drug-dealers who have had their sentences reduced since his Government came to power, including the details on the case of one Hector Hapeta?

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** As to the issue of the use of illegal drugs in our community—this Government has replaced the tough rhetoric of the previous Government—the dishonest approach of talking tough, of being tough on paper but being soft in reality—with a much tougher and more practical approach in terms of giving the police the resources that they need.

**Mr Borbidge:** Hector Hapeta had his term reduced.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** The truth is that, under the National Party, people such as Hector Hapeta and the other peddlers of heroin flourished and were protected.

**Mr Cooper** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** That is right. When Mr Cooper was Police Minister, Hector Hapeta and his kind flourished and were protected. This Government delivered on its promise.

**Mr Cooper:** They're running brothels from gaol.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** I take the interjection that criminals are running this business from gaol. As I understand it, that was investigated by the Criminal Justice Commission and it found no evidence. If Mr Cooper has anybody to support him in his contention, apart from an anonymous prostitute, we would welcome the evidence. As to the Government's policies on enforcement of drug laws—we replaced the rhetoric of the past with some action. Immediately upon coming into office, the Government doubled the size of the State Drug Squad.

**Mr Cooper:** You've reduced them since.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** The Leader of the Opposition does not want to hear the facts. Because it was our observation and the observation of law enforcement authorities that the significant problem of illegal use of drugs—and, in particular, north Queensland as a source of drugs—was left unaddressed and ignored by the previous Government, the Government doubled the size of the State Drug Squad and set up new Drug Squad units in Cairns and Townsville. We acted on that in the context of doubling the Drug Squad. In

addition to that, substantial sums were provided. In the last two years, \$600,000 in cash was provided to enable the police to carry out undercover work. We have established a Detection of Proceeds of Crime Unit to trace property purchased with the proceeds of crime, such as the sale of drugs. In conjunction with the Criminal Justice Commission and the Attorney-General's Department, this unit has been involved in the freezing of \$4m worth of assets.

**Mr Cooper:** Drug abuse is worse than ever.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** Members opposite do not want to hear the facts.

**Mr Veivers** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the member for Southport to cease interjecting.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** The reason that is important is that the main incentive, of course, for people to become involved in the drug trade is the high profits. When in office, members opposite never attacked the profits; we have. Some \$4m in assets has already been frozen.

I have here a list, which I will not go through, of dozens of reforms and Fitzgerald recommendations in relation to the Police Service that have been implemented by this Government to end the neglect of the attack on corruption of the past. In conclusion—this Government accepts that there will always be some crime in our community. It is not prepared to pretend otherwise, or to ignore it, and to allow the spivs, the prostitutes and the crooks to prosper on a franchise basis in the way in which the honourable member did when he was in charge.

### **Visit by Deputy Premier to Western Queensland**

**Mr PREST:** I refer the Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing and Local Government to the reported statements by the member for Warrego about the Deputy Premier's visit to rural centres last week, and I ask: can he inform the House whether the statements by the member for Warrego about his meetings at Mitchell are correct?

**Mr BURNS:** I thank the member for Port Curtis for the question. I am worried about the Opposition and Mr Hobbs. One would have thought that, when someone went to Mr Hobbs' territory to look at some of the problems that have been experienced over the years, he would be there—that he might have even turned up in the town. In fact, in Taroom, one of the National Party members turned up and sat in at the meeting. If the member for Warrego had done that, he would not have had to give false reports on it. There was no problem with him turning up at those meetings. They were meetings with the council and with the public. Members of community groups were present. The problem is that members opposite do not want anything to be done in their towns; they do not want any help. All they want to do is knock. They have knocked for the last 32 years.

In 1957, the population of Mitchell was 1 219. When the election was held in 1989, it was 816. In the days of the National Party Government, the population of that town dropped by one-third. Mr Hobbs does not tell the truth when he makes his reports about—

**Mr HOBBS:** I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! It is not the words "does not tell the truth" that the honourable member objects to, but the context in which they were used. I ask the Minister to withdraw.

**Mr BURNS:** I will withdraw. The only way in which I can refute the allegations and the matters that the honourable member has been raising is to deny them and to say that

they are not truthful and they are not correct. They are not correct for this very reason——

**Mr HOBBS:** I rise to a point of order. If the Minister wants to go along this line, I can produce witnesses to say that he has said those things.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr BURNS:** Mr Hobbs said that the people were told there was no chance that a clerk of the court would ever be appointed there again. That is not true. I never said at a meeting in Mitchell the words that he attributed to me. That is not true.

**Mr W. K. Goss:** And he knows it.

**Mr BURNS:** And he knows that it is not true. He can get a couple of his cronies to say whatever they like. The facts of the matter are that I went around the west and in each town I told the people the same things: there are no pots of gold and there are no miracle cures. Because of regionalisation, towns such as Charleville, Roma and Toowoomba will grow bigger. For the first time in his life the honourable member should be honest with the people in his area and tell them the truth. Little towns will struggle. I said that we would try to provide a multiskilled person in each of those towns and that we would not close courthouses, as the National Party did. We said that we would provide multiskilled people.

**Mr Hobbs:** Blackall has been closed.

**Mr BURNS:** We said that we would freeze the courthouse closures. We told the people there——

**Mr Hobbs** interjected.

**Mr BURNS:** You can interject all you like. If you wanted to be in the town, why didn't you front up? Why didn't you have the courage to be in the town? I will tell you why——

**Mr HOBBS:** I rise to a point of order. I would have been there but, if the Minister recalls, Parliament was sitting last week.

**Mr BURNS:** I will tell you why he did not turn up. The people in the town said that he never mixes with the ordinary people, that he never goes near them.

**Mr HOBBS:** I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn. That is not true.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr BURNS:** I withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the Deputy Premier to do that. I also suggest that he makes his comments through the Chair.

**Mr BURNS:** People in Mitchell said to me that he flies into town in his little plane, sits with all his cronies in the corner of the bar and does not talk to the ordinary people.

**Mr HOBBS:** I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive and ask that they be withdrawn. That is not true. The Minister is now lying.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The word "lying" is unparliamentary. The member will withdraw that remark.

**Mr HOBBS:** If the Deputy Premier will withdraw his remark first.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the member for Warrego under Standing Order 124.

**Mr BURNS:** I withdraw that remark. The other thing that they said was that the member for Warrego never shouts.

**Mr BORBRIDGE:** I rise to a point of order. With respect, Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to your comments last week to the Parliament in respect of appropriate standards of parliamentary behaviour. I suggest that the effort by the Deputy Premier falls a long way short of that.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

### **Liberal Party Police Policy**

**Mr PREST:** I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services: is he aware of the release last Thursday of the Liberal Party's police policy titled "New Directions of Law and Order"? Can the Minister advise the House what impact that policy will have on the Police Service and the community?

**Mr MACKENROTH:** Yes, I saw an article in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* relating to the Liberal Party's new police policy, in which it is claimed that the Goss Labor Government has run out of ideas and initiatives. I suggest that the Liberal Party has run out of ideas and initiatives. That policy, which has supposedly been released for the next State election, is very similar to the policy that our party released prior to the last election. The only difference is that most of the Liberal Party's policies that are enunciated in that new document have already been implemented by our Government. The Liberal Party claims to have a policy for on-the-spot fines for drink-driving. Today, the Minister for Transport outlined to the Parliament how Cabinet decided yesterday that this would be done.

**Mr Beanland:** Three days after we announced them.

**Mr MACKENROTH:** No. This was announced on the same day as we launched the booze buses. The Leader of the Liberal Party says that the Liberal Party will introduce more Neighbourhood Watch programs. When we came to Government, there were 113 Neighbourhood Watch programs in Queensland. As at this date, there are now 300 Neighbourhood Watch programs, representing an increase of 187 in the two years that we have been in Government. The Leader of the Liberal Party claims that his party will strengthen laws to prevent attacks on women and children. Our Government has set up within the Police Service a program for women, and people are working on that particular issue. It is also claimed that the Liberal Party will undertake a review of police terms to allow optional retirement after 30 years' service. The Liberal Party is not going to do that; it will only review it. Our Government has already implemented a scheme whereby police officers of commissioned rank can apply for early retirement not only after 30 years but, in fact, under 30 years. The Liberal Party intends only to review that, but we have already done it. Another Liberal Party policy is the overhaul of computerisation. Our Government has already allocated funds—and presently has a trial program in place—to computerise every police station in Queensland.

The last policy mentioned in the Liberal Party's document—and the most ridiculous one—is the removal of restrictions on the recruitment of female police. Our Government did that on its first day in office. The number of female recruits presently at the police academy or the university represents 30 per cent of the total number of police in training. Previously, there was a restriction on the recruitment of female police, and only 5 per cent of the total number of recruits in training were female. This Government now has no restrictions on the recruitment of female police. People are selected on merit. As I said, 30 per cent of police in training at the academy or the university are female. Before we came to office, there were no female commissioned officers. We have appointed female commissioned officers.

The real highlight of the Liberal Party's policy document lies in the headline. It even stole from us the exact number of police—1 200. The Liberal Party claims that it will increase the Police Service by 1 200 to 7 000 and that, by the end of this financial year,

there will be 6 200 police officers. That is only 800. The Liberal Party cannot even do its mathematics.

### Privatisation

**Mr BEANLAND:** In directing a question to the Treasurer, I draw his attention to his comments last Wednesday in the House when he indicated that, unlike the Liberal and National Parties, he was opposed to privatisation. Yesterday, in the *Sun* newspaper, the Treasurer was quoted as saying that, if the Government could not make corporatisation work, privatisation was inevitable. I ask: what is the Treasurer's position on privatisation? Or does he tell one tale to the Labor caucus and another tale to the business community?

**Mr De LACY:** I tell the same tale everywhere. If we cannot make corporatisation work, then privatisation is inevitable. I will repeat that anywhere at any time. The fact is that we can make corporatisation work. I have said that in every speech and utterance that I have made about corporatisation. Our policy is corporatisation—in other words, making public sector enterprises efficient. We have the runs on the board. Suncorp, the QIDC and the Queensland Investment Corporation are the best performing enterprises in this State and in Australia. They are outperforming their private sector counterparts. As to the member's question—do I support corporatisation, or are we going down the privatisation track as his colleagues did in New South Wales—the answer is: no. We are committed to public enterprise, and we will make it work.

### Tertiary Education Places

**Mr BEANLAND:** In directing a question to the Minister for Education, I refer to the growing queue for tertiary education places in Queensland, with 27 000 Queensland school-leavers now set to miss out on university places—8 500 more than last year. I ask: can the Minister explain to those students why his Government and the Federal Government betray students whom they encourage to continue at school by denying them further education due to a lack of funding?

**Mr BRADY:** As usual, the member for Toowong cannot get his facts straight. Nowhere in Australia does everyone who applies for university entrance either expect to enter or in fact gain entrance to a university. Most of those who sit for tertiary selection, whether it be in Queensland under the TE score system or elsewhere, naturally submit an application, but no system in Australia allows for all students who wish to go to university to, in fact, gain entrance. To suggest that 27 000 Queensland students will miss out is a fallacy and a deliberate attempt by the Liberal Party to spread misinformation. However, from the day that we were elected to Government, Labor Party members have made it very clear that we wished to see as many Queenslanders in university as possible. That is why the Labor Party Government has funded 2 300 university places from State funds, despite the fact that, under the modern constitutional arrangements in this country, university selection and preferment at university are totally the matter of the Commonwealth Government. Of the States, only Queensland and Victoria fund university places. The Queensland Government has criticised strongly the Federal Government for its failure to give Queensland its due share. We have made that criticism very public and we do not resile from it. We continue to criticise the Federal Government. We are assured that, by 1994, in the next triennium, more university places will be provided for Queensland. We in the Queensland Government say that that is not good enough and we continue to press for those places now on behalf of Queensland students.

### Unemployment

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** In directing a question to the Treasurer, I refer to recent media reports that quote the National Party's State Director, Mr Ken Crooke, as saying that the Government is masking the true picture of unemployment in Queensland, and I ask: will the Minister inform the House whether that view of the employment situation in Queensland is shared by independent economic commentators?

**Mr De LACY:** I notice that Mr Crooke—the de facto leader of the National Party—has been travelling around Queensland making those allegations. I am told that Mr Cooper and Mr Borbidge are not game to leave Brisbane because they are both counting the numbers. Mr Crooke says that the Government is masking the true jobless picture. That is his viewpoint. Let us have a look at what the independent commentators say. This week's *Business Queensland*—

**Mr Littleproud** interjected.

**Mr De LACY:** —which does give the facts and which is hardly a socialist rag, says—

**Mr Littleproud:** There are a few socialist rags around, though.

**Mr De LACY:** The honourable member is not suggesting that *Business Queensland* is a socialist rag, is he?

**Mr Littleproud:** I didn't say that. I just picked up your point.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the member for Condamine to cease interjecting. He has had a fair go.

**Mr De LACY:** On page 15 of this week's *Business Queensland*, an article headlined "Queensland leads job recovery" states—

"However, if we turn our attention to employment, we find that the Australian national recovery is beginning and we find evidence of the most remarkable recovery in the Queensland economy.

...

The figures for employment in Queensland demonstrate the extraordinary power of the Queensland economy, even in the worst Australian recession since 1937."

The article then cites some figures and continues—

"This means that employment in Queensland has in only four short months recovered almost all of the losses that it has made in the devastating recession of 1990-91.

...

Queensland generally runs an unemployment level which is about 1% higher than the national rate. Unemployment peaked in Queensland in May at a rate of 10.7% when the national rate was only 9.4%.

...

In September, Queensland's level of unemployment at 9.8% broke for the first time in this cycle below the Australian level of unemployment at 10.2%."

In conclusion, the article states—

"These statistics reveal that the Queensland economy has turned earlier than the national economy. More importantly, perhaps, this State's economy is expanding at a dramatically faster rate."

That was an independent assessment by Michael Knox, who is an economist with a Brisbane stockbroking firm, Morgans. I suggest that honourable members compare an independent assessment with that made by the de facto leader of the National Party.

### **Education**

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** In directing a question to the Minister for Education, I refer the Minister to comments made last week in the House by the member for Fassifern regarding changes in the education system, including a claim regarding the administration of education in the Darling Downs region, and I ask: will the Minister inform the House whether those claims are true and, if they are not true, what is the real situation?

**Mr BRADDY:** As usual, the member for Fassifern conducts a campaign in which he pays no heed whatever to the facts and sets about spreading misinformation and bigotry wherever he can. On Thursday, in his speech on the Education Estimates, he certainly operated in that way. During the debate, the honourable member set out to suggest that a leader of education in the Darling Downs was a person who had arrived from outside the education system.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BRADDY:** His words were that an education leader in Toowoomba had arrived from outside the education system. In fact, the executive director of the Darling Downs region is Mr Geoff Greene, who was appointed to the position of regional director by the National Party.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. I suggest to the Minister that he may talk about general principles but he is not allowed to refer to debate in the current session.

**Mr BRADDY:** For the information of the honourable member, in the event that he is misguided—which is very unlikely—the person who is the leader of the Education Department in Toowoomba is in fact Mr Geoff Greene, who was a person appointed by the National Party Government and retained as regional director when the Labor Party came to office. The person who is sometimes alleged to be the leader by the community is in fact the assistant executive director of human resources in the region. She is not the education leader in Toowoomba; she never has been and is nowhere near that position. On many occasions Mr Lingard has also failed to tell the truth to the people of Queensland. It should be borne in mind that, prior to assuming her former position and taking up this position, this person was the senior personnel officer at the University College of Southern Queensland at Toowoomba. Her educational experience in Toowoomba is therefore well known, but ignored by Mr Lingard and others. It is about time that Mr Lingard started telling the people of Queensland the truth about the education system in this State.

### **Electricity Supply to Rural Consumers**

**Mr FITZGERALD:** In directing a question to the Minister for Resource Industries, I refer to changes to the Statewide standard conditions regarding the supply of electricity to consumers on extensions in rural areas where the electricity boards have implemented changes to conditions of supply so that the limit of the board's contribution is adjusted and the annual potential revenue represents 22.5 per cent of the contribution rather than 15 per cent as previously, and I ask: did the Minister approve this change in 1990 at the direction of Cabinet and request that the change be implemented after 30 June 1991?

**Mr VAUGHAN:** I vaguely recollect that matter coming before me last year but, as far as the operative date is concerned, I could not answer that question precisely. If the honourable member would like to put the question on notice, I will give him a factual answer.

**Mr FITZGERALD:** I do so accordingly.

### Electricity Security Deposits

**Mr FITZGERALD:** I refer to the promise made by the Minister for Resource Industries before the 1989 election to refund security deposits held by electricity boards on household connections and to the Minister's speech recorded in *Hansard* on 28 September 1989 on the same matter, and I ask: has he broken that promise?

**Mr VAUGHAN:** I have not broken the promise. I have not implemented it yet.

### Riversleigh Fossil Fields

**Mr McGRADY:** I refer the Minister for Environment and Heritage to a recent media statement in which the Opposition Leader, Mr Russell Cooper, called on the State Government to undertake a scientific appraisal of the famous Riversleigh fossil fields near Mount Isa, which he refers to as "an alleged fossil field". Given the importance of these fossil fields and the Government's intention to buy a portion of a pastoral holding over the area, I ask: does the Minister consider that any further studies are warranted?

**Mr COMBEN:** I certainly had my attention drawn to an article in the *Townsville Bulletin* headed "Labor told to lay off fossil property" in which Mr Cooper says that there is an "alleged" fossil field. He wants the Government to take no action until the find is authenticated. Is Mr Cooper saying that there are no fossils up there and that this is not a world-class system?

**Mr W. K. Goss:** Is Mr Cooper claiming that the National Party has got a mortgage on fossils?

**Mr COMBEN:** It certainly has. It has resurrected some and some have come back from extinction. This is an attack on a fossil field that has been known to exist since 1901. This area should have been made into a national park in 1951 when the first propositions were made. From 1986, negotiations on the use of the land—which the Leader of the Opposition is now saying needs to be authenticated and which he assumes is a fossil field—were conducted by the previous National Party Government. The Opposition is now saying that there are no fossils there and that more research should be carried out. Mount Isa Mines, the Mount Isa City Council and the Burke Shire Council have all assisted in making this a world-class fossil field with the aim of presenting it to the people of Queensland. It should be a world-class fossil field. There are certainly a lot of concerns on this side of the House about the areas covered.

If I wanted research or support for my proposition about the significance of this field, I would look to Mr Cooper and a previous Cabinet. On 19 April 1988, the Honourable Geoff Muntz wrote a letter about these "assumed" fields that need to be authenticated in which he states—

"It is correct that the 'Riversleigh' fossil field is of major national and international significance and a proposal for its protection as a reserve for scientific purposes is presently under consideration by the Queensland Government."

That was under Mr Cooper's Government, yet today he says that he does not want it. Three years ago he said that it was good enough.

### Daylight-saving Referendum

**Mr McGRADY:** I ask the Minister for Justice and Corrective Services: is he aware of the statement made by the Leader of the Liberal Party, Mr Denver Beanland, attacking the Queensland Government for not spending in excess of \$1m on posting out the "Yes" and "No" case for the forthcoming referendum? Will the Minister inform this Parliament of the Government's view on this matter?

**Mr MILLINER:** I was quite amazed at the statements made by the member for Toowong and Leader of the Liberal Party. He is virtually insulting the intelligence of every Queenslander. The issue of daylight-saving is very much a quality of life issue. Everyone in this State is affected by daylight-saving. Some people like it and others do not. For the honourable member to suggest that posting out a document to every elector throughout the State will convince people one way or the other is absolute rubbish. To put the record straight——

**Mr BEANLAND:** I rise in relation to Standing Order No. 70 (i) which states——

"In answering a Question a Minister or Member shall not debate the subject to which it refers."

It is quite clear that the Minister is debating the issue of daylight-saving.

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

**Mr MILLINER:** That shows the intelligence of the member for Toowong, who is quite off the planet. The issue of sending out a pamphlet on the "Yes" and "No" case is a relatively new phenomenon as far as State referendums are concerned. The referendum held in March this year was the first time that there was a requirement to send out to every elector a pamphlet setting out the "Yes" and "No" case, which is not a requirement in the other States throughout the nation—apart from in 1983 when the Western Australian Government introduced into legislation a requirement that a "Yes" and "No" case be distributed.

**Mr Littleproud** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the member for Condamine under Standing Order 123A for interjecting. He has had a fair go today.

**Mr MILLINER:** In 1989, the previous Queensland Government picked up the provisions in the Western Australian Government's legislation regarding referendums and incorporated them into Queensland's legislation. The Commonwealth Government also has a requirement that, on matters of constitutional reform, notification must be posted to each elector setting out a "Yes" and "No" case. I make the point that it is an insult to the intelligence of Queenslanders to suggest that they need a pamphlet posted to them setting out a "Yes" and "No" case to change their point of view. Everybody in Queensland is affected by daylight-saving. Everybody has an opinion, and he or she will be given the opportunity to express that opinion.

### Trainee Teachers

**Mr LINGARD:** In directing a question to the Minister for Education, I point out that part of the restructuring of the Education Department means that many people in clerical positions are being placed in the class rooms, and that one group that is being severely affected by that policy is the teacher trainee group. There is a backlog of 300 teacher trainees who have not been offered a position and at least 150 will finish their courses this year, which means that for 450 people, there are only 50 positions available this year. I ask: will he outline what he, as Education Minister, has done to overcome this horrific problem confronting teacher trainees?

**Mr BRADDY:** There is a wonderful irony in that question which was asked by a member of the National Party, because he was a member of Government that in 32 years did the least of any Government in Australia in relation to the employment of teachers and in education-funding; yet he rises in this Chamber to ask such a question. First of all, in relation to the aspect of what this Government is doing to provide employment for teachers, let me point out that since we came to Government, we have increased education-funding so much that we have employed 1 500 extra teachers over and above the population growth and replacement of teachers ratio. Does the honourable member believe that that does not provide employment for teachers in schools? As I have said in this House several times, since Labor came to Government, the resignation rate from the teaching service has halved. In other words, the conditions and pay applying to teachers have improved so much that half the number of teachers have resigned compared to what occurred when the National Party was in Government. The situation is that the Labor Government has employed more teachers and has received fewer resignations.

Of course, what this Government has to do is try to offer reasonable employment to new graduates, which in fact is occurring. Unlike every other State in Australia where teachers are being sacked, the Queensland Government is employing more teachers. However, we cannot give a guarantee to all graduate teachers that they will be employed any more than any graduate from any other university course is given a guarantee of employment. For the rabble on the Opposition side to posture concern about teachers and the education process in this State is the rankest hypocrisy, and I reject it.

#### **Aboriginal and Islander Education Committee**

**Mr LINGARD:** In directing my second question to the Minister for Education, I refer to the fact that 10 weeks ago, on 19 August, his department conducted interviews for appointment to the position of Chairman, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Education Committee. Despite many phone calls having been made to his office and promises of an answer having been given, no decision has been announced. This is unfair to the Aboriginal and Islander community, because consequential appointments to the positions of executive officer and regional coordinators depend on this announcement. I ask: will the Minister promise an immediate decision on the appointment to the position of chairman?

**Mr BRADDY:** Again, it is remarkable that, on the one day, a group of people who were renowned for their inadequate approach to Aboriginal education and Aboriginal welfare generally could ask such a question. At present, the Government is undertaking a review and audit of Aboriginal education in this State. It is the most comprehensive review that has ever been undertaken, and I will receive a report within a matter of days or, at the very latest, within a matter of weeks. We have also completed the interviews for appointment to the position referred to by the honourable member. Recommendations have been received by me in relation to that appointment, and I believe that the department is now processing the announcement. In the light of the honourable member's question, I will make it my business to ascertain the stage that the process has reached. I am quite confident that the announcement will be made very, very shortly.

#### **Redcliffe Police Station**

**Mr HOLLIS:** I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services: has he read a press report in which the Leader of the Liberal Party in Queensland claimed that the police station at Redcliffe closed down during weekends because of a shortage of officers? Is it true, as claimed by the Liberal Party Leader, that the house of an unknown Redcliffe

citizen was broken into on a recent Saturday night and that this citizen allegedly was told by the police that nothing could be done until the following Monday?

**Mr MACKENROTH:** Firstly, my attention was drawn to the report that Mr Beanland had received an anonymous complaint. The second time it was drawn to my attention, the complaint came from his private secretary, which means it went from being a complaint from somebody who had phoned him to being a complaint from somebody who in fact works for him. When the matter was first raised, it was very difficult to check it out, but as soon as we had the details—which was about two weeks later—we were able to ascertain that Mr Peter Kidman had made a complaint to the police on a Saturday night in relation to some tools being stolen from a building project site in the Redcliffe area. I checked out the claim made by the Leader of the Liberal Party that Mr Peter Kidman was told that nothing at all could be done until Monday, and I found that that is completely untrue.

## MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

### Goss Labor Government

**Mr COOPER** (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (11 a.m.): I rise today to say to members opposite that the 1989 change of Government has not worked. The Labor experiment in Queensland, as in other States, has most certainly backfired. This Goss Labor Government has turned out to be an utter failure. It has failed the people of Queensland on all counts. It has failed on the issues of law and order, unemployment, job creation, illegal brothels, abortion, pornography, cronyism, corruption and accountability. In fact, the only growth industries under the Goss Labor Government are those in the areas of abortion, prostitution, pornography, gambling and drugs.

Under Mr Goss and Labor, this State now has massive unemployment, record crime levels and a boom in brothels. We in the Opposition have constantly called for action on job-creating projects such as Tully/Millstream, the electrification of the northern rail link, the Cape York space base, the sale of the Gladstone Power Station, and many others. The Government's inaction could mean that Queensland will miss the boat on some, or even all, of those projects. Contrary to the claims of the Treasurer, we in the Opposition have a positive approach to job creation. The Treasurer simply does not listen, and he simply does not take advice. We in the Opposition have put forward proposals to tackle unemployment. We have suggested land tax reform to help small business and we have urged fast-tracking of major projects to encourage industry development. But, in response, the Labor Government does nothing. Instead, it sits on its hands and blames Hawke for just about everything—even the impact of the drought. It is excuse after excuse.

Let me analyse this Government's sorry record of indecision, indifference and incompetence. One only needs to consider last weekend's revelation on the issue of illegal brothels. The *Sunday Sun* newspaper is full of general notices advertising brothels. I table a copy of that, Mr Speaker.

Leave granted.

**Mr COOPER:** It is a shocking indictment on this Government. Since the Labor Government decriminalised homosexual activities, there has also been a large increase in the number of young boys offering themselves on the streets in Queensland. The Labor Government is an absolute disgrace.

Thirty million dollars of taxpayers' hard-earned money was spent on the Fitzgerald inquiry and its aftermath, but the taxpayers of this State have now discovered that after two years of the Goss Labor Government, there are more illegal brothels than ever before.

The Fitzgerald report cost \$30m—it is now being betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. The people of this State have been betrayed by this Goss Labor Government. Under Mr Goss and Labor, Queensland has officially become Australia's State of crime. There is a climate of fear in the community, particularly amongst women. Not enough police are being directed to the scenes of crimes—Queensland's cities, towns, suburbs, streets, and its very homes.

**Mr Palaszczuk** interjected.

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

**Mr COOPER:** The honourable member is getting a little bit carried away. In another disgraceful situation—and the honourable member can wear this one as well—because of the dithering of the Premier, the abortion issue——

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr COOPER:** Did I hear something unparliamentary? The abortion issue remains one of the great unanswered questions hanging over this Labor Government. The Premier is too frightened to bring Labor Party policies on abortion into this House for debate and for a vote. Apparently the Premier has also sanctioned the views of his Welfare Services Minister, who has been reported as declaring that there will be no prosecution of illegal abortions while she is in Parliament. Abortion is now one of the Labor Government's growth industries, but it is an industry of which it should be absolutely ashamed. What a disgrace! What a mockery the Minister makes of her oath of office as a Minister of the Crown.

On another important issue, I think every member in this House who is honest with himself or herself will acknowledge that what has occurred in the public service in the past two years is a blot on the history of Government in this State. Thousands of public servants and their families know what misery has taken place under the false colours of the Public Sector Management Commission. I say "false colours" because the Public Sector Management Commission has turned on an efficient and effective public service in a shocking witch-hunt under the flag of reform. Last week, I used the term "McCarthyism", and I use that term again now. For what crime have public servants been persecuted? The crime of serving well in the public service during a 32-year period of conservative Government.

As I mentioned earlier, at the weekend the whole of Australia learned via national television that Queensland has a boom in brothels. Queenslanders were told that people in prisons are actually running illegal brothels. Queenslanders were told that "illegal brothels are all the go". Queenslanders were also told that "police are on the take". What is the Premier of Queensland—our little Aussie jogger who spends his time running in and out of this Chamber, eyes darting everywhere because he cannot look anyone straight in the eye—doing about this issue? The Premier is doing nothing, and members opposite know that. In fact, his women's division chief has indicated that the CJC report on prostitution will be researched at length. In case anyone is not aware of it, that is Westminster public service jargon for "this issue is too hot for the boss to handle, so let's file it away until after the election". Mr Goss said on television that it was not his problem. I wonder whose problem it is, and where the buck stops in this State. Mr Goss is the elected Premier, or is supposed to be, and ultimately it is his responsibility to ensure that the laws of this State are upheld. I say again that the Premier is constantly running out of the Chamber, but he is always running in the opposite direction to making a decision. I again accuse Labor of giving prostitutes a higher priority than the unemployed people of this State. I accuse Labor of favouring the poker machine lobby, and the shadowy poker

machine companies, ahead of the business community of this State. I accuse Labor of gutting the bush, the provincial towns and the cities of much-needed services, all in the name of regionalisation. I accuse Labor of perhaps the worst political crimes of all, that is, arrogance and indifference.

The dithering Premier and his ineffective sidekick, the Attorney-General, have been active in only one respect recently, and that is in their disgraceful entry into the media debate on the Bjelke-Petersen trial. I draw to the attention of this House the comments of Mr Bob Greenwood, QC, the distinguished counsel representing former Premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen in the recent perjury trial. On the weekend, Mr Greenwood broke his silence. He described certain comments made through the media as "below the belt." That, of course, is putting it mildly. Who has been out there throwing punches on this issue, which in many respects is still before the court? Both the Premier and his sidekick, Mr Wells. The Premier and the Attorney-General are both lawyers, yet they could not wait to obtain some political mileage out of the Bjelke-Petersen trial. Their aim was definitely below the level of the waistline. The Premier and the Attorney-General knew that a decision had yet to be made as to whether charges would be continued against Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, but that did not stop this pair of suburban lawyers from lecturing the whole of Australia about what should and should not have happened at the trial of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. There could have been only one motivation in the comments of the Premier and his Attorney-General, and that was political. There was only one target in their sights, and that target was a man who is still innocent under the law. Their comments and their activities have helped to create a terrible situation in which it is almost impossible——

**Mr WELFORD:** I rise to a point of order. This matter is still the subject of consideration by the Special Prosecutor.

**Mr COOPER:** What about the comments from your own party?

**Mr WELFORD:** Mr Cooper's comments are sailing far too close to the wind.

**Mr COOPER:** What about your own party's comments—from the Premier, and the Attorney-General himself?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I assure the House that I am cognisant of the fact that the matters are under consideration. I am listening to Mr Cooper's comments with a lot of interest.

**Mr COOPER:** Their comments and their activities have helped create a terrible situation in which it is almost impossible for the former Premier to receive a fair trial. We on this side of the House are conscious, even if the Government is not, that this matter is still to be decided in a proper and legal fashion. However, the public comments of both the Premier and the Attorney-General have not assisted that process. It is they who have deliberately ignored the decision of the trial judge that nothing untoward had taken place within that jury.

I said at the outset that the change to Labor has not worked, that it had failed the people of Queensland on all counts. The prosecution of this Government——

**Mr WELLS:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable the Leader of the Opposition has made the allegation that the Premier or I was prejudicing the case in some way. That is offensive, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Attorney-General does find that offensive. I must ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw it.

**Mr COOPER:** As a matter of form, I withdraw. The prosecution of this Government will take place at the State election next year, and I can assure the Premier there will be no hung jury at that trial.

Time expired.

### Housing

**Mr SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton North) (11.11 a.m.): On 18 October last, the Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing, Tom Burns, and his Federal counterpart, Brian Howe, launched the 1991-92 Queensland housing assistance program. This joint Commonwealth/State initiative yielded some \$924.8m for housing in Queensland. Of that, some \$238.4m will go towards public housing. Some \$620m will go into our home-lending scheme, which has proved very popular. The Commonwealth's share of that funding is \$176m, and the State's contribution is \$748m. This amount of money is very significant in Queensland when this Government is trying to create jobs, and the building industry is seeing the effects of its contribution. It is very welcome news for the building industry in this State, and I am surprised to hear members of the Opposition deriding the efforts of this Government in not only providing homes in Queensland, but also providing jobs in the building industry. This program will provide some 30 000 families in this State with home assistance. It will also provide some 8 000 places in public housing. Eight thousand home loans will also be available.

**Mr FitzGerald:** This is your Estimates speech again.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I am pleased to see that the member for Lockyer finds all this so humorous. It is apparent to me that he obviously does not have housing difficulties in his electorate. Either that, or he does not care a tinker's curse about those poor devils in this State who are homeless, and all those unemployed carpenters and timber workers in this State who cannot find work. I for one am very proud of what this Government is doing about housing, and I want to go on a little further and talk about what we are doing in terms of housing assistance planning. One thing the previous Government failed to do in regard to housing was really identify the priorities. It thought it knew what the circumstances were under which people sought housing in this State, and it sat in Brisbane and determined the needs around the State. Members of this Government have travelled around the State and spoken to some 800 different groups, and from that determined nine key priorities that are forming the basis of the plan. The fact is that because there is a housing shortage in my electorate it is very welcome there. There are something like 700 on the housing waiting list, and that, believe it or not, is a result of the boom in the local economy which, again, is the result of this Government's action in that area in terms of construction, especially in terms of the gas pipeline, the Stanwell Power Station, and the soon to be constructed State Government building. That has left us with a housing shortage, and this injection of some \$900m into the State's housing will go a long way towards ameliorating that problem.

At the present time, about 100 units are scheduled for construction in the Rockhampton/Yeppoon area. They are either on the books to be constructed or in the process of being constructed. Thirty-five of those have been constructed in Yeppoon and 40 in Rockhampton. This week, tenders for eight houses in Yeppoon have been announced. Hardly a week goes by without an announcement being made by this Government in regard to the construction of houses in Rockhampton, and that is very welcome news on the local front. I might point out that the first single unit accommodation has been constructed in Yeppoon, and that is very welcome news, especially for the 3 500 pensioners who currently reside there. The fact is that the previous member, Mr Hinton, went out of his way to ensure that there was no housing accommodation from the Department of Housing.

**Mr Pearce:** That is in fact true.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I am aware of that. I take that interjection. Mr Hinton refused to have Department of Housing—or Housing Commission, as it was then—houses in his electorate. The Government does not share that view. It is going out of its way to address

a real need in that area. The Government's new housing policy, which relates to design and construction, is very popular with contractors. They produce a design package and tender for a group of houses on the basis of design and construction. The latest group of houses in Carlton Street, Rockhampton is a specific example of that initiative. They are well set out brick/veneer houses with tiled roofs, and they cost only \$61,000.

**Mr Pearce:** Totally appropriate.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** They are totally appropriate. Previously, it was thought that, if people were poor, they could live in anything. The Government has gone past that. It does not believe that people who have been forced into poverty should be forced to live in hovels. The Government is addressing that need. Recently, at the insistence of the Deputy Premier, officers of his department investigated the housing needs in Rockhampton. They have developed a number of plans, including the intersplicing of Department of Housing accommodation with existing homes so that we do not get housing developments that are primarily Department of Housing estates. I welcome that initiative. However, that is not enough. We have a long way to go. This weekend, the Deputy Premier is visiting my electorate to inspect a block of land containing 160 sites owned by his department. We want to get that project on the road as quickly as possible. It is important that we address that outstanding need. I am certain that the Deputy Premier will be able to assist the people of Rockhampton in that regard.

I turn now to the issue of the disgraceful construction of the Rockonia Road units, as they are known. That development contains 72 units and it is a sociological disaster. Credit must be given to people such as Di Kadir who are trying to manage the system and to get rid of what must be for those people a nightmare. When 72 families live in close proximity to each other, problems must occur.

**Mr Davies:** That's what the National Party thought of them. It forced them into those areas.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Exactly. I noticed that the National Party always built such units in Labor electorates. In Government, we are forced to do something about that. On the weekend, the Deputy Premier will inspect that development. The Government has set aside \$500,000 to address the problem by upgrading the development so that it will provide a reasonable environment in which to live, which has been well applauded by the people living there. In the same area, a law-and-order issue has arisen, although it is not related to those units. Tonight, Constable Jim McLean will launch a Neighbourhood Watch program which has been established owing to the organisational skills of Bev Reynolds. I congratulate those people. It is a shame that such an issue has arisen in that quiet area. What is more, the local police have trialled the relocation of the police officer from the Lakes Creek Police Station, Chris O'Neil, and tried to maximise their forces in North Rockhampton. The locals do not approve of the arrangement, and I can understand why. In the next couple of days, I will be tabling in this place a petition from a number of residents who want the operations of that police station to remain as they were, and I must say that I find some sympathy with that view. I have raised that matter with the Minister, who is also sympathetic with that view. In the next couple of days, he will consider the petition and my submission. I am confident that there will be no change to the police hours or presence at the Lakes Creek Police Station. I applaud the police in the area who have trialled that scheme. I believe that it has potential; however, unfortunately, while the present circumstances exist there, I do not believe that it can proceed.

The area to which I have been referring has significant problems, most of which were created by the previous Government and are costing this Government much to overcome. However, the Government will not shrink from its responsibility. Those problems will be overcome, in the same way as the police presence in those areas will be guaranteed.

When young offenders in that area are giving the people a bad time, it is a shocking indictment on society.

Time expired.

### **Cronyism and the Merit Principle**

**Mr SANTORO** (Merthyr) (11.21 a.m.): Today, I wish to talk about an issue that I have raised in this Parliament previously and about which much has been said. I am referring to the issue of cronyism. During the past month or so, we have seen the issue referred to the Electoral and Administrative Review Committee, the Premier has tabled documents in Parliament seeking to disprove that cronyism is being practised in Queensland, the concept of merit principle has been bandied around in attempts aimed at defining what it is and, of course, on the weekend, we saw EARC reject calls from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to investigate allegations of cronyism.

**Mr Borbidge:** Actually, they have requested further information.

**Mr SANTORO:** They have requested further information. I will be suggesting to the Premier that he supply the information. I am sure that the member for Surfers Paradise and other members will be interested in the information that I suggest should be supplied. Members will undoubtedly recall that I was the first member to table in this place a list of appointees with union and Australian Labor Party affiliation. This morning, I added to that list by tabling the details of another batch of such individuals, and I again state my objectives for doing so. The first objective, I reiterate for all members in this place, is to clearly show the inconsistency between a fundamental pre-election promise by Wayne Goss and his actual performance in Government. In Opposition, today's Premier repeatedly stated that cronyism and political appointments would cease under a Goss Labor Government. That has clearly not happened, and I am not the only one saying that. It is claimed by the vast majority of public servants who said so in a survey conducted by EARC itself, the results of which are contained in a recent EARC paper called *Codes of Conduct for Public Officials*.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SANTORO:** I am sure that if all members opposite who interjected took the time to read those survey results, they would see that public servants concur with me totally. It is also claimed by none other than Chris Griffith, Chairman of Queensland's Watchdog Committee—a committee that to date certainly cannot be accused of favouring one side or another of the political spectrum. In fact, I remind honourable members opposite that Mr Griffith used to be a member of the Labor Party until he resigned in disgust because of the incidence of cronyism, as he saw it, within the Government and the public administration of this State.

**Mr Foley:** That is not true.

**Mr SANTORO:** I will take the interjection from the honourable member for Yeronga. There was another reason why Mr Griffith resigned. He resigned because people such as the honourable member for Yeronga did not support the principle that he mealy-mouthed so often within this place and outside it of one vote, one value. Among other reasons, including cronyism, that was why Mr Griffith resigned from the ALP.

This essential truth was also intrinsically appreciated by the hundreds of guests at the recent Castlemaine lunch, for when Wayne Swan, the State Secretary of the Labor Party, declared that there was no such thing as cronyism, those people filled the room with mocking and disbelieving laughter. So, it is not just I, the Liberal Party or, indeed, the National Party that are saying it is all about cronyism; it is clearly the general public of Queensland, including—and particularly—the public servants, who are screaming it from

the rooftops. EARC may well dismiss the submissions of the opposition parties in relation to cronyism, but it cannot—and we on this side of the House certainly will not—ignore the anguish, the frustration and the shabby treatment of the loyal, hard-working public servants who know that cronyism is alive and well in their neck of the woods.

In a speech that he made to the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants on 9 October—I think in Bundaberg—Mr Sherman clearly admitted the existence of such a feeling within the public service. For the benefit of those in this place who have chosen to forget the survey results, to which Mr Sherman referred in that speech, I remind the House that the survey found that 59 per cent of respondents considered the practice of cronyism to be a major factor in the decision-making in the public service and 31 per cent either agreed moderately or strongly with the proposition. In his speech to the CPA, Mr Sherman said—

“All selection committees need to be competent both in the application of procedures and processes set out in the PSMC standards for Recruitment and Selection as well as in the requirements of the position.”

Thus the questions that become relevant, according to any reasonable interpretation of Mr Sherman's comments, are: what is the composition of the various selection councils that have made appointments which have been questioned by people on this side of the House? What are the procedures relating to the advertising of positions to be filled both within the public service and in statutory authorities? What is the short-listing criteria and who short-lists? What is the interviewing procedure? The Goss Government tells us that no elements of cronyism exist, but it does not tell us very much at all about the due process. It is this process that is as suspicious as some of the appointments themselves. I and other members on this side of the House have been contacted by many people who tell us of applications not answered; of humiliating interviews in which the so-called selection panels go through the motions of the interview with indecent haste and often terminate the interviews with absolute rudeness; and of excellent personal qualifications and experience being ignored and preference being given to unknowns and outsiders who are later proven to have a so-called connection with either the Labor Party or the trade union movement.

Today, the Liberal Party challenges the Premier and the Government to agree to release to EARC and to the public certain details relating to the appointment of certain people to positions within the public service and statutory authorities. For example, that challenge is made in relation to the appointment of many of the people whom we on this side have named, including, to name a few, Brian Dobinson, Michael Kinnane, Brian Walsh and Len Keogh. Let the Premier and his Government come out with the details of how and when the positions mentioned in the document tabled by him were advertised; who made up the selection panel; who was short-listed and interviewed, and their qualifications; who applied and was not interviewed and missed out, and their qualifications; the job description that was discussed with the interviewees; and the previous holders of positions who have been unceremoniously dumped. I ask this for all positions. This sort of detail will not be forthcoming because our sanctimonious Premier simply does not want to be as accountable as he wanted former Governments to be. If he was to become as accountable as much as he mouths the word, then in the view of those on this side of the House, he would be proven to be a shallow and deceitful person indeed. In his recent and public attempt to dispel the accusations of cronyism, the Premier challenged members on the Opposition side of the House to prove it. Well, we say that he should give us the information that has been asked for in this particular contribution, and we will go about doing just that.

Let me now address the Premier's recent tabling in Parliament of a list detailing the qualifications and experience of appointees to the SES. A few weeks ago, the Premier, in

my view, indulged in a massively cynical exercise when he tabled the qualifications of the Senior Executive Service. The Liberal Party and I readily acknowledge that many of the people who appeared on the list tabled by the Premier are competent, well-qualified individuals who have a long and distinguished public service career before them. They are people who, through their qualifications and experience, chose themselves for the positions they now occupy. However, there are three points I wish to make about the list. Firstly, the list concerns itself with appointments to the public service and not with appointments to statutory authorities and Government instrumentalities. It is within this area of appointments that the worst cases of cronyism are being experienced and seen. A great number of these appointments are clearly indefensible. Secondly, the details within the document tabled tell us nothing about the purges, the misery and the humiliation experienced by the many hundreds of hard-working, professional, decent and experienced public servants who have been either summarily dismissed or shunted aside by the Goss Government. Thirdly, it clearly displays this Premier's performance in the area of appointments, particularly when one reads names on the list such as David Bruce Butt, former private secretary to the Minister for Health; Don Martindale, assistant secretary of the Trades and Labor Council; John Fergus Sherrington, former private secretary to the Minister for Land Management; Michael Kinnane, trade union official; and Kevin Rudd, former private secretary to the Premier. So the Liberal Party rejects this move by this cynical Premier, who tenders that list as proof that cronyism, retribution and witch-hunting do not exist within the Goss Government's method of political appointments.

On 23 August, Peter Coaldrake addressed the Australian College of Education in Bundaberg and, according to reports, he referred specifically to the dismissal and appointment of high school principals by asking the following question: "Is there really an argument that a person should be simply tapped on the shoulder and offered a \$13,000 increase when other qualified candidates have not had the opportunity to compete for that same position?" The answer to this question is "No" for all types of appointments—not only for the Education Department but also for the public service generally. So this is the disgraceful situation we are facing today. The Government should be warned that we in the Liberal Party will not be deterred from pursuing this issue, both in this place and in the general community. To this effect, today the Liberal party will be announcing the establishment of a cronyism task force comprising the honourable member for Sherwood and me. We will be placing advertisements in major newspapers across the State, inviting the public to provide the Liberal Party with feedback about what is happening, particularly within the public service. Members in this place can rest assured that the Liberal Party will not back off from this issue. Irrespective of what the Premier and members of the Government say, it will be the public of Queensland who will be the judge of the validity of what we are saying. We are confident that that judgment will not be very flattering for the desperate Goss Government.

Time expired.

### **Mental Health**

**Mrs BIRD** (Whitsunday) (11.31 a.m.): In the light of that performance, my speech today is probably fairly appropriate. The state of our society is intermittently related to the personal condition of its members—as with the individual, so with the nation. As people grow and advance, society grows and advances. As people decline, so then does society decline and diminish. In this context, mental health has considerable social importance. Last week was Mental Health Week in our State. It is probably a reflection of society and of our attitude as politicians that, last week in this place, very little, if any, reference was made to mental health. In fact, our attention health-wise last week at least appeared to

concentrate on our anatomy in the area below the shoulders. We must know that conditions of our health above the shoulders can well be stimulus to some of the offences below.

There is a volume of research evidence that there is widespread incidence of mental health in our society—sometimes long term, sometimes short term, but always tragic. In her report to the Australian Government, Professor Beverley Raphael noted—

“Psychiatric disorder is prevalent, extensive, affects all age and social groups and is associated with chronic and often major disability, handicap and invalidism.”

She went on to say—

“For instance, 25 percent of the population may suffer from moderate to severe disturbance at any one time. 12 percent of children may suffer from psychiatric disorder. 40 percent of all hospital beds are devoted to psychiatric patients. One third or more of those attending general practitioners do so for problems of mental ill health. Mental ill health is one of the major causes of invalidity in the Australian population.”

The 1990 figures of the National Mental Health Association suggested that some three million Australians—nearly one in five—were suffering mental illnesses sufficient to interfere with their daily lives.

I wish to speak particularly about community mental health and the rehabilitation of the mentally ill, and to commend the unique work of the Australian-begun GROW movement in community mental health, which has expanded to six other countries. Mental health—personal maturity—is considerably more than the simple absence of the symptoms of mental illness. Diagnosis and treatment can take a person only so far. They rely on the operation of natural healing forces if the patient is to get well. This is exemplified in the case of physical illness. Prompt setting of a broken bone enables natural healing processes in the body to operate. Professional diagnosis and treatment in the field of mental health must dovetail with natural causes or forces or processes for mental health and personal maturity. I have thus been prompted to ask myself: what are these natural causes or forces or processes which underpin the mental health and personal maturity of an individual? Seeking answers, I have found much of value in the educational programs of the organisation GROW.

In presenting the following reflections, I commend GROW for the insights that I have obtained, and suggest that there is much in GROW relevant to the whole field of rehabilitation and prevention in community mental health—much of which regrettably goes unnoticed. As a preliminary, then, I will shortly describe why that happens. GROW, which began some 30 years ago in Sydney, is now the largest voluntary community mental health program in this country. Each year, it comes into contact with more than 12 000 sufferers. GROW could be much larger. The core founders and a few subsequent leaders took GROW from its Sydney origins to all round Australia. GROW is now established in every State and Territory, including Queensland. In the field of mental health—GROW is an advanced and more highly developed counterpart to Alcoholics Anonymous in the field of alcoholism. GROW has developed many insights, techniques and ideas that are respected, especially in the United States and elsewhere overseas. GROW is a self-activation and mutual-help movement that balances an experience-based education program with a GROW form of therapy and a highly developed caring and sharing community concept. I believe that if GROW were to become more adequately resourced, both at State and Federal levels, it could enormously expand its proven healing and life-rebuilding work for the increasing benefit of this country.

Frequently, a person who has been treated for mental illness is confronted with the problem of stigma. People may look down on that person, they may retreat from that

person or they may write off that person. Many say that there are signs that this form of stigma is declining, but I say that it is still there. Another type of stigma takes the form of the sufferer shrinking in the belief that he or she is about to be stigmatised. Many sufferers may be forced to return to, and live in, a highly neurotic personal environment in which the people who are disturbed by their presence may themselves be in a condition of disorientation and maladjustment. Further, the sufferer may have received considerable benefit from diagnosis and treatment, but is left with no know-how for living, no practical map for life and no integrated personal philosophy that will enable that sufferer to advance and achieve his or her best. In this situation, it is simply not enough to provide the troubled person with a supply for material aid, more therapy and more life-style skill training. What is needed are people who are able to relate in a friendly and meaningful way to the rehabilitating sufferer. There is additional need to educate and rehabilitate into the wellsprings of normal life and, at the same time, provide a means whereby the sufferer is enabled to relate to others. Those sufferers need—in a form that is applicable to their state in life—natural forces and personal growth. Most of all, they need friendship, truth, community, harmony, value and purpose.

I shall now comment briefly on some of the interjections that have been made by members opposite. It is the sort of comment with which mental patients in this country deal daily. It is the sort of snide comment that puts mental patients into a box and then classifies them as being untouchable. Mental Health Week was designed to overcome those——

**Mr FITZGERALD:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member referred to members of the Opposition interjecting during her speech. If members of the Opposition did interject, they would like to be identified so that they can defend themselves. The honourable member cannot get away with this type of thing. We did not interject.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member has made his point.

**Mrs BIRD:** Perhaps I should replace the word “interjections” with the word “sniggering”, because sniggering is the attitude that mental patients in this country put up with daily. It would appear to me that people in the rural communities would be well aware of the stress that is creating suicides within those communities. Members of the Opposition should vocalise some of the comments of last week and today to ensure that the people in their regions receive treatment in terms of mental health rehabilitation. Instead of grandstanding, members of the Opposition may well do better to consider the health of the people in their electorates.

### **Government Commitment to Fitzgerald Reform Process**

**Mr BORBIDGE** (Surfers Paradise—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.40 a.m.): To quote the *Sunday* program, as Brisbane basks in the twilight glow of the new era heralded by the Fitzgerald reform process—the corruption and cronyism that once tainted its image supposedly laid to rest—few of its citizens realise just how strongly the dark undercurrents still flow. The more things change, the more they stay the same. The fairy floss Goss Government, led by its plastic Premier, has been dealt a “Sunday” challenge. The multimillion-dollar Fitzgerald process, which was supposed to dawn a new era for the so-called moonlight State, has been submerged by a Government of inaction and incompetence—a Government that promised so much but has delivered so little, a Government long on rhetoric but short on reality, a Government led by a Premier who, when confronted with more than 100 lurid listings in a local paper, responds by asking, “Well, so what? What’s the point?” The point is that Mr Goss is now the Premier. He is now in charge of this State. He is responsible for law enforcement. He is responsible for

policing prostitution. That is the point which, for political purposes, the Premier has chosen to ignore. The Premier has wimped out in a manner that would have drawn him to arms when he was the Leader of the Opposition in this place. From "Mandingo the black male fitness supervisor specialising in personal fitness and relaxation programs" to "Hot, new, hot, new, hot Roxanne, the penthouse pet"—those listings are there for all to see—every man, woman and child—except the Premier of this State and his three brass monkeys who symbolise the inaction of his Government.

When he was Opposition Leader in 1988, the Premier said—

"The test of honesty and the test of the Premier is what he does when he has a choice. A person's true determination to act against corruption is what he does when he has a choice."

Today, the Premier has a choice and his actions will say much about his determination to act against corruption. If he does not act—if he turns his back—it will prove to all and sundry that the Goss Labor Government has used the entire Fitzgerald process to further its own ends. It has manipulated Fitzgerald recommendations to suit its short-term political and public relations agenda. When the bottom line is drawn under Mr Goss and his Government, they have no runs on the board. The pre-Fitzgerald bastions are still there, says Sir Max Bingham, chairman of the CJC. As to corruption, Sir Max says "Yes". As to cronyism, Sir Max says "Yes". The Government has presided over a multimillion-dollar exercise only to see hard-won reforms eroded as corruption builds to new heights in this State.

**Mr Randell:** Thirty million dollars.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** As the honourable member for Mirani said—\$30m. The corruption is condoned by Goss, as evidenced by his decision to allow poker machines in Queensland despite the fact that every commission of inquiry conducted in this country has detailed the links of poker machines with organised crime. Hard-fought reforms and gains risk being overrun by the internal bickering of the Goss Labor Government. I cite the example of the extraordinary comments of the member for Brisbane Central, who also happens to be the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Criminal Justice. He said—

"We are in Government and that beats the hell out of Opposition. I'm not going to do anything that will jeopardise our standing in this Government . . . and if I have got to bite my tongue, I'll bite my tongue until it has got blisters."

They are the words of the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Criminal Justice. In other words, the honourable member said that he is prepared to put public relations ahead of good government. He said, in effect: I am not going to stand up for what is right. I am not going to stand up for the reform process if it will rock the Premier's boat. What a complete and utter wimp-out! I ask the House: what sort of commitment to reform is that? The member for Brisbane Central has indicated his commitment to nothing more than public relations. By his comments, for the entire country of Australia to see, he has compromised the integrity of his position as Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Criminal Justice. A man with a most important role to play in post-Fitzgerald Queensland is prepared to roll over and play dead.

**Mr Randell:** Bite his tongue.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** He is prepared to bite his tongue, as the honourable member said. He is prepared to wimp out, to run for cover and to abandon, as the Government has abandoned the cause of Fitzgerald reform. It is the commitment of a Government looking down the barrel of defeat—a Government chock-full of oncers. The Government will front up at the polls with the following exchange ringing in its ears—

"Reporter: Are the police still being paid off?

Prostitute: I imagine they are. They talk on the streets as if they are.

Reporter: They are—so the corruption continues?

Prostitute: Yes, it does."

That is a frank exchange and one which the Premier immediately discounts. I ask the House and members of the Government, who are so sensitive about their failure in the Fitzgerald reform process: what if members of the National Party Government had discounted allegations contained in the *Four Corners* program the *Moonlight State*? We would have been hung, drawn and quartered and held out to dry.

Last Saturday night, we had the amazing spectacle of the State Secretary of the Labor Party, Wayne Swan, attacking the National Party and me personally over a commitment to reform. According to Mr Swan, the Nationals had indulged in a campaign against reform, a campaign against the Special Prosecutor, a campaign against EARC, and a campaign against anything that came into Mr Swan's confused mind. The simple reality is that the Ahern and Cooper Governments successfully implemented more of the Fitzgerald initiatives in a little under six months than the Goss Government has managed to do in two years. The record speaks for itself. It was the Goss Government, not the Nationals, which slashed funding to the Criminal Justice Commission by some 40 per cent in the last Budget. It was the Goss Government which, when presented with a CJC report damning the poker machine industry, promptly pulled the handle and drew five lemons. It is the Goss Government that is currently loading the public service dice in such a way that fear of recrimination is part and parcel of a day's work. It is a system of public administration in tatters, where power is vested in the hands of a group of unelected and unaccountable mandarins, and where Queensland-born, career public servants have been locked out and the keys have been thrown away. It is the Goss Government which, in line with Fitzgerald, promised this House and the people of Queensland parliamentary reform, but which last week pushed through what the Premier described as the most important legislation in 70 years at 3 o'clock in the morning with something like 34 Government amendments. It is the Premier's Ministers who are consistently failing to answer questions. The Premier and Mr Swan are running scared. They are running around trying to cloud already muddled waters because they know that 44 equals 44 and that their Government is in trouble and on the slippery slide back into Opposition.

### **Liberal Party Allegations of Cronyism; Urban Renewal**

**Mr ARDILL** (Salisbury) (11.49 a.m.): It is the job of Opposition members in this House to criticise, and nobody wants to take that away from them, but the political chicanery of the members of the Liberal Party cannot go unanswered. The McCarthyist lists that are continually brought into this House by members of the Liberal Party are beyond description— except that they are McCarthyist lists. This morning in his speech, the member for Merthyr had the hide to mention Len Keogh, the Chairman of the Redland Shire Council, as an example of cronyism. It is typical of that member's so-called lists that he puts on them people who are appointed to positions as of right, as a result of their position in the community. In actual fact, the chairperson of SEQEB has to be a member of local government, and it is only natural that that person has to be someone with a distinguished career, such as Mr Keogh. He is there as of right because of his position. The majority of people on the list are in exactly the same position.

Another matter which demonstrates the Liberal Party's chicanery was a question asked in the House about tickets given to drunk drivers. It is the oldest trick in the political bag to know what is going to be presented, ask a question about it and demand that the matter be brought forward. That is exactly what was done this morning and is typical of the

member who brought the matter forward. Throughout the years, I have seen him do it over and over again. He knew that the Travelsafe Committee, on which the Liberal Party has a member, suggested that initiative in the report that was put into this House one month ago, in September. He knew the matter would be brought forward because a report has been compiled by the department on the Travelsafe Committee's report indicating that these matters will be brought forward.

I turn now to urban renewal. The Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Alderman Jim Soorley, is not alone in thinking that urban sprawl must be contained. However, he seems to be alone in his scope of vision to adopt adequate measures to do something about it. Other local government people whom I have talked to seem to think that there is little that can be done about it, because "that is what the market wants", and that is what developers are interested in providing. In my opinion, from long years in local government dealing specifically with planning and development, it is more of the latter and less of the former. Developers know that they can make a good profit out of developing broad acres, or in globo land, into 600 square metre or one-sixth acre allotments or providing six-pack, two-storey walk-up apartments on slightly larger blocks. There is no pressure on them to be innovative and only a few, such as Leightons, have bothered to try new concepts.

Of course, the armchair planners all talk of smaller lots and Green Streets and such, but is that what people really want? The developers do not think so, but I believe that a good many people do and have not been given the opportunity at a reasonable price. There will still be a market for standard one-sixth acre allotments, despite any efforts to discourage that life-style, but diversity is what is needed. During the 1970s, I was involved in a small urban renewal trial in Spring Hill to provide a more pleasant life-style for the residents, but the result was gentrification of the suburb because most of the residents did not own their homes. The owners sold at high prices, forcing out many tenants and the result was an increase in valuations and rents based on those sale prices. This cannot be allowed to recur in New Farm. What is proposed in the inner northern suburbs of Fortitude Valley, New Farm, Teneriffe and Newstead—while it might appear overambitious to some—is much more realistic as it is being proposed on a properly planned basis. In the near northern suburbs, the population has fallen by 13 per cent from 1976 to the present 12 000.

The Soorley scheme envisages an increase in the population occurring progressively to approximately 30 000. Thirty-five per cent of the present population are migrants, and 53 per cent are white-collar workers, representing in 15 years a massive reduction of 9 000 blue-collar workers and their families as industry moved to Rocklea, Acacia Ridge and Geebung. If Federally funded urban renewal is ever to operate successfully, it must be successful here. There are a number of reasons for this. First of all, Fortitude Valley is crying out for residential development, and honourable members should just remember its history. It was the location of the first large-scale migration settlement in Queensland when Dr J. D. Lang brought his Scottish and European dissenters to Brisbane in the late 1840s. The local shopping centre developed a major shopping town rivalling the CBD and it was certainly larger than South Brisbane. However, as shopping habits changed in the Great Depression, it went into a decline from which it never fully recovered. The building of the Story Bridge in 1940 and the Second World War revitalised it temporarily until Chermside Shopping Town developed, and since then it has never been viable; and, unless urban renewal takes place in the surrounding suburbs, it never will be again. A mix of high and low rise residential and commercial buildings is the answer if the traffic canyons of Ann and Wickham Streets can be removed. It is extremely important that it not be allowed to rival the central city as a head office and financial district. A visit to American cities shows what not to do to the central city, as a dead heart

destroys the viability and vitality of the whole urban area. "Always keep the CBD tight and vibrant", is a good planning maxim.

The Valley should be developed as the shopping town of the local area, particularly with the public transport mode planned for the urban renewal program. As a new mode, it has a chance of being noticed—unlike the present excellent public transport in the central city, which is underutilised or ignored, and is claimed not to exist. Perhaps space can be found for a relocation of that blot on the landscape, the Queensland University of Technology, from land which used to be the People's Domain. The replacement of the road system is crucial to any renewal program in the Valley, and the most important hub would be the triangle at St Pauls Terrace and Brunswick Street. The present busy building at that location might be the future site of a statue of Eros in the middle of a large roundabout similar to Piccadilly Circus or Trafalgar Square! This would lead to a further junction of routes 25 to Eagle Farm and 26 to Sandgate/Redcliffe north of Brookes Street. The most important factor is to provide diversity of developments in the renewed suburbs of Newstead and Teneriffe while retaining the life-style of residents in New Farm by instituting adequate controls over existing satisfactory housing stock.

Only the Brisbane City Council has the necessary resources and authority to carry out a scheme of this nature. It also can afford the expertise and has the prestige to insist on standards. The late Russ Hinze, as Local Government Minister, understood this even if Don Lane and the Liberals did not and managed to force their disasters on us at Roma Street and elsewhere. Brisbane has the advantage over other States also because it has the Deputy Premier, Minister for Housing and Local Government, Tom Burns, who has provided more rental housing in Brisbane in two years than did the previous Government in a decade. This is the measure of his interest in housing people. I sincerely hope that the Federal Government is also sincere in the matter of providing funds for a life-style that many people want close to the city and its facilities. The alternative is a continuing savaging of our agricultural land, our bushland and wildlife in the breathing space that older planners intended.

I do not believe that smaller individual allotments containing conventional houses will succeed in Brisbane's climate because outside activities utilise space in the yard, but a diversity of housing styles can be made to work if they are properly planned. There is a lot of glib talk about reducing the quarter-acre block—that mythical allotment which never existed. In fact, the standard allotment of a sixth of an acre, that is, 607 square metres, can scarcely hold the average middle-class suburban home being built currently, together with the barbecue and the Hills hoist. If the 607 or 545 square metre block is reduced still further, home-buyers will first have to be convinced to accept a smaller house, which will need clever designwork and soundproofing techniques to maintain the quality of life presently demanded by suburban dwellers. What should be done is: provide the alternative of high density, as Jim Soorley proposes, and then insist that the thousands of vacant blocks in suburban streets be built on by rating vacant land to its full potential; next, housing authorities should provide a large number of duplex houses, back-to-back on small allotments, allowing space to be provided on the outward sides and front of the duplex. This would solve the noise problem of insufficient clearance. This has been talked about for decades, but developers are reluctant to set the precedent.

We have heard a lot of criticism of the Federal Government's Urban Renewal project, and the Valley/Newstead scheme is a chance to show its bona fides. In the context of containing the urban sprawl, I hope it quickly takes up the option. The alternative is a very costly exercise in providing infrastructure on new land when there is land available in the city. Already, the people of Redlands are crying, "No more!"

Time expired.

**Speech by Member for Whitsunday on Mental Health**

**Mr FITZGERALD** (Lockyer) (11.59 a.m.): Earlier, during the Matters of Public Interest debate, the member for Whitsunday alleged that members of the Opposition had interjected. At the time, I availed myself of the opportunity of informing the honourable member that no interjections had been made, and the member for Whitsunday went on to say that members of the Opposition were snickering and sneering at her comments. I deny that any member of the Opposition was snickering or sneering at comments she was making. In fact, the members on this side of the House may have been rather bored by the delivery style adopted by the member in making her speech. I point out that members on this side of the House support totally the public awareness campaign regarding people who are mentally ill.

**Mr Prest:** Are you apologising?

**Mr FITZGERALD:** I want to support that totally, and I want to correct any misinformation that the member was trying to convey during her speech. I reckon her speech was quite devious, and I deny any accusations implying that members of the Opposition are not aware of the plight of some people in the community with regard to mental health. The member referred particularly to the prospect of suicides occurring in rural areas, and she related some of her experiences to the House. I point out that members on the Opposition side of the Chamber are only too well aware of the difficulties that financial conditions are causing people who live in rural areas. Each member of the Opposition can speak from personal experience in relation to those difficulties, because we see people who are suffering from financial stress that is being placed upon them and their families.

**Mr Johnson:** We are concerned about those people, too.

**Mr FITZGERALD:** As the member for Gregory says, we are extremely concerned and we are aware of the situation. Any accusation made by the member for Whitsunday implying that members of the Opposition are snickering and sneering at her comments are mischievous and are made not with the right intention. It is not fitting for a member of this House to try to suggest what is in the mind of someone who is bored stiff by the delivery style adopted by the member who makes the speech. I believe that the member for Whitsunday should apologise to members of the Opposition for making those allegations, which are totally denied.

Time expired.

At 12 noon,

In accordance with the provisions of the Sessional Order, the House went into Committee of Supply.

**SUPPLY****Estimates—Thirteenth and Fourteenth Allotted Days****Estimates-in-Chief, 1991-92****Administrative Services**

**Hon. R. T. McLEAN** (Bulimba—Minister for Administrative Services) (12 noon): I move—

“That there be granted to Her Majesty for the service of the year 1991-92, a sum not exceeding \$390,549,000 for General Public Services, Department of Administrative Services (Consolidated Fund).”

The Department of Administrative Services was created by the Goss Government from a haphazard group of service-providers spread through the old system. Like pieces of a jigsaw, the Department of Works, Goprint, the State Stores Board, the Centre for Information Technology and Communications—CITEC—the Public Relations and Media Office, the Government Motor Garage, State Archives and other sections were amalgamated under my responsibility. They now form a coherent and logical grouping which provides services for other sections of the Government. The department's formation was an important part of the philosophy of removing duplication and overlap of functions. The Government recognised that in an organisation where hundreds of millions of dollars were being spent, a reorganisation along commercial lines could save taxpayers millions of dollars. It was decided the new department could best provide an efficient, cost-effective service if it operated as a number of business enterprises on a user-pays basis in a commercial environment. An amalgamation review unit was created in my department to oversee the radical changes.

The department now comprises eight business units, each with its own general manager. Those units are Q-Build Project Services, Q-Build Property Management, Q-Build Maintenance and Operations, Goprint, Q-Fleet, Queensland Purchasing and Sales, Media and Information Service, and CITEC—the Centre for Information Technology and Technology—with State Archives due to join in the new year. In talking about these enormous changes, I want to say that first and foremost they obviously would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and cooperation of the public servants of all grades working in the department. There have been plenty of whingers in the Opposition ready to criticise the reform process and to take advantage of the fears some people have of change. They have sought to drag morale down. So, in looking back over the tremendous successes of the last financial year and looking forward to the achievements to come in the period to 30 June 1992, I want to take this opportunity of thanking everybody in the department for their contributions. I have met and chatted with staff all over the State and have been most impressed by their attitudes, abilities and enthusiasm.

On 13 August 1990, Cabinet approved in principle the corporate strategic framework and operating philosophy for the department's business units. The strategic plan provides a common vision, value system and service philosophy. The long-term survival of each business unit will depend on the level of customer demand for the cost-effective delivery of our services. In turn, each business is adopting commercially sound practices which contribute to its ability to operate as competitively as any other player in the market. The nine business units of my department will have to earn their income by providing services which meet our clients' needs in terms of quality, timeliness and cost. Each unit has been established to ensure its services are clearly identified, priced and costed through appropriate accrual accounting systems to produce separate profit and loss statements and balance sheets. Business units will generate income to meet their operational costs. The number of staff in the corporate area has been kept relatively small to ensure minimum overheads, but at the same time to provide the policy and planning framework for the business units. One of this area's major achievements was the introduction of a full accrual accounting system from 1 July this year, making this the only department to operate on that basis.

Cabinet approved 26 operating principles for business units in April this year. They include—

Each business unit should establish, on a basis agreed with Treasury, a debt/equity structure similar to that applying to comparable private enterprises. Any net surplus after payment of all costs, including taxes and the meeting of dividend obligations, should be retained to finance the future capital or operating requirements of ASD business units.

Normal commercial principles should apply to the invoicing and recovery of charges by ASD business units including private sector debt recovery practices.

ASD activities or services of a community service nature or whole-of-Government—non-commercial—nature are to be funded through the budget rather than by means of commercial charges or levies.

The prime objective of a business unit shall be to recover all costs, consistent with providing an appropriate return on the Government's investment while maintaining prices or charges at a level competitive with private sector levels or for close substitutes of the goods or service.

In establishing prices or charges, each ASD business unit shall seek to recover all costs including direct and indirect labour and management costs, materials, taxes, dividends, interest, depreciation, commercial returns, etc.—and to keep such prices and charges broadly at levels competitive with private sector prices or charges for comparable products or services.

Each unit is to provide me with a corporate plan and, each year, a fully-costed business plan using accrual accounting standards, and incorporating three-year projections

Services which do not contain any significant public interest component should be charged for unless it can be demonstrated to Treasury that the costs of implementing and operating charging systems exceed the potential efficiency gains.

Following an initial transition period of two to three years, each unit should be fully open to private sector competition unless, upon review, it is determined that less than full competition is warranted.

When departments are untied from units and propose doing business with the private sector, they must seek a quote from the relevant ASD business unit.

For the most part, units should be free to exercise a high degree of management discretion and flexibility in their day-to-day operations with respect to staffing numbers and profiles, and financial and personnel delegations and authorisations.

Our corporate plan is almost complete and will highlight our commercial and client focus.

Work is continuing on the development and implementation of a comprehensive management information system. Extensive training programs have been implemented to inform staff and clients of our plans, and particularly to equip staff to operate in a commercial mode. I will expand on the achievements and plans of each of the units. The business plans for the three Q-Build units are nearing completion, and are due to go to Cabinet in the near future. Organisation structures have been developed to ensure clearer lines of communication with clients.

#### Q-Build Project Services

Q-Build Project Services has a budget of \$73,086,000 for the year, of which \$22m is for labour and related costs. The unit provides a competitively priced professional building consultancy service which manages building concept, design and documentation, and civil engineering works Statewide. Among its major services are energy conservation and environmental health programs. Members may have become aware of the way in which our experts are involved in investigating ways of reducing Parliament House's annual electricity bill of about \$500,000. The business unit developed its organisation structure with the intention of creating a one-stop shop for clients. It has attracted a number of new clients such as the Port of Brisbane Authority. As the only managed, multidisciplinary building consultancy in the Queensland Government, the unit can assure optimum professional results. Special provisions this year include \$42m as part of the enormously

successful accelerated capital works program. Other sums are, of course, contained in the estimates of client departments.

Last year, the Goss Government could see the way the economic wind was blowing. Let us make no mistake: this recession is not restricted to Australia. Other Western economies, including those under non-Labor Governments, are suffering just as badly or even worse. In 1990, this Government talked to both sides of the building industry about what was needed in Queensland, and in December it decided to introduce an accelerated capital works program. In January, about 100 schools, police stations, health facilities and other projects which could be accelerated were identified. That was then increased to 150 projects at a cost of up to \$348m. Construction work has already started on 115 sites, creating some 116 000 weekly pay-packets in the building industry. Last week, I was able to announce the awarding of a contract worth \$58m for the construction of the new State Government office building at 111 George Street. A contract for a major State Government office complex in Rockhampton is due to be awarded in the New Year. My department has been working late nights and weekends to process projects at double the normal rate, and I thank the many people who have been involved. That dedication meant that nearly \$30m was able to be injected into the Queensland economy before the end of the 1990-91 financial year. In the first six months of the year, tenders were called for more than 180 major projects in the accelerated and normal programs. It is estimated that the accelerated program is creating more than 250 000 man-weeks of employment on building sites alone. This equates to about 2 600 jobs.

The unit administers the school improvement subsidy which this year is worth \$4,759,000. This scheme is designed to help with improvements which are over and above the facilities provided by Government, and is part of the Goss Government's commitment to improving education facilities all over the State. This unit has the expertise and experience to advise parents and citizens associations contemplating providing improvements at their schools. That expertise and experience is then essential in making sure that the project is carried out properly, efficiently and cost effectively. Such improvements range from the supply of electrical equipment up to massive games and recreation facilities. Q-Build Project Services also administers the showground capital works subsidy, which has a budget of \$1,533,000.

#### Q-Build Maintenance and Operations

Q-Build Maintenance and Operations has a budget of \$102,437,000, of which \$15,980,000 is for labour and related costs. The unit maintains an infrastructure of more than 19 000 Government building assets throughout the State. It uses the condition-based maintenance planning method, a structured approach to planned maintenance that recognises asset maintenance needs. The method also incorporates a strategic approach to preserving the condition and value of the assets, minimising unnecessary expenditure. More than \$77m will be spent on maintenance this year through our network of regional offices, depots and the technical services branch. Much has been made of allegations that the regions are being neglected by the Goss Government. In fact, the reverse is true, and in keeping with the policy of regionalisation, the structure of this unit focuses on devolution of responsibility to 13 regional offices. A new office is being established to service the Sunshine Coast area from Caboolture at a cost of more than \$1m.

While the private sector has cut down drastically on the number of apprentices in the work force, this Government has kept the number of apprentices employed by the department at the record levels that existed before the recession. It is essential that opportunities exist for youngsters to acquire training, rather than be left languishing in dole queues with no skills to offer. This year, like last year, we took on 88 apprentices, and at the moment there are about 300 apprentices under training. We are contemplating the introduction next year of a program for female apprentices. We have developed and

implemented a new data-based asset register and maintenance information system which has attracted interest from within Australia and from overseas. Last year, assets conditions surveys on over 21 000 buildings were carried out to determine future work programs for our clients. Construction management of projects valued at \$109m, and the supervision and administration of \$245m in building contracts under the capital works program, were undertaken.

The 13 regional offices are also geared to post-disaster recovery services, and can provide an immediate response to the needs of Government and the public alike after storms, cyclones, floods or fires. I was proud of the significant role played by the staff of this unit in the post-flood reconstructions in Charleville and the huge area to the north and in Rockhampton, and post-disaster recovery management of damage to public and private buildings by cyclone Joy in northern and central Queensland.

#### Q-Build Property Management

Q-Build Property Management has a budget of \$162,655,000, of which \$17,858,000 is for labour and related costs. The capital program accounts for \$55,768,000. This unit provides a full range of commercial property services to clients, including one-stop commercial property advice. The unit has developed new and improved management systems such as the tenancy management information system and property register database which provides details regarding sites, buildings and residences managed by ASD. And it is involved with the Lands Department in the introduction of legislation which will simplify disposal and leasing activities in respect of Government-owned property. This unit has been responsible for the very successful school security program being introduced in the State. The replacement cost for a fully equipped administration block, library or teaching block is more than \$250,000. Then there is the loss of countless hours of personal work, along with the trauma and heartbreak for staff and students.

A special task group of security officers responds to specially fitted alarms inside 10 minutes and, in the last year, officers discovered 28 arson attempts at schools. Fires that had been lit were put out before they could cause major damage. If those fires had taken hold, it is estimated it would have cost us nearly \$5m to replace the buildings. The alarms have been fitted to more than 100 schools in areas in which arson, vandalism and theft are a major problem and these alarms are then monitored by the Government's central operations room. The schools are clustered in Logan, Inala, Richlands, Beenleigh, Townsville and Maryborough, with some single schools in Ipswich, Gold Coast, Morayfield, Petrie, Strathpine and Brisbane. Another 20 are now coming on stream, with 29 more in the next six to nine months. The thieves, vandals and arsonists are often caught by the task group or the police before they realise they have triggered an alarm. The special task group also patrols many of the cluster schools on a random basis, and another 35 schools without alarms in the same areas are safeguarded by these regular patrols. This financial year, the cost of the system is \$572,000; but, when we can save \$5m in fire damage in one year, catch nearly 150 other intruders before anything is stolen and disturb more than 100 more before anything is stolen, it is well worth it. Waste paper recycling was introduced as a pilot study by this unit and, by the end of 1991, will involve most Government buildings in the Brisbane CBD.

#### CITEC

CITEC has a budget for the year of \$28,809,000, of which the labour and related costs amount to \$13,685,000. The unit offers communication and information technology solutions to help Government agencies achieve their goals and enhance their service delivery. Public access is provided to selected electronic databases. The unit has introduced a facilities management service in the computer area directed towards achieving savings for departments in infrastructure costs relating to air-conditioning,

security and other areas. It has initiated, in conjunction with the information policy board, a major telecommunications study that will enable interfacing of various Government databases resulting in increased efficiency and reductions in costs. CITEC, in competition with nationally based organisations, was successful in obtaining a contract to supply a New South Wales-based legal company with information from the Australian Securities Commission. The unit was also successful in signing an agreement with NEC to develop a new switchboard product. The unit has been responsible for improved PABX networking for phone and fax services. Q-Net, the outback satellite service, accounts for \$3,874,000 of the budget.

#### Purchasing and Sales

Purchasing and Sales accounts for just \$428,000 of the budget. It gains the rest of its expenditure from a trust fund, and for this year expenditure is estimated at \$15,108,000. It is the central purchasing agency for the Government. A business plan has been approved in principle. Increased efficiencies have resulted in 11 jobs being shed by natural attrition, giving a saving of \$300,000 a year. At 30 June 1991, 806 period contracts for goods as diverse as paper and petrol with a total annual value of \$418m were in operation. It is estimated that, if we had bought those goods at normal prices, we would have needed to spend an extra \$69.5m. The cost of this operation is \$2.5m a year. On 1 July, the unit started operating under the new State purchasing policy. The old policy was introduced in 1986, but it was lacking in many ways—especially when it came to giving local business and industry a chance to do business with the Government. We also wanted a policy which contained a commitment to enhancing business and industry capabilities throughout the State. We felt it was far more sensible to actively encourage companies to become more competitive than to subsidise companies that could not stand on their own feet against southern competition.

Businesses and industry associations from throughout Queensland were invited to examine the policy that was developed and make their own suggestions and contributions. This sort of process has been sneered at by the Opposition, but democracy is important when something like \$1,600m a year is involved. More than 100 written submissions were received and they were all taken into account when the policy was put together. Then the policy was once again sent to organisations such as the Queensland Confederation of Industry, the Metal Trades Industry Association, about 40 industry associations and others for further reaction. We took further comments on board, and on 1 July we introduced the new policy. One of the few criticisms has come from the Opposition, which has told the media that the policy does not adequately address the needs of small business. In fact, the policy contains a complete chapter on how local industry will be boosted. The State Chamber of Commerce and Industry has thanked us for producing the policy. The Metal Trades Industry Association of Australia says that the requirement relating to the special needs of small business is a particularly welcome feature of the proposed policy. And we have had letters of thanks from small businesses such as Davro Services of Beenleigh—a Queensland company through and through. Davro wrote to say—

“We have read the document and wish to congratulate all concerned on the excellence of the result.”

The company said—

“There is no doubt that this policy, implemented in the same spirit in which it was conceived, will give true opportunity to Australian manufacturers and suppliers.”

And just about everyone else has recognised that we are doing everything we can to remove any barriers which prevent small business competing for Government orders.

Under the old system, the emphasis was on centralised buying. Now, there is a Government move to regionalisation and we are giving decentralised industry a better opportunity to supply the goods required by us. Our purchasing officers will give extra weight to local tenderers when—

- spare parts and servicing support are more readily available;
- warranty provisions can be carried out more reliably;
- supply lines are shorter;
- communications in contract administration are easier; and
- employment is created locally.

We are now actively seeking decentralised manufacturers prepared to supply furniture. Manufacturers are also being encouraged to offer their standard production lines where these would be suitable. In addition, the fact that businesses will need to have quality assurance certification will mean that they will also be able to guarantee quality in the export market. Purchasing staff will help companies develop the appropriate quality systems. If Queensland business and industry can achieve internationally recognised standards of quality assurance, we can all sell Queensland to interstate and overseas firms. Any practice which favours overseas suppliers is against the code. Specifications are being written so they are understood by local firms seeking Government business for the first time. Full counselling and debriefing is available to any company failing in its bid to do business with the Government. Purchasing officers are going out to meet company personnel at seminars to improve their understanding of how they can benefit. Senior staff and I have addressed businessmen at evening meetings in provincial Queensland which have been very well attended. In fact, I am addressing such a seminar in Toowoomba on Thursday night this week.

We have created a State Purchasing Council that is overseeing the way in which we do business. Among its tasks is to support the Government's industry development and regional development objectives. It is also ensuring that suppliers have a good appreciation of the Government's needs for goods, equipment and services. It is acting as an umpire on any complaints about the administration of the policy and reviews the policy's effectiveness. It is also providing a point of reference for suppliers who might suffer slow payment or other difficulties. The council has the powers and it has the personnel, comprising representatives of many organisations, including the Queensland Confederation of Industry, the Queensland Small Business Corporation, the State Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Trades and Labor Council.

#### Media and Information Service

The Media and Information Service has been allocated \$8,736,000, of which \$2,407,000 is devoted to labour and related costs. The unit has been restructured to better reflect the depoliticised publicity needs of the Goss Government. Now the emphasis is on providing essential information to the public instead of on peddling political propaganda, with the unit concentrating on providing strategic advice in marketing and communications. Support for the Remote Commercial Television Service, which gives people in the outback a second television channel, accounts for \$3,175,000. Apart from the huge savings made by slashing the sort of propaganda perpetrated by the previous Government, such as the weekly television video which was foisted upon an unwilling public on all three commercial channels, the number of personnel has been reduced by eight, with a saving of \$400,000 a year. A number of staff were transferred directly into information areas to improve the availability of general Government information to the community and the business sector through the production of the Government directory and other information research and referral services. The unit was responsible for the coordinated approach to Government displays at the RNA which resulted in a cost-saving

over previous years of about \$500,000. Of particular interest has been the expansion of regular satellite video-conferencing to support Government regionalisation and training initiatives, as well as the provision of educational services to remote regions.

#### Archives

The archives unit has been allocated \$1,002,000 from consolidated revenue, of which \$798,000 is devoted to labour and related costs. Over the years of mismanagement by the previous regime, the Government's archives have become scattered over all sorts of hiding places. Some are in desperate need of attention. Under the accelerated capital works program, we are constructing a \$27m, specially designed building to house the archives at Runcorn. This construction will result in 15 000 pay-packets in the construction industry. Those business units receive funds through consolidated revenue, along with the corporate core of my department which exists over the top of and alongside those units. The corporate section receives \$12,351,000 of which \$2,987,000 is devoted to labour and related costs, \$5.5m to the operation of the State Purchasing Council and \$2.5m for the ongoing development of our management information systems.

#### Goprint

Goprint receives nothing from consolidated revenue but derives its expenditure from a trust fund, and for this year expenditure is estimated at \$24,465,000. It is a self-funded commercial organisation and its business plan has been endorsed by Cabinet. The unit concentrates on three areas of business—fast print, publications and print brokerage. In March 1991, it introduced a new organisational structure which placed a greater focus on sales, client response and profitability. Savings of \$500,000 a year have been made possible through the loss of about 10 per cent of the staff. On the other hand, sales staff have been increased from 4 to 10. This is because the unit has been untied since 1 October and must go out and compete with private printing companies for business from the Government. It provides a 24-hour service for quotations and estimates. What was the Main Roads Department microfilm unit has now been transferred to Goprint. A major achievement of the unit has been the obtaining of third-party quality assurance accreditation with Standards Australia.

#### Q-Fleet

Q-Fleet receives nothing from consolidated revenue but gains its expenditure from a trust fund, and for this year expenditure is estimated at \$51,911,000. On 1 July, the unit started operating as the sole supplier of cars to other Government departments. It evolved from the need to manage the costs associated with a motor vehicle fleet valued at about \$170m. The business plan has been endorsed by Cabinet. Q-Fleet's services also include maintenance, advisory services, Statewide repair network, improved vehicle disposal procedures, improved insurance arrangements and a wide choice of vehicles. The unit has introduced a computerised fleet management system. It has been able to negotiate a new comprehensive insurance deal which will result in an estimated saving of \$500,000. The melding of these units into an efficient provider of cost-effective, timely services to the rest of the Government is part of the overall reform of the Queensland Government. I look forward to the ensuing debate.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I desire to inform honourable members that on the Vote proposed I shall allow a full discussion on all the Minister's departmental Estimates (Consolidated Fund and Trust and Special Funds).

**Mr STEPHAN** (Gympie) (12.32 p.m.): The Administrative Services portfolio is usually known as the good news portfolio. Just after this Government came to power, it certainly put that into practice by altering some of the programs that were in place and commencing construction in other areas. That was very noticeable, and I could not let this opportunity go by without commenting on that.

When the Minister took over the Administrative Services portfolio, he pointed out that a considerable amount of money had previously been spent in National Party electorates. By the same token, I notice that a lot of money is still being spent in those very same electorates. If overspending did occur in those electorates under the National Party, why has the Minister seen fit to expend a considerable amount of money in those electorates? Obviously, they were and still are growth areas that require this sort of expenditure.

**Mr McGrady:** Wouldn't that suggest that we are doing the right and proper thing?

**Mr STEPHAN:** I am just pointing out that some areas grow faster than others, giving rise to a demand for new schools in particular. If the Government does not cater for the growth in school environments, it is not doing the right thing by the children of the future.

I take note of the Minister's comment about reorganisation into a corporate operation in line with the principle of user pays. This concerns me a great deal. I wonder whether it is just another tax-gathering exercise under a different name. For example, some publications were previously available on request for particular purposes. A charge now attaches to those publications. As I said, I wonder whether that is just another revenue-gathering exercise.

I believe that these Estimates demonstrate the need for a parliamentary Estimates committee to question the Minister responsible for their preparation. These Estimates raise a considerable number of questions, including whether they are intentionally unclear or whether they are designed to be a little confusing. In particular, I refer to the Minister's comment that a new State Government office building is to be constructed in Brisbane. If the Departments of Education, Health and Transport are truly downsizing their central offices—as the Parliament has been led to believe—how can the Government justify the construction of another State Government office building in Brisbane?

I am sure that members would remember the Premier's comments a couple of weeks ago when he was trying to justify the refurbishing of the Executive Building. Members will remember the Premier saying that, as a result of that refurbishing, the Government will be able to house in that building twice as many public servants as are housed there at present. The Premier wondered why Opposition members laughed at that suggestion. There appears to be a move towards housing twice as many public servants in that building. This Government is supposedly considering regionalisation and moving public servants and some sectors of Government departments away from the south-east corner of Queensland, but that is not what is happening. As well, the sum of \$50m has been allocated to commence the construction of a major State Government office complex in Rockhampton. What is the needs-based justification for the construction of additional State Government office accommodation in Rockhampton? What are its likely economic impacts? Are they positive or negative? Or is it yet another effort to prop up the Rockhampton area? Other areas that require just as much support as that small part of central Queensland are to receive no new construction. I hope that the Minister addresses this issue, makes some positive statements and gives some positive reasons why that State Government office complex should be constructed in Rockhampton.

I turn now to property management. This Government will complete an additional \$19m worth of refurbishment projects, including the Executive Building, Forbes House and the Cairns Government offices. Could the Minister provide a precise break-up of the \$19m which is to be spent on that refurbishment? Specifically, how much of that sum will be spent on the Office of the Cabinet? This issue has been raised in the past few weeks in the House. However, the answers provided were not very satisfactory and, in fact, left more questions unanswered than answered. That \$19m is a lot of money to spend on that

particular refurbishing operation when so many other parts of Queensland are foundering. From time to time, we are told that Queensland is on track as far as the economy, productivity and employment are concerned. But that is certainly not the case.

I turn to maintenance operations. I draw to the Minister's attention the building section of the annual report, where it is stated that, through increased productivity, the level of planned maintenance would increase. What does the report mean by "planned maintenance"? Is the Minister trying to say that previous maintenance was not planned or that too much time elapsed between maintenance operations or that maintenance was not carried out as regularly as necessary?

**Mr McLean:** Your Government never spent any money on it.

**Mr STEPHAN:** The National Party Government did spend money on maintenance. I am trying to understand what the Minister means by "planned maintenance". It is planned maintenance for particular purposes in particular buildings. I cite the example of the Executive Building.

**Mr McLean:** It's the same thing. It's falling down.

**Mr STEPHAN:** The Executive Building is falling down! Honourable members can now travel around Queensland quoting the Minister as saying that the Executive Building is falling down. I know that the Minister got upset when it was suggested that the panelling was oak or marble. The problem was the amount of money that the Government was spending on the upgrading of that building. Obviously, that maintenance was planned, and it was planned to look after both that building and members of the Cabinet. I wonder what are the Government's priorities on planned maintenance.

I turn to tenders and quotes. I ask the Minister: what consultation, if any, has occurred to date with respect to the general conditions of contract for industry, where many tenders are being submitted? I refer again to the Minister's answer to my recent question, when I sought some clarification as to the delay of four months or more that seems to be necessary between the time when tenders close and when the unsuccessful tenderers are refunded their deposits. I wanted to know why the delay is necessary, and the Minister's answer was very confusing. It confused all those in the industry who have been submitting tenders and paying their deposits. I began to wonder whether the Minister has any control over that aspect of his portfolio. I remind the Minister that he stated—

"Tender Deposits are required by Principals to be lodged with tenders as a bona fide security commitment of the tenderer to proceed with the work."

There is no question about that at all. The Minister continued—

"Generally, Tender Deposits are refunded to unsuccessful tenderers unless their tender is withdrawn. The successful tenderers deposit is often held and used as security under the terms of the contract.

This type of deposit is rarely used by Administrative Services Department—once in the past five years."

Certainly, many more deposits have been put down on tenders than only once in the past five years.

**Mr McLean:** If an expensive document is required, they put a deposit on that.

**Mr STEPHAN:** That is a document deposit, which is different. In his answer, the Minister also referred to document deposits. However, I was talking about tender deposits and the amount of money that is held. I suggest to the Minister that he should consult with the industry and see what is going on. I assure him that the matter is of concern. The amount of money that is required and held under those sorts of conditions leaves quite a bit to be desired. One person wrote to me and said, "Just take a browse through the pile of

junk mail I have enclosed." That related only to the purchase of one simple machine. God help our forests while this Government is making purchases!

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr STEPHAN:** They are not my words.

**Mr McLean:** Did you come and see me?

**Mr STEPHAN:** I asked the Minister a question about it, and he replied with that sort of an answer. I am bringing it to the attention of the Minister now. What has the Minister done about consultation with the industry? It is no good the Minister getting upset about it now and complaining about it. If I get a reaction by highlighting the matter now, that is the name of the game.

**Mr McLean:** If you have a problem, you come and see me.

**Mr STEPHAN:** Of course, I will go and see the Minister. It is no good the Minister getting upset when I point out the facts and ask him what he has done about the matter. I asked the Minister whether he had consulted with industry, and he shook his head. If that is the Minister's idea of consultation, perhaps I need to raise the matter in the Chamber and point out to him that other aspects need to be taken into consideration.

The different methods of payment are also a cause of concern. For example, most suppliers of major equipment demand payment in full on delivery or on installation. In this day and age, 30-day terms on that type of equipment are almost unheard of. However, a clause in a quotation states—

"Ninety per cent (90%) of the Contract Price for each machine shall be within fourteen (14) days after delivery of the machine.

Ninety five per cent (95%) of the Contract Price for each machine shall be paid on completion of satisfactory trials.

The remaining five percent (5%) of the Contract Price shall be retained until after the satisfactory completion of the warranty period . . ."

That is another reason why I am asking the Minister whether he has consulted sufficiently and if he knows what is going on in relation to the tendering process.

I cite the further example of a document that states the type of tractor required. The contract states—

"To carry out these functions the tractors will require a low travel speed for attachment operation and a higher travel speed for travel between job sites."

The difference is 35 to 40 kilometres an hour for the high-speed tractor and up to 30 kilometres an hour for the low-speed tractor. I do not understand why the specification appears in the contract if one or other tractor is required. The specification states—

"Front wheel assist or 4 wheel drive (i.e. equal wheel size front and rear). 4WD is the favoured option all other things being equal."

In fact, this is what was offered. The tractor that was purchased did not have the same wheel size at the front and the rear and it was not a high-speed 40 kilometres an hour tractor. The tractor had a smaller front wheel drive and it did not meet the 35 to 40 kilometres an hour speed specification. I bring this matter to the Minister's attention for his closer investigation.

I turn now to quotations and ask: what are the department's specific objectives and cost estimates in implementing freedom of information and judicial review legislation? When tenders are provided the information is not always given, and it is not provided unless it is requested. Quotes are not available at all. Some comments have been made to me about this point and the question has been asked: why the difference? I ask for the

Minister's specific objectives and the cost estimates in the implementation of the freedom of information and judicial review legislation.

I turn now to the salary bill and some of the decreases that have occurred, which are open to question. How is it that the salary bill of the department's Corporate Services Program has decreased by 7.81 per cent, while the number of full-time equivalent employees has decreased by 21.67 per cent? There has been a substantial reduction in the number of employees, which has not been met by the amount allocated for salaries for the program. As at 30 June, 50 per cent of full-time equivalent employees were blue-collar workers. I wonder why so many blue-collar workers are required in the building program and which 30 jobs will be eliminated from the building program this year.

**Mr McLean** interjected.

**Mr STEPHAN:** I am taking this from the Minister's publication. I am reading from his publication, and he is laughing at it now.

**Mr McLean:** I'm laughing at your statement.

**Mr STEPHAN:** I am reading the Minister's comments which have been taken out of his publication. Why do they upset him if he in fact put them in?

**Mr Schwarten:** You obviously don't know what a blue-collar worker is. You said you couldn't understand why the Minister wanted blue-collar workers working in the maintenance area. Who do you think works there?

**Mr STEPHAN:** I am sorry if the honourable member has misunderstood what I am trying to say. Sometimes he gets carried away with his own rhetoric. Eighty-two extra positions will be created in the department's service program. I wonder why the Minister requires these extra positions to be created. How can the printing program sustain a \$4.149m decrease in its administrative expenditures? This morning, a number of reports were tabled in the Chamber. I wonder how the printing program can be decreased when over the last few weeks we have been overwhelmed by the number of reports that we have received. Certainly not many of them are read from cover to cover.

The Minister referred to Q-Fleet and the Government Motor Garage. He referred to the \$51m trust fund to provide for the operation of this program. The availability of cars to staff is open to question. It is no good cutting down on the number of cars and not making them available for all staff and not arranging the program properly. That has been causing concern and a great deal of anxiety. The Minister referred to the accelerated capital works program. This program has brought forward capital projects worth \$203m to provide additional employment opportunities in the current economic downturn and to take advantage of the competitive tendering environment. In 1991-92, the Administrative Services Department has allocated \$42m to commence construction of a Government office building in Brisbane. Recently, the Government has implemented this capital works program. Early last year, the Opposition pointed out that it would not work. I wonder whether the Minister's department will stop all its capital works at the end of this program, or how much money will be allocated for capital works projects after the completion of the program. I remind the Minister that, because of the increase in the population of this State, capital work will still need to be done. Extra buildings will still be required, and I warn the Minister against cutting back or stopping this capital works program.

I urge the Minister to indicate the direction in which he is heading when he refers to the principle of user pays in the promotion of Queensland. Part of the Media and Information Service's mission statement included in the report refers to the "promotion of Queensland", and in this regard I point out to the Minister that previously publications were made available to exchange students to take with them when they visited overseas countries. Those exchange students were able to obtain pictorial literature relating to Queensland which described the types of industry engaged in, etc., and this information

was appreciated greatly by not only the students themselves but also the host countries they were visiting. I acknowledge that a publication that exchange students can take with them is available for a fee, but it is not readily available. I therefore urge the Minister to give consideration to not only making available this type of publication but also to reinstituting the practice of providing those students with a Queensland flag. In the past, most exchange students were presented with a flag on the understanding that when they returned to Australia, it was to be left behind in the school they attended—a gesture that was very much appreciated by the host country. In my opinion, the Minister should make Queensland flags available for students to give away in much the same way as organisations such as the Lions Club and Rotary exchange banners at international conventions. The Minister should take steps to ensure that this very good aspect of his department's public relations exercise is not lost.

I turn now to address the issue of school subsidies. From time to time, the Minister makes comments in relation to the funding that has been allocated to schools as part of the Government's upgrading program. I have here a press release containing statements made by the Minister indicating that two schools received a subsidy of \$6,000 from the State Government. The Minister stated—

“As an example of that commitment we plan to spend nearly \$160 million this year on building work at our schools—a huge increase on the previous government's spending.”

I point out that the previous Government's practice was different from that of the present Government for the reason that the present upgrading program now provides a requirement for schools to alter playground equipment, particularly in the adventure playgrounds located in the schools. Inspectors have been told that equipment that, for one reason or another, was in a condition that was previously acceptable is now either too high or in some other way unsuitable. A maximum height restriction has been imposed, and school principals are now being told that some horizontal platforms and slides that do not conform have to be reduced in height—in some cases by as much as nine inches or one foot. In addition, swings have to be located separately from the play area and there is to be no solid timber or metal member at the base of the structure. There is also a requirement for the use of impact-absorbing material and hand grips.

**Mr Pearce:** What is wrong with that? That is just common sense.

**Mr STEPHAN:** That is all right, but the point I make is that, without mishap, children have been playing on those swings and pieces of playground equipment for as long as I can remember. In spite of that, the present Government now requires schools to undertake increased expenditure and accuses the previous Government of not being interested in these matters. I am merely pointing out that the reason the present Government is spending funds on playground improvement is that conditions have been imposed by the Minister which make it imperative for the schools to spend the money.

I draw to the attention of the Committee the contents of a letter which states—

“... ‘Planned Play Areas’ which detailed all current standards and requirements that would need to be addressed when schools undertook to construct playground equipment on School Reserves. These booklets were distributed to every school throughout the State.

The intent of this booklet is not to imply that all existing playground facilities need to be immediately upgraded . . .”

I point out to the Minister that if they are not immediately upgraded, officers from his department will promptly inform the schools concerned that the equipment and playground areas are not safe, with the end result that children will be prevented from playing in those areas. The Minister must state either one thing or the other: he cannot write a letter stating

that there is no immediate intention to have these playground areas upgraded when at the same time he imposes new standards on some schools that cannot afford the additional expenditure. Recently, I made representations on behalf of a school in my electorate to devise some scheme that would enable schools to afford the construction program that the Minister expects them to undertake to meet the guidelines he has imposed. I have collected a great deal of information which points to the fact that a considerable sum would be required to meet these guidelines. The end result of implementing this program without the provision of adequate funding will be that the playground areas will have to be closed, thereby denying children access to recreation and playground equipment. I urge the Minister to make available additional funding above the 50 per cent subsidy available to enable schools to meet the requirements.

I notice that the budget contains a slight reduction in showground subsidies. In the past, showground organisations spread through this State have made use of those building program subsidies with great success. The subsidy is distributed to organisations ranging from the Brisbane RNA to the small show societies of country towns. I urge the Minister to ensure that sufficient funds are made available to facilitate construction of new buildings when and where required. In the Gympie district, show princesses have raised amounts of \$30,000 and \$40,000 that have been used for making improvements to the showground. It should be remembered that the community supports the fund-raising efforts of show committees and makes significant contributions to their building programs, thereby providing buildings and facilities which are of lasting benefit to the whole area. I would not have mentioned this matter except that I noticed the "small" reduction in the amount by \$305,000. Under present economic conditions, I would like to think that show societies could look to the Government for continued support for the building program. In conclusion, I refer to the Minister's comments in relation to the success of installing security and alarm systems in schools. I understand that several Brisbane schools where the security system has been installed have been saved from vandalism because security personnel have been able to swiftly traverse two or three suburbs and apprehend the offenders within a short time after the alarm was triggered.

Time expired.

Sitting suspended from 1.02 to 2.30 p.m.

**Mr SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton North) (2.30 p.m.): At the outset, I want to spend some time correcting some of the points that were made by the honourable member for Gympie. The first point is his question about the provision of the \$23m building in Rockhampton. To my knowledge, that issue has been raised no fewer than eight times in this place. Various questions have been asked about it and explanations have been given. If I have interpreted the issue correctly, it was: was there a need for that building in Rockhampton and had there been an assessment made of buildings available? The overall assessment shows that, in Queensland, more than 30 per cent of buildings used by this Government are leased. That might not sound dramatic; but, when one starts adding up how much those leases cost the taxpayers of this State, one finds that that is a significant amount of money. It also means that, in certain parts of Queensland, the Government is a victim of unscrupulous landlords. Those landlords feel free to charge the Government as they so desire in areas in which there is a shortage of accommodation. They rip the Government off. Rockhampton is no exception. Over the years, the assessment was made—and I refer specifically to the period before 1983—that there was a great need for a building to be constructed in Rockhampton. There were many reasons, not the least of which was that there was no quality accommodation available; and, secondly, that the accommodation which was available was very expensive and scattered all over the town. In many cases, a taxpayer who was trying to do business with Government departments in Rockhampton had to go to four or five locations.

In 1983, the previous State Government was planning to construct a building in Rockhampton. The Government bought some land—a good site, I might add—and the allocation for the building was supposed to be in the 1983 Budget, but the proposal was knocked on the head. I believe that the reason for that—and I have never heard it denied—was that some good old brown paper bag diplomacy used by some influential National Party members who owned buildings in Rockhampton prevented that proposal from going ahead. That has been well documented. I made that statement in my maiden speech. It has never been refuted, and I stand by it. Another reason why the question may have been raised was that the National Party itself will lose out on some very important revenue as a result of the decision to build this \$23m building. The Department of Education currently leases premises from the National Party in Quay Street, Rockhampton, at a cost to the Government of about \$140,000 a year. That is \$140,000 that will not be going into the coffers of the National Party. I think a raw nerve has been hit.

The other point that I make is that it costs almost \$1m a year for the Government to lease premises in Rockhampton. In my opinion, this proposal is worth while. Honourable members need not just take my word for it; an independent survey was conducted in Rockhampton—and I might say that the survey was conducted to try to prove the Government wrong—and it confirmed that there was a need for such a building to be constructed. Indeed, the project would not only create a large number of jobs and bring income into the town but also produce something like \$54m by way of a boost to the local economy. So, in every assessment, the project comes out with flying colours. I trust that the honourable member for Gympie has listened to my answer to his question and is able to comprehend it. The honourable member can feel free to make any assessment he likes. To set his heart at rest, I will give him a copy of the independent assessment that was made of the proposal.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** He apologises.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I do not care whether the honourable member for Gympie apologises or not; it is up to him. The topic of the Executive Building was also raised. If I were the honourable member, I would not speak too loudly about the Executive Building, because I happen to have heard that when Mr Brian Austin—everyone remembers him—was elevated upstairs in the Executive Building, he was not able to occupy the Deputy Premier's office, so he renovated his own office. I think that it cost \$900,000 to renovate the office with red cedar, marble and imported carpets. If I were the honourable member, I would not be too pious about that claim.

The honourable member for Gympie referred to playground equipment in schools. It is obvious to me that the honourable member has not really grasped this issue, which has been around for a number of years. In fact, the honourable member's Government tried to grapple with the unsatisfactory nature of playground equipment throughout schools in this State. He obviously does not understand that many memos were issued under his Government, from both the Education Department and the Works Department, calling on p. and c. associations, principals and school communities generally to re-evaluate the suitability of playground equipment. If the honourable member for Gympie had visited as many schools as I have, he would have seen some playground equipment that was dangerous and outdated. Something had to be done about that. This Government has bitten the bullet and tried to obtain some proper structures on which children can play. Accordingly, I applaud what the Minister for Administrative Services is trying to do to safeguard Queensland children at schools.

I now turn to the other issue of maintenance. I think that the honourable member for Gympie made a faux pas when he said that he was surprised that 50 per cent of maintenance people were blue-collar workers. What I read into that remark made by the honourable member is that perhaps the Government should not have any day-labour

people—blue-collar workers—working in the maintenance area and that all of the work should be contracted. That has been the philosophy of the National Party for a number of years.

Everybody hears about the National Party's commitment to employment and its commitment to rural areas. In 1957, in my region, there were 230 day labourers. In 1979, there were 120, because the axe went through them in 1975. My father was one of the carpenters who were dismissed unceremoniously under the National Party program when day labour was stripped down. Today, only 83 of those people remain. The record of the National Party is not very good. I will look at the picture Statewide. In 1957, when that Government came to power, there were 2 336 blue-collar workers, maintenance workers or day-labour workers working for the then Works Department. Today, that figure is 982. The figures speak for themselves, and I think that that is what the honourable member was on about. He asked a very valid question as to why the Government would want to persist with that. The reasons are manyfold, but some of the words that spring to mind are availability—and that is availability of a large multitrades work force that can undertake effectively a wide range of building construction activity—flexibility, mobilisation, simplicity, stonemasonry and other specialist areas, construction management, quality assurance and reliability. They are reasons for the need to maintain the work force of the department. That work force plays a very important role in this State.

The business units to which the Minister referred are many and varied, and he made a good job of summing them up. One about which I wish to speak is the Q-Build Maintenance and Operations business unit. Its role is to integrate planning and delivery of all types of maintenance operations and minor works for clients' buildings. Its major service areas are building maintenance management, installing and operating building/engineering services, fire safety, energy management, security, mechanical, electrical and electronic systems, emergency repairs, construction management, contract administration for new building projects, professional advice, asset management and maintenance, and servicing and repair of Government timepieces. There are a number of key points to that issue as well.

This Government has made four changes in that area. The first is the regionalisation program, with the new region established at the Sunshine Coast. There are plans for the establishment of a new district office at Roma, the movement of the metropolitan east regional office to existing facilities at Milton, together with a number of enhancements in depots in smaller country centres in Emerald and Innisfail. Contrast that with what occurred under the previous Government. This Government is doing it on the basis of need, not greed. The program of detailed market research will ensure that our service and delivery strategies provide for the needs of our clients, and commercialisation awareness workshops will be held for all staff of in-business units. This program was designed to introduce the need for a client focus, a sense of commercial urgency, a culpable change within the business and, finally, there is the introduction of responsive mobile maintenance services. That is another good example of what this Government is doing. That particular unit, which this Government started, is in very high demand. It gets between five and seven call-outs every day. It is on the go—it can go anywhere—and its main concern is maintenance. In fact, I think the majority of the work that it does is devoted to that particular area. Maintenance is an area that has been raised in this place. Programmed maintenance was not on the agenda of the previous Government, which put maintenance money into electorates that were geographically on-side—as it used to be called—with that Government. That is why today enormous problems are experienced in regard to maintenance. Today, the Government has a program of maintaining its buildings—both pro-active and reactive maintenance.

A lot has been said about what a failure the day-labour force has been. The Opposition would have us believe that those workers are failures. I have a document from the Capricornia Region Q-Build office. The general manager of that office is Ross Batley. He is ably assisted by Bill Horridge and Bruce Corey. Those gentlemen have put together a very significant document which shows exactly what this section does. During the flood, for example, they were able to inspect 1 000 private residences in Rockhampton. I cannot think of any other group that would have been able to do that. The effort in Charleville would be well remembered. Without a day-labour force of the magnitude of the force employed by this department, it would not have been able to respond so quickly to the demands in that area.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** The cost of the Glenmore State High School project, for example, was \$321,454, and the construction time was a mere 24 weeks. Craig Pedersen was in charge of the job, and it was \$7,500 and five weeks under estimated time. The regional health office in Rockhampton was a \$200,000 project, and again there was a very tight time-line, with a total working-time of only 11 days. The client department was able to take up occupancy on the designated date. The same situation applied to the construction of houses in Emerald. There was a time-limit of 21 weeks, an estimated cost of \$186,000 per unit, and again they were constructed in 17 weeks at \$7,500 under the estimate. The list goes on. I have a letter which praises the efforts of Jamie Hannan and Arthur "Skipper" Hannan for their efforts in the painting of the Biloela State High School, signed by the principal, Trevor Gordon. It reads—

"In these times of 'accountability' I wish to record the fact that at Biloela S.H.S. we are 'satisfied customers' of Q Build."

The list goes on. In regard to the Yeppoon State High School, an amount of \$406,000 was approved for the provision of dark room and art spaces, and there was a saving of \$15,000. The department has a valuable resource in its workers. I am very proud that this Government has continued to maintain the number of workers. Approximately 88 apprentices have been put on, so the Government is doing its bit for training as well. Well might the honourable member for Gympie ask, "Why do we need these workers?" The facts speak for themselves. They are hard-working, efficient, and deserving of the credit of every member of this Chamber for the efforts they have put in over a long period and the hell they had to put up with under the previous Government. This Government will make sure that those people are looked after in the way they ought to be, and that the derision with which they were treated previously, because they were not appropriately outfitted or resourced, given targeted jobs, or looked after to that degree, does not happen again.

Time expired.

**Dr WATSON** (Moggill—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (2.45 p.m.): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak in this Estimates debate. I will start on a positive note by congratulating the Minister on some matters, because he deserves congratulations on certain aspects of the administration of the Administrative Services portfolio. In saying that, I remind honourable members that my information from my colleagues on this side of the Chamber and some members on the Government side is that, if a vote had been taken a couple of years ago on the shadow Minister least likely to succeed, the Minister may have won the vote. However, I will begin by being positive. One important point is that the Minister provided the departmental report last week, which enabled me to examine it on the weekend. The Minister's other ministerial colleagues could follow in his footsteps and provide their reports in sufficient time for examination. On behalf of the staff of my electorate office, I acknowledge the work of the staff in the Minister's office who have

been extremely helpful. I refer particularly to John Mickel, John Lutteral and Ron Cuthbertson. That reflects well on the Minister.

**Mr Elder:** Are many of them in your electorate?

**Dr WATSON:** I have not actually had dealings with him. I acknowledge also John Conway. My office has found those officers to be extremely courteous, which distinguishes this Minister's portfolio from those of a number of his colleagues. He could teach them a thing or two. Ross Dunning's good leadership is reflected in many aspects of the department's administration. That is not to say, of course, that I agree with everything that the Minister has done. I am sure that that does not surprise the Minister or other members of the Government. Some matters need elucidation. I will raise a number of questions about the administration of various aspects of the Minister's portfolio.

One matter that has been brought to my attention relates to Government cars. An editorial which appeared in the *Townsville Bulletin* stated—

"An LTD limousine was driven from Brisbane to Mt Isa to do no more than drive Mr Comben from his private jet to his motel. He then flew on to Riversleigh, with two hired back-up vehicles, laden with liquor, travelling by road. During his lightning-fast inspection, Mr Comben became an expert in paleontology, property and cattle"——

**Mr McGRADY:** I rise to a point of order. The information which the member has given this Chamber is misleading and untrue.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN** (Mr Hollis): Order! There is no point of order.

**Dr WATSON:** I am merely reading from a newspaper article, which continued—

". . . although he failed to notice about 40 head of cattle desperately looking for feed near the purported fossil field and seemed to have no idea of what a drought is—he declared the land useless."

I raise a number of questions about that. First of all, is that an appropriate use of a ministerial LTD? More importantly, is use such as that consistent with the business plan outlined in the Minister's departmental report relating to Q-Fleet? Is it a cost-effective use of a Government motor vehicle?

**Mr McGRADY:** I rise to a point of order. Again, the matter raised by the member is totally untrue. The Governor of Queensland was to accompany the Minister on that visit and, at the very last minute, he became ill.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Dr WATSON:** The Minister can answer that for himself. If he has a good reason, I am willing to listen to it. However, because it is important, I will continue with the issue of Government cars and Q-Fleet. Today on radio, a related issue was raised by the Minister for Resource Industries about the use of electricity in these precincts. I do not mind those issues being raised by the Minister for Resource Industries. It is legitimate to raise a question on the use of power and the effect that it might have on our environment. However, if the Government wants to look at that issue seriously, it must examine other related issues such as the use of ministerial cars. Most of the Ministers drive around in LTD limousines, which are heavier and less fuel efficient than smaller and more compact cars. I add that we should not be hypocritical on these matters. Good reasons exist for selecting different kinds of cars, but if some Ministers can preach one thing on the radio to obtain cheap mileage on an issue, all other Ministers ought to be consistent across the various activities of their portfolios.

At page 13 of the annual report, comment was made on the future directions that Q-Fleet might follow. It refers to clients being able to take up equity in the business or receive budget supplementation from Treasury. The report indicated that 15 departments

and agencies have elected to take up the equity option. On that issue, a couple of questions arise. What does it mean to take up equity in this business unit and what are the advantages that might flow from that? How consistent is that with a Westminster system of Government and who will be the responsible Ministers? Will this Minister, as the Minister for Administrative Services, therefore be responsible for Q-Fleet, in whatever form it takes, and will other Ministers, presumably through their departments, have equity in it? This raises an interesting question of ministerial responsibility. I am also interested to know what the report means when it refers to one Government department taking an equity interest in another Government department under our system of Government and eventually how this is to be reported.

I am also interested in the reference on page 4 of the annual report to business units implementing an accrual accounting system. In some people's minds, this raises the question of exactly what reporting standards will be used and, more importantly, of course, what ability is there to evaluate those business units. This is important, because when the Queensland Investment Corporation Bill was discussed in the House some time ago, the Treasurer indicated that he was willing, at least on an ex-post basis, to outline the targets that would be used to evaluate the QIC. When we talk about financing, we usually think of things such as the rate of return on assets, net profits or some other derivative of those two items. I would like to know how the Minister sees the setting-out of criteria for evaluating business units. Today, when answering a question about corporatisation versus privatisation, and in yesterday's *Sun*, the Treasurer suggested that, if corporatisation failed, privatisation was perhaps the next logical step. The question that must be raised is: by what criteria do we decide corporatisation has failed or succeeded? Those criteria have to include financial criteria. The accrual accounting system in the business units, which the Minister has implemented and which I applaud, therefore allows a next step, namely, to define clearly the expectations in terms of financial criteria and the comparison of actual performance with those expectations.

An additional issue which I would like to address, which came to me from the business community, relates to design and construct tenders with which the Minister's department now seems to be operating. I am sure that the Government is aware of the high cost of such a tendering system to consultants such as quantity surveyors, architects and structural engineers. I am sure that the Minister believes that perhaps this is in the best interests of the Government in terms of paying the cheapest price for an end product. One question that comes to mind is whether or not this is in the long-term best interests of the Government and, of course, more generally, the community. Because of the high cost of sending out to a number of potential contractors and inviting each of them to tender, and all of them developing their own work group of professionals around them for the tendering process, one of the problems is that only one of the tenderers is successful and has his costs reimbursed. For many consultants, there is a question of whether or not it will be profitable for them to continue to participate in that kind of activity. To achieve long-term cost control and quality control, the Government must ensure that competition remains in the marketplace. Through the Government contracting system there should not be set up a process that destroys competition. To do so will cause a major problem.

The other concern that people have is whether or not costs relate only to the capital costs of a building or to what are generally referred to as the life-cycle costs—the costs of running the building and the costs of maintenance and such things. The process adopted may result in the construction of a cheaper building, but there has to be a definition of "cheaper". Does it relate simply to the initial outlay costs or to the total life-cycle costs of the building. I ask the Minister: is he completely confident that the process

that is being adopted now by his department results in the minimum total cost outlay for the building? By that, I mean not only the initial capital costs but also the life-cycle costs.

In the time that is available to me, I should bring to the Minister's attention a matter which has been brought to the public's attention by my colleague the member for South Coast. It concerns school repairs and Government minor works. It has been indicated to me that the minor works budget has fallen quite substantially this year. Last year, the amounts in the various categories added up to approximately \$86m for minor works in schools. This year, it looks as though that figure has dropped to \$51m, which is some 40 per cent less than the amount spent last year. This concerns many people in the community, particularly those in the school p. and c. associations, because they are the ones who may end up being asked to pick up the difference. In a related area, through information received from the bureaucracy and elsewhere, I understand that repairs and maintenance may also have been slashed by 40 per cent. Again, this is of concern to all schools, particularly those in my area. As the Minister knows, since I have been the member for Moggill there has been quite an effort on my part in having discussions with his office to establish a program to repair and, particularly, to repaint a number of the schools. I am very concerned that a slash of some 40 per cent in that area would mean that much of the very essential maintenance, which has perhaps been put off for too long, may be put off even further. I would like, if the Minister is able to give it, his assurance that, if it has not been addressed already, or if I have the wrong information, that will be addressed.

**Mr BRISKEY** (Redlands) (3 p.m.): I must say that I am very pleased to hear that the member for Moggill thinks so highly of the Minister for Administrative Services. I am very pleased that Liberal Party members believe that the Minister is doing a good job. I am sure that they will be very happy that he will continue to be a Minister for many, many years to come.

As honourable members would be aware, when this Labor Government was elected in 1989, once again common sense and logic prevailed in Queensland. One of the changes made was the establishment of the Department of Administrative Services to bring together all common services that the Queensland Government provides to itself. As a result of this very logical and commonsense approach to Government services, the Government computer service—CITEC; the Government printer—Goprint; fleet management; purchasing and stores; media information; State Archives; and the Department of Works, were combined to form the Department of Administrative Services. These service areas were then logically grouped into nine business units so that there could be adopted a commercial or user-pays focus for the services to be provided to the Government. These business units are the Q-Build Project Services; Q-Build Property Management; Q-Build Maintenance and Operations; Queensland Purchasing and Sales; CITEC—the Centre for Information Technology and Communications; Goprint; Media and Information Service; Q-Fleet; and the State Archives. These business units are not only expected to provide services to the Government, but they are also expected to operate on a commercial basis and to ensure that the delivery of their services is at an optimum level. This means that the services that they provide must be second to none in the marketplace. Whether or not each business unit survives will depend on the demand for its services.

Operating each business unit in this commercial manner will ensure that the Government knows exactly the cost of providing services to the Government. This knowledge will allow the Government to make rational decisions with regard to the services that it provides. Knowing for the first time the true cost of services will enable the Queensland Government to make decisions with regard to extending those services or, indeed, making changes to the services that it provides. Therefore, commercialisation of these nine business units means that they must provide efficient and quality products and

services on a full-cost identification basis, with proper regard for the needs of their clients, while operating within Government guidelines. Hence, commercialisation of the business units within the Administrative Services Department requires the establishment of specific commercialisation goals for each business unit which reflect its particular business environment. I refer, firstly, to the efficient use of resources—that is, money and people—within the business unit; secondly, the provision of high-quality, independent services, consultancy and policy advice; and, thirdly, the minimisation of costs to Government. This commercialisation of business units within the Administrative Services Department will best be achieved by ensuring that all business units operate in an environment that includes management autonomy and authority, competition through untying of clients, financial accountability, and fee-for-service principles. Each business unit is working autonomously towards commercialisation. There can be no doubt that once commercialisation is achieved throughout all business units, there will be tremendous savings to Government.

Within Q-Build, detailed market research has been undertaken. As a result, significant progress has been made towards the implementation of a long-term strategy. Client contact programs which have been developed highlight the importance of providing high-standard, cost-efficient products and services. Programs are also in place to educate the employees of Q-Build in relation to the change to commercialisation. The implementation of information systems is well on the way. These will allow each unit within Q-Build to measure its productivity, manage projects and provide essential data on facilities provided by Q-Build. As well, the implementation of a computerised property management system to efficiently manage the leasing functions for the State is under way. The management and operations area is currently developing a framework of working cooperation with Australian Construction Services in providing commercial services to clients.

CITEC—the Centre for Information Technology and Communication—is well on its way to commercialisation. It is currently operating on a fee-for-service basis for telephone and other communication services. It has also implemented a marketing plan to build in partnership with clients, and is in the process of implementing commercial management and accounting systems. Goprint has been restructured along commercial lines into various business units. This has been done in order to provide for greater efficiency and to enable a better focus on profits and accountability. On 1 July this year, Goprint commenced operating on a full commercial basis. From 1 October this year, its traditional clients have been untied. Goprint now has to compete with the private sector for those clients. Because of reduced printing costs through competition with the private sector, there will be savings to the Government. The Media and Information Service has introduced commercial practices and provided a range of public relations, photographic, video production and teleconferencing services.

Q-Fleet has implemented a policy of client consultation at all levels throughout the State. It has also introduced a vehicle hire service for clients. Further, it has introduced new motor vehicle contracts offering clients a greater range of vehicles at very competitive prices. The estimated savings to the Government are some \$3m. Q-Fleet has also introduced a repairer network throughout the State which has resulted in significant reductions in overservicing and overcharging. Within Purchasing and Sales, warehouse operations were placed on a full recovery basis from 1 July this year to ensure that prices are cost competitive. A marketing unit to advertise the range of services provided to clients has also been established. As can be seen by the examples that I have just given, the clients of these business units are already being charged for their services, and given a better service. By 1 July 1992, in all business units commercialisation will be in operation. As from 1 July this year, the client departments who use some of the services

provided by the business units have freedom of choice as to whether they use the business unit or use a private sector provider. That freedom-of-choice decision must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Some services are being reserved to the business unit for policy or security reasons. An example of that, of course, is the printing of Cabinet papers, parliamentary papers and legislation.

Presently, the Minister's department is working on the development and implementation of commercial practices and procedures to ensure that each business unit can report in a businesslike manner, that is, on a profit basis. The department is also working on the development and implementation of operational support systems within each business unit to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Those systems include client billing systems, which enable the timely and accurate charging of clients for services and products; a time catch-up system to allow recording of production time against work performed and to facilitate client billing; and a purchasing system to improve the processes of ordering goods and services.

From 1 July this year, all nine business units were placed under accrual accounting so that their total costs to Government can be readily ascertained, and I note that the member for Moggill also applauds that decision. That system of accounting is essential as each business unit is expected to operate in a commercial or user-pays mode. Each business unit provides goods and services to its clients and, in order to properly manage the unit, it is imperative that the cost of providing those goods and services each month is known so that the proper charge can be worked out for the provision of such goods and services. It is also imperative, just as it is in any commercial business, to know how the costs are made up so that areas which need improvement can be identified and the necessary action can be taken to address those needed improvements.

As well, as indeed in any other business venture, the value of goods or stock on hand must be known, cash flows must be maintained and it must be known whether or not customers or clients are paying their bills and, indeed, how long it takes them to do so. The current value of assets must be ascertained, as it is in any business and, further, it must be ascertained whether or not sufficient moneys are available to meet outstanding commitments. It is extremely important that all of that information be available so that each business unit can be run on a commercial basis. A full accrual accounting system requires the systematic recording of transactions and events throughout the year so that their effects are recognised when they occur. It is not sufficient to have merely a record of when cash is exchanged or merely a yearly balance sheet. Sufficient information must be available to run each business unit on a commercial basis. In the past, that sort of information was not available. To ensure that each business unit is able to operate in a commercial way, clients must pay their bills and those moneys must be received by the business unit without excess delay. Therefore, within each unit there must be some form of credit control and a debt-collection area so that the unit can continue operating and pay its own accounts.

The Minister and his department have recognised that the accrual accounting system is extremely important for the success of the business units and their operations in a commercial framework. Therefore, resources have been provided to ensure that training courses are made available so that the success of the accrual accounting system can be assured. In April this year, operating principles for each business unit were approved by Cabinet. Those principles were designed to provide a consistent framework against which each business unit could develop its corporate and business plans for commercialisation. That is, each business unit should operate on a full user-pays basis within the commercial environment. In all, 26 operating principles were developed. The main criteria are that Government departments become more economical in their level of demand for services and the suppliers or business units must be more efficient in the

provision of those services. Those changes in the way in which departments service their needs and how suppliers of services provide those services to departments should happen over an appropriate period. That is, there must be an adequate transition period so that the Government may have the opportunity to review the arrangements that have been made in the light of the experience gained through that process.

With regard to the Budget arrangements—the operating principles provide that, when Administrative Services Department business units charge for their services, client departments should receive and control the appropriations available to acquire those services and also have the capacity to vary the level of service utilised so as to achieve efficiencies. When a business unit is expected to operate as a commercial undertaking with charges for its services predominantly set on a cost-recovery or commercially competitive basis, the finances of the business unit should normally be conducted outside the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Each business unit should establish on a basis agreed with Treasury a debt/equity structure similar to that applying to comparable private enterprises. Any net surplus after payment of all costs, including taxes and the meeting of dividend obligations, should be retained to finance the future capital of operating requirements of the business units.

Normal commercial principles should apply to the invoicing and recovery of charges by the business unit, including private sector debt-recovery practices. Surplus cash balances are to be invested by Treasury through the Queensland Treasury Corporation with interest earnings payable to the business unit. Each business unit may seek short-term overdraft or long-term borrowing facilities through either Treasury or the Queensland Treasury Corporation, which shall, if approved, be available at commercially competitive rates. Each business unit shall have as its prime objective the recovery of all costs consistent with providing an appropriate return on the Government's investment while maintaining prices or charges at a level competitive with private sector levels or with close substitutes of the goods or services. I commend the Minister and his department for their moves towards commercialisation of the department's business units because it will provide a better service to its client departments.

Time expired.

**Mr STONEMAN** (Burdekin) (3.15 p.m.): I rise in this Estimates debate to acknowledge the importance of this portfolio. The activities of this department touch every member of Parliament and the community. It plays a very important part in the delivery of Government services in many arenas. I wish to briefly, but sincerely, acknowledge the communications I have received from the Minister's office. This communication from the Minister to me, as a member of this Parliament, is always courteous—if not always positive—and stands head and shoulders above any other communication that I receive as a member of the Opposition. I thank the Minister for that.

The Department of Administrative Services is the most recognisable of the Government's departments because of the range of activities it undertakes. First and foremost, one of the main activities of the department that the community sees is the provision of school buildings and the upgrading and maintenance of those buildings. This department provides buildings right across the spectrum of education from preschool to tertiary level. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence in the gallery this afternoon of students from two schools who probably rarely get the opportunity to come to Brisbane and attend Parliament. Their member of Parliament is not speaking on this occasion, but they are able to see the way in which the debate takes place. They are able to witness a debate taking place about provision for the schools they currently attend. The Mount Murchison and Prospect Creek schools are situated outside Biloela, and today 30 or 40 pupils from those schools are present. I am sure that all honourable members have a great deal of pleasure seeing children from country schools coming to Brisbane.

and witnessing the way this Chamber operates. I am delighted to be speaking whilst they are in the gallery because I have a great affinity with country children. A little later I will take the opportunity to note a problem concerning the lack of a country school in my electorate.

It is a fact of life that this department provides the bricks and mortar for the delivery of services in many areas such as health, education, welfare and primary industries. They all depend very much on the cooperative spirit of the department and the allocation of funds derived from Government sources. Over the last 30-odd years, this State can truly be said to have been done proud by the increase in the number of structures and accommodation facilities made available through the Department of Administrative Services. Over the years, the facilities that have been provided and planned in my electorate have grown to be more sophisticated in the sense that, because it is a coastal area and subject to the vagaries of cyclonic influences on an annual basis, it is increasingly recognised that many buildings constructed by the Government can be used to service the community. They can be utilised as shelters in times of severe cyclonic conditions. In recent years, it has been planned that high school domestic science facilities will provide food as well as shelter for communities disrupted by cyclones, such as the Ayr and Home Hill communities, which have suffered particularly badly. Facilities which have the capacity to stand alone and do not require the use of electricity, such as gas stoves, must be utilised. These can be used for heating and cooking for people such as the aged and infirm in times of cyclone. This is very much part and parcel of the necessary planning that increasingly needs to be undertaken in this day and age.

I turn briefly to a problem that gives me no joy at all. Having mentioned the cooperation that has generally been forthcoming from the Minister's office, I must say that the department has a black mark on its score card not only on my account but also on account of my electorate. A vindictive and most unfortunate attitude has been adopted. I will paint a picture for the edification of Government members who might be somewhat scornful. I am sure they would be most upset if it took place in their electorates. Outside the twin cities of Townsville and Thuringowa, on the southern highway, is a fast-developing suburb which services Townsville and Thuringowa as well as surrounding areas. That suburb is known locally as Alligator Creek. In addition, it is associated with the Mount Elliot national park, and a further subdivision is the suburb of Nome adjacent to it. Young families who wish to live in a semirural area are developing this region. It is a beautiful area set amongst the hills. As honourable members would be aware, one of the things that any small community has to have is a heart and, until this community has a public facility of one sort or another, that heart really will not exist. It has no central core of operation and no community building or function hall around which the people can gather and become a community in the real sense. A church and a school are the two things that give most heart and life to a small community or suburb and an outlying area such as Alligator Creek. The history of many small centres in Queensland shows that the school is developed first and church services are held in the school until, ultimately, the denominations can construct their own facilities. Over the years, the community in the Alligator Creek area recognised the necessity of servicing the needs of the growing number of young families who were living in the area. There was an increasing need for facilities to accommodate children at primary school and secondary school levels. Obviously, young mothers in the area were not able to gain access to preschool facilities with the same ease as their counterparts in city areas were able to avail themselves of similar facilities.

Following a number of meetings, I acknowledged that, in the first instance, the No. 1 priority was to construct a preschool facility in the area. After a series of public meetings—I will not name those who attended because they could become the target of

attacks of the type that have led to the sad situation which I wish to relate—a number of vacant blocks of land were identified. Finally, by virtue of a great deal of departmental cooperation between the Department of Administrative Services and the Department of Education, two blocks of well-located land were purchased. They were of a size sufficient to enable a preschool as well as a primary school to be constructed to serve the needs of this rapidly growing area in the future. The design of the school buildings was embarked upon. A great deal of cooperation took place to enable the project to commence. I pay tribute to those departmental officers at both local and capital city levels who recognised the special needs of the area and produced a buildings and site design that could encompass all the facilities that were needed by people who live in the area. Funding approval was given approximately nine months before the last State election, but because of the delay associated with purchase of the land, the design of appropriate buildings and the choice of a name for the school—which was ultimately Mount Elliot State Preschool because the name Alligator Creek had already been applied to a school in the Mackay area—the project was not proceeded with. As I said, funding approval had been given, I received ministerial advice which I circulated in the community, and the announcement of the school project was made. Unfortunately, because of the time-lag in selecting the appropriate block of land and the design work, construction had not commenced prior to the fateful date of 2 December 1989.

History will record that on that date the Government of the day changed. Lo and behold, in spite of the fact that the local head of the Department of Education—in those days, the term was regional director—indicated to me and to people who attended public meetings that the siting and construction of a preschool was the most important project in regional development, the school project disappeared off the list. As the local member, I had assumed that the project would proceed, but when I checked I was told, “No, sorry, that is no longer going to take place.” It was bad enough to discover that after purchase of the land had been made, the design of the building had been completed, funding had been approved, the announcements had been made informing the community that, at long last, it would have a heart around which it could build, grow and prosper even if it would still be necessary for a while for students to use bus transportation to obtain secondary education, but it was worse to be informed that there would be no chance of getting a preschool. From day one, the area should have been provided with preschool facilities together with primary school facilities, but even at the late stage that I have mentioned, the project was wiped.

Since that time, I have played a low key role in respect of the project except that from time to time I have contacted the department to check on whether the project has been put back on the agenda. By some quirk of fate, I recently became aware that not only had the project been wiped but also that most of the building materials had been delivered to the local railway station to be off-loaded onto trucks and delivered to the site. The materials even had the name of the school, “Mount Elliot Preschool”, stamped on them. Most of it had been delivered. I will not name the person who told me this, but I will say that that person said he could not believe what he was told when he asked what would happen. He was told, “That was to be the Mount Elliot Preschool, but we have been told to get rid of it and take it out of sight as quickly as possible.” That would have to be one of the most damning examples of a vindictive Government that I have ever come across. It can be compared to offering a glass of milk to a starving child and, as he or she reaches out, hauling it away before the child can take a drink. I cannot believe that a Government could adopt such a vindictive attitude, nor can I believe that this Minister would have failed to put the needs of an area above politics and acknowledge that certain decisions that have been made should not be undone. I think that what I have described amounts to a most despicable act. I hope that the Minister is unaware of what has happened.

**Mr McLean:** I am.

**Mr STONEMAN:** I hope so because, as I say, this is one of the most vindictive acts that I have ever seen. If it has been done at a departmental level in an effort to curry favour with the new Government, that would be tragic. If it has been done by political direction, that would be even worse, because the people who live in the area had been honestly represented by me. The approval for the project had been given after the people in the area had contributed a great deal of hard work, and after lengthy representations had been made. It is a tragedy to have the school taken away from these people. I have waited until this point to make a song and dance about it because I did not want to get in the way of any possible rearrangement of priorities. However, my subsequent checks indicate that not only is this project not being given a high priority but also it is probably a facility that will not be provided in the near future, which is a tragedy.

Time expired.

**Mr PEARCE** (Broadsound) (3.30 p.m.): The State Government's accelerated capital works program is designed to stimulate the economy and preserve jobs in the construction and service industry. The member for Gympie showed in his opening comments that he lacks an understanding of the accelerated capital works program. He claimed that the Minister had initially axed projects which were approved by the previous Government, but was later forced to give them the go-ahead. I point out for the benefit of the honourable member for Gympie that at that time, those projects were not considered to have a high priority. Now that the accelerated capital works program is in place, those projects have been brought forward, and brought forward by anything up to three years. To me, an accelerated capital works program means that Government offices, police stations, hospitals and school buildings that were scheduled for construction over the next two to three years are actually being started as soon as possible. The people of Queensland should understand that the aim of the accelerated capital works program is to stimulate the economy, but there are also real gains for taxpayers because much more competitive tenders for contracts are now being submitted to the department. There is no doubt that the building industry is now extremely competitive. Major building companies, which have not yet felt the full impact of the downturn in the economy but have few projects on their books, will appreciate the opportunity to tender for these works.

The Government has made it quite clear that the accelerated capital works program is not an employment scheme. I think everybody understands that it will create some jobs, but most importantly, it will maintain existing employment in the building and construction industry that might otherwise be lost. It indicates that this Government is serious about creating jobs and it recognises that these jobs need to be long-term, sustainable jobs. The accelerated capital works program is a major Government initiative. It was designed to ensure that allocated funds will be spread Statewide so that a wide range of people will have a chance to get a share of those funds and that work. I congratulate the Premier and his Minister for Administrative Services, Mr Ron McLean, on the hard work that has been done in getting the accelerated capital works program operating for the benefit of the building industry and the people of Queensland.

This Government is well aware that other State Governments are talking about problems in the building industry, but in Queensland the Goss Government is getting on with providing pay-packets for workers. The State Government has selected 150 projects under the accelerated capital works program, of which 128 have been fully planned and documented. Construction has commenced and is progressing on 115 of these projects, while there are 22 in various stages of planning. Those projects will now be implemented as part of the capital works program brought down in the recent Budget. In a progress report, dated 15 October 1991, on the accelerated capital works program in Queensland, there has been identified 23 priorities in health, and construction has commenced on 14 of

those projects. In police, 23 projects have been identified, and construction has commenced on 10 of them. In education—it is very important to improve the standard of accommodation in schools for our children in Queensland—102 projects have been identified. Already, 88 of those projects have commenced. That is an indication that the Government is getting on with the job, not just talking about it.

The first of the Government's accelerated projects to commence was the redevelopment of the maternity ward of Ingham Hospital. That work commenced on 11 February this year. In addition, construction was commenced on the following four projects during that month: Bauple State School teaching block; Crestmead State School music block; Ipswich West State School teaching block; and the Kelvin Grove State High School movement studies block. The number of projects commenced subsequently increased to a monthly high of 36. That was achieved in the month of May. That is an outstanding performance. It proves that the Government can get on with the job and commence the construction of projects, which creates employment, as well as generates income for the local community.

I shall mention some of the major projects that have been committed under the accelerated capital works program. They include a State office block which was expected to cost \$72m. I believe that the acceptance of a tender for the construction of this building at 111 George Street was announced late last week. Leightons has won the contract for \$58m. That is a saving of some \$14m on what was originally expected to be the cost of that building to the Government. The taxpayers of Queensland will be delighted that there is a department within the Government that is saving their money. The new \$27m State archive building under construction is progressing well and to schedule. This 12 500 square metre building will replace the present State archive building at Dutton Park. The good news goes on. Recently, construction has commenced on the \$10m south bank car-park which will service the Performing Arts Centre.

Earlier this year, my colleague the member for Rockhampton North was rewarded for his hard work when approval was given for the construction of a Government office building in Rockhampton, which will be put to tender in November. I believe that construction is planned to commence in the new year. This proposal is certainly appreciated by the local community. That \$24m project will inject funds into central Queensland and will be of major benefit, of course, to the people of Rockhampton. In addition, to the north of Rockhampton, almost \$4m will be spent on a new rail bridge over the Styx River near Ogmoo.

The Goss Government's accelerated capital works program is meant to stimulate the economy and preserve jobs. This is in complete contrast to the actions of the previous Government, which brought forward capital works around election-time, not to stimulate jobs or the economy but to enhance its own prospects on polling day. It is worth while having another look at what the previous Government thought was the meaning of bringing forward capital works programs. On Tuesday, 6 February last year, the *Courier-Mail* reported on almost \$7m worth of developments that had been given the chop by the Minister, supported by members of the Government, mainly in former National Party seats. Yes, indeed, dozens of capital works projects were approved on the eve of the 1989 election by the former National Party Government, and for the benefit of elected honourable members. They can squirm and hang their heads low as much as they like. That happened; it cannot be denied. I will never forget the day that the Minister stood up in this Chamber and produced a toilet roll which contained a list of jobs that had been approved before the State election. The total number of projects that had been approved was 38 and came to a total of almost \$7m. The Minister withdrew those, and he did so for good reason. The reason was that they did not match the priorities of the Government.

departments. I think it is important that honourable members note the words "the priorities of the Government departments". That is the way the system should work.

At that time, the National Party held 48 of the 89 seats in this Parliament, and the allocation of funds went entirely to National Party electorates, bar one, and I believe that was in the north of the State. There is no doubt it was a blatant pork-barrelling exercise in the run-up to an election, and an abuse of public money for a political purpose. At the time of these disclosures, I remember the Minister standing in the Chamber and pledging to bring fairness back into capital works funding. I congratulate him on doing just that, because it is well known around this State that the Honourable Minister is a fair man. That has been supported today in this Chamber by the glowing tribute that the member for Moggill paid the Minister——

**Mr Foley:** And the member for Burdekin.

**Mr PEARCE:** The member for Burdekin did not go into as much detail as the member for Mobil, but there is certainly some support there——

**Mr Foley:** Moggill.

**Mr PEARCE:** It is all right. The member for Moggill is always flying pretty high when he stands up in this Chamber, so I thought it was actually Mobil that kept him going. Let me return to the positives of the accelerated capital works program now benefiting thousands of Queenslanders. The total investment resulting from the implementation of 128 accelerated projects will be \$300m, equivalent to 214 000 man-weeks of employment over little more than three years of work, or 1 300 jobs. To date, investment in planning, documentation and construction has accrued to a total value of \$34m. Employment arising from this investment is equivalent to 24 000 man-weeks or 650 jobs Statewide since January. It is interesting to note that, of the \$34m injected into the Queensland economy, \$18m of the investment, equivalent to 13 000 man-weeks of employment, has actually occurred outside the Brisbane region. I know that people in country areas of Queensland and regional centres such as Rockhampton appreciate the efforts of the Government in ensuring that some of that work is allocated to those areas to help the unemployed people and to keep contractors in work. As I said earlier, the Government's accelerated capital works program is not an employment scheme. It is meant to stimulate the economy and preserve jobs. There has been a dismal attempt by both the National Party and the Liberal Party to make some political mileage out of the Government's decision to implement the accelerated capital works program. That is not unusual. I guess they see it as an important role to knock whatever the Government is doing but, as a member of the Premier's rural and northern task force, I have seen a lot of Queensland, and I know people appreciate what this Government is trying to do. They understand what we are about, and they hope that other areas of business can take up the challenge and try to assist by stimulating employment in Queensland. All the knocking that Opposition members have done has failed dismally, and it will continue to fail while they sit like shot ducks on the other side of this Chamber.

I cannot let this opportunity pass without mentioning that the Emu Park State School was the first of two schools in the Broadsound electorate to receive school buildings under the Government's accelerated capital works program. The accommodation provided was a double teaching area, store room, activities area and an outdoor teaching area. The project cost \$133,000, and will help the school with increasing enrolments over the next couple of years. The school's parents and citizens association president, Mr Lindsay Shepherd, the secretary, Meriel Barlow, along with the school principal, Mr Denis Wex, are absolutely delighted that the building was approved under the program because the school was facing very cramped conditions for the 1992 school year.

Another school to benefit from the program is the Caves State School where a new class room block is currently under construction. The building will include four general learning areas capable of accommodating 120 students, two withdrawal areas, a preparation area, a practical learning area and a store room. They are all included in this new building. The Caves school is supported by a very hard working p. and c. association whose members have put an enormous effort into upgrading the school surrounds. I know that the school principal, Ms Ann Haynes, who accompanied Year 7 students to Parliament House last week, is held in very high regard by the local community, and is very appreciative of the efforts of the Government in providing this building. I must also take the opportunity to mention to the Minister——

Time expired.

**Mr VEIVERS** (Southport) (3.45 p.m.): I have a lot of time for the Minister for Administrative Services. He is one of the few effective Ministers in the Labor Cabinet. When I have to approach him on behalf of the constituents of Southport, his response is usually adequate. He seems to get stuck into doing his job. However, I regret that I must tell the people of Queensland something else about the Minister which will probably raise the hairs on the backs of their necks. The Minister for Administrative Services is about to become the propaganda Minister for this Labor Government. The taxpayers of Queensland will soon be footing the bill for a very cynical exercise in political corruption. The State Budget brought into this place by the worst Treasurer in this country makes provision for the propaganda Ministry. That money is buried somewhere in the Minister's Estimates which we are debating today. There is no point in members opposite denying what I am saying. The details are all contained in the submission taken to Cabinet by the Minister for Administrative Services. That submission is a blueprint for a propaganda unit of which Joseph Goebbels would have been proud. It is a prospect which must terrify ordinary, decent Queenslanders. Even a Cabinet Minister was terrified by the trend this Government is taking. He was so terrified that he ensured this submission would see the light of day outside the secret cells of the Labor Cabinet. I thought he was kidding, but he made me read the document.

This Labor Government has conned the people of Queensland with all sorts of publicity about how honest and upright it is. If one were to believe the trash and outright lies that Government Ministers peddle through the media and in the Parliament, one would think that butter would not melt in their mouths. Backbenchers think that they are the true believers in everything democratic and right. If one read the tabloids and broadsheets of the Queensland news media, that is what one would believe. However, that is absolute rubbish. It took a national television channel to set the record straight on just some of the real truths about the Government. On this issue, it is setting out on a course to pervert the very basis of democracy in this State. It is not enough for this crowd to employ a high-priced army of PR men to impose media management on reporters trying to do an honest day's work. Now this crowd wants to spend a lot of money—public money, taxpayers' money—to set up what they like to call a Government information service. It sounds really innocent, does it not? Well, I am here to tell people that it is not and to tell them why.

Here is what the Minister proposes in his Cabinet submission, which already has the approval of most Ministers. He wants to set up a big central apparatus in his department to handle the production and distribution of a whole range of Government publications, which most people know about. But he also wants to set up regional offices throughout the State. He has even suggested where they will be. They will operate in Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns. The submission states that agreement has already been reached for the Brisbane and Townsville operations to be run jointly with the Australian Government Publishing Service. It says that the propaganda outfit will assist departments with publications and information materials. "Assist" is another nice word. We all know

about the way the Premier's media people assist other Ministers. They tell them what to do; they lay down the law. If anyone steps out of line, they get the chop. Just ask the people who have been chopped. Ask the people who used to work for the Treasurer, the Primary Industries Minister and a few others. Where are they now? They have gone—sacked by this Hitler-like Premier. So the propaganda service will “assist” Ministers with information programs! But it gets much better than that. This Labor Government wants to do all this in cooperation with Federal and local governments and community information networks. How about that—a Labor Federal Government and a couple of Labor local councils! Labor has a bad record of perverting the information process. When it got control of the Townsville and Cairns councils, it turned them into propaganda machines. It used them in the most cynical way to spread the Labor message and work for the election of Labor members of State and Federal Governments. That is Labor's way—use public money to promote the Labor Party. What is more dishonest? What is more corrupt? I wonder what Fitzgerald thinks about it—or does he not know about it? Well, he will now.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN** (Mr Johnson): Order! I remind the honourable member for Southport that we are debating the Estimates for Administrative Services.

**Mr VEIVERS:** I will return to them. What about the links with community information networks? That is nothing more than an extension of the old Labor policy of setting up front groups to do Labor's bidding. We saw that in the last election campaign when Labor funded all the single interest groups to attack the Government of the day. This is just an extension of that policy. But this time Labor proposes to fund its mates out of the public purse. This initiative has come directly from the Goss minders. They are known throughout the Government and the public service for the way they want to control everything. They are a vicious bunch of political thugs who hide behind the Premier's power. Until now, they have had to do their dirty deals out of the Premier's office, the Cabinet Office and the Premier's Department. But things are getting too hot for the archangel Wayne. He is uncomfortable.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I rise to a point of order. According to your previous ruling, Mr Temporary Chairman, you asked the member for Southport to get back to the Estimates for Administrative Services. He has not done that. I ask for your ruling.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! I ask the honourable member for Southport to return to the Administrative Services Estimates.

**Mr VEIVERS:** Certainly, Mr Temporary Chairman. As I was saying, the Premier is uncomfortable when he finds a few things are being sheeted home to him. He is going dingo on this one and he wants to pass the hot potato to someone else, and this poor old Minister for Administrative Services has been anointed. Unfortunately, he will have to wear this one.

**Mr McLEAN:** I rise to a point of order. I must put the record straight. This is an initiative of my department, not the Premier's Department.

**Mr VEIVERS:** I thank the Minister. For a moment, I took his voice away from him. The money for this breathtaking exercise in political corruption has been provided in the Minister's Estimates. We have his own word on that. On page 4 of his Cabinet submission, the Minister told his mates in Cabinet—

“Funding of operational and staffing costs for the telephone information service, government information centres and bookshops are estimated to be \$531,205 in 1991/2 and are able to be met within the existing departmental allocation.”

Later, on the same page, there is this paragraph—

“Establishment costs of \$1.26 million for the Government Information Centres and Bookshops have been included within the allocation for the 1991/2 Administrative Services Departmental Works budget.”

What will be included in this super propaganda Ministry that the Minister will run for the Goss thugs? There will be effective control of every bit of written propaganda the Government wants to spread for itself, for its Labor mates in Canberra and for the local councils around the State. There will be a public relations and writing consultancy to help keep the party line straight. They have ensured the ideological purity of the unit by doing over the staff of the old media unit. It might make even a few Labor members uncomfortable to be reminded about those people crucified so recently by the Minister on the orders of the Goss/Swan/Rudd cabal.

**Mr Palaszczyk:** Ha, ha!

**Mr VEIVERS:** Mr Palaszczyk can laugh, but that is true. He would not have liked to have been there. He never knows what could happen. Those people, who had been working on Government publications for many years, people who had not worked on a ministerial staff for years, were heaved out. They were done over in the way this Government loves to do over honest public servants. Their jobs were slightly redefined and then they had to go through the futile exercise of reapplying for their own jobs. Of course, they were unsuccessful. “They just were not good enough.” Rubbish! Those people whom the Minister threw on the scrap heap were among the best. They were replaced with political toadies whose only function will be to ensure that the Labor line prevails in everything. The Labor Party screamed loud and long every time the previous Government published so much as a pamphlet. As far as the Labor Party was concerned, that was corrupt. How quickly it has changed its tune. There were also howls of outrage when National Party Ministers appointed press secretaries—just one each. Labor members yelled so loudly that even Tony Fitzgerald, in his report, had a few things to say about ministerial press units. The Government and this Minister should read what Tony Fitzgerald said. After all, the hypocritical Premier of this State, who is now leaving the Chamber, bleats about his absolute devotion to Tony Fitzgerald. He would have us all believe that he has the closest relationship to Mr Fitzgerald.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! I once more ask the honourable member to return to the debate on the Estimates for the Department of Administrative Services.

**Mr VEIVERS:** I will get right back to it. But what the Government has done with media manipulation puts the lie to any claim the Premier might make about that devotion to Fitzgerald. Government publications—this is to do with Administrative Services, Mr Temporary Chairman—have become a boom industry in this State. Whole forests are being cut down to provide the paper for this Labor Government’s self-adulation. We have to remember that Labor cannot distinguish between its own interests and those of the people of Queensland. In office, Labor went straight to the trough. It is there snorting with the best of them. In office, Labor has become one of the biggest publishers in Australia. We are drowning in the printed self-congratulations of this Labor Government. But printing is not all.

Today, when he opened this debate on his department’s Estimates, the Minister made an interesting remark. He had a bit to say about TSN 11, which is the satellite television service set up by the previous National Party Government to carry various Government communications. The Minister made some fairly odious comments about what the previous Government did with television information programs. I am here to tell the Committee that this Labor Government has turned TSN 11 to its own party political purposes. No wonder the Canberra mob wants to ban TV coverage of electioneering! This

Government can do without it, because it has remodelled TSN 11 to carry its party political message to every corner of this State. It has changed everything around so that TSN 11 can be part of the Labor Party's propaganda effort. Like every totalitarian ruler from Stalin to Hitler, Goss believes the official media should follow and be faithful to the party line. It is significant that the Minister is proposing that TSN 11 be part of the official propaganda unit. He is already using it to squeeze out the independent production houses bidding for Government work. It is all around the industry how TSN 11 always manages to beat the prices quoted by others on Government video work. The real reason is simple.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** This is a Borbidge speech.

**Mr VEIVERS:** The honourable member would not know; he has never been in business for himself. The reason is simple: TSN 11 does not include staff costs in its bids. The Government is letting TSN 11, its electronic propaganda arm, have the inside running. I challenge the Minister to produce a full list of the Government's electronic propaganda productions, and the bids for them, to prove me wrong. The people of Queensland have great reason to fear what will happen when this propaganda unit really gets off the ground and starts to run smoothly.

**Mr McGRADY** (Mount Isa) (3.59 p.m.): Administrative Services is the heart of any Government, and I believe that, under the leadership of Ron McLean, this department has gone from strength to strength and has become one of the most respected Government departments in Queensland. As a member of Parliament, I have received total help and assistance from the Minister and his staff both here in Brisbane and in my home city of Mount Isa. Today, I want to pay particular credit to Mr Ross Dunning for the very professional way in which he has directed his department at a State level. However, it would be remiss of me if I did not take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to Mr Noel Reidy, the local manager at Mount Isa, who is a great ambassador for his department. Mr Reidy has certainly become very active in the Mount Isa community and is there to help all the people. The same can also be said of all the other people who work for the department in Mount Isa.

I applaud the policy of the Minister in making the department more competitive and relevant to business principles. I still believe that we have a fair way to go and would suggest that consideration be given to more cooperation between the Department of Administrative Services, the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs and the Department of Housing. I believe that much of the work which is done separately by those departments could in fact be done by the Department of Administrative Services. That would certainly give job security to the people who work for the department and, I believe, a more efficient product for the State of Queensland.

Basically, I wish to address the benefits of the new State purchasing policy. Before I do that, I draw the Committee's attention to the campaign this afternoon by the Liberal Party to try to discredit the Minister for Environment and Heritage. Dr Watson made a despicable claim that a special car was driven from Brisbane to Mount Isa to take the Minister out to Riversleigh. I make it perfectly clear that the vehicle was travelling from Brisbane to Mount Isa because of the visit to Riversleigh by the Governor and his wife. A couple of hours before the Governor was to arrive in Mount Isa, he and his wife were taken sick. The vehicle was located at Longreach, and it was decided that it would continue on to Mount Isa. As to the Liberal Party spokesman's statement that the vehicle was laden with alcohol—I make it perfectly clear that in that vehicle were six bottles of wine that had been purchased by the Minister out of his own pocket. In fact, my wife and I were in the process of hosting a barbecue for the vice regal couple. I believe that those six bottles of wine would have been the Minister's contribution to that function. That is the sort of thing that country people do when they visit somebody else's house.

Dr Watson went on to say that there were a number of hire cars. I point out that one car was hired for the purpose of taking departmental staff from Mount Isa to Riversleigh station. As to the member's statement that the hire car was laden with beer—officers of the department had purchased that beer for their fellow workers who had been out to Riversleigh. As you would know, Mr Temporary Chairman, that is the custom that we adopt in outback Queensland. It was despicable for the member for Moggill to make that attack on the Minister and the vice regal couple. He stands condemned, and I certainly condemn him.

I also wish to bring to the attention of this Committee a vicious attack on the school communities in my electorate and around the State. I refer to wanton damage to school property by hooligans and vandals. Although I realise that this is happening around the State and nation, that is no consolation to my school community. Action must be taken to bring those offenders to justice. I appreciate the Minister's comments about what is happening in this regard. However, I feel so sad when I see the sadness in the eyes of principals, teachers, students and members of p. and c. associations when they turn up at their schools only to find that the tuckshop, the administration building or, indeed, the class rooms have been savaged by hooligans. Whilst I accept that the Government is speeding up the electronic surveillance of schools, I appeal urgently to the Minister to consider speeding up that process.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN** (Mr Johnson): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members will be less noisy.

**Mr McGRADY:** In particular, the electronic surveillance of schools in Mount Isa should be given priority. In the past, whenever I have asked the Minister for something, I have always had a good hearing from him. I take this opportunity to appeal to the Minister to give favourable consideration to speeding up the program of electronic surveillance in Mount Isa schools.

Some of the other sectors covered by the Administrative Services portfolio are certainly important to the people who live in remote areas. I refer to the Minister's comments that the number of apprentices employed by his department is the same as the number employed before the recession set in. I believe that all industry—private or Government industry—has a responsibility to the young people of this State. The Government should be congratulated on maintaining that number of apprentices at a time when, I suppose, it could be forgiven for reducing that number. The State Government has certainly played its part in this regard, and I congratulate it on that. Whilst I am referring to apprentices, I also place on record the tremendous work done in our community by the Mount Isa group apprenticeship scheme—known as MIGATE. It employs something like 140 young people who otherwise would be on the unemployment scrap heap. But as a result of that group scheme in the city, which also caters for the surrounding districts, a large number of young people are now actively employed in trades and traineeships.

Another aspect touched upon in this debate is commercial television in outback Queensland. I believe that it is fair to say that all people who live in those centres demand the same quality of television as that enjoyed by people in the capital city. Each year, the State Government allocates \$4m to help offset some of the losses to North Queensland Television. I certainly welcome and support that move. I also hope that that television station realises why that money is paid to it. I certainly hope that it continues to provide good service to the outback. In particular, I hope that sporting activities such as the Olympic Games and other important spectacles will be televised by that particular station.

There is another issue of concern to me, and I am sure that the Minister has taken this on board. When I was first elected to this Parliament, I used to go jogging along the banks of the Brisbane River. I saw hundreds of State Government cars that appeared to

be parked all day. Obviously they were used by State Government employees. Rather than being part of a pool system for cars, they were obviously used by those employees to travel to and from work. That is a waste of Government resources. I have no doubt that the Minister and his officers are taking that matter into account.

As I said at the outset, the main thrust of my address relates to the benefits of the State purchasing policy to rural Queensland. Of course, the new policy that was introduced by the Minister is certainly of great assistance to those businesspeople who live outside the main areas of activity, such as the regional areas. The new guidelines that have been set by the Minister include five criteria: value for money, open and effective competition, what the purchase does to enhance the capabilities of local business and industry, protection of the environment, and the ensuring of ethical behaviour and fair dealing. The first of those deals with the way in which purchasing officers will evaluate tenders for work. For example, although freight costs may mean that a retailer in Mount Isa may not be able to supply a refrigerator for a school as cheaply as can his Brisbane counterpart, the back-up service that he is able to provide makes it an advantage for the appliance to be purchased locally. Value for money means looking at the total package offered, not just the dollar amount. A point worth noting is that the further one goes from Brisbane, the bigger the advantages for the bush that the policy gives.

Going one step further, if a regional Q-Build manager can see benefits in entering into a long-term contract with a local plumbing supplier, under the new State purchasing policy that can be arranged through the Purchasing and Sales business unit so that all materials come through the local supplier. Such a deal would be beneficial to the Government, the local supplier and the economy of the local region. It also gives due consideration to the five criteria that I mentioned. However, the new policy can also provide for rural suppliers to be involved in standing orders placed with manufacturers based in Brisbane. An example would be when a school required new carpet and a rural supplier was able to gain business through a long-term contract made with an organisation such as Acsminter in Brisbane.

Businesses in rural and regional Queensland have traditionally viewed Government purchasing as being the domain of the big players in Brisbane. A view has been taken that, because decisions were made by bureaucrats in Brisbane, the suppliers in the south-east corner had the advantage of being able to keep in personal contact with the decision-makers. Such personal contact has also been perceived as giving Brisbane suppliers the one-up when it came to gaining valuable standing orders, which gave the right to supply a specific good for a specified period. Those were previously known as period contracts. However, with the new purchasing policy introduced by the Minister, those traditional barriers to rural and regional businesses getting a bigger slice of the Government dollar are being removed. Many of the businesses outside Brisbane are much smaller in size than their metropolitan counterparts. They can therefore ill afford long delays in the payment of accounts. The perceived delay in the payment of Government accounts—be that a myth or a fact—is a substantial deterrent to rural and regional businesses vying for Government business. To address that problem, part of the function of the new State Purchasing Council, which replaced the old State Stores Board, is to place greater emphasis on the speedy settlement of accounts. The Minister has made the target time no longer than 30 days.

In previous Government purchasing policies, although quality assurance was preferred, suppliers were not able to see much, if any, tangible return for their investment. As was the case with delays in the payment of accounts, smaller rural and regional businesses have perceived that lack of tangible return as a deterrent to becoming quality assured. That in turn was to the detriment of promoting Queensland as a totally quality-assured package to overseas investors or for export purposes. Under the new policy,

while the possession of quality assurance does not guarantee access to Government work—as that would breach the condition of open and effective competition and ethical behaviour and fair dealing—for the first time, specific preference may be given to quality-assured suppliers. For example, a purchasing officer at a regional office deals regularly with three local plumbing suppliers, one of which has quality assurance. When the plumbing on a school toilet block needs to be replaced, if the purchasing officer is satisfied that the quality-assured supplier can complete the work without the five criteria being breached, he may award the work without calling tenders.

By providing for Government business not to be awarded wholly on the basis of whether a supplier has quality assurance, quality-assured suppliers are forced to remain competitive, thus bringing about the best return for the Government dollar. It should be remembered also that, when determining which contractor is best suited for a contract, quality assurance is really only a consideration in cases involving either the supply or the supply and installation of manufactured goods. In cases involving either construction or the provision of services, the State purchasing policy is extended in principle. However, the State Purchasing Council has to set a starting and finishing date for the work. Several ways are being considered of making the means to obtain quality assurance more accessible to regional and rural centres, for example, TAFE colleges and other similar organisations.

**Hon. R. C. KATTER** (Flinders) (4.14 p.m.): I bring to the attention of the Committee some matters that are fairly parochial to my electorate. The first is the Richmond Hill school, where some of the toilet facilities are now 60 or 70 years old. I have seen them and they are an absolute disgrace. Although I cannot complain about the amount of money that has been spent in my electorate over a period, that is one place in which facilities are lacking and which now urgently needs attention. I refer also to the Charters Towers State School/High School oval, the construction of which was a marvellous accomplishment. The people thank the previous Government and this Government for completing the job, but they also say to the Minister that they like to be good neighbours. I would like to believe that the Government would think of itself as being a good neighbour. Some of the people surrounding this oval are having enormous problems because of footballs, etc., going over the fence. Similarly—and this is a general problem that should be raised in the Chamber—I bring to the attention of the Committee the Millchester school at Charters Towers, which is still labouring with the demountables. These demountables are extremely hot buildings—they are extremely unsuitable for northern conditions—and should be removed as fast as is humanly possible. I request in the strongest possible terms that the demountables, particularly those at the Millchester school, be removed. They are an abomination.

I have been informed that 300 or 400 railwaymen working on the maintenance of the line in the region will lose their jobs. I hope and pray that these very definite instructions are not true and that the pressure applied by some fairly courageous railwaymen on the northern line will result in a hearing on the part of the Government and it giving attention to this continuing problem. The many empty houses along the line reflect the fact that railway jobs have gone up in smoke. I do not want to see more empty houses, but perhaps these empty houses could be given attention or moved to another locality. I stress in the strongest possible terms that I am not advocating the removal of houses to facilitate the removal of jobs, which is obviously the Government's intention.

Another matter of serious importance is that undertakings were given by the previous Government that all public service homes in the midwest and farwest of north Queensland and parts of western-central Queensland would be air-conditioned. That has not taken place. Only a couple of days ago, I was assured by the Teachers Union representative in Hughenden that teachers' houses there are not air-conditioned. A

program undertaken by the last Government has clearly been abandoned by this Government. If the Minister is fair-minded he would realise the absolute necessity for all housing in the western region of north Queensland to have large evaporative air-conditioners. These items are very reasonably priced—they can be purchased for under \$1,000. Without any ducting at all, two units will air-condition the average Government or Housing Commission house. When the National Party was in Government, it was told that it would cost some \$3 extra per week to install the air-conditioning. I am sure that any person living in a Housing Commission home would gladly pay an extra \$3 per week to have his house evaporative air-conditioned. These areas suffer extremely hot conditions and ground temperatures regularly reach 107 degrees Fahrenheit. The steel roofs simply radiate heat into houses that are very poorly ventilated.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** You were the Minister for eight years.

**Mr KATTER:** Yes, and one of my proudest boasts was that the air-conditioning of all public service houses in my electorate was undertaken and the program was being fully implemented until we lost Government. The minute we lost, public servants were deprived of their right to occupy air-conditioned houses. All Government and Housing Commission houses should be considered for the installation of evaporative air-conditioning because, as one of the previous speakers from north Queensland said, in this day and age a house in north Queensland needs air-conditioning just as it needs a toilet. That is a valid statement, particularly when one looks at the amount of money involved. I point out to the Minister that refrigerative air-conditioning is not only enormously expensive and hotly opposed by the public servants themselves but also costly in terms of our limited energy resources. This decision should be revised significantly.

I was appalled that, instead of defending his own constituents at Riversleigh station, the member for Mount Isa simply protected the ALP and its political masters on the front bench as the members of the ALP in this Chamber always do. This was a classic example. The member for Cook is shaking his head, but the day before yesterday I was with eight of his constituents and they told me what they thought of him. It gave great joy to my heart to hear what they thought of their honourable member. He had informed them that he did not need their vote in the forthcoming election and they assured me that he would not be getting it. The area of concern was the Torres Strait, which is a very big region. I would have thought that the member did not have that many votes up his sleeve. Obviously he thinks that he has, but we will see what happens in the forthcoming election. Under his portfolio, the Minister is responsible for Government vehicles. An LTD vehicle from Brisbane ended up in Mount Isa. The member for the area gave an exculpatory explanation to this Chamber. He said it was already in Longreach waiting for the Governor, and therefore it was quite all right for it to be taken on a 1 200—kilometre round trip to take the Minister from the airport to his motel room and back out to his jet which was to take him to Riversleigh station. The honourable member then went on to justify the taking of two four-wheel-drive vehicles all the way to Riversleigh. Perhaps the Minister for Environment and Heritage has put on a lot of weight and needs two vehicles instead of one. A second vehicle was required because so much alcohol was taken.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr KATTER:** I am simply quoting the people from Riversleigh station in a letter written to the *Townsville Bulletin*.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I rise to a point of order. The member may well be quoting the people from Riversleigh, but I was on that trip and I can assure the honourable member and the people of Riversleigh that his assessment was wrong.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN** (Mr Johnson): Order! There is no point of order. I ask the honourable member for Flinders to resume his speech.

**Mr KATTER:** Mr Temporary Chairman, it appals me that there was not only a Minister but also a member of Parliament travelling in this convoy referred to in the *Townsville Bulletin*, which is fairly conservative in its reaction to events and enjoys a reputation for being very kind to the Labor Party. In fact, the honourable member for Townsville has had his photograph in it three times in the last week, so it can hardly be described as an apologist for the National Party. It describes the Minister's trip as "vomitive", and I am surprised that the member for Cook would leap to his feet in this Parliament and claim that he also was a member of this trip. I would be ashamed to be associated with a trip that was described in those terms. Far from denying that alcohol was bought, the honourable member for Mount Isa gave the reasons for it. He said, "The national parks workers wanted a beer when they were up there—some of them."

**Mr COMBEN:** I rise to a point of order. I think that the private and personal expenditure out of my own pocket on six bottles of wine is not a matter for this Parliament.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! I ask the honourable member for Flinders to continue and to address the Administrative Services Estimates.

**Mr KATTER:** Administrative Services incorporates the provision of vehicles throughout the State of Queensland and what those vehicles are used for. Four members of this Parliament have served gaol sentences, in part, for the misuse of such vehicles for personal purposes.

**Mr COMBEN:** I rise to a further point of order. Mr Temporary Chairman, the honourable member is impugning the integrity of the Governor of this State. My ministerial vehicle went to Mount Isa to transport the Governor. I ask, on behalf of the Governor, for a withdrawal of that sort of allegation.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! The member for Flinders will resume his speech.

**Mr KATTER:** Mr Temporary Chairman, the record will speak for itself. I ask you to take cognisance of the number of interruptions that have occurred since I turned to this very touchy subject. All I am doing is quoting verbatim from a letter that was sent to the *Townsville Bulletin*. I have known the Seymours all my life. They are from a long-established Labor family and they are railway workers who have worked hard all their lives. Micky Seymour has worked all his life to buy a little bit of dirt up in north Queensland, and it is about to be taken from him. One could be excused for fighting like a tiger to try to hold on to it while the jack-booted land commissar runs around the countryside with two four-wheel-drive vehicles hired at public expense to go enjoying himself with a large quantity of alcohol in both vehicles.

**Mr COMBEN:** I rise to a further point of order. I do not know which two vehicles the member for Flinders refers to. To the best of my recollection, national parks vehicles were used for the intended trip of the Governor and me in the Riversleigh area when we visited Mr Seymour.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr KATTER:** Mr Temporary Chairman, two vehicles were taken on hire and no Governor was present. The constant interruptions made by the Minister indicate clearly—and I ask the Committee to take cognisance of this fact—that not one single fact presented by Mrs Anne Seymour in the article published in the *Townsville Bulletin* has been refuted. The member for Mount Isa attempted to explain it.

**Mr COMBEN:** I rise to a further point of order. Mrs Seymour was not at Riversleigh when I changed the itinerary of my trip specifically to go to Riversleigh to obtain first-hand knowledge because the member for Flinders had suggested that I should visit the area.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr KATTER:** These interruptions are frivolous and they are an attempt to gag me and prevent me from putting on the public record the disgraceful events that occurred on this trip to Riversleigh station which accounted for an entire editorial of Queensland's third-largest newspaper. Let me continue and state for the record that, clearly, it has been admitted by the Minister and by the member for Mount Isa that two vehicles went to Riversleigh station and that there was a very large load of alcohol in the two vehicles that were taken there. I have been assured that I will be receiving statutory declarations.

**Mr McGRADY:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr COMBEN:** I rise to a further point of order.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! I call the member for Mount Isa.

**Mr McGRADY:** I demand an apology from the member for Flinders. I never stated that two vehicles went to Riversleigh laden with beer. I said one vehicle had six bottles of wine and the other one had a six-pack. Let us have fewer lies from him.

**Mr COMBEN:** I rise to a further point of order, Mr Temporary Chairman. I agree with the member for Mount Isa in respect of "laden with" alcohol because a number of senior national parks officers——

**Mr KATTER:** Mr Chairman, this is outrageous.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr COMBEN:** A number of senior national parks officers who were looking at the acquisition proposal had been invited to dinner by Sebastian Maia. I, in a gesture of gratitude, said, "I will bring a bit of wine." I paid for six bottles out of my own pocket and I have not even claimed the expense as a tax deduction.

**Mr Bredhauer:** It comes under "entertainment". Why don't you tell the truth for a change, Bob?

**Mr KATTER:** Mr Temporary Chairman, I accept all these interjections. Surely what is happening now is that these members are confirming that alcohol was taken to Riversleigh station, and that is all I said.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The member for Flinders has prosecuted the argument for long enough. I ask him to continue on some other aspect of the Estimates or he will be ordered to resume his seat.

**Mr KATTER:** Mr Chairman, I want it stated on the record that I have been interrupted four times during my speech——

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I call the member for Isis.

**Mr Katter** interjected.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I warn the member for Flinders under Standing Order 123A.

**Mr NUNN (Isis) (4.30 p.m.):** Mr Chairman, I have no hesitation in supporting the Minister for Administrative Services in his efforts to reform his department. It therefore gives me considerable satisfaction to rise in this Chamber and debate the 1991-92 Budget Estimates for the department; but, before doing so, I will canvass some of the statements made by previous speakers. The member for Gympie mentioned that, in certain electorates, money was spent on capital works during the period of the previous Government. I can tell the honourable member that it would not have been very much money because the funds were allocated over a three-election period. The funds would be promised during one election campaign; the project would be announced in the next election campaign; and in the third election campaign, the previous Government would actually get around to building the project. This points to the fact that the present

Government is still spending money on capital works in those electorates. The member for Gympie made those comments to justify a patently obvious but nonetheless sorry and distasteful record of mismanagement that occurred under the National Party. Let me inform the Committee that the differences lie in the area in which the money was spent and in the reasons for the spending. The previous Government spent the money on a political and sometimes unnecessary basis, whereas this Government responds to the needs of the community. I will give two instances of what happened in the one town. In Childers, in the Isis electorate, the then Minister for Education saw fit to requisition the building of a new primary school. There was a perfectly good primary school in the town of Childers—which I will come to in a minute—but what the Minister did was spend approximately \$2m building a new primary school when there was already a perfectly good primary school on which to build. As proof of the fact that that was a good primary school, the former Government then turned around and spent somewhere in the order of \$410,000 to refurbish the school into a TAFE college, which never functioned. The former Government was going to have some grandiose schemes. Three basket-weaving classes and some wickerwork was all that went on in that college. Since then, the people of Childers have come together. They realised that the scheme was beyond their capability, so the education people in Isis and myself got together and formulated a plan of cooperation between secondary schools and TAFE colleges to use this college to its full potential.

On the other side of the coin, at every election a succession of Health Ministers rolled through Childers. What did those Ministers do? Each and every one of them promised a new hospital in Childers. Guess how many hospitals the people of Childers received under the National Party? None. It took the Minister for Health exactly six months to have a look at the situation, size it up and put his department to work on providing the new hospital which was so richly deserved and so badly needed by the residents of Childers.

**Mr FitzGerald:** You won't save the day.

**Mr NUNN:** Listen, I am in no danger. The honourable member can come up, if he likes, and give his mates a hand, but he will be no help to them. Mr Stephan, the member for Gympie, posed a question: is user pays another method of introducing a tax? What a question! It is no wonder the honourable member gets a worried look on his dial when he puts up these propositions because the poor old fellow does not know where they are leading him. He is worried that he might end up in a blind alley, or run into a brick wall. The Minister generally does. The answer to the question is "No". User pays is a method of making the users of Government services aware of the costs of providing those services.

In the past, no attempt was made to cost the services that the Government provided—at least not by the previous Government—let alone to recover any meaningful portion of those costs. The concept of user pays imposes a discipline on the provider of the service to look at how services are delivered and to make sure that those services are operating as effectively and efficiently as possible. Previously, the Government was unaware of the individual costs of services and the total cost of all the services that it provided with its revenue dollars. This meant that no informed decision could be made when it came to choosing which services it could afford to fund, or what was the appropriate level of funding.

Initially, most funds raised by the ASD will be from other Government departments and related bodies. Therefore, user pays will not initially result in a net increase to consolidated revenue funds. What it is hoped this will mean in the future is that, as the departments become aware of what they are actually spending on the goods and services they use, they will rationalise their usage and ultimately draw less from consolidated

revenue. This means that tax dollars will be able to be spent on other Government priorities. The Minister for Southport—

**Mr FitzGerald:** You are promoting him.

**Mr NUNN:** I will promote him when he is worthy of it. The member for Southport says that this Government has been secretly establishing a Goebbels-style media and information machine. Let me get it in its proper context. Again, the member for Southport has picked up somebody else's ideas. The Goebbels allegation was first raised by the member for Surfers Paradise. All this comes after 32 years of jackboot government and 32 years of batons cracking innocent heads on Monday after the Government has spent all day Sunday praying to God for the strength to do it. All this was done on the orders of the National Party Ministers who presided over widespread Government corruption.

As I said, the member for Surfers Paradise issued a press release alleging the creation of a Goebbels-style mega media unit. There was evidence of a Goebbels-style ministry of information, as the former Minister suggested. There was the existence of a weekly video production costing the Government and the taxpayer hundreds of thousands of dollars. The idea was that the Government of the day would spend a fortune on putting out this awful propaganda every week on all three commercial television channels. The five-minute program was called *Queensland Unlimited* and was broadcast concurrently so that viewers had a job to avoid it. At the same time, this Goebbels-style ministry of information placed up to 60 propagandists in the Premier's Department and elsewhere to spread the propaganda. Who did it? It was the National Party Government, of which Mr Borbidge was a prime mover. That Government was responsible for this gross waste of public money and misinformation for years and years until that fateful day in December 1989. This Government has put a stop to that. Instead of propaganda, the department will make sure that essential Government information is available to the public and to business. To do this efficiently and cost effectively, this Government has set up a business unit which will operate on commercial, user-pays lines.

The member for Southport and the member for Surfers Paradise have some trouble. I know they are unlikely bed fellows, but they have to cop it if they want to get into bed together. The trouble with them is that they do not know the difference between political propaganda and essential information. The member for Southport tried to steer attention away from the misdeeds of his Government when he mentioned the mysterious propaganda unit. He said that it would be hidden somewhere in the Estimates. I will bring to the attention of Opposition members, and members of the Government, the Government television network known as TSN 11, the Government network that Vince Lester used as a half-hour weekly broadcast to his electorate. What a blatant misuse of Government property and funds for political purposes!

I have digressed a little, but I will come back to what I originally wanted to say. The Estimates reflect the hard work done by the Minister and also the economies and efficiencies that have been introduced by him, with the help of his departmental officers. I wish to speak of the achievements in the service group business units. These comprise a number of units which have already been elaborated on slightly by Mr Briskey, but CITEC is currently operating on a fee-for-service basis for telephone and other telecommunication services. It has implemented a marketing plan to build partnerships with clients. Such a relationship has been established between CITEC and the Queensland Police Service. That relationship will be formalised in a service level agreement around the end of October this year, which is just about now. Immediate cost savings are being realised and are expected to reach at least \$100,000 in the first year, while further savings are expected with the opportunities offered by CITEC for further rationalisation and economies of scale. The transfer of facilities management to CITEC

has allowed a number of uniformed police who were allocated to computer operations to be released for deployment elsewhere.

Goprint is a perfect example of how a business unit can be restructured to the benefit of all concerned. The corporate plan for Goprint was approved in August, and already results are being achieved. For instance, Goprint will downsize its staff by approximately 10 per cent, which is more consistent with its level of production. This has resulted in savings in the order of \$500,000 per annum, and that is to be commended. Goprint has been restructured along commercial lines into various business or cost centres to provide greater efficiency which, in turn, will enable greater focus to be put on production and profitability. Under the National Party Government, Goprint was treated as one huge business, but was structured in such a way that it was impossible to identify areas of inefficiency. It was also impossible to identify areas of high or low production or profitability. On the other hand, the establishment of these cost centres not only identifies each production area; but also, in the area of sales, results can now be analysed each week instead of every four weeks, as was the previous policy.

Goprint commenced full commercial operations on 1 July, and has been competing with the private sector since 1 October this year, when agencies or other departments were no longer tied to Goprint. The combination of a tied client base, lack of responsiveness to customers' needs and poor marketing, has led to client perception of Goprint as being slow, unresponsive, expensive and difficult to deal with. One of the department's objectives is to promote Goprint as a responsive and market-driven organisation, and one of the strategies used is to untie Government departments of the necessity to use Goprint's services to the exclusion of the private sector. Whilst it has been argued that Goprint has had an advantage when it comes to servicing other departments, this is not necessarily so. Goprint was supposed to have a tied clientele. However, market research revealed no such thing. At best, Goprint was getting only 50 per cent of the printing work from the Government sector. Some departments perceived Goprint as not being able to meet their requirements, and made alternative arrangements. This was despite a Treasury decree issued in 1988 that all orders from Government departments were to be placed with Goprint. Another contributing factor was printing orders placed with advertising agencies. Once work from a Government department is placed with an advertising agency, the printing remains in the private sector's domain. Advertising agencies have their own band of printers who regularly do their work, and Goprint does not get the opportunity to quote for this work.

In order to compete effectively in the marketplace, two things must happen. On top of the decision to untie Government departments from Goprint and to provide a true level playing field, Goprint will now be given the opportunity to quote for all Government work, whether it goes out through intermediaries, or the departments call tenders direct. Departments will be called upon to follow the State purchasing policy as regards contracting work only to printers who have third or second party quality-assurance accreditation. Services that are reserved to Goprint—and it makes good sense that these should be excluded from the new freedom of choice provisions—are—

- legislation, both primary and subordinate;
- parliamentary papers, White Papers, Green Papers, etc.;
- Government gazettes;
- electoral rolls, boundary notices, ballot papers;
- budgetary and other sensitive Government documents;
- annual reports; and
- betting tickets, as set out in the Racing and Betting Act Amendment Act 1991.

Print brokerage is now an important part of Goprint, and, as part of the one-stop shop philosophy, Goprint will offer a comprehensive print procurement service for work which is contracted out on behalf of clients to the private sector. Goprint, as part of the overall structure of the Department of Administrative Services, will introduce the printing of the *Tenders Gazette*. Instead of having to plough through the larger *Government Gazette* to find particulars of tenders, contractors who subscribe to the *Tenders Gazette* will now have an easy-to-read document, purpose printed for their convenience. The Government's policy of making access to and availability of the department easier for its clients and the public contrasts with the previous National Party's attitude whereby the functions of the department were shrouded in secrecy.

One of the great failures of the previous Government was its inability to manage the fleet of Government vehicles at its disposal. In 1989, when the Labor Party came to office and Ron McLean became Minister, it was discovered that there was no comprehensive data on either the number of Government-owned vehicles, or their whereabouts. When a check was done on the number of cars owned by the Government, it was found that the numbers did not tally with the number of vehicles registered. We were paying registration on cars we did not own. There is also the Government Motor Garage, whose function is to repair and maintain the fleet of Government vehicles. This section was the flea on the dog's back of the National Party Government. The Government wanted to get rid of the garage, but all it could do was scratch away at it and hope for the best. The Government could not manage it, and a succession of Ministers got rid of it from their portfolios as quickly as they could.

Time expired.

**Mr BEANLAND** (Toowong—Leader of the Liberal Party) (4.43 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on the Administrative Services Department Estimates. I spoke on these Estimates last year, and, as I did then, I congratulate the department and say to the Minister that he is well in front of the mob. On a score of one to 10, he certainly scores very well indeed. He is the only one who actually rates at all. I congratulate him. I say that on my behalf, and also on behalf of the member for Sherwood who is sitting beside me, and who will not have the opportunity to speak today. He endorses my kind remarks about the Minister, so it is the Minister's lucky day.

Last year, I said something to the effect that the Minister has the good news and bad news department. Unfortunately, some of us on one side of the Chamber seem to get the bad news as often as those on the other side of the Chamber get the good news. Nevertheless, it is a department which I believe is doing very well indeed, and certainly a department which I think sets the pace and a trend for a number of other Government departments. I will refer to the annual report and the Budget documents, about which I have a number of questions. This year's annual report reveals that in the asset management area salaries and wages have increased by 111 per cent over the previous year. In the annual report, a wide range of items are covered under salaries and wages. This year, we find that the building section has increased by 103 per cent, the motor vehicle services area has increased by 92 per cent, printing services have increased by 115 per cent, the information and communications services area has increased by 700 per cent, and the corporate services area has increased by 56 per cent. I am certain that the Minister has good reasons for those sizeable increases, which do not follow a steady pattern—they are all over the shop. However, they are very significant increases. An examination of the figures in the annual report does not make clear why those sizeable increases in salaries and wages have occurred. It is not apparent from the report whether or not the Minister has rearranged some of the programs or sections. Some significant changes have occurred. I look forward to the Minister's reply on that matter. It is worth while noting that, according to this year's annual report, salaries and wages have

increased by 126 per cent over last year's figure, with overall administrative costs increasing by 78 per cent. The famous area of information and communications has increased by 334 per cent in total current outlay, which is a very sizeable increase. In view of what I will say shortly, that should raise a number of questions in the minds of honourable members.

At page 81 of this year's Budget Paper No. 3, under the services program, the current outlay under "Administrative" shows a decrease from \$38,951,000 in 1990-91 to \$19,146,000 this year. Again, I am sure that the Minister has a good reason to move around the figures in the departmental Estimates, but it is difficult to follow such a significant change. In contrast, the allocation for plant and equipment has increased from \$549,000 to \$40,136,000—a very steep increase in that Vote. I turn now to page 80, which refers to information and communication services. The annual report provides a separate column for that item, yet it has been included in the Budget document under the services program. In the annual report for the last financial year, that item is separated, as are motor vehicle services and the purchasing and procurement services. However, all of those have been gathered and thrown into the program area called "Services". I well understand that there might be a reason for that, but it is clear that there are benefits to the Government in putting it all into the services program. By doing that, it very conveniently hides the very important item of information and communication services. Of course, motor vehicle services is another contentious and important area, as is purchasing and procurement services. In his reply, I would like the Minister to indicate why those items have been put together in the Budget document. It is impossible to compare vehicles with tape-recorders, which is the situation that has been created by putting all those areas of Government operation under the services program.

Also on page 80, we find the subprogram relating to media and information. The document reveals that the Government proposes to establish media information centres not only in Brisbane but also in Townsville and Cairns. It is fair to say that the Government has now embarked upon the establishment of a media and information unit similar to the unit set up by the Federal Government. I believe that the Federal unit is called ANIMALS, and the State Government unit does not seem to be much different from it. When it is in full stride, no doubt it will push the Government line. We can expect to see more Government media officers appointed. I am not talking about ministerial press secretaries. I note also that the unit is to compete with the private sector. However, at the same time, it is clear from the Budget document that that unit will have a propaganda role. Whether we are going to see the Labor propaganda machine under the command of the Minister acting as Herr Goebbels move into full stride in that section, time will tell. However, if that unit is established and run along the lines of ANIMALS, which has been established by the Federal Labor Party, we can expect to see a concerted effort to feed a media line throughout the State and an effort to manage the media in this State that we have not seen previously. If that unit is along those lines—and there is every chance of its being so—we will see a clear waste of taxpayers' funds. Having that unit compete with the private sector will also be a waste of taxpayers' funds. The recent report on the Arts Division recommended against setting up a unit to compete with the private sector, which is what this unit will do. The Government is going against one of the recommendations of that extensive and expensive report prepared for the Arts Division of the Premier's Department.

I note on page 79 an item relating to a school improvements subsidy, which speaks for itself. However, the worrying aspect is that there has been a decrease in the Vote from \$4,981,000 last year to \$4,759,000 this year. That is a significant cut in the school improvements subsidy, something that all schools and p. and c. associations have come to rely upon over many years. I understand that there has been a slowing-up of the

payment of subsidies to schools throughout the State. It will be of no surprise to p. and c. associations and the teachers at those schools when they glean that the school subsidy outlays have been substantially reduced this year not only in real terms but, if one takes the inflation rate into account and the fact that expenditure increased by 11 per cent across-the-board, also in the school improvement subsidy area. I can well understand the feeling of hurt that has been indicated by parents at schools throughout the State because of the slow-down in the payments of subsidies. Many schools were looking at doing things within their school areas. It has been indicated to them that they could have a very significant wait indeed. At page 79, "Capital Outlays" also shows a reduction in the Vote for plant and equipment. I look forward to some indication from the Minister as to the reason for the cut-back in subsidies. Such cut-backs are not something which parents of schoolchildren will buy; they will not wear it. I ask that the Government reconsider that particularly important Vote.

I turn now to a couple of areas concerning motor cars. The first relates to the extraordinary situation surrounding the appointment of the principal at the Toowoomba State High School. Because of the cool reception that he received and because he had to travel from Brisbane to attend the school, he was given a car. I understand that he may no longer have the car, but certainly a car was involved. I would like the Minister to indicate to this Chamber how long the principal had the car. That is an indication of special favours being done for the principal of the Toowoomba State High School. I question the Minister about the costs and the use of that car. I ask: how long was the car used? What was the purpose of its use? Does it fit in with the ministerial guidelines for the use of Government cars? This matter raises a number of questions, not only here but also in Toowoomba, about the use of Government vehicles.

We heard a great deal from previous Government speakers about the State purchasing policy. However, I ask the question: how many clothing and footwear contracts have been let by this Government to Queensland companies? After all, Queensland companies are fighting to survive under Labor Governments and in this current Labor brought-on recession that we all had to have. I ask: how many contracts have been let to Queensland companies compared with those let to interstate firms? Under Labor Governments, both in this State and Federally, Queensland companies are fighting to survive. Large businesses are being made into small businesses and small businesses are being put out the door into bankruptcy by this Labor Government. Looking after Queensland firms is not something on which this Government has a very good record. Since December 1989, Queensland firms, particularly those involved in clothing and footwear, have suffered. All businesses in this country are suffering, more so those in Queensland. Therefore, I ask that some indication be given as to the number of clothing and footwear contracts that have been let to Queensland companies.

I want to conclude on an issue that has been raised previously. I want to get to the bottom of the matter because a number of statements have been made about it. It concerns a couple of articles that have appeared in the *Townsville Bulletin*, one relating to the use of a motor vehicle by the Minister for Environment and Heritage. In a letter to that newspaper, Mrs Anne Seymour of Riversleigh wrote—

"We had a short and expensive visit from Mr and Mrs Comben last year. I must certainly congratulate the government on how to travel first class. Why was an LTD vehicle driven from Brisbane to Mount Isa just to transit Mr and Mrs Comben from the private jet to a motel?"

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I rise to a point of order. I believe this is repetitious debate.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! This issue has already been raised and fully debated, so I will not allow the Leader of the Liberal Party to continue with it. I ask him to get on to another issue.

**Mr BEANLAND:** That is fine, Mr Chairman, but of course I am talking about motor vehicles, which is very relevant to the Minister's portfolio responsibility. I am not making this up. This comes from an article written by Mrs Seymour.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I rise to a point of order.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! A point of order has been taken. If the member for Toowong does not have anything else to raise——

**Mr BEANLAND:** I certainly have, Mr Chairman. I have a lot to raise, with respect, and I am talking on this portfolio's area of responsibility.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I have said that that issue has already been raised twice. There has already been a quarrel——

**Mr BEANLAND:** That is not my problem.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! Excuse me! I am making the point. When I have asked the honourable member to get on to another issue, he has continued with it. If he makes another comment on that matter, I shall terminate his speech.

**Mr BEANLAND:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. It is quite clear that this is a very twitchy and a very sensitive issue for the Government.

Time expired.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK (Albert) (5 p.m.):** It gives me great pleasure to rise in this debate to speak on the Estimates of the Administrative Services Department. Before I deal with the Estimates, I must comment on the speech made earlier by the member for Southport, who spoke about cronyism within the Government.

**Mr FitzGerald:** That has been raised before.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** The only comment I would like to make is that if the member for Southport goes out doorknocking on Friday afternoons, he should wear a hat. I think in some ways he has been affected by the sun. My advice to him is: Mick, if you get out there, buy a hat and put some sunscreen lotion on.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The member for Albert will please not make personal reflections on any member.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** Yes, Mr Chairman. I will deal now with the Estimates of the Department of Administrative Services. This Minister is performing well. He has a good department which is working for the benefit of all Queenslanders. I congratulate the Minister on the quality of his staff members such as John Lutteral and, before him, John Mickel.

The staff of the local Administrative Services Department at Beenleigh are a hard-working lot. Their local supervisor is Wes Turby. Whenever I have a problem, I have no trouble contacting Wes, who makes certain that any matter that I raise is dealt with efficiently and effectively. The boys at Beenleigh have asked me to invite the Minister to the works Christmas party at Beenleigh. I hope that the Minister will see fit to come along. The local fare and refreshments are very good. The produce from the Albert electorate will be served at that function. Our district has a couple of aquaculture farms, and the prawns are very fresh and very good eating at that time of year. On behalf of the boys at Beenleigh, I extend that invitation to the Minister. If he comes along, I am sure that he will enjoy himself immensely.

I intend to speak about two major functions within the Minister's department, namely, Q-Build Project Services and Strategic Facilities Planning and Management. Firstly, I refer to Q-Build Project Services. The major activities of Q-Build Project Services include the management of the Government's building program, project management, architecture, engineering, quantity surveying and energy conservation, just to name a few. The mission statement of Q-Build is as follows—

“To provide a Statewide competitively priced, professional building service which will include the management of the building concept, design and documentation, construction supervision and engineering works.”

To achieve that mission, the department has set some goals. These are—

“To provide a timely, cost effective, quality service.

To be responsive to clients.

To provide professional building consultancy services through the skills, knowledge and expertise of our staff.”

In the past year, a major achievement of Q-Build was the decision by the Goss Government to create jobs through the accelerated capital works project.

The member for Broadsound stated that, in the first six months of 1991, tenders were called for more than 180 major projects in both the accelerated and normal capital works programs. In the accelerated capital works program, Project Services was responsible for injecting more than \$350m into employment through 150 additional building projects. Since January 1991, tenders were called through the accelerated capital works program, including 75 projects for the Education Department, valued at \$52m; 10 projects for the Police Department, valued at in excess of \$21m; 16 projects for the Health Department, valued at in excess of \$63m; and the new State Archives building, valued at \$27m. Another achievement of Q-Build Project Services was its participation in the rehabilitation of the Kingston/Mount Taylor hazardous waste site. That project was commenced in the early seventies by the Albert Shire Council. It is good to see the Minister's department enhancing facilities for that local community.

Some of the projects in my electorate add up to millions of dollars. These projects include the new Coomera Police Station, which will cost under \$1m. I have heard bleatings about that project from some of the pseudo National Party members on the council. Six years ago, when I first went to Coomera, one policeman, Herbie Boyd, worked out of an office. In that time, I heard not one comment from Councillor Kleinschmidt or anyone else in the National Party who is bleating about those projects. The Coomera Police Station now has eight staff members. Before the end of the year, they will move into the new facilities, which will become a 24-hour operation that will serve the community well.

Other projects in that area include a new State school at Mount Warren Park. I prefer to call that area Windaroo, because it gets confused with the previous State school. The present State school at Mount Warren Park, which has in excess of 1 500 schoolchildren, is a sea of portables and demountables. A new State school will be good for the children of Beenleigh and the surrounding district. That State school project will cost in excess of \$2.9m. On that site will be built a new double-unit preschool and a special education unit. This Government, through the Minister, is committed to looking after education—

**Mr Palaszczuk:** And, of course, your representation.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** I thank the member for that comment. There is no doubt that my electorate is growing rapidly. In the past three years, it has grown by more than 10 per cent, compared with the State average growth of 3 per cent. National Party members bleat about their rapidly growing electorates, but my electorate is growing so rapidly that townships seem to be built there in the time that it takes to blink.

I turn now to Strategic Facilities Planning and Management, which was set up by the Minister to identify likely demand for space and indicate strategies for the acquisition of development sites and disposing of surplus properties that are not needed. I understand that the Government owns very few of the buildings that it occupies at the Gold Coast. In the next few years—maybe next year, in the next capital works program—I would like to see the Government build a State office block on the Gold Coast, perhaps in conjunction with the Federal Government. Branches of those departments on the Gold Coast serve so many people that I believe that a State office complex such as that to be constructed in Rockhampton would service that area well.

**Mr Stephan:** Do you want to copy Rockhampton?

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** I believe that there is a great need for a State office complex on the Gold Coast, which is the second-largest city in Queensland. Government services in the region are spread out. The Government pays rent for the use of those facilities and gets no return from them. The Government should centralise its departments and own those buildings in which they are housed. The majority of honourable members would own their home or would be in the process of purchasing their own home. To me, there is no difference between a private individual owning a building and the State Government owning something concrete—for example, a facility on the Gold Coast—instead of renting it. The only person on the Gold Coast who received any benefit was a friend of the National Party who used to live on the Gold Coast and from whom the Government used to rent buildings.

I turn to Q-Build Property Management, which also has a corporate mission. Its aims are to excel in satisfying the property management requirements of the Queensland Government. To me, one of the fundamentals of Government is to manage and look after property. A goal of the department is to provide clients of the Queensland Government with quality property management services at a competitive price. I am reading this out of the Minister's annual report.

**Mr FitzGerald:** No, the department's annual report.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** Well, the annual report of the department. Another goal of the department is, most importantly, to optimise the return on capital invested by the Government. Here again, the Government gets the capital for its investment from the taxpayers of this State, and they in turn receive the benefit. In my opinion, paying rent is dead money. I own my house and I pay it off. I consider the same issues that the Government should consider.

One of the major achievements of Q-Build Property Management is the Cleaning Services Group. In consultation with the Department of Environment and Heritage, the department introduced a pilot project to recycle paper waste in most Government buildings in central Brisbane. That program reduces the volume and cost of dumping waste in landfills, allows paper to be recycled and benefits clients by reducing costs associated with the removal of waste. We have paid for it once. Paper is a resource that should be recycled and renewed. I do not believe that burying paper waste is the answer. Maybe the cost is a benefit in the short term, but in the long term it helps no-one. We cannot continue the vicious cycle of ripping down trees and feeding the paper mentality of Governments.

The other major initiative of the Cleaning Services Group is Goplants, which maintains gardens, provides professional advice on the care of large gardens, and supplies indoor plants from its own nursery. A business colleague of mine told me how expensive it is to provide indoor plants for his offices. He said that his company spends between \$15,000 and \$20,000 a year on providing indoor plants for its building.

**Mr Littleproud:** The Speaker allows plastic plants in Parliament House.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** He only has to pay the cleaner to clean them. I would rather pay for a gardener to pot the plants downstairs and change them over every couple of months within the building. That is providing a service here. We need natural plants to breathe, and I do not believe that plastic plants are adequate. That is another matter for the Speaker to consider.

I turn to the State Government Protective Security Service. Although that is a new initiative of the Government, it has been expanded to include school security. One has only to look at the figures to realise that the problem of school security is costing the Government a lot of money. In Beenleigh, which is in my electorate, and in the neighbouring electorate of Logan, figures show that since the Government installed alarm systems in school buildings, from 1988-89 to 1989-90 there was a reduction of 25 per cent in the number of break and enters into schools, and from 1989-90 to 1990-91 there was a further 15 per cent reduction. The cost to the community of those break and enters is amazing. The replacement cost of a fully equipped administration block is approximately \$300,000 and the replacement cost for a standard teaching block or a library is approximately \$250,000. A lot of money is being wasted on rebuilding those services.

**Mr Palaszczuk** interjected.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** I would have to agree with that. My sister lived in Victoria. She was contracted to the school and she lived on the site. When she was there, no break and enters occurred at the school. That may be another way in which we can protect those State buildings. In my electorate, I have had first-hand knowledge of fires. Early last year, the Beenleigh preschool was burnt down and was rebuilt by the department. I am grateful to the department and the local depot. The mothers were very upset at the loss of all of that equipment. They had worked very hard at fund-raising to buy the equipment for the school, and in one 30-minute blaze of glory for someone, between 10 and 15 years' work was destroyed.

Time expired.

**Hon. R. T. McLEAN** (Bulimba—Minister for Administrative Services) (5.15 p.m.), in reply: I thank all speakers who have taken part in the debate, particularly those who said nice things about me. That does not happen too often. I have only a short time in which to answer many of the questions from the various speakers, so if I miss some, I give a guarantee that I will get back to those members by mail or as soon as possible.

**Mr Littleproud:** It's in the mail?

**Mr McLEAN:** Yes, in the mail. Unlike the National Party Government, this Government has nothing to hide. It has absolutely nothing to be ashamed of in this debate. In fact, it has a lot of which to be proud. Huge changes have been made for the better in the department. Huge changes have been made to save money and to provide better services. What has disappointed me in this debate is the fact that members such as the Opposition spokesman have spoken and have done absolutely no work at all. The member did absolutely no research, but for half an hour he made a speech that had no substance whatsoever. He spoke the greatest heap of garbage that I have ever heard during my 11 years in Parliament. I thought it was by far the worst, but that turned out not to be the case because the member was outdone by two others. He was outdone by the member for Southport, who was then outdone by the member for Flinders.

**Mr Stephan** interjected.

**Mr McLEAN:** He did not write that, either. Rob Borbidge wrote his speech. I will return to the subject, because I do not have much time. The member for Gympie, Mr Stephan, touched on many issues because he did not know anything about any one of them. He began by talking about spending in National Party electorates. I would have thought that would have been the last thing he would mention after the example I gave of

the special works program that he and his Government instigated. The member went on to touch on the subject of user pays and said it was a tax-getting exercise. The member has not heard one word that has been said in this Chamber. He has not read one line written by the department. He spoke about new buildings, property management and maintenance, but the matter that struck me most was his reference to tenders.

**Mr Stephan:** You didn't understand them, did you?

**Mr McLEAN:** If the honourable member reminds me, I will get back to what really upset me. He is a typically lazy member of Parliament.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I cannot accept that remark. I ask the Minister to get to the issues rather than to refer to what he considers are the personal traits of the member for Gympie.

**Mr McLEAN:** I will bow to your ruling, Mr Chairman, but it is very difficult. The member referred to tenders, but it was only 1 October when I gave a reply to a question that he asked in this Chamber. It was a very obtuse question and contained no clues whatsoever as to what it was all about. At the time, the answer that I gave was a page or so long and, at the end, I added that should Mr Stephan wish to give specific instances of abnormal delays, I would undertake to investigate them and respond accordingly. He did not give a specific instance. He did not write to me with an instance; he did not fax me; he did not phone me; he did not visit my office; he did not approach me in the Chamber; he never fronted me at all. Today, he got up in the Chamber with the same rubbish that I do not think any honourable member in the Chamber could understand. It is unbelievable. I will not waste any more time on the member for Gympie, because he is too stupid.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr McLEAN:** I withdraw. The next member to speak was Dr Watson, the member for Moggill. He spoke about a number of issues and I thank him for his congratulations, which came quite out of the blue. He spoke about the equity of Q-Fleet. One of the reasons why departments are claiming equity in Q-Fleet is that they can see it will be a success. I am proud to say that 15 departments have taken it up and will reap dividends down the track. This is good to see, and I congratulate Les Clarence and everyone at Q-Fleet for their efforts to date. It will be a very successful operation and it certainly highlights the mismanagement by the previous Government when it came to Government cars. The member talked about design and construct, which at present is a controversial issue in the building industry. I realise that the people in the industry are split pretty well down the middle on the issue, and one could argue for either side quite easily. It depends on which section of the industry one talks to concerning design and construct as to which side one takes. The argument seems to be more prominent when times are tough, and it is tough out there at the moment. We only use it in some instances, and one of the reasons we used it recently was that many projects had to be speeded up. It will not be a permanent fixture within our department, but I admit that it is controversial. The member referred to school repairs and a 40 per cent drop in minor works. That is quite wrong. We have put more money into maintenance, but if the member wishes, I will get back to him on this matter.

I thank the member for Redlands, Mr Briskey, for his contribution. It is good to see that he has such an understanding of the direction that the department has been taking. I thank him for his assistance and his support during this very difficult period of the formulation of Government policy, and I congratulate him on his speech. I thank the member for Burdekin, Mr Stoneman, for his congratulations and acknowledgment of the service given by the department and the service that he receives from departmental officers. He also acknowledged the importance of the responsibilities that come under the umbrella of the Department of Administrative Services. However, he said there was a

black mark against the department concerning the Mount Elliot State School. I will leave that matter until later and I will answer it in the Chamber at some stage. My department does have an answer for it. The member for Broadsound, Mr Pearce, was the next member to speak, and he referred to the accelerated capital works program. I congratulate him on his involvement in my parliamentary committee. Up to this point, he has played an enormous role, and I thank him for his involvement and for his speech.

Now, I will come to the second-worst speech that I have heard in this Chamber in my 11 years in Parliament—the speech delivered by the member for Southport. He ranted and raved about a Goebbels-style media and information unit set up by this Government. It is obvious that his speech was written by the League of Rights in conjunction with the member for Surfers Paradise. It was the greatest heap of tripe and garbage that I have ever heard in this Chamber. I will tell members about the proposition, which most certainly is not a goer at this stage. It is a suggestion that came from our department and not from the people whom the honourable member is blaming. The idea is to assist regional areas. It is all about setting up information shops and bookshops that can sell some books.

**Mr Veivers:** It is not just the bookshops.

**Mr McLEAN:** I am telling the honourable member what it is about, if he cares to listen. It is about selling Acts of Parliament, regulations, maps, primary industries information and fishing information.

**A Government member** interjected.

**Mr McLEAN:** That is right. It is about information on roads, the Government Gazettes and information that people who live outside Brisbane find difficult to obtain. The honourable member should tell me what is wrong with setting up in Rockhampton, Cairns or Townsville a shop where people can obtain access to information that people who live in Brisbane take for granted. In those northern areas, people cannot obtain ready access to that type of information. Why should not we, as a Government, be entitled to sell our own information through our own shops?

**Mr Veivers:** And not pay tax and all that type of thing?

**Mr McLEAN:** Of course we do. The member does not even understand. He is another one who does not know what it is all about.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The member for Southport has had his go.

**Mr McLEAN:** His speech was quite disappointing, but not surprising because it obviously came from the member for Surfers Paradise. All honourable members know how Right Wing and stupid he is. Obviously, it was written in conjunction with the League of Rights, and probably with the Friends of Joh, too.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** You were set up.

**Mr McLEAN:** I think he was set up. I move on to discuss the speech made by the member for Mount Isa.

Time expired.

At 5.25 p.m.,

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 1 October, I shall now put the questions for the Vote under consideration and the balance remaining unvoted for Department of Administrative Services (Trust and Special Funds).

The questions for the following Votes were put, and agreed to—

\$390,549,000—General Public Services, Department of Administrative Services (Consolidated Fund).

\$91,728,000—General Public Services, Department of Administrative Services (Trust and Special Funds).

### Lands

**Hon. A. G. EATON** (Mourilyan—Minister for Land Management) (5.26 p.m.): I move—

“That there be granted to Her Majesty for the service of the year 1991-92, a sum not exceeding \$1,493,000 for Law, Order and Public Safety, Department of Lands (Consolidated Fund).”

Mr Chairman, this year has seen a major step forward in continuing the Government's commitment to reform. It is the year that has seen the development and introduction of a legislative program that will give us new policy objectives and goals in the area of land management. It is the year that has seen the Government tackle and overhaul a land and administration policy which no longer addresses the policy issues and problems facing us today. In reviewing the legislation, it has been my intention to move away from the present clumsy, regulatory framework towards streamlined, more effective and more easily understood statutes. My legislative program has started with the reform of the Land Act, which is still being debated before the House. It will continue in the future with reform focusing on the Lands Department operating within the principles and objectives of sound management and administration of Crown land and open government. The elimination of duplication and the streamlining of activities are being implemented as a result of the merger of the four departments which will flow through to the legislative program.

The principles behind the reform program can be summarised in three areas: the first is openness of decision-making, supported by clear, easily understood legislation; the second is flexibility, provided by statutes framed in primarily non-regulatory, simple form, containing principles and powers, and supported by published policies; the third is an emphasis on education and incentives. Since the election of this Government, we have been concerned with improving the delivery of services and programs to our client groups. The beginning of this was the integration of the four former land-related departments—the Department of Geographic Information, the Department of the Valuer-General, the Department of Freehold Land Titles and the Lands Department—into one. However, it has been a major task to bring four departments into one. No restructuring of this kind runs smoothly always. Indeed, it has proven to be a substantial challenge. However, despite some of the difficulties experienced, the senior officers and staff have worked hard on developing improved staff training, working conditions and facilities, and opportunities for staff advancement. I believe that the end result will be higher staff morale and better service to the public.

A key reform has been the ongoing regionalisation program which will see more staff in rural and regional Queensland. The Government has committed a Budget allocation of \$5.4m to the establishment of 10 regions and 33 offices throughout the State. Honourable members should note that of the 33 offices, 12 are situated west of the Great Divide, close to the department's rural clients. The department has designated 10 regions centred on Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Maryborough, Caboolture, Brisbane, Beenleigh, Toowoomba and Roma. A structured multiskilling process has been implemented across all programs. Land service centres represent my department in all aspects at community level. They are a one-stop shop for transaction of land-related business—managerially, professionally and operationally. These centres have already been established in Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, Maryborough and Toowoomba regional centres. Inquiries and applications can now be processed in the regional offices rather than having to be referred back to Brisbane. The advantages in both time and cost are obvious, and the end result will be faster over-the-counter services, with decisions being made with the benefit of local input. Despite some claims that this would lead to a loss of services in the rural communities, I can inform the Committee that not one

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Department office has been closed; nor has staff been removed. In fact, the opposite is the case, as I said earlier, with extra staff being relocated in regional and rural Queensland. The implementation of this initiative is also expected to provide further assistance in the development of the major regional centres throughout Queensland. It will not only provide business and the public with greater access to services with improved turnaround times but also result in injections of funds to these cities and towns through the increased work force.

The Department of Lands has a legislative and policy platform of major initiatives and programs which I shall now outline. I know that other members of the Government will highlight specific areas during the course of this debate. The expenditure figures from the Consolidated Fund for each major departmental program are—

Land Courts: 1990-91, \$1,350,000; 1991-92, \$1,493,000;  
land sustainability: 1990-91, \$5,970,000; 1991-92 \$5,680,000;  
land information: 1990-91, \$10,488,000; 1991-92, \$11,135,000;  
land use: 1990-91, \$22,386,000; 1991-92, \$21,452,000;  
land titles: 1990-91, \$13,692,000; 1991-92, \$15,245,000;  
land valuation: 1990-91, \$23,740,000; 1991-92, \$27,511,000;  
land boundaries: 1990-91 \$13,071,000; 1991-92 \$16,689,000.

The total expenditure for 1990-91 was \$90,697,000, and the total allocation for 1991-92 is \$99,250,000.

A number of savings options have been introduced by the department, based on both internal and external evaluations by agencies such as Treasury and the Public Sector Management Commission. An estimated \$650,000 will be saved through a rationalisation of thematic mapping products and \$225,000 through a reduction of Government involvement in the survey plan examination. The total anticipated receipts for 1991-92 are \$148,732,000. This is an increase of 4.76 per cent over actual receipts for 1990-91.

As I said before, this Government has launched an ambitious and long overdue review of Queensland's land administration policy. The first major legislative reform is the Lands Legislation Amendment Bill, which is still before this Assembly, but the passage of this legislation will mean the lifting of the 1990 freeholding freeze and the introduction of unimproved capital value as a basis for all Crown rentals. The use of unimproved capital value will come into effect from 1 July 1993. Essentially, this will mean there will be one valuation for rent, rating and land tax purposes. This will have a number of advantages. Most importantly, it will mean that rents will more accurately reflect the strength or weakness of prevailing economic circumstances, that is, if valuations fall, then rents will automatically follow. However, if valuations increase dramatically, then the Government will have the power to average them over a period to reduce their impact. Unimproved capital value has been used to determine rental levels for most of the State's Crown leases. Moving all leases onto this basis will rid the department of wasteful duplication in both the valuation process and the grievance resolution procedure.

The Government recognises that the rural community is suffering at the moment from the collapse of commodity prices, the general economic recession, and the ravages of the drought. As part of the Government's drought relief package, I have agreed to a 12-month deferral of Crown rents. The only qualification needed is for the property to be a drought-declared property or for it to be in a drought-declared shire. It is worth noting that the legislation before the Assembly contains a broad hardship provision which will give greater flexibility in relation to rent levels. Included in this provision is an allowance for drought, flood, fire and economic recession which expands the previous narrow hardships

provision. The Opposition has criticised this legislation for not including rental levels. I would have thought they would have welcomed legislation that is responsive and flexible. This legislation will not only take into account the economic conditions closer to the introduction date of 1 July 1993, but will be set following continued consultation with industry groups.

This Government is not about stopping freeholding or withdrawing security of tenure, but the days of uncontrolled, indiscriminate freeholding are finished. For the first time, this Government has defined the issue of public interest to protect the land and maximise its use. Under the legislation, special consideration must now be given to issues such as the risks of land degradation, existing land degradation, compliance with lease conditions, environmental requirements, and profits from foreseeable higher potential use. In summary, this means that while a more thorough scrutiny of freeholding applications will be undertaken, the rights of people to obtain freehold title have been maintained. For some time now, the variety of residential leases in some Queensland towns has caused problems due to the difference in rental and freeholding conditions. This has now been corrected with the special freeholding of leases legislation, which will standardise them. These anomalies existed in Mount Isa, Cloncurry, Charters Towers, Collinsville, Scottville, Mount Morgan and Gympie. The special freeholding legislation sets a two-year time limit on the special freeholding conditions for special leases, non-competitive leases and workers' homes perpetual town leases and State housing perpetual leases. The purchase price for the freeholding of these leases is based on the valuation of the freehold of the miners' homestead perpetual leases, which is mostly the 1980 valuation paid off over 30 years, or in full with a 49 per cent discount for cash payment. Not only will this correct an unfair and inequitable situation in certain mining towns, but also it will streamline the freeholding of all those leases in these towns.

As members are aware, in late June I released for public comment a Green Paper on the Building Units and Group Titles Act. This paper addressed management issues and staged developments of building units as part of a general review of this complex and difficult area. The response to the paper has been significant, both in terms of industry organisations and the general public. More than 12 000 copies have been distributed to interested parties and my department has received more than 300 submissions in response. Issues raised in the paper have been discussed with members of the Gold Coast Unit Owners Association, the Body Corporate Managers Institute, the Australian Institute of Valuers and Land Administrators, the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, the Unit Owners Association of Queensland, and the Resident Unit Owners Chapter.

My department places great emphasis on the development and use of computer technology and information databases. This is consistent with our objective to continue the department's role as lead agency in land information systems and effective regionalisation of functions. Funding of \$298,000 has been provided for the development of a charter for the State's land information system and a land information system strategic plan. This will result in a coordinated approach to land information, reducing duplication and cost, and the provision of an improved product for the community. In terms of the development of integrated databases, the proposal to provide a single Statewide database catering for the title register, lease register, miners' homestead tenure creation, tenure management and other areas has been given a high priority. This has been strongly supported by the recent Public Sector Management Commission review. All members of the community and organisations involved in land transactions will benefit from an integrated database.

The other major development project is the provision of an integrated land valuation and sales system. This will provide valuation and sales information for valuation, rating and taxation purposes which can be shared directly with local authorities. Work is

continuing on the Government land management plan which will identify essential Government real estate. It will also allow the disposal of the non-essential real estate to produce the greatest community benefit. A property review committee has been established to manage Government real estate, and coordinate the disposal of all excess Government real estate. It is anticipated that sales revenue in 1991-92 will be \$5m, growing to \$30m in 1992-93. There are, of course, a number of other benefits to be gained from the proper and effective management of the Government real estate. The identification of excess land means that it can be made available for more appropriate development such as new housing or employment-generating activities. It also leads to improved decision-making that is in touch with and sympathetic to the needs and aspirations of the community, taking into account issues such as the environment, the need for open space in our fast developing cities and regional centres, as well as our heritage and Aboriginal cultural issues.

The development of urban Crown land remains one of the department's major functions, and \$6.13m has been provided to continue this program in 1991-92. Primarily, these funds will be used to develop residential lots throughout Queensland, ranging from Southport in the south to Horn Island in the north, and west to Mount Isa. In all, approximately 450 residential lots will be developed, with major developments in the following areas: Emerald, 150; Alexandra Hills, 53; Townsville, 47; Southport, 43; and south-east Mackay, 37.

The Rural Lands Protection Board continues to provide valuable research into pest plant and animal control, with a budget allocation of \$2.895m for 1991-92, at the Alan Fletcher Research Station, Brisbane, the Tropical Weeds Research Station, Charters Towers, and the Robert Wicks Research Station at Inglewood. The major research activities involve the investigation of biological control agents for plant pests such as prickly acacia, parthenium weed, lantana, groundsel, mesquite, rubber vine and bitou bush. Major budgetary initiatives involve—

- \$788,000 for rabbit control in the eastern parts of the State;

- \$415,000 for the control of feral pigs and foxes;

- \$367,000 for control of harrisia cactus;

- \$343,000 for parthenium weed control;

- \$1.163m for the maintenance of the dingo barrier fence; and

- \$1.29m for research projects.

The containment policy for parthenium weed will continue in the central Queensland local authorities of Bauhinia, Bowen, Emerald, Jericho and Peak Downs. The Alan Fletcher Research Station is working to develop a biological control for parthenium weed, and has been involved in mass production for parthenium weed rust which was recently released into the field. Its progress will be monitored to assess the rate of spread of the rust and its effectiveness as a biological control.

In these times of drought, the importance of monitoring the condition of our stock-routes is crucial for our rural community. In some cases it can mean the difference between survival and disaster for primary producers. However, at the moment, information relating to regular stock movements and the condition of water facilities is not available. It is proposed that a stock route database be developed to identify and map stock-routes of primary, secondary and minor importance to give the department a total picture of this aspect of land use.

A major initiative of my department has been the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Interests Program. The Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, Ms Anne Warner, and I have been working continually with

key staff to build a new administrative mechanism to ensure the most efficient process for the implementation of the Aboriginal Land Act and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act. While my department does not have sole responsibility for the administration of this program, the position of land claims registrar will be held by the chief executive of the Lands Department. The Lands Department will coordinate arrangements for the identification and gazettal of land, the processing of claims and the issuing of titles. My department is conscious of its responsibilities and of the expanded role that Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders will have in its operations. These interests will not only be taken into account in developing the Government's future land policy but also will be a prominent consideration in all land management decisions.

One of the most exciting and new technical innovations and land management systems being developed by my department is the digital cadastral database, a computerised record of the State's land parcels. The land boundaries program will be embarking on a major exercise in 1991-92 to convert from the old relational database management system to a more sophisticated and powerful Ingres database. This will allow almost unlimited searching and extraction queries to be made of the DCDB so that people can obtain tailor-made land information at any scale. The department also offers a Faxmap service, and information can now be recalled from the DCDB via remote terminals around the State within minutes. The benefits to both the general community and to business are obvious. I have only touched on the highlights of my department's policy and legislative reform program. I know that, during this debate, other members of the Government will touch on specific issues. As I said at the beginning, my department has embarked on an ambitious program during difficult economic times. It is a program that is succeeding. The final result will be a streamlined, efficient department which meets its obligations to its client groups and, at the same time, brings about an innovative and long-term program for the successful management of Crown land.

Debate interrupted.

## PRIVILEGE

### Appointments to Court of Appeal

**Mr KATTER:** I rise on a matter of privilege. Today, AAP ran a story based on some comments attributed to me relative to appointments to the new Court of Appeal. The statements were made on Monday when I was in Hughenden, where I had been informed, erroneously, that the appointments to the Court of Appeal had not been made. It is against the conventions under which we live to comment on judicial appointments. Such comments in the past have been most unfortunate. And whilst we in the National Party have advocated different modes of appointment, I would strongly adhere to the criticisms made in the past that attacks upon the judiciary are most unfortunate and I would never be a party to such attacks now or in the future. I wish to unreservedly withdraw the comments in light of the fact that the appointments had already been made. I seek leave to do so.

Leave granted.

## SUPPLY

### Estimates—Lands

Debate resumed.

**Mr HOBBS** (Warrego) (5.48 p.m.): It is my pleasure to speak on the Estimates of the Land Management portfolio. We must review the Estimates for the past year and for

the coming year on the basis that many reviews of the department have been carried out. I refer to the Wolfe committee of review of Land policy and administration, the Smith review into the different types of valuations, and the PSMC review. With that in mind, we must ask the Government where it is going and when the public will be aware of the recommendations that the Government is accepting from those reviews. I refer particularly to the Wolfe report and the Smith report. The Government often talks of reform. The word "reform" seems to have been taken out of context. In many cases, it seems as though there has been change for the sake of change. I have no problem with any review of any department or organisation. It can be healthy and may lead to benefits to the community, not merely to a department or other organisation. However, I am concerned that the Government has endorsed the Wolfe report in principle. We do not know which recommendations have been accepted and which have not. During the debate on the Lands Legislation Amendment Bill, the Minister outlined some items with which the National Party is not happy, but a wide range of other recommendations were made in the report about which members on this side of the Chamber and members of the community, including groups that represent a large number of lessees and people involved in land management issues, are concerned. We are concerned about what will occur with tax on leasehold land and about the maximum level of land-ownership on stock-routes, aggregation control, living areas and the categories of prescribed rates. Will prescribed rates be provided for rural areas, commercial areas, industrial areas, tourist areas, public utilities and sporting and recreation, charitable and non-profit organisations? Will they all have a separate category? When we debate the issue of reform, we must take into consideration all those aspects. If the Government wants to change the ground rules, we need a broad picture of where we are going. If any reform measures will be of any benefit to the people of Queensland, I will be happy to help in changing those rules.

This year's annual report points out clearly in regard to the Wolfe report that the first stage of implementation of the recommendations made by the committee of review of Land policy and administration in Queensland has been considered by Cabinet. It states that the recommendations require amendments to legislation relating to the freeholding of leases, which has been discussed. The report continues—

"Further recommendations of this report will be progressively implemented."

The Government is stating that further recommendations of this report will be progressively implemented, but, from what we have seen so far, it appears that the recommendations that are put forward are not satisfactory. We need to have a better working relationship so that we can put together a better strategy that will benefit all lessees as well as the people of Queensland. That is an important aspect. The report further states—

"The resolution of a simplified valuation system within the context of the Smith Report is being investigated."

After Mr Smith made his report, the Minister invited local government representatives, the head of his department and others to look further into the matter. What stage have we reached? In future, are there likely to be site valuations for urban land? Are there likely to be land valuations in some manner or form in rural areas? I noticed that, when the Minister talked about rentals, he mentioned UCV. That would probably be fairly clear. I guess some other aspects may need explanation.

I notice in this year's Estimates that there is provision for an increase in rentals of 22 per cent. Recently, Mr Carter of the Land Court recommended rental increases of between 100 per cent and 200 per cent. Judging by the figures in this year's Estimates, it is obvious that the Government considers that it would not receive an increase of that order. I guess that, in reality, the figure which is aimed for may be obtained. However, many

people will not be able to pay the increases of 100 per cent to 200 per cent as recommended by Carter. That will particularly apply to the wool industry, which is going through a bad time. Although recently the price of wool rose—I suppose it could be said that it was a large rise for a small amount of money—that is not really an indication of the full extent of the problem experienced by people in the sheep lands. They will not have the funds to be able to pay land rentals and also shire rates. Many of them are flat out feeding themselves. There is no chance in the world that any of them will be even able to pay interest to the banks. You can bet your boots that the banks will be in there first for their money ahead of local authorities and State Government departments which want money for rentals and so on.

During debate on a Bill presently before the Assembly, and also in this Estimates debate, the Minister mentioned that UCVs will be the valuation method adopted by the Government. I still maintain that that method is not satisfactory. It will not reflect the ability of a piece of land to produce. We should be looking at whether the land can produce instead of whether it is situated close to a town or, for some reason or another, whether it may be sold at a higher price. In an agricultural sense, the valuation may not really reflect its potential to produce. I refer to my speech on 23 October 1991 in the debate on the Lands Legislation Amendment Bill in which I covered many of those particular points. I do not think it is necessary to repeat all of those arguments again tonight.

A couple of points need to be made about freeholding. The proposal that is being put forward now is anti-ownership, even though the Minister said a while ago that it was not. It really is anti-freeholding. So many conditions have been applied that the meaning of freeholding has been removed. Quite frankly, I think the new method of freeholding is useless. It will be costly. Who would want it? A person might as well have a lease. This is obviously the intent of the Government.

**Mr Dollin:** It's a good idea.

**Mr HOBBS:** I guess that I have no problem with it. I hear someone from the back of the Chamber say, "It's a good idea." The honourable member has said before that having freehold land is like taxing the air that we breathe. If the Government wants people to have real ownership of land, it should not give them a Claytons freeholding, which is what it is offering them at present.

**Mr Ardill:** Why?

**Mr HOBBS:** That is exactly what it is. It is not freehold at all. Under the new proposal, it will not be freehold. It will only be a term. In actual fact, someone could quarry within 100 metres of a person's house. When it all boils down, the occupier will not have forestry rights over the land. For a start, even the conditions required to be met in order to be able to apply to have the land freeholded will be too tough. In fact, I do not believe that much of the land will be eligible to be freeholded. Originally, the Government imposed a three-month freeze on freeholding. That period is now in excess of 20 months. There is no doubt that for that reason a lot of development work has been held up. During the time that it has been held up, matters have been handled very shabbily. Many people have contacted me, but the simple fact of the matter is that all I can tell them is that there is a freeze on and that nothing can be done. I continue to make the point that I believe the freeholding policy that is in place at the moment is useless. I do not think there will be many takers once people see all the details.

Another point that needs mentioning is stock-routes. I ask the Minister: what is their future? The dogs are barking that Mr Comben would like to get hold of some of the stock-routes. I see a few members opposite grinning, no doubt in agreement with that statement. We should reflect on the fact that stock-routes exist for a purpose. I do not think that the Minister for Environment and Heritage should really have his eyes on stock-routes, trying

to put them under his wing to protect the birds and bees and whatever else he wants to try to protect. A good stock-routes system is needed. This year, the drought has emphasised more than ever just exactly what the stock routes system can do. As the Minister would be aware, many people need to use stock-routes. I understand that he has been very sympathetic to people on stock-routes, and for that I thank him. At present, people are walking the stock-routes throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. The use of stock-routes will increase. However, it also concerns me that the proposed national registration scheme will put a lot more pressure on road trains, which will result in more stock being put back on the roads. At the moment, people cannot afford to pay road freight. That will also be the case in the future. As a result, I guess that more pressure will be placed on the use of stock-routes again somewhere along the line.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.

**Mr HOBBS:** Before the dinner recess, I was talking about stock-routes and their importance for travelling stock. At present, because of the dry conditions that we face, a great deal of use is being made of stock-routes throughout Queensland. In regard to stock-routes, the annual report states—

“Over the next five years, the Department will develop a comprehensive computerised information system to support a major review of the State’s stock route system.”

I have no great problem with such a review. Perhaps that would identify the particular categories of stock-routes and those portions that are used more regularly than others. However, that review must be undertaken bearing in mind that stock-routes are sacrosanct and are to be used only for the movement of stock.

One particular section of the annual report talks about protection of the environment. Although the environment is very important, it is not the be-all and end-all of the stock-routes system. I do not believe that the environment should be the main criteria used in this particular review. In years to come, the stock-routes system should be available and open to everybody. It is up to this Minister to make sure that his department is stronger than the Department of Environment and Heritage. At present, that department seems to be having a run in the media and in the public opinion polls as to how things should be done. But, at the end of the day, I believe that it is most important to keep the stock-routes open for the people who need them, not just for those who want them. I should probably give notice to the Minister for Environment and Heritage to keep his hands off those stock-routes. They are there for stock—not birds, plants or whatever else.

**Mr Eaton** interjected.

**Mr HOBBS:** I hope that this Minister is strong enough to beat the Environment Minister on this issue. The dogs are barking that that Minister would like some control over the stock-routes.

I turn now to the artesian basin and bores. A good program is already under way for the rehabilitation of many rogue bores, and I am pleased that the Government has continued with that program to a certain degree. I believe that we are on the right track towards creating a good balance between the intake and output of the artesian basin, which is the life-blood of western Queensland. Many towns use that artesian basin. Many dams are dry at present, and people are looking to their neighbours for some assistance in providing water for household needs. Those artesian supplies are being well used at present. We must ensure that the basin is not damaged in any way.

I am very disappointed at the possibility of a toxic waste dump at Miles. I am genuinely concerned about that, because the site is very close to the intake of the Great Artesian Basin. As to the argument that the basin is perhaps not relevant—for many

years the Water Resources Commission has claimed that that is a very important intake area for the artesian basin. It cannot say all of a sudden that it is not an important area, and that it was propaganda. For many years, it has been claimed that that area is part of the Great Artesian Basin intake. Australians, and particularly Queenslanders, should take some notice of the concerns that have been raised by locals in that area.

**Mr Eaton:** We've had some very thorough tests done there and they are fairly articulate.

**Mr HOBBS:** Whether they are or not, this Government is placing a toxic waste dump over the artesian basin for which the Rural Lands Protection Board has a great deal of responsibility. It is the Minister's responsibility now to ensure that, in the future, toxic waste does not get into the artesian basin. The Minister should make some statements along those lines. We cannot even afford to take that chance. In America, they are getting away from landfill.

Under the new regionalisation reform, the Department of Lands has divided Queensland into new regions. I am not particularly happy with those regions. From studying the map, it appears to me that the person in charge of determining those regions had an affinity with fresh prawns, because all the divisional headquarters run basically along the coast. One cannot have decentralisation or development of the State across the board if people are hanging around the coast. We must be able to drive them throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. Perhaps it would have been far better to determine a region in the central area based on Blackall or Longreach. If I read the map correctly—and I could be wrong, because the map is a bit vague—basically, it looks as though Boulia will come within the Townsville region. That is a long way away. It appears also that Birdsville will come within the Rockhampton region. It is all rather intriguing. Some of those places would not have a chance in the world of any association with each other. For example, Kowanyama in the Gulf of Carpentaria will be associated with Townsville. I would have thought that Cairns would be the main centre that it would deal with. I do not believe that these regions are really practical. Even if there were one region fewer, perhaps it would have been more sensible to have a central region. I acknowledge that Roma and Toowoomba represent regions, which is not all that bad. But, apart from that, every other region runs along the coast. That is not a decentralisation program at its best.

**Mr Eaton:** We looked at all those aspects when we were drawing it up. If the activity warrants it, we can create another region and put those in the area. We found the best way to go was to get it moving along the road. As we go along, we will be looking at those issues.

**Mr HOBBS:** I appreciate that. The reason why the activity is declining is that the centres are not receiving promotion. The Government is pushing Townsville, Rockhampton and Cairns but not Longreach or Blackall. Towns on the coast will improve under those conditions, but we will see what develops. The determination of those regions should have been done earlier, because it would have been of much greater benefit to the people in those inland areas. It would have given them confidence that the Minister was looking after them.

I turn to staff, which is a very important matter. The Minister said that the number of staff in regional areas would not be reduced. Maybe it will; maybe it will not. Time will tell. The former Lands Commissioner and the fellow who has arrived to take his place are both in Charleville. The Minister has put the former Lands Commissioner out of a job and he is waiting to see where he will go next. It is most unsatisfactory. If that is an example of what is happening throughout Queensland, I am very concerned about the whole public service. In no uncertain terms, I acknowledge the hard work that many of the staff in the

department have done throughout the year. Many people are truly dedicated to the department. That is the case not only in this department but also in all departments. I accept that. However, to those who got the boot, I thank them for their service in Queensland. For those who are yet to get the boot, I have a word of advice: watch your back; do not go on holidays or take long-service leave; do not talk to strangers in the street—they may be National Party voters—otherwise, the Premier's ministerial pimps may get you. I advise those people to keep their heads down, for their turn will come.

**Mr Eaton:** I think they'll be treated better than that.

**Mr HOBBS:** I certainly hope so, but that is what is happening now in the departments. The Minister should know that as well as I do. He only has to talk to the people. If the Minister were to walk down the street, he would find them and they would tell him what is happening. My advice is good advice to any public servant in Queensland.

**Mr Eaton:** We've got a lot of good people in the Lands Department with a lot of expertise, but it's a bit like picking the Australian football team. You can have three full-backs of very good quality, but you can only put one in the team.

**Mr HOBBS:** That is not the point. The problem goes deeper than that. The Minister should know that. He is only dragging sand across the trail. The Minister knows as well as I do what is happening in the public sector. In time to come, many people will be in trouble. I turn to the PSMC. I am disappointed that the position of Surveyor-General will be eliminated. The PSMC has not taken into consideration all aspects of the position. Its decision will diminish an efficient and important position.

I turn to annual valuations. A great disservice has been done to land-owners throughout Queensland. Many people will pay additional tax, additional shire rates, over and above what they should have paid had annual valuations been carried out. I know that an annual valuation has been done in a few shires and regions, but a good example of where an annual valuation was not done is the CBD area of Brisbane. Those land values have decreased dramatically. The Minister has not allowed those people the chance to have an annual valuation. They will pay additional land tax over and above what they should pay. That applies across-the-board to people who pay shire rates. Those who live in regions where the land has a higher value will pay increased shire rates, and those who live in areas where the land has a lower value will not. There are discrepancies that need to be addressed. The Minister could have and should have addressed those this year with the annual valuations.

I turn to the Rural Lands Protection Board. Many aspects of that were covered when stock-routes were discussed. Obviously, it is very important that the department continues with biological research on ragweed, groundsel, lantana, mesquite, parkinsonia, parthenium, prickly acacia and other weeds that cause a great deal of trouble. Work is being done in North America, Argentina, Kenya and the UK. We need to keep the pressure on. The Government should spend as much money as it can on that research to pursue the best biological control that it can get. Biological control is the best method of control, whether it be a rust, an insect or whatever the case may be. Chemicals and manpower are very expensive. We are unable to control many pests by those means, so a better biological method of control is needed. I appreciate the role that the Government is playing now, but more money is needed. The Budget allocation for that research has not been increased; if anything, it has been decreased. The Government needs to be able to pursue research vigorously so that it can at least say to people who are confronted with noxious weeds that it is doing something to eradicate those weeds. At the moment, Queensland is suffering from a very severe drought. Feed is being carted from throughout Australia into Queensland. This occurred mainly in the 1940s in my electorate when mint weed was introduced. It was brought into the State in hay. It is a very

serious noxious weed that slowly took over the area. After this drought is over, many areas will be infested with various noxious weeds. We will not know where they have come from and it will take a while to sort out. We must be alert to this because it will cost money to eradicate these weeds.

The dingo barrier fence, which was mentioned tonight, has been of great benefit. The maintenance of the fence has been good. After the floods last year, 120 kilometres of the fence was reconstructed and 30 kilometres was replaced. The workers did a great job. My original thought on the dingo fence was that we would have been better off paying a bounty on dingoes. Irrespective of that, I accept the decision that was made. At the moment, the department is doing a good job of maintaining the fence.

I turn now to the Foreign Ownership of Land Register. The figures are in the annual report for people to debate. There are many aspects to this matter and it could become a very emotional issue. The figures show that the Americans are the biggest land-owners in terms of size and the Japanese are the biggest land-owners in terms of the value of the land. The Office of the Referee should be discussed tonight. Applications for orders have increased by 27 per cent, and the year before that they went up 12 per cent. Over the last 12 months, there has been a large increase in the number of applications for orders, and appeals against those orders have increased by 53 per cent.

Time expired.

**Mr NUNN** (Isis) (7.48 p.m.): It was soothing to say the least to hear the mealy-mouthed comments made by the member for Warrego.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN** (Ms Power): Order! I remind the member for Isis not to make personal comments about honourable members.

**Mr NUNN:** For "concern" read "give me something for nothing". Let us not forget that stock-routes are for the use of travelling stock. They are not for the benefit of individual graziers. If grass pirates like the member for Warrego were given open slather on the stock-routes, the feed would not be there for travelling stock. That would be a travesty.

**Mr Hobbs:** Where does it come from?

**Mr NUNN:** Hang on a little, young fellow, because I know how dependent travelling stock are on feed. Before the honourable member was born I was droving with Peter and Sam Fuller, Chilla Wyatt, Jack Oates, Taree Hudson and others. Skidding about on motor bikes and pretending one knew something about cattle was unheard of at that time. If the honourable member knew anything about those times, he would remember the Fullers. They were great drovers. They never lost a beast. They may not have had them all down there, but they knew where they were. They could always go back and point to them. The honourable member might remember that they ran the buckjump show in Mitchell for charity. I rode in the buckjump show for both Peter and Sam Fuller. Both of them pulled me off with a flank rope, but we were bloody good mates anyway. The honourable member need not put on an act about stock-routes because the men who really know about them will laugh him right out of the west.

In December 1989, the electors of Queensland saw that the State needed a change for the better. Amongst several other major concerns, they saw that Queensland's natural resources were not being managed to their fullest extent and that, in most cases, these resources were being mismanaged. Thankfully, we are living in a society that is becoming more and more conscious of the fragility of the environment. Surely the electors of Queensland considered this when they so dramatically illustrated their confidence in the Goss Labor team and entrusted us with Government. Their trust has not been betrayed.

For example, legislation is currently before this Parliament that will substantially increase the abysmally lenient fines for the destruction of trees on Crown land and incidents such as the one that occurred at Eli Waters at Hervey Bay. Unfortunately, Queensland is yet to put in place legislation which empowers the authorities to control destruction of trees on freehold property. Whilst on the subject of Eli Waters, it is worth mentioning that not so long ago the National Party hierarchy in Hervey Bay called a public meeting. They charged \$25 to get into the meeting. Some public meeting when people had to pay \$25 to get into it! The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Cooper, responded to a question from a namesake of his who asked what would happen to the development on Eli Waters. What they were intending to do with that development—and they have now seen the error of their ways—was to dig a channel out into the ocean 32 feet deep because the tides would not have carried anything else. The philosophy was, "The creek is sick. Let's kill the creek." Do honourable members know what the Leader of the Opposition's response was to that question? He said, "When we are re-elected we will allow that sort of development to go ahead." The people of Hervey Bay are thirsting for his blood over this matter. The penalties being considered will raise fines from \$400 to \$24,000 for individuals and \$48,000 for companies. Direct action is being taken to manage our Crown estate for the benefit of all Queenslanders and not just a few.

May I offer my good friend and colleague, Mr Bill Eaton, the Minister for Land Management—who sits so attentively on the Government side of the Chamber—my heartfelt congratulations on an outstanding success in reforming land management in Queensland. Through Bill Eaton's inspiration as Minister, the Department of Lands has successfully been guided through a period of massive change of social, historical and economic significance to all of Queensland.

**Mr Eaton** interjected.

**Mr NUNN:** Following the creation of the new Department of Lands, plans were initiated and funding provided to establish a framework for future operations. Two significant initiatives in this regard are the regionalisation of departmental activities and the increased emphasis on information technology development. At this point, I must say that the Minister has no need to write speeches for me because praise comes to those who deserve it, and it flows freely.

**Mr Prest:** I get quite a lot.

**Mr NUNN:** And so the honourable member should. In addition to the funds provided for communications systems, significant funds are needed to develop, upgrade and maintain our computer systems and databases for regionalisation to work effectively. These funds have been provided both by way of special funding by Treasury and from departmental resources. Details for the Land Use program are as follows: land use database, \$35,000; Government land register, \$101,000; tenure file conversion, \$975,000; tenure management \$110,000; miners homestead system, \$9,000; reserves system, \$261,000, which makes a total of \$1,491,000. Other major activities include various capital works projects, and an amount of \$1,060,000 is being provided for minor works, including some fit-out of regional offices. Projects already under way include the Rural Lands Protection Board water facilities, \$192,000, and multiuse buildings at the various research stations, \$310,000. Crown land development also falls into this category with approximately 445 residential allotments to be developed throughout the State this year at a total cost of \$6,130,000, made up of 53 allotments at Alexandra Hills; 43 at Southport; 20 at the Town of 1770; 150 at Emerald; 37 at south-east Mackay; 47 at Bohle Plains and Townsville; 72 at Stratford, Herberton and Horn Island; and 23 at Mount Isa. Those figures give a fair spread of those sorts of works right across the State.

Other new initiatives for which Treasury funding has been provided include \$200,000 towards the annual operating costs of the Government's land management plan and \$350,000 towards the cost of surveying miners' homestead leases that are eligible for conversion to freeholding. That is a measure that has just been introduced, for which the miners are very grateful—or, at least, those who are still holding the leases. Both those activities are expected to generate significant revenues for the State through the overview, coordination and disposal of all excess Government real estate and the conversion of existing leases to freehold tenure. A number of savings options have been introduced by the department based on both internal evaluations and evaluations by external agencies, such as Queensland Treasury and the Public Sector Management Commission. An estimated \$650,000 will be saved through a rationalisation of thematic mapping products; \$225,000 through a reduction in Government involvement in the survey plan examination process; and \$6.5m through a reduced allocation in the urban Crown land development area. These savings are in addition to the \$1m machinery of Government dividend and the 1.5 per cent productivity dividend required in the Budget process.

Occasionally, the members of the Opposition try to make political capital out of financial matters by saying that this is a big-spending Government. We spend money where it is necessary. Just in relation to this department, I have demonstrated that this is a saving Government, not a big-spending Government; we spend what we can afford. The total anticipated receipts for 1991-92 are \$148,731,000, which is an increase of 4.76 per cent over actual receipts for 1990-91, which amounted to \$141,972,814. The major revenue categories show that significant increases are expected under taxes, fees and fines, owing to an expected increase of approximately \$6m in real property and property law fees. Land revenues are expected to increase by approximately \$3m, principally due to increases associated with the implementation of the Wolfe report recommendations. Revenue from land sales is expected to drop by approximately \$2m, reflecting the reduced funding for urban Crown land development to which I referred earlier. The major revenue categories lie mainly in taxes, fees and fines, land revenues, receipts for goods and services, and capital recovery—all of which amount to a substantial total.

I turn now to examine the work done by the department through the highly respected Land Protection Branch. Throughout the past year, the Department of Lands' land protection and sustainability branch has been involved in an impressive range of initiatives concerning research into the biological and chemical control of vegetable and animal pests. Some of the major successes recorded include the containment through chemical treatment of the Quilpie mesquite, which is a small prickly tree from Argentina which has infested areas along the Bulloo River. The Quilpie mesquite is well adapted to survival in arid areas because it has a very broad surface root system and a deep tap root. Its seed pods were a stock fodder source but, by the 1980s, it was established from the site of its introduction along 70 kilometres of land on the Bulloo River flood plain near Quilpie in south-west Queensland. A chemical treatment program has now reduced the originally affected area by 80 per cent, leaving hard-core, heavily infested areas which will require an integrated approach, including mechanical removal by blade plough. Blade ploughing trials this year showed up to 99 per cent kills of mesquite plants on heavily infested sites. A five-year integrated plan, consisting of three periods of basal spraying and two periods of blade ploughing, is now proposed to reduce the existing 4 800 hectares of mesquite by half. During this time, control by land-holders would concentrate on three key activities: the maintenance of areas already cleared; control of seedling growth on blade-ploughed areas; and chemical control along creekbanks and timbered zones which cannot be blade ploughed. The Charleville-based regional inspector will supervise this coordinated project at an estimated total cost of \$118,000 for the 1991-92 financial year.

Prickly acacia was introduced as a shade tree to the Mitchell grass downs of north-west Queensland, but has since spread into thorny thickets that suppress natural pasture growth which can block access to stock watering points. A distribution survey and education program is proposed to determine plant distribution and abundance in north-western and central-western Queensland, to educate land-holders about the problem status of this declared plant, and the recommended control measures for individual property management. The employment of a full-time extension officer is considered imperative because the extension component in the proposal is rated as the best possible chance of achieving a reduction of prickly acacia infestations in the long term. Computer equipment, aided by satellite positioning, has been purchased to facilitate mapping of plant infestations in the distribution survey and a total expenditure of \$102,000 is proposed in 1991-92. The current dingo/feral animal control programs have a heavy reliance on baiting techniques, employing 1080 poison solution injected into fresh meat baits.

**Mr Beattie** interjected.

**Mr NUNN:** I reckon we can catch a few feral animals. This dependence on a sole product and concerns related to operator safety aspects and the impact of fresh meat baits on non-target animals have stirred the need to explore alternative techniques or products. An enteric-coated 1080 pellet which will improve operator safety and can be implanted in a distinctive sausage-type bait expected to reduce attractiveness to non-target species has been developed in conjunction with the firm Incitec. The 1991-92 Budget proposes that a limited production of the 1080 sausage baits be undertaken to trial effectiveness and to gauge commercial acceptance of the baiting technique as an eventual replacement for the present annual organised 1080 baiting campaigns.

In the last financial year, considerable interest was again generated in the land resource represented in the stock-routes system in Queensland. Information relating to regular stock route movements, the condition of water facilities and the protection of this part of the State's total land resources is presently not readily available. It is proposed that a stock-routes database be developed to identify and map stock-routes of primary, secondary and minor importance, and to record information such as stock movements and the condition of water facilities to give a total picture of this aspect of land use.

Time expired.

**Mr QUINN** (South Coast) (8.03 p.m.): I rise to take part in the debate on the Estimates for the Land Management portfolio. Last year in this debate, I raised the issue of land valuations and some discrepancies which were obvious between the valuations issued on properties in the Gold Coast City Council area and those on properties in the neighbouring Albert Shire. Apart from land-owners lodging objections, such discrepancies can only be remedied when an annual valuation of the local authority takes place. Contrary to the department's own strategy that it should—

“Undertake annual valuations for rating and taxing purposes for revenue raising by local authorities and the Commissioner for Land Tax . . .”

This year, only four local authorities are being valued—the Gold Coast, Cairns, Mulgrave and Douglas. One has to ask why the vast bulk of valuations across the State were frozen. The reason outlined in the Lands Department annual report that it was necessary given the large number of objections last year, seems inadequate when the same level of objections may result each year. The reason given to local authorities is different from the reason contained in the annual report. In a letter to those councils that are not being revalued this year, the reason given is a lack of resources due to reorganisation and regionalisation of the department. I think one must ask the Minister on this occasion: what is the real reason for the vast bulk of Queensland local authorities not being revalued?

Perhaps the Minister might care to explain the obvious disparity between the two reasons given by his department. Given that property values have fallen across-the-board, why were valuations not carried out this year in Brisbane, on the north coast, and in provincial cities to reflect the downward trend in property values? Why are all property-owners who have historically high valuations not treated in the same manner as when property values are rising significantly?

It is quite obvious that the freeze was introduced in order to keep the amount of land tax collected relatively stable. In other words, land-owners are paying more land tax than is necessary. The department's own corporate goal is to provide Queensland with an equitable land valuation system for Government revenue-raising, but what is equitable about a system that can be frozen at the Government's whim to maximise revenue, such as land tax, raised by the Government from land-owners? If there are going to be annual valuations for the purposes of local authority rates and Government taxes, then they ought to be annual, not just while the property market is rising. If a substantial number of objections are received, then this should not be allowed to divert the resources in a department to the extent that it cannot carry out its stated corporate goal.

The Government's system of making valuations available at public places such as shire and city council offices for inspection by property-owners also needs to be reviewed. Although the cost would be in the order of \$1m, property-owners deserve the right to be informed individually of the basis on which their rates, and possibly land tax, is calculated. Land-owners realise too often that the unimproved capital value is incorrect, or they have some reason to dispute it, only when the rates or land tax notice is received. By then it is usually too late to lodge an objection. The present system of advertising locally is of no assistance whatsoever to absentee landlords, or many people who do not purchase newspapers. Many of the anomalies in suburban valuations arise because of the lack of awareness by the land-owner. The current system hides the true extent of fluctuations in valuations and denies all property-owners the opportunity to scrutinise the Valuer-General's assessment. The issue of large and sudden increases in valuations could be ameliorated if a recommendation from the Wolfe report into land policy and administration was to be implemented. Wolfe recommended "a moving average of the latest three years of unimproved capital value" as a fair method for both the lessee and the Crown on which to base leasehold rentals. This moving average would also be a fair and equitable method on which to base local authority rates and land tax, and it would be a way of evening out the large jumps in valuations that Queenslanders have seen over the last couple of years. Since all valuations are issued by computer, the implementation cost would be negligible. Such a system would iron out some of the savage increases in valuations that Queenslanders have seen that have led to quite alarming increases in rates and land taxes.

The second matter that I wish to raise is the Green Paper on the Building Units and Group Titles Act that has been released by the Minister. I know from my experience on the Gold Coast that this review of various aspects of the Act is generating enormous public comment. There are strongly held views by both unit-owners and the holders of management rights. Although I do not wish to enter the debate until the submissions of all interested parties have been considered and a firm proposal put forward, I trust that the Minister and the Government keep in mind that the issues involved, apart from concerning the major players such as owners and managers, will have far-reaching effects upon the tourism industry that depends on well-managed buildings to supply appropriate accommodation at affordable prices. Despite the appearance of international hotels, the most popular holiday accommodation on the Gold Coast is still the home unit sector. There are over 450 buildings in Queensland with management rights covering some 25 000 strata or group title home units, collecting some \$300m in rents annually. So one can see

that changes to the Building Units and Group Titles Act need to be carefully thought through, otherwise a vital sector of the tourist industry could be damaged. Unfortunately, I have to report, an officer from the Minister's own department has not adopted a similar neutral approach to the Green Paper. On Wednesday, 16 July, in the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, the referee of the Building Units and Group Titles Act—of all people, the referee—made public comments such as—

“The selective fleecing of absentee owners is not uncommon.”

These comments are unacceptable coming from a senior public servant. Considering that his office made a total of only 500 orders under the Act in 1990-91, his statement was grossly misleading. Furthermore, his comments referred to matters between unit-owners and managers as letting agents and, as such, he had no jurisdiction in such matters as they were covered under the Auctioneers and Agents Act. I repeat that he had no jurisdiction. He had no way of knowing whether they were true or false. His actions were emotive, inflammatory, and showed extreme bias against resident unit-managers. How could any unit-manager have confidence in the referee's decision should he be required to refer a dispute to him in the future? The member for Albert also made comments designed to catch a headline rather than represent the facts when he said on 6 July in the *Gold Coast Bulletin*—

“The whole scene needs to be cleaned up.”

Both these people contributed nothing to the debate on the Green Paper, or the issues raised in it. Instead, all they managed to do was harden the views and promote a confrontationist approach on behalf of the interested parties, and both should be condemned for their irresponsible actions.

The third matter that I wish to address is the Wolfe report. When the Minister introduced into this Parliament legislation to implement the inquiry, the Liberal Party supported it. However, the report's recommendations and the proposals that flow from them will be judged on their merits in this Chamber by the Liberal Party. We recognise that much of the work done by Wolfe will erase inequalities and inequities in the tenure system for Crown land, and at the same time promote responsible management and care of the land.

Another issue that I wish to raise is the staffing of the Minister's department. I did a quick count through the various programs, and they seem to indicate that the Lands Department is top heavy with well-paid officers. Whilst the programs involving land use, information, title, valuation and boundaries will actually be decreased by some 300 personnel to a total of 740 full-time equivalent employees for this year, the corporate and executive service will remain the same at 638 employees—almost as many. It would seem from the department's annual report that computerisation and other technology is reducing the staff needed to at least the same level of service as previously, if not a better and improved service, but the number of managers needed to oversee this more efficient operation remains constant. In addition, the salaries and wages provided for these personnel in corporate services have increased from \$18.7m to \$23.4m, a 25 per cent increase for the same number of officers. In the program areas where there have been cut-backs in staff, salary outlays also remain the same, if not increased. Making assumptions on the raw data supplied in the program statements can be misleading—and I know this to be so—but I would ask the Minister if he can inform the Committee whether or not his department is becoming top heavy with highly paid executive staff, whilst the number of staff actually providing the services is diminishing. That would need a better analysis than I have been able to provide here, so I would ask the Minister to answer that question.

**Mr Eaton:** That would be with the current technology, or updating the technology?

**Mr QUINN:** It is all in salary and wages. There is no capital component there at all. Finally, I would like to acknowledge that at all times the Minister and his departmental staff have extended courtesies to me when I have requested information and sought help, and I thank them for their consideration.

**Mrs BIRD** (Whitsunday) (8.13 p.m.): The State of Queensland has more than two million registered parcels of land. In area, 11 per cent of this State is freehold land, that is, land that has been alienated from the Crown. Eighty-nine per cent of the State is Crown land, which includes State forests, national parks and vacant Crown land. The Department of Lands is responsible for the management, administration or registration of 81 per cent of the State's land area. Seventy per cent of Queensland is held under Crown leasehold tenure. Although occupying only 11 per cent of the State's land area, the alienated or freehold lands generate an enormous volume of work for the department.

The land titles program alone receives and processes an average of 30 000 land transaction documents per month. To manage the State's land held under Crown leasehold tenure, the department's land use program administers in excess of 42 000 Crown leasehold tenures. If one adds to that the fact that all of the State's land parcels need to be valued at regular intervals by the department's land valuation program, it will be appreciated that the task of managing and administering the State's land resources is a monumental one. If left to the previous archaic and cumbersome manual filing and document processing systems, or the old paper-based and time-consuming map production techniques, the cost and time spent on searching for and retrieving accurate and up-to-date land information would be totally unacceptable.

To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations, the Department of Lands has committed itself to the development and use of the very latest in computer and satellite technology. The land boundaries program of the Department of Lands has the responsibility to ensure that the integrity of the State's land boundaries is preserved. With a Budget allocation of \$16,689,000, it will now address some of the exciting and new technical innovations and land management systems currently being developed or enhanced in the land boundaries program during 1991-92. These developments will have widespread positive benefits for all organisations and individuals who deal with land both now and in the future.

The first and most significant technological development in the department is the computerised record of the State's land parcels. Known as the digital cadastral database—or DCDB—this database holds both attribute and spatial information for over 2 million land parcels in Queensland. The DCDB can best be described as a continuous map containing the State's cadastral information. It will be the unique reference layer upon which the future Statewide land information system will be built. However, the fact that the department holds all that information about land in a computer is of little benefit to anyone unless the data can be made available to the people in a useable form. The advantage of the DCDB lies in the way in which land information can be recalled from the computer and distributed. That is done by using a database management system.

During 1991-92, the land boundaries program will be embarking upon a major exercise to convert from the old DEC relational database management system to the more sophisticated and powerful Ingres database. That will allow almost unlimited searching and extraction queries to be made of the DCDB so that people can obtain almost instantaneous tailor-made land information at any scale. The department also offers a Faxmap service. Information can now be extracted from the DCDB via remote terminals around the State and a hard copy map faxed to the users in a matter of minutes. That powerful tool will ensure the success of the department's regionalisation program. The land boundaries program also carries out a continuous program of updating the DCDB with new subdivisional or survey plans and an upgrading program to improve the integrity and

accuracy of that database. That latter exercise will be carried out using the latest in global positioning systems.

I will now move on to the department's acceptance and application of the global positioning system's technology—or, in simple terms, the use of satellites to accurately position oneself on the earth's surface. The use of GPS technology for mapping control is up to 10 times more efficient than the traditional surveying techniques that we used just five years ago. GPS surveying is also more accurate than conventional methods. Less than one hour of recorded signals from the GPS satellites will allow measurements of relative position with one centimetre accuracy. In the past, surveying for first, second and third order mapping control often required the clearing of long lines of sight through native scrubland. GPS surveying is not subject to those limitations and its use is far more environmentally friendly. During 1991-92, the department's GPS receivers will chiefly be used for the purpose of continuously upgrading the accuracy and the integrity of the DCDB.

Another major project in the land boundaries program this year is the document image processing project. There are more than 500 000 survey plans stored in Brisbane and the various regional offices of the department. The searching and retrieval process used in this massive storage system is still a time-consuming manual one. This document image processing project involves the capture and storage of all 500 000 plans on to one optical disk system. The project will commence with a first stage capture of all plans in the Caboolture Shire. Once captured onto the optical disk, each plan will be linked to existing textural databases from the DCDB, thus enabling plans to be quickly found and retrieved by computer. Benefits to clients include reduced document-handling costs, rapid access to documents, a Statewide service system, public access and delivery by fax and increased productivity with reduced operating overheads. Ultimately, the public will have a 24-hour on-line access system for remote viewing; a virtual self-service environment for survey plan access.

Another major innovation requiring continuous updating is the index of geographic information. For many years, the Queensland Surveying and Mapping Advisory Council has published a catalogue of Queensland maps. The catalogue provided a limited amount of information about the State's map coverage, including a brief description of the map theme and a pictorial representation of map coverage as well as text describing other map types and products. The department has expanded the theme of the map catalogue and overcome its limitations by developing a computerised index of geographic information. The concept of the index is to make available an inquiry mechanism which can disseminate information about products and where the products can be obtained rather than provide direct access to the product itself. Like other systems in the department, the index can be accessed via remote terminals in land offices throughout the State. The index can be easily updated, thus removing the problem of having a catalogue which is out of date from day of publication. Another advantage is that many other data sets such as, say, a study of soil salinity in specific areas of the State can be added and accessed by other Government bodies or interested parties.

Another major project commencing this year is the \$1.2m Mackay/Whitsunday mapping project. This is a cooperative venture jointly funded by the sugar industry, the local authorities and the State Government. The project covers approximately 2 600 square kilometres within the central cane district. It will produce a total of 278 orthophoto maps and digital information for computer analysis. The project is being coordinated by a management committee based in Mackay and is chaired by a Lands Department representative. The land boundaries program is providing all technical advice, orthophoto production and quality control for both the tendering process and project completion.

They are just some of the major projects being undertaken this year by the land boundaries program. There are many others. They include the digitising and storage on computer of all 2.5 metre contours covering Brisbane, and the development of a Government land register and a basic land information system as a prototype for the ultimate Statewide land information system. The commitment of the Department of Lands to the use of technology in developing computerised land-management systems is obvious. There are few places in the world where all of the land boundaries are stored on computer. The potential for developing and enhancing the land-management and decision-making processes involving land use is almost unlimited. Queensland has passed the most difficult, costly and time-consuming phase in the task, developing a Statewide land information system. The Department of Lands is recognised as the leading agency in the use of computerised land-management systems and has been given the responsibility by Government to expand its databases to include information held by all other Government departments and agencies that deal with the State's valuable land resources. I submit that the allocated budget of \$16,689,000 for the department's land boundaries program will continue the commitment and momentum required by Government to achieve its goal of preserving the integrity of all land boundaries upon which the State's land information system will be built.

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory) (8.26 p.m.): During this debate, I was very pleased to hear the Minister say that the rent for Crown land will fall if the valuations fall. That should be considered in conjunction with land degradation. No doubt, many members in this Chamber would be aware that land degradation does not occur only through mismanagement. If many of the western rural areas were large, there would not be degradation. One of the biggest problems confronting people in western areas is that some properties have been cut up into pieces that are too small. I am not pointing the finger at any Government for this. Some of the places were cut up years ago under Labor Governments and some were cut up in recent years under conservative Governments. We must take into account that, in the early stages of those properties being cut up, 4 000 or 5 000 sheep—I will refer to sheep areas—may have been a living area. In this day and age, in the present economic circumstances faced by the wool industry, 15 000 or 20 000 sheep are needed to make a living area a worthwhile area for wool-growers. Therefore, much larger areas are needed. I point out to the Minister that, as not enough consideration was given to the cutting-up of properties, the smaller areas have been the subject of a lot of heartache and trauma. The reason why many people are in a quandary today and are facing economic hardship is that their areas of land are too small. As a result, land degradation has occurred because they have had to flog their properties to run enough stock to try to get an extra dollar.

The honourable member for Whitsunday said that 11 per cent of the State has been freeholded. As the member for Warrego pointed out earlier, freeholding has been paid for by the land-holders; it is not something that they got for nothing. Freeholding of good properties is a very important part of trying to keep families on the land. Nobody will be worried about freeholding just anything. Most times, the properties that are freeholded are good, viable operating ventures. That practice should be encouraged and it should recommence immediately. I understand that the Government is giving consideration to that practice. I hope that it will bear fruit very shortly.

During his Estimates speech, the Minister mentioned the \$708,000 being provided for rabbit eradication in the State. Many people might not be aware that, at present, in the south-western corner of the State, in the electorate of my colleague the member for Warrego, places such as Thargomindah, Bulloo Downs, Nappa Merrie, Naryilco and Orientos are in the grip of a rabbit plague. I hope that the money that is forthcoming for the eradication scheme can assist those areas, which are big cattle-producing areas. It is

absolutely essential—paramount—that rabbits be eliminated so that those very worthwhile cattle areas can get back into full production. Honourable members would be aware that, as rabbits have become immune to myxomatosis, a rabbit plague could occur, thus creating a real problem.

Some \$415,000 will be provided for the eradication of feral pigs, which at present are a real problem. I ask the Minister to encourage local authorities by providing them with money to purchase a quantity of SAP poison, which is one of the best eliminators of the feral pig. Anybody who has had anything to do with poisoning feral pigs would agree that SAP is one of the best and most effective means of getting rid of them. I know that the 1080 is very good, but it is very complicated to use and it costs a lot of money. I suggest that local authorities should be given the money to enable them to try to eradicate feral pigs. As honourable members are aware, we are in the grip of one of the worst droughts and one of the worst wool recessions in history. Because sheep cannot be sold, many graziers throughout the length and breadth of this State, as well as throughout the rest of the nation, are destroying them in the thousands. This worsens the pig problem. The thousands of dead sheep in those areas are a real breeding ground for pigs. Because the drought is affecting the entire State, livestock are dying in mass proportions. The feral pig problem will become even greater in 1992. That is not a wild estimate; I believe that it is a fairly accurate prediction.

The Minister referred to the \$367,000 allocated for the eradication of parthenium weed. That weed is a real problem. I think that everyone would agree that the main problem with parthenium weed is that many people do not recognise it. If they did, I do not believe that the problem would be as severe as it is. During the current dry period, the last thing that people will have on their minds is parthenium weed. When we get good summer rains, I fear that the weed will multiply at an alarming rate. Through the DPI, we should be making land-owners—including people who live beside railway lines, and people who work on the railways, in the Main Roads or whatever—conversant with and capable of identifying parthenium weed so that it can be eradicated properly.

I notice that another \$1.2m has been set aside for research into the eradication of weeds. I wonder whether the problem with algarroba, prickly acacia or whatever one wants to call it, will come into that category. No doubt many members are aware of the problem in the west with algarroba or prickly acacia. Because of the dry season, sheep and pigs in particular are great spreaders of the seeds. With summer rains, that weed will multiply at an alarming rate. Prickly acacia is a form of land degradation. It is of real concern to land-owners in the west. I had prickly acacia on my property at Quilpie. It is a real problem there. Around north Comongin and Quilpie it is a problem. As the Minister would be aware, blade ploughs have been used to try to eliminate it but when it gets into watercourses and channels, it is beyond the scope of blade ploughs. I make a very worthwhile suggestion to the Minister. The Government should be providing local authorities with additional money to help land-holders eradicate that weed. I realise that it is not a weed that is natural to Australia; it was brought here by the early settlers. We must work out how to eliminate it.

**Mr Pearce:** How did it actually get here?

**Mr JOHNSON:** It was brought here from South America in the early part of the century. I believe that it was intended as an ornamental bush in station homestead gardens. That is how it originated around Quilpie. It is a real problem throughout the central region around Winton and up to Hughenden. It is not actually a weed, it is a bush that grows anywhere from 14 feet to 20 feet high. It has a barb on it about an inch to an inch and a half long in places. As I said, it is a real problem. If these dry times continue, it is really going to spread.

I turn now to stock-routes. In this current economic climate, we are confronted with a possible increase in heavy road transport registration fees. This is a fear of all people in isolated and remote areas. If the Federal Government implements the proposed national road transport heavy vehicle fees, we will find ourselves with no road transport at all. The people who will be affected are the land-owners and those who produce wool, beef and sheep in the western parts of the State—and even grain-growers—and try to get their produce to the railheads, wherever they may be. It is absolutely paramount that stock-routes be maintained and upgraded as they were 30 or 40 years ago when big mobs of bullocks travelled from the west to railheads at Winton, Quilpie, Dajarra, Kajabbi or wherever. It is important that stock-route watering points be maintained as we knew them 30 or 40 years ago. Many drovers are taking advantage of those stock-routes. Big stations are moving large mobs of cattle from the Northern Territory down the Georgina and Diamantina River systems to the Channel Country for fattening. As I said, it is essential that those stock-routes throughout the length and breadth of the State are maintained as they were 30, 40 or even 20 years ago. The last time that I saw stock-routes in the Quilpie region used to any great extent was back in about 1965. I remember that, at that time, because of the dry spell, the Elsinora pastoral company moved huge mobs of cattle. It is totally impossible to move such large numbers of cattle by road transport. If they are in a poor state, they do not travel too far. Stock-routes are a part of the heritage of this State and this nation. They are a very important part of the network of the grazing operations and primary producers of the inland. I hope that, in his reply, the Minister will make special mention of this issue. Through this Minister to the Minister for Environment and Heritage, I trust that stock-routes will be maintained as they have always been and will not become national parks or something else.

As to the dingo barrier fence—the sum of \$1.163m has been allocated in the Budget. That barrier fence, which is a very important part of the inland, must be maintained and upgraded. Many people hoo-ha it, but my experience with dingos in sheep areas is that, in a period of days, a plague of dingos can virtually destroy a farmer's sheep. I know that sheep are not worth much at present, but the last thing that we need is a plague of dingos. I congratulate the Government on keeping that dingo barrier fence program going, and I hope that the program will continue forever and a day.

**Mr DOLLIN** (Maryborough) (8.39 p.m.): I rise to debate the Land Management Estimates. The titling program of the Department of Lands is an important element in the provision of regional services to local communities and to growth in this State. The Government has shown its commitment to overcoming the impost on economic growth caused by the decentralised nature of the State's resources by adopting a policy of local services for local consumption. On 5 December, the Treasurer, Keith De Lacy, delivered this Government's second Budget, which made special mention of the Department of Lands and the provision of \$5.4m to relocate its activities into 10 regional areas. The Budget will create jobs, reduce taxes and improve services at a time when other States are reducing services, sacking public servants and selling assets to reduce their debts. Business and the community applauded the Government's fiscal management as they realised that the Government is committed to long-term planning for a better Queensland for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

The Lands Department is an important part of that process. Land information and administrative services are essential for regional growth, and those services are being relocated to areas such as Hervey Bay, the canelands around Mackay, the fertile plains of the Darling Downs, the tropical far north, with its unlimited potential for tourism, and the grazing lands of central Queensland. The potential for investment in Queensland is great, but it must be stimulated. One way of doing that is by providing services to give more autonomy and greater opportunity to the people in those areas. I am pleased to say that

the Department of Lands is leading the way in providing administrative functions and decision-making capabilities to those areas. As a result, there will be more contact with business and the community on a face-to-face level and better access to those services. As an example, in the Wide Bay region staff levels are being increased from 48 to 72 to better serve the growth in that region. In addition, offices at Bundaberg and Maryborough now handle a wider range of services, including document receipt and pre-examination of survey plans and title documents.

After consultation with a broad cross-section of the local community, who are showing a willingness to involve themselves in a number of other land management committees, the regional manager has recently completed a Crown land strategic plan for the area. This year, the department will spend \$15m on furthering the Government's document titling and document registration services. Queensland shares the most efficient titling system in the world, and it is through the efficiencies of the Torrens system and computerisation that the service is now being expanded to many regional areas. As the theme of the debate suggests, the change is for a better Queensland, better opportunity for all and a better service in land administration. To assist that process, this year the department will spend \$1m on furthering the development of the State's automated titling system, which will bring to each local land service centre over-the-counter lodgement and registration of title documents, saving both time and money for the client. That money is well spent and will be used for the development and design of the computer software necessary to fully automate our titling system. Although completion is still years away, the computer system will include current details of land ownership and encumbrances and will form part of a broader State land information system, which will be available through the public access system.

The first major step towards achieving that goal was the placing together of the freehold and Crown leasehold registers in July last year. The single register could be achieved only by forming a new Department of Lands from the former departments of titles, valuations, lands and geographic information. That register will form the basis of the automated titling system. As a result of the Government's initiative, document lodgement, examination and advisory services are now available from offices in Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville, Maryborough, Nambour and Toowoomba. Planning is now under way to extend those titling services to Cairns, and the services will be offered in other regional centres as accommodation and communication equipment are put in place.

The Government's commitment to corporatising Government-owned enterprises has revitalised the public sector and given it a new direction. The direction is a greater client focus. The demand for land information is increasing and fully justifies the automation of land services. For example, the unregistered dealings system for freehold and leasehold land last financial year recorded almost 32 000 separate actions—an increase of 300 per cent on the previous year. This year, \$1.1m was allocated to provide that service in regional land service centres. Other databases in operation include the Foreign Ownership of Land Registry, the lot/plan conversion which links old descriptions to new descriptions, an inquiry system for building unit and group titles plans and an inquiry system of referees' files issued in accordance with section 117 of the Building Units and Group Titles Act. Those systems are available on the CITEC public access system and are contributing to the effective management of property dealings. The foreign ownership of land database is now located in the same area and provides a useful guide for Treasury's Foreign Ownership Board and a ready check on ownership in Queensland. Last year, 24 000 notifications were processed in relation to land acquired by foreign nationals which, in September this year, was 91. The register is a valuable asset for Queensland and shows that 1.5 per cent of our total land mass is held by overseas

interests. The United States holds the greatest area, which is about 905 000 hectares, while Japan holds one-tenth of that area, with 10 times the market value.

Many people are now turning to the convenience of high-rise apartment and villa-style living. With as many as 100 people on the same block of land, building unit and strata title legislation is highly specialised and complex. The Minister for Land Management has addressed many of the anomalies in the Act and recently received more than 300 public submissions as a result of a Green Paper on management rights and staged development of building unit complexes. The key to many people buying into that style of dwelling is to have information at their fingertips. The titling program provides that information for purchasers at the Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville land service centres either across the counter or directly through the public access system. There are well over 100 000 units in Queensland, and that number is increasing each year. The department's Office of the Referee assists with common property issues, owner entitlements and dispute resolution as a low-cost method of resolving disputes. Last year, the referee received 527 written applications for an order—an increase of 27 per cent over the previous year—and appeals have increased by 53 per cent to 58. The total number of inquiries also increased, from 9 000 in 1989-90 to almost 11 000 in 1990-91. The department is aware of the concern of many unit-owners and has responded by providing an advisory service for unit-owners and bodies corporate and an inspection service to assist the referee to make appropriate orders. It has supplied background for a decision and published an information booklet for unit-owners.

Queensland's economic development has as its foundations the security of tenure and provision of fast, efficient land services. The Torrens system has served Queensland's land settlement for almost 130 years, and served it well. Last year, the titling program in Queensland processed 434 000 lodgements, of which 357 000 were processed in Brisbane. Although this is a reduction of 3 per cent on the 1989-90 figures, it represents almost 1 500 lodgements daily, generating a total income last year of \$50m. To overcome the load on the lodgement system, the department pre-examines all documents to eliminate delays caused by requisitions. Currently, 85 per cent of all dealings are passed at pre-examination, thereby saving the client both time and money. The titling program issued a total of almost 50 000 last year from the Brisbane, Townsville and Rockhampton offices. For example, by reducing service delays in plan registration from one month to two weeks, it is estimated that on a \$1m property loan transaction—assuming current interest rates—savings in the order of \$10,000 can be generated by a client for each plan where similar conditions apply. The titling program can indirectly assist the Government's \$3 billion capital works program by quickly processing the necessary title documents.

A quick and reliable document service is available anywhere in Queensland through the department's Docfax service. Plan and document searches are provided for 428 registered clients, which is an increase of 50 over 1989-90 figures, and information is provided in four to five hours. Feedback I have received from professional bodies and the community indicates that they are extremely satisfied with the service provided by the department. Last year, 62 000 orders were processed for clients at an average cost of \$16.50 per order, generating \$1m in income. This represents considerable cost savings for clients, especially for those living in areas such as Charleville and Mount Isa. The department also provides a telephone advisory and inquiry service. The advisory service received almost 84 500 calls—an increase of 21 per cent on 1989-90—from people requesting basic information on policy initiatives and legislative interpretations. A further 76 000 inquiries were made. The department has maintained the search fee at the 1989 level of \$6 and has not increased it in line with the CPI. This represents a saving to clients of about \$54,000 over the last financial year. This figure is based on the 154 000 search

tokens sold last year. Other savings include the proportion of value base, which was raised for freehold title transactions from \$110,000 to \$150,000 to help home-buyers. This represents a reduction of \$128 to \$75 for freehold title transfers of properties valued at under \$150,000. In April this year, Cabinet approved the waiving of fees to replace powers of attorney with an enduring power of attorney. When an enduring power of attorney was lodged to replace an existing power of attorney prior to 3 September 1990, no lodgement fee would be payable. This represents a reduction and a minimum saving of \$144 for each application submitted. These savings, when costed over the number of dealings each year in Queensland, represent a considerable saving to our community.

In conclusion, these changes reflect the commitment this Government has to regional growth, local business and the community. The Government is proceeding with public sector reform and restructuring to make a variety of services throughout Queensland more accessible. The Department of Lands is to be congratulated for the pace at which it has regionalised its functions. The titling program is one area that is vital to the progress of development and growth in these regions. The day is not far away when all regions of the State will have access to land information and land services that were previously only available in the south-east corner of the State. I congratulate the Department of Lands and the Minister on their achievements and encourage them to continue the good work.

**Mr STONEMAN** (Burdekin) (8.51 p.m.): I rise in this debate to make a couple of points that I might well enlarge on later in the debate on the Lands Legislation Amendment Bill. In particular, I wish to place on record my appreciation of the importance placed by the Department of Lands on the administration of lands throughout Queensland. I commend the department and the Minister on the annual report. It is well presented and contains a great deal of valuable information. Unfortunately, one of the problems in the administration of lands—and this not only applies to this administration, but also to previous administrations—is that the process has become somewhat irrelevant in terms of the speed at which many changes can be made. There have been a lot of road closures and changes in the tenure structure and granting of leasehold and freehold land. That matter is of particular concern to me and many other people. I make the point that this applies not just to the Minister's administration, and sadly there has been an attitudinal problem in many areas. This has perhaps been brought about by frustration because the officers are so bound up with the need for red tape. There are so many bits of paper and files involved that administration is made very difficult. In addition, it must be acknowledged that the people at the other end of the line—those who are seeking changes of some sort or clarification from the department—also suffer a feeling of frustration. They have a feeling of frustration and devastation because in many instances their livelihood is not just held up but indeed put on the line. I wish to read a letter to the Committee. Members will note that it refers to both administrations. It is a letter written in reply to a gentleman in my electorate. I will not use names because it does not serve any purpose to identify the people. The letter is dated 12 August 1991 and states—

“Dear Sir,

With reference to your letters dated 14 February 1984 and 20 March 1984 regarding applications for leasing at . . . by . . . respectively, I wish to advise that both applications are refused as the areas are required for future reservation as National Park. Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service has objected to the applications.

Yours faithfully . . .”

The point I make is that that is simply not good enough in this day and age. I am not pointing to one administration or the other because the matter goes back seven years. I think that in any business terms, that is not a very good arrangement.

**Mr Hollis** interjected.

**Mr STONEMAN:** Again, I make the point for the benefit of Government members that I am not pointing the finger. I am simply saying that these matters should have been addressed in the past and still need to be addressed. I know that there are new systems evolving and being developed all the time and that there are difficulties in some instances, but it must be remembered that people are becoming increasingly frustrated and, in many instances, their livelihoods and investments are being put on the line because the system is unable to cope. There are thousands of transactions involving parcels of land and roadways, etc, which must weigh very heavily on departmental officers who have to solve the problems and give advice to Ministers or heads of departments.

I have in my possession another letter relating to an application for a road closure which was the subject of approval given a number of years ago. For one reason or another, the paperwork got away from the particular applicant concerned and each section of the partnership thought that the other partner had attended to the matter, with the result that it was overlooked. It became necessary to reapply for a road closure. The application was approved by the Burdekin Shire Council, all the payments were made and the maps were returned. The letter states—

"I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 19 July 1991 regarding the . . . details."

The letter concluded—

"The application has been processed and you will be further advised in relation to the matter at a later date. Please quote reference number . . ."

Because a large amount of money and the rearrangement of the partnership were involved, the applicant inquired about further advice that may be necessary. The officer who answered the inquiry laughed and said, "It might take two years." I think that statement is a damning indictment on the standard of professionalism of the system. It is a disgrace that it would take two years to process an application that had already been approved. I emphasise the point that many thousands of transactions have to be processed by the department and that the system I have described does none of the members of this Parliament, none of the departmental officers, or the smooth operation of this State any good. In those circumstances, it would be remiss of me not to draw those instances to the attention of the Minister. I will take up the matter with him at a later stage, confident in the knowledge that he will look into the matter, while reiterating my strong feeling that it is to no-one's advantage to publicise the names of the people involved.

**Mr Eaton:** There are a few under the old Act that have to be taken care of.

**Mr STONEMAN:** I emphasise that, in many instances, the deficiencies in the system were inherited, but I do not believe that that is necessarily an indictment on the previous administration in the light of the fact that the process is evolutionary. It also should be emphasised that transactions involving titles and legal structures are very difficult to unwind, which tends to create difficulties.

I now refer to page 39 of the 1990-91 departmental report which shows the amount of the total unimproved value of land in this State. I believe that the graph applies to rateable land, because the values range from \$2 billion in 1971 to \$64 billion in 1991, which is a 34 times increase in the value of land in a 20-year period. In the period 1986-1991, which is a five-year period and a very constrained period, the unimproved value increased by more than four times. At a time when the economy of this nation is on its knees, all honourable

members will recall the time when the increased valuation of unimproved land resulted in a public revenue windfall in so many ways—for example, in increased shire rates, because, at the end of the day, local authority rates tend to increase after an increase in land valuations occurs. It is therefore a matter of grave concern to me that the system seems to be self-perpetuating against the interests of the lessee or the person who has to pay the rates. I am not pointing the finger at the present administration, but the trend indicates to me that when wild increases in valuations take place—for example, the 20-year period in which astronomical increases in land values occurred in this State—they have no particular relationship to the capacity of the land to produce an income, particularly in pastoral areas which account for the larger part of leasehold areas in this State.

During the last couple of weeks, I have spent some time in the central-western areas of this State around Longreach and Winton. Locals tell me that land valuations are twice the true market value of their properties. The effects of increased land valuations take a while to flow through, and it is a matter of grave concern to me that those increased valuations will be used to determine the rental structure. The end result will be that the adverse effects will impact on the capacity of pastoral land-holders to operate and continue to derive even a subsistence living from the land. During the many years when I was involved in the pastoral industry in western Queensland, it seemed to me that the unimproved value of the land was only as good as the potential of the land for development. I say that because, in the first instance, land has no value unless it contains a huge natural waterhole and stock can be improved. However, in this day and age, pastoralists are compelled to erect fences because they can no longer afford labour. Starting from scratch with a waterhole is one thing, but pastoralists now have to sink bores, build fences and then maintain them. The cost of these improvements has risen astronomically. The pastoralist has to pay rental charges based on capacity of the land that has been built up over many years and increased valuations. However, the reality is that land values have decreased and when I talk to people in inland areas and in the central and western downs areas, I am concerned that because the improvements they have made to their properties are falling down around their ears, they will have no earthly chance of being able to maintain the value of improvements they have carried out on their properties.

I would suggest that the peak of improvement in inland Queensland was probably in about 1963 or 1964. Since then, through the drought in 1965 that followed right through into the seventies, there has been a depreciation of the capacity of the lessees to service their improvements in a very dramatic way. One grazier in the Longreach area, who receives approximately \$500 a bale for wool at present, told me that it costs \$100 or more to put the wool in the bale, \$100 or more to sell it, and in excess of the balance of \$300 maximum to run his property. Because that grazier has a three or four properties and because he had sons who had become virtually slave labourers, he was able to maintain his operation. The most important thing that he pointed out to me was that he was living on the fat of the improvements which had been undertaken and which had created the value of those properties some 20 years before. These properties simply cannot be maintained on an ad hoc basis.

Again, I refer to page 39 of the report of the Department of Lands and say that, unfortunately, the unimproved value of land in Queensland really indicates very clearly the problem that is being faced by people all around the State. The cost and the value of land is now out of proportion to the capacity of those people who make a living off the land to service it. Unless those assets are serviced, the State has no asset. I pay tribute to the Water Resources Commission, as I did in the debate on the Estimates of the Department of Primary Industries, for its rehabilitation of those flowing bores in the artesian basin. However, the project costs a huge amount of money. Compared with

today's costs, the cost of sinking a bore, erecting a mill and putting up a facility 20 or 30 years ago was a reasonable outlay to contemplate. Now, it is an impossible amount of money to contemplate. Under those circumstances, I think that the attitude of the Department of Lands today in extracting a value from the land, in what might be termed as being in the interests of the public and to return a dividend for the public, has to be offset by the capacity of those people to maintain the value of the land.

In drought conditions, the land always deteriorates, yet there is the situation in which graziers are virtually forced to flog the land. The graziers have to return too quickly to the land to start grazing again. It has a snowballing effect. The next drought affects the land much earlier. Most of all, unless the assets are maintained, the value of the land is zero. The only value that the land has is in its capacity to provide an income for those who invest in it. Unfortunately, in the last few years, people have been buying land because they have had a windfall profit in another area of Queensland, or Australia. Those people transfer those profits to the purchase of land that really has no real estate value. I refer again particularly to the central western downs area of Queensland. That area of land does not have a real estate value. It has a value only if it can provide a return to the grazier. That value can be applied only if the assets are able to be maintained.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK** (Albert) (9.05 p.m.): Over the years, land valuations have been an area of contention for many businesses and ratepayers. Over the last few years, people have heard a lot about land tax and valuation increases. The result was that the land valuation system copped most of the criticism. Because of the level of concern in the community, the Government investigated the State's land valuation system to be able to assure people that the system was, in fact, the fairest method of apportioning the burden of local government rates and land tax. It is on this issue that I welcome the opportunity to take part in the Department of Land Management's Estimates debate on the land valuation program.

My electorate covers much of the development corridor between the Gold Coast and Brisbane. This area will be the subject of intense development over the next decade. It follows that, in order to serve this development, Queensland must have the best system available. More importantly, the Government must provide this information where it will do the most good. That is not in Brisbane where people have to travel for 40 minutes to get the information, but in the Albert Shire and in Gold Coast City where people are investing their money. The Department of Lands is doing just that. It is establishing a land service centre at Beenleigh, which is in the centre of this expanding and progressive area. I must say that the service is situated in the building in which my office is located and that I have observed it taking shape over the last six months. This initiative will serve both the provision of more timely land services and the provision of local advice on such complex matters as new valuations and appeals against valuation decisions. In fact, the department is in the process of opening an office in Beenleigh, as I have already stated, and at Bundall on the Gold Coast, to serve this rapidly growing area.

Last year, valuations across the Albert Shire increased from \$4.1 billion to \$4.7 billion, or an average of 14.72 per cent. Even the most conservative predictions estimate that the population in the Albert Shire will double by the year 2000. This amounts to an increasing number of title transactions, land valuations and investments. That is good news for the State, it is good news for the economy, and it also means better employment prospects for the people in my electorate. As I have mentioned, it is appropriate that Queensland has the most effective means of dealing with the increasing number of transactions and that it has an equitable and professional land valuation system. I am pleased that the land service centre at Beenleigh and the land information office at Bundall on the Gold Coast will provide people with an avenue to find out first-hand more

about this complex issue. This Government is backing the department in the provision of these services.

This year, the Department of Lands will spend \$27.5m on the valuation program, while a special Treasury allocation of \$3.2m will be directed to providing the information and computer links for regional officers to access valuation data. This will include the transfer of past and current land valuations for the South Coast region by linking the Bundall and Beenleigh offices to a computer database network. To appreciate the size of this operation, I point out that valuation information is being extended into 10 regional centres throughout Queensland. This will represent a vast improvement in the provision of these services. To the department's credit, it is well advanced with the development of the integrated valuation and sales computer system which will provide a comprehensive record of property ownership and sales data.

Under the previous Government, there were two systems of valuations. There was one for leasehold land under the old Lands Department, and one for freehold land under the former Department of the Valuer-General. By amalgamating the two offices and their functions, considerable duplication of resources has been saved and redirected to improving services. We had a situation in which some properties had two different valuations. However, the concern of the rate-payer, especially the elderly and the socially disadvantaged, was real. The adverse publicity which the department received was counterproductive and the cause of a serious waste of resources.

While land valuations are based on market trends and are subjective to some degree, I want to assure people that valuations by the Valuer-General's office are of the highest professional order. I must say here that we have this bleating about valuations from the National Party—in fact from all parties across the State at local government and State Government levels—but I do not think that we have found any other system that has worked better. If anyone can find a better system, I want him to tell us.

**Mr Katter:** If you have, tell us about it.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** That is what we want to know. This study looked at the valuation systems in other States and overseas. The controversy surrounding the British poll tax is a perfect example of the feeling that local taxes generate, and an experiment that went terribly wrong for the Thatcher Government. The Queensland valuation system has served the State well. However, the department realises there is an urgent need to streamline the system and make decisions and information more accessible. The Government's policy of regionalisation will make a range of services available to the public. That is a policy with which the Department of Lands has run since day one, and one which aims to provide a comprehensive service in land valuations by 1993. The review of Crown land policy and administration recommended the formation of one valuation system to cover both Crown and freehold lands. This will overcome much of the confusion of the past and provide a common base for determining rent, local government rates and State Government land taxes.

In 1990-91, the total value of rateable land in Queensland increased by \$7.7m to \$63.9 billion with the department providing more than 1.1 million valuations, which is an increase of almost 12 000 over the previous year. This massive task is reviewed annually, and could not be completed without the assistance of automation and the storage of computer databases. However, this year, the department reviewed only the land values of the Mulgrave and Douglas Shires, the Cairns City Council and the Gold Coast City Council, which was mentioned by the honourable member for South Coast. These four areas were chosen because values had shown a downtrend due to the downturn in the tourism industry, and it was the Government's wish not to disadvantage those areas. What that means is that the last annual valuations determined on 31 March 1990 will take effect on

30 June 1991 and will remain in effect for two years. The next valuation of the State will commence on 31 March 1992 and will take effect on 30 June 1993. This 12 months pause will enable the department to relocate resources into the 10 regional land services centres throughout the State, and further the collection of data for the computer system and the formulation of policy initiatives. The valuation database will be a great asset to the State and the provision of valuation services across the State. The design of the new system is complete, and the database is being continually added to and updated. It will assist grievance appeals and public inquiries, and will be of great assistance to the community. The database is scheduled for completion on 31 December 1993.

As well as the provision of valuations for local authorities and the community, the department is responsible for special valuations for other Government departments and statutory authorities. Last year, a total of 1 764 special valuations were carried out for various Government institutions, with a total value of \$214.8m. Rental assessments for fringe benefit tax purposes were also carried out for 320 properties administered by the Government. The total fee estimated for providing this service to local authorities and the Office of State Revenue is almost \$6m, which underscores the importance of this service to Queensland.

The Smith report, which was completed last year, reviewed the land valuation system, and recommended a number of improvements to the present system. Mr Smith commented that much of the misunderstanding over the valuation system stemmed from the complexity of determining the unimproved capital value of land. To address this concern, the report recommends the adoption of site values as a basis for land values in residential areas only. This concept is still under review, but it has the advantage of arriving at a value which is closer to the public's perception of land value. Hopefully, this will promote better understanding of the system and alleviate a lot of fears.

The department has also continued its policy of regularly visiting local authorities and providing information on enhanced regional services. This awareness program has proved very successful in the past, and is a practice the department is keen to continue. The Department of Lands takes its responsibility for land valuations seriously and is implementing policies to make the system more responsive to the needs of Queensland. Queensland's second-greatest asset is its land. This Government is committed to effective administration of that resource to provide opportunities for all. My electorate of Albert will benefit from the provision of enhanced services in the Beenleigh land service area.

Before I conclude my remarks, I will comment on the recently released Green Paper on building units and stage developments. Unit-owners, unit-managers and developers on the Gold Coast have faced problems relating to units. Earlier this year, I attended a meeting with unit-managers. As I was leaving, I was called a communist, a radical and everything else under the sun. I asked them, "What other system can we use?" They were quite happy with the system.

**Mr Quinn:** They were too kind to you.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** The unit-owners and the investors both have a problem with the matter. I do not believe that mugs with money should be able to buy into those units. There are many professional people in the community who can manage units.

**Mr Quinn** interjected.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** Most of them are. I believe that some of them can do the job well. The Minister should investigate introducing a TAFE course similar to the hotel-managers' course to enable people to learn about unit management. In conclusion, I congratulate the Department of Lands on the thoroughness and enthusiasm with which it is implementing major changes to land policy and administration.

**Hon. R. C. KATTER** (Flinders) (9.18 p.m.): I wish to say a few words about proper land preservation and land-care. I commence with an editorial in the *Townsville Bulletin*, which stated—

"Anne Seymour's account in *The Townsville Bulletin* yesterday of how the politicians, the bureaucrats and the conservation movement have bludgeoned her family into misery and are in the process of taking away from them such a large chunk of their station property that the remainder will be unviable provides an appalling example of arrogant officialdom at its worst. Its damning indictment of Environment Minister Comben should have all North Queenslanders on their feet and shouting for justice for the Seymours—Anne, Michael and small sons Will, Matthew and Jackson."

I point out that we are talking here about the preservation of the land resource. If certain mosaic parts are removed from that land resource, the rest of it is of no use. I make the point in this debate on the Land Management Estimates because the matter is most relevant to it. The article continued—

"Six years ago they bought the leasehold of Riversleigh station, north-west of Mt Isa. They moved in at the start of a five-year drought"——

**Mr COMBEN:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the Committee. He is referring to two owners of that property; there are 10 owners of that property. This afternoon, he heard that that editorial is totally false. I ask him to withdraw.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN** (Mr Stephan): Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr KATTER:** The Minister is quite entitled to stand up in this place and state what he wishes to state. The article continued further—

"Mrs Seymour's account of the visit is vomitive. An LTD limousine was driven from Brisbane to Mt Isa to do no more than drive Mr Comben from his private jet to his motel. He then flew on to Riversleigh, with two hired back-up vehicles, laden with liquor, travelling by road. During his lightning-fast inspection, Mr Comben became an expert in paleontology"——

**Mr COMBEN:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member said that I own a private jet. I suggest that he ask my bank manager about that. The two vehicles laden with liquor referred to were six bottles of wine bought out of my personal pocket in exchange for some support.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! I thank the Minister for his explanation. I call the member for Flinders.

**Mr T. B. SULLIVAN:** I rise to a point of order. This is the third time that this matter has been raised in the debate. It is being repetitive.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr KATTER:** I am merely quoting, as I always do in this place, a document that I have received. The Minister is not calling me a liar; he is calling Mrs Seymour a liar. For the information of the Committee, I point out that the Seymours are a pioneering family of Cloncurry. The father worked in the railway and the son started life as a ringer. They are the people who are being treated extremely shabbily. I will move on. If the Government takes out of a station property that part of it which runs the cattle, the rest of the property is worth nothing. In this instance, the valuable part of the station is being removed. If the average price of the station is \$4 or \$5 an acre and the part on which the cattle are run is removed, the half-value compensation that the owners receive for the half of the property that is left is absolutely useless. They have half the value, which normally would not cover the debt, and the other half cannot run any cattle. Those people are broken. Because of the way that the laws of acquisition are applied in this State, there is nothing that they can

do. It is imperative that the Minister for Land Management act to address this criminal situation which allows the seizure of land in the same manner as occurs in any Third World country or a country that we despise because it has a totalitarian regime. If the land can be taken from an owner and the owner has no ability to be able to meet his debt or obtain compensation for that——

**Mr COMBEN:** I rise to a point of order. I am continuing the policies of the former National Party Government.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr KATTER:** I take the interjection, because the laws of the land need to be changed. Although they were administered by us with great fairness——

**Mr Comben:** Ha, ha!

**Mr KATTER:** I hear the Minister laughing. I defy any Government member to point to a single case in Queensland in which the former Government broke a land-holder. Under this Government, I can name about eight without drawing breath, and there are another 10 on the drawing board. I will start with the lady from Yaraka, with whom the Minister dined recently in this place. She expressed to me her thoughts about the Government and what it had done to her. Again, this case must be addressed by the Minister for Land Management.

The proprietors of the Uanda and Bogunda stations applied for permission to clear timber so that they could increase the stations' cattle carrying capacity. Whether it is good to clear timber or not is a matter about which we can have a fight at some other time. The point was that both of the station proprietors are members of fourth generation grazing families. They have survived every single conceivable hardship that has been thrown at them over the years. Surely, they are the people who know best how to operate those stations. They are not the sort of people who will run away. They have been there for a hundred years, and it is their desire to be there for another thousand years. They will not do anything to harm that land. When they chose to make a management decision—and it turns out that some of the wisest and best man managers are those at Bogunda and Uanda stations—they were told wisely and intelligently by Government officers, people who are experienced in this field, to proceed. No-one came out to see them except the land commissars from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, who informed the station proprietors that they liked their stations and that they were going to take them. Members opposite continue to accuse me of lying. I am simply relating to them what those people told me. People from Yaraka have rung me and told me similar stories. People from south of Prairie have rung up; people from Greenvale have rung up; people from Gunpowder have rung up; and people from Kowanyama, up on Cape York Peninsula, have rung up. In fact, there seems to be no part of this State that has not been terrified by the Honourable Minister. Somebody has to protect these people. With all due respect, that responsibility rests upon the shoulders of the Minister for Land Management and his department, and he should be backed up by the Minister for Primary Industries. I do not expect an intelligent attitude from the Premier of this State.

In this debate, we are talking about land-care. One of the most important scientific digs recently carried out in Australia was at Death Adder Gorge in Kakadu. There, scientists dug down some 30 feet to a rock floor on which they found Aboriginal implements. The interesting question is: why was there no deterioration in the land before the coming of human beings? It is very difficult to ride around the fact that fire was the cause of the enormous erosion that has taken place over the last 30 000 years. It seems very hard to ride around the scientific evidence from those scientists who worked so hard and long digging at Death Adder Gorge in Kakadu. When Logan Jack walked out from Cooktown—he was the first white man after Leichhardt to do so—on the first day out he

said there were six Aboriginal groups firing the country. Two weeks later he made mention of that only because he had gone a whole three hours without seeing a group burning off. The point I am making is that fire is the great hazard for the Australian land mass.

**An Opposition member:** And Mr Comben.

**Mr KATTER:** Mr Comben, too; that is true. I want to point out the grave danger that the Minister for Environment and Heritage is to the environment of Queensland. We are pleading with the Minister for Land Management to do something about the continued deterioration of land-care in this State because of the continuing encroachment of the most devastating thing that has happened in this State, namely, the growth of national parks. No matter how many times I rang concerning its name, after hearing it on the news and taking down notes about it, I did not get the name of a national park in the south-east corner of the State which some bloke who was being interviewed said was burnt to a cinder. I can understand that. When a fire occurs on an average station property, the owner can call upon a dozer, a couple of graders, a dozen men and a couple of water trucks. I think there would be very few stations which could not call on that sort of equipment. The station will ring up 10, 12 or 15 neighbours and everybody will come and help but nobody will come and help national parks. There is no way in the world that the Minister responsible for national parks can provide anything like the sort of equipment, the fire power and muscle power that must be used to successfully fight a fire. Yet the scientific evidence, which I am trying to present, is that if those fires are allowed to burn, they will destroy the land mass upon which we depend and upon which the wildlife of this State depends for its very existence.

When a station is turned into national park, the artificial watering points are closed down. I am not questioning the way in which the law works at present, which is that the land is supposed to be returned to the state that it was in when human beings—or Europeans, if you like—arrived. As a result, the artificial watering points are done away with. Each of those artificial watering points is responsible for sustaining very large amounts of wildlife. In fact, on Bogunda station, about which I spoke before—and there were some 15 witnesses to this because there was a camera crew from the ABC and a large number of journalists—we counted over 4 000 kangaroos crossing the fence in a 40-minute period. That station had no cattle or sheep whatever. They had been removed. That station has no natural water, yet in that tiny area in the space of 40 minutes we counted 4 000 kangaroos. That is the sort of wildlife that is propped up on the artificial watering points that will vanish when national parks take over those areas.

**Mr Welford:** That's a lie.

**Mr KATTER:** Well, it is the definition of a national park. It is supposed to be returned to the wilderness.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The member for Stafford will stop making comments such as that. They are unparliamentary.

**Mr KATTER:** The new Government is supposed to be a socialist Government. In one area, it must be congratulated because it has taken 4 per cent of the land mass, which it now owns, and called it national park. The 7 per cent of the State that once belonged to the Aboriginal people—up until two years ago—is now owned by the State Government. This Government has acquired for itself 11 per cent of this State's land mass. When people deride the Government and say that it is not a socialist Government, I would have to say, with all due respect—in one area, anyway—that it has responded to its socialist beliefs in a very honourable manner. I take my hat off to it as being a very successful socialist Government in that field. How those areas are being looked after now, with nobody owning them, under the tender mercies of national parks under the grand administration of our jack-booted hero opposite—

**Mr COMBEN:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member said that we have taken 4 per cent of the State for national parks. We have not. The previous Government's policy was 5 per cent.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I inform the Minister that the points of order he is taking are not valid. I ask him to refrain from taking them. If he wishes to join the debate, I am certain that we can get his name put on the list of speakers.

**Mr KATTER:** The Mining Act was introduced in this State by the Labor Government of the day. I pay that Government a tribute, as I often do in respect of Governments of the past where a tribute is deserved. I have lived all my life under the Mining Act. I believe that it was one of the most excellent pieces of legislation that I have ever had the pleasure of working with and under in my life-time, as both a member of Parliament and a private individual. A person is entitled to take up land on three bases: occupation, cultivation and production. In the case of mining—mining would replace cultivation. Those were the three concepts under which title was taken up over the continental land mass of the United States under what was called the Lincoln Homestead Act. The reason that we have had such a grand success story in lovely old towns such as Gympie and Charters Towers and why people want to live in those towns is the nature of the Act under which those people lived until very recently. That is also the reason why America has been such a grand success story. I refer to the concept of the owner/operator that was enshrined in that Lincoln homestead legislation, which was so integral a part of American history. To date in this State, a similar Act has been operating with our land mass in the State of Queensland. However, it is enormously restrictive and inflexible. At some stage, it must be changed. The member for Cook was one of those Labor members who said constantly how terrible freeholding is—that a person is not allowed to subdivide and sell off a block.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I rise to a point of order. I never claimed to be opposed to freeholding. I find that statement offensive, and ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr KATTER:** For the sake of brevity in getting my point across, I am only too happy to do that. Time expired.

**Mr PITT** (Mulgrave) (9.34 p.m.): The date of 2 December this year will mark the second anniversary of the Goss Government and the policies that it has put in place to guide our future. It has been two years of achievement for our Government, especially for the Department of Lands, the Estimates of which we are debating tonight. Firstly, I congratulate the Honourable the Minister for Land Management, Mr Bill Eaton, on the manner in which he has handled his portfolio which includes the overseeing of a major review of land policy and administration in Queensland. Under the previous Government, Crown land policy and administration did not reflect the needs of the State to streamline administrative details and encourage appropriate growth and investment. A total of 30 years of neglect for land laws is now being wiped away. It took a Labor Government to do that. The last review of Crown land policy was undertaken in 1959 by Land Court Judge William Payne. The populate-or-perish philosophy of that time was the right philosophy for an expanding State. However, I point out that this policy has not kept pace with changing times and a changing Queensland.

The report of the review of land policy and administration in Queensland has come to be known as the Wolfe report. It was a result of five months of intensive study, travel and listening to industry-leaders and land-holders. Audiences included many pastoralists on the cape, miners in Mount Isa, tourist developers along the coast and grain-farmers. As a result, the report's 95 recommendations have provided some basic underlying principles for a major overhaul of Crown land policy in this State. Under the guidance of the Minister, the Department of Lands has set itself a program for the implementation of many of the

recommendations of the Wolfe report. The major amendments to the Land Act are contained in the special freeholding of leases legislation and the Lands Legislation Amendment Bill which is currently before the House. The recommendations of that report have been grouped into several areas: freeholding; rents; aggregation control and balloting; tenure reform; grievance mechanisms; and a number of miscellaneous aspects. The Government has endorsed the major concern of land-holders for security of tenure by placing freehold at the top of its list, and quite rightly so.

There was much concern when the Government placed a freeze on freeholding applications for most leases from 5 February 1990. It was made clear that the freeze applied only during the deliberations of the Wolfe report and the drafting of necessary legislation. However, Opposition members took it upon themselves to exploit the fears of many lessees in the rural community. In my opinion, that misinformation campaign was an utter disgrace. It is now clear that the 1991 Lands Legislation Amendment Bill will lift the freeze on freeholding, and that this Government is not about withdrawing security of tenure from families—whether it is a small residential town allotment or, indeed, a large grazing enterprise. However, the department will place proper checks and balances on what needs to be considered prior to freeholding. For example, if a property is degraded, less than a living area, or is in a unique area of the State, this may be grounds for giving the application more thorough consideration.

For the first time, the issue of public interest has particular parameters to protect the land and define its proper use. Conservation of flora and fauna, land degradation and windfall profits from tenure conversions were previously given only cursory consideration. That will no longer be the case. Under this Government, public interest is of vital importance. It includes the strategic planning, cultural, recreational, environmental and heritage interests associated with land. Specific consideration is now being given to the risks of land degradation, existing land degradation, compliance with lease conditions, other special matters and profits from foreseeable higher-potential use. That last point is worthy of comment. No longer will individuals reap huge profits from questionable changes to Crown land tenure or approved usage. The Government sees itself as the custodian of the Crown estate for all Queenslanders—not the greedy minority.

While more thorough scrutiny of freeholding applications will be undertaken, the rights of people to obtain freehold title have also been maintained. In line with the Government's corporatisation of the public sector, the department will adopt a more commercial approach to freeholding. This means that land will no longer be sold off at generous or no-interest terms. However, a maximum term of 30 years will apply, and an interest rate lower than normal commercial rates for new grazing homestead perpetual lease conversions will also apply. This policy, which recognises the equity built up by the lessees, will go some way towards cushioning the impact of current interest-free terms. It is clear that the majority of hard-working Queenslanders were subsidising the fortunate few who were able to freehold properties, a practice that, in my belief, was neither fair nor equitable. With the introduction of minimum instalments, the department is able to overcome the costs of carrying debts and issuing receipts.

The second aspect addressed by the Bill is Crown rents and the need to review the rental-setting mechanisms for all Crown leases. The present system contains many glaring inconsistencies, and the Wolfe report recommends that all leases be based on a percentage of the unimproved capital value of the land. Essentially, there will be one valuation for rent, rating and land tax purposes, and that represents a substantial saving to the Government in wasteful duplication of both the valuation process and, of course, the grievance-resolution procedures. Those achievements are a break-through in land administration and efficiency for the department. We have to ask ourselves about the cost to Queensland's economy over 30 years of conservative Government.

The approach of the Government to rental levels is the need to ensure a fair return to the people of Queensland for the use of Crown estate by individuals or companies. The days of gratuitous leasehold arrangements are now long gone. The emphasis is now focused on fair and equitable treatment for all. An important element in the Government's approach to rent is the capability to respond to hardship and to difficult times. Already, many rent deferrals—and I heard the Minister outline them this morning—have been approved due to present drought and economic hardships. The Wolfe report recommended a far more sensitive approach to hardship provisions, which were previously very narrow. The Bill before the House will allow a broad range of options for such assistance.

Another issue is aggregation control and the provision of land for balloting in the future. The tendency over the past decade for land ownership has been towards large pastoral companies and big businesses. It has been difficult for the younger generation to get a start on the land. That is a most unfortunate trend. Land for ballot has not been available for almost 10 years. That is an indictment on the previous administration and has been a serious disadvantage to promising young farmers and graziers. Large holdings have lands that are surplus to requirements and suitable for balloting. The Government is not opposed to aggregation, just excessive aggregation by certain large companies. Excessive aggregation has led to disasters in other countries, and it is the wish of the Government to avoid the same trend. The department is committed to investigating and discussing those issues with industry groups and to initiating reforms that will stop excessive aggregation.

One more issue is the reform of the many different types of tenure. Presently, 30 different types of leasehold tenures exist, many of which cover similar or closely related usage. Many tenures therefore are now outdated and confusing. The Government is committed to standardising all tenures into three generic categories, which will include a simple system of freehold tenure, perpetual lease tenure and term lease tenure. The need to address inconsistencies between lease arrangements is a priority of the department that is being undertaken now. The Special Freeholding of Leases Bill addressed many inconsistencies in mining and other related tenures, especially in places such as Mount Isa. Over the next 12 months, lessees will be given the opportunity to convert those leases to a freehold title on what we must all agree are generous terms. The tenure reform process will be ongoing. Lease-holders will retain their existing conditions; however, terms and conditions will be standardised as the leases come up for renewal. It is appropriate at this stage that, when leases are reviewed, they are reviewed with an emphasis on land care and environmental issues that impact on land use. As an example, the Government will increase penalties for illegal destruction of timber on Crown leasehold land. In the past, considerable destruction of large areas of mulga and grazing lands was carried out without permits and with blatant disregard to the Land Act. The Wolfe report recommended that local boards should be established in order to discuss local land management issues and to find solutions.

Another issue is a review of grievance mechanisms within the coming year so that land-holders can appeal against decisions and avoid costly litigation. That is a most admirable process to undertake. The review will be in accordance with judicial and administrative review procedures currently being undertaken by EARC. Under the previous Government, many inconsistencies crept into the system, with appeal rights for some issues and not for others. There was no logic or reason for those inconsistencies, often leaving a lessee in a state of utter confusion. The Land Court will be retained as the final arbiter of disputed decisions; however, it is intended to put in place a local grievance mechanism to avoid costly appeals. Further to that, people will be able to receive written reasons for any administrative decision that may affect them.

Over the next two years, many miscellaneous reforms will be implemented. Of interest to many land-holders is the reservation of quarry materials in deeds of grant when leasehold land is converted to freehold tenure. In the past, those valuable resources passed from the Crown to individuals at no cost. In some cases, many fortunate individuals made considerable sums of money at the expense of the people of Queensland. That has to stop. Those resources, like minerals, should always remain the property of the Crown and be there for the benefit of all.

The changes to land policy are an indication of the direction of the Government. It is our intention to provide the necessary tools for development in the local regions. Graziers, tourist operators and land-holders will be able to receive decisions from regional offices and discuss issues with the local regional manager. The Government's initiative will allow for greater access to departmental staff and policy matters through the policy of regionalisation. This year, the department will spend almost \$10.5m on improving and extending communication systems across 10 regional areas, with a further \$7.6m for accommodation, relocation expenses and other expenses. In far-north Queensland, the regional office, currently located in Cairns on four floors in two buildings, maintains four counter areas. The office is in the process of being relocated to a new building, and functions then will be rationalised to just the one counter. The local community has already expressed acceptance of this planned relocation. It is another example of this Government rationalising departments to create a one-stop shop. The department has already achieved integration of leasehold and freehold registers into one single register. This is now being progressively extended to all centres.

Earlier tonight, my colleague the member for Isis addressed some of the issues the Department of Lands had tackled in respect of controlling noxious weeds and pests. I wish to expand on this and concentrate on some of the current field operations. The containment policy for parthenium weed will continue in the central Queensland local authorities of Bauhinia, Belyando, Bowen, Emerald, Jericho and Peak Downs. The width of contract spraying of roadsides will be reduced from 10 to 5 metres as a cost-cutting measure. Herbicides will be provided to local authorities to treat secondary and minor shire roads to limit the spread of parthenium weed from infested areas. In the past financial year, hundreds of notices were issued to land-holders to control harrisia cactus on their properties. Charges will be introduced to supply material affected by the mealy bug and it is anticipated that such cost recoveries will enable the employment of additional casual employees to hasten control activities following the issuance of these notices. Specialised pest management services will be offered for the northern World Heritage area with a view to proper management of introduced plant species in the World Heritage area itself. External funding will have to be sought for these services. Field operations will be directed at reducing the abundance of declared plants and animals on vacant Crown land and major reserves under the control of other State Government departments. Of course, the latter will be on a cost-recovery basis. Major operations will be on the groundsel bush and annual ragweed in areas near Brisbane, the bitou bush on South Stradbroke Island and at Inskip Point, and the iniquitous chinee apple bush in Charters Towers. Inspectors throughout the State will organise feral animal 1080 baiting campaigns and will provide 1080 impregnated factory prepared baits for sale to land-holders under strict guidelines designed to protect public health. Services will also be offered on a cost-recovery basis to the Queensland Forest Service and the Department of Environment and Heritage for feral pest management in the areas specifically under their control.

In conclusion, I wish to summarise the admirable and important role played by the Department of Lands in the management of our State's land resources, and I will refer to one of the department's major goals.

Time expired.

**Mr SANTORO** (Merthyr) (9.49 p.m.): In this brief contribution tonight, I wish to touch upon the issue of regionalisation and in particular how it affects the Lands Department. I wish also to make brief comment on the staffing of the department and will seek to solicit from the Minister some information about the recruitment policies of the department. Before doing so, however, I wish to thank the Honourable the Minister for the courtesies extended to me and my constituents whenever I have made representations on their behalf. This applies particularly to the issue of land valuation, which has caused so much concern and anguish to a vast number of property-owners who have been adversely affected by successive valuation of their properties.

I have sought to assist my constituents by arranging for explanations by and visits to the Division of Valuations, as it is now known. Appointments have been readily made available and lengthy and detailed explanations as to why valuations have in some instances changed so dramatically have been provided. I am particularly indebted to the Valuer-General, Mr John Trickett, and his capable staff for the courteous attention they have paid to my constituents. Unfortunately, and in most cases, the current system of valuations does not allow for major reviews of specific valuations once these have been issued. I support previous members of the Liberal Party who have spoken in this place on this particular issue when they called for a thorough review of the current system of valuations. Many residents in my electorate, particularly those who are on fixed incomes, live in homes situated on very valuable, prime sites. Many of these sites, although very well located, have become as valuable as they are today only during the last 10 or so years. This has meant a quantum leap in the amount of rates payable on these highly valued properties. Unfortunately, this has occurred without a corresponding increase in income for many people who, as I said before, are on fixed incomes. Some people may say, "Well why don't these people sell their valuable properties, capitalise on their value and move to a more affordable area?" The answer is simple—they do not want to leave what in many cases are their birth places and they do not want to abandon the communities within which they have established their livelihoods, their religion and social lives. They should not be asked to simply move on. Unfortunately, that is exactly what some of them have had to do. Because of their fixed incomes, some of my constituents have not been able to keep up with their increases in their rates and have to sell up and move out. Governments of all political persuasions have a responsibility to assist the type of people I have just described. After all, they live in all of our electorates and there is a need for a collective effort on the part of State and local governments to come up with a better land valuation mechanism. The members of the Liberal Party are certainly committed to assisting in the process and we look forward to what initiatives are forthcoming from the Government in this area of vital community concern.

I now wish to turn my attention to the running of the Division of Titles and, in particular, the lot of private sector title-searchers. Before doing so, I wish to read into *Hansard* the contents of a letter I have received from a concerned client of the Lands Department about recent appointments to the senior management of the Lands Department. Amongst other things, the letter stated—

"Perhaps someone should take a close look in the new Lands Department with respect to appointments of management.

A large proportion of appointees come from one former department whilst there is little or no representation from the remaining former departments.

Needless to say morale within the Department is low to the extent that client services previously enjoyed have been degraded and will continue to become worse.

As a valued client of the department, I am voicing my disapproval of what is happening to a once efficient and courteous service to the public."

I have been told that most of the new appointees have come from the Department of Geographic Information and that other sections of the department are not very well represented. I ask the Minister to comment on these concerns with the hope that he is able to dispel them on the public record. I notify him that I am undertaking my own investigations. However, I give him the opportunity to make a comment and I look forward to his reply in relation to this concern that has been genuinely expressed in at least one piece of formal correspondence, and by others to whom I have spoken, with the Minister's department.

I now wish to turn my attention to the issue of private sector title-searchers, about whom I have previously spoken in this place. A month or so ago during an Adjournment debate I raised the matter of the Lands Department wasting public money on unnecessary regionalisation. At that time, I said that there was no need for the Lands Department to open Division of Titles offices all over the country. I also noted and described the extreme reluctance of the Land Management Minister to meet with representatives of the people whose jobs were being destroyed by his misguided adventure. I am pleased to report that, in the end result, the Minister agreed to meet those people, and I commend him for that. However, it is my sad duty to report that the Minister informed them that he intended to make no concessions whatsoever and that he made no attempt to explain his decision.

There is no rational justification whatsoever—certainly in my mind and in the minds of practitioners who are affected—for the creation of titles offices all over the countryside. Every service that these regional offices provide is already efficiently and economically provided in full by private sector firms that provide the services for a small fee which, because of the very strong competition among them, is very close to the cost of doing the work. However, the Minister is allowing his department to set up titles offices throughout Queensland which is, obviously, costing a great deal of money. It is just silly to say that the department is using money that has been saved as a result of making the Brisbane titles office more efficient and that, therefore, the service is not resulting in increased costs. It is obvious to any average person that it would be better to simply save the money, but the Minister says that there is a great demand for these services. Of course there is a great demand. For example, if I were to open a petrol station and give away the petrol, there would be a great demand for that petrol. That is virtually what the Minister is doing. Regardless of the extravagant rents being paid, the high costs of communications, couriers, and all the extra record-keeping, he is providing a regional service practically free of charge. I ask the Minister: why is it so important to shift the cost of carrying out a conveyance from the buyer of a house to the taxpayer? The Minister should make no mistake about it: that is what is happening. If the Minister wanted to reduce the cost of conveyancing, he should have reduced the titles office lodgement charge.

**Mr Dollin** interjected.

**Mr SANTORO:** If the Government wants to reduce the cost of conveyancing, it could reduce the stamp duty rate. The truth is that the members of this Government want to expand their empires and they just could not care less about the jobs and the lives they destroy while doing so. I note interjections being made by Government members and I point out that during an Adjournment debate speech I made, I gave the Minister the opportunity to comment. I readily admit that I have been absent for two weeks of the sittings while engaged in parliamentary business, and that I may have missed something that the Minister has said. However, if he cares to reply to the interjections made by members of his own political party or to respond to the concerns that I have raised, I would be most grateful to have his comments placed on the record.

I turn now to the Docfax service which has been established at huge expense to the taxpayers. Again, this is justified by the claim that it is in huge demand. However, the

demand exists because the titles office is providing the service at half the price charged by any organisation that has to pay its own way. The Minister provided a very limited justification for the price charged for this service—I admit that he provided “very limited justification”—which, as I said, showed the faulty nature of the advice that he is being given. It contained massive errors that have been pointed out to him, but he simply ignores them. In view of these problems, I ask the Minister: why will he not arrange for independent costings to be carried out? What is he frightened of? I appreciate fully that the Minister has cited interstate experiences and that he has sought to justify the figures, but I repeat: why will he not authorise independent costings to be carried out so that the practitioners, who have written to the Minister voluminously, can be satisfied that the costing is in fact proper, independent and accurate? Again, the answer seems to be that the Minister is determined to maximise damage to private sector firms by undercutting them so completely that they just cannot continue.

The effects of this predatory behaviour are obvious. The most dramatic is the loss of jobs. The destruction of businesses drives investment away. I know of at least one firm that has invested elsewhere as a direct result of this predatory, anti-private sector behaviour. Two others have retrenched most of their employees. I ask the Minister: why is he so determined to destroy the jobs of young Queenslanders? He has not produced a single valid argument to justify his actions. He knows he cannot, and that is why he does not. The types of jobs that are being destroyed are mainly those that are occupied by young employees who are the very people that this Government purports to be trying to help. Unfortunately, in this particular instance, it is my sad duty to report that, judging by all the evidence that has been presented to me, the Minister is failing those young people. Dr Coaldrake's recent paper, which was delivered to the Commonwealth/State Heads of Agency Conference, states that the Lands Department is an example of too many change agendas being implemented too quickly. Dr Coaldrake said that it is important for regionalisation not to be pursued for its own sake or as an end in itself. I wonder whether he was in fact looking at the Lands Department and its obvious overstepping of the mark in its quest to realise the dream of regionalisation? Why cannot this Minister see, as Dr Coaldrake has, the disadvantages of a policy of hasty regionalisation, particularly as it applies in this case? Surely it is time for this Minister to come clean and tell this Committee just what he thinks he is doing. It is time for him to explain to the people of Queensland why he is hell-bent on wasting public money and on the destruction of jobs for up to 120 people in an industry that to date has served the State of Queensland well.

At this point, I wish to briefly touch upon the operations of the titles office, particularly in relation to the processing of real property survey plans. Statistics that have been supplied to me show that approximately 20 regional surveyors in the six regional offices lodge an average of between 20 and 30 per cent of all plans processed by the titles office whereas approximately 14 surveyors in the Brisbane office handle the rest of the unendorsed plans. I say “approximately” because I do not have precise figures and I do not want to be picked on because I deviate from the true figure by one or two when describing the number of people employed in the regional offices vis-a-vis the central office. By virtue of reasonable and honest analysis, I indicate to the Minister that those figures would stand up to scrutiny. For example, for the week ending 4 October, 29 endorsed plans were lodged from the six regions which, as I have just said, employ approximately 20 surveyors, whereas 86 unendorsed plans were processed by the central titles office in Brisbane, which employs approximately 14 people. For the week ending 11 October, the corresponding figures were 32 and 82, and for the week ending 18 October, the figures were 23 and 83 respectively. I say to the Minister that it is obvious what is happening. Because of the inconvenience of having to submit separate documentation to the regional office, solicitors and surveyors are not using the regional facilities. By paying an extra fee, which is approximately \$60, and lodging the documents with the central

Brisbane office, this avoids the lengthy process of preparing and submitting documentation. Surveyors in country regions appreciate that all the documents relevant to the successful lodging of a plan for a particular job are found in head office, and for this reason they prefer to deal directly with head office. I submit again to the Minister that what I have just described is certainly not the most effective way of running the Lands Department, and I invite the Minister's comment on this issue.

I could not finish without commenting on the Riversleigh station saga. I will not mention the misuse of Government vehicles, the hire vehicles staggering under the weight of enough grog to resupply a Mark Down bottle shop—

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I rise to a point of order. This information irrelevant to the Lands debate has been debated at length. I think it is tedious. It is also not relevant to this debate, Mr Temporary Chairman, and I ask you to rule that way.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN** (Mr Hollis): Order! I do not accept that point of order. It has already been ruled that the subject is relevant.

**Mr SANTORO:** Thank you, Mr Temporary Chairman. As I say, these matters do not come under the auspices of the Minister, nor does the extravagant use of the Government jet, but what does come under the Minister's portfolio is the arrogant contempt with which the Minister for Environment and Heritage treated the Seymore family at Riversleigh station.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I rise to a point of order.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr BREDHAUER:** The jet was not even involved.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr SANTORO:** Thank you, Mr Temporary Chairman, for your protection from such a ridiculous point of order. The Minister, with a vision of land ownership as limited as his Windsor backyard, declared to this battling family as follows—

"How dare you think you can live in this ideal place. You don't own it."

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I rise to a point of order. Mr Temporary Chairman, you have already ruled that this matter is not relevant to the debate and I ask you to ask the member to desist.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! Will the member for Merthyr please return to the Estimates.

**Mr SANTORO:** If the Seymour family had freehold tenure—and I am talking about land—they would own the land. If it is leasehold, they should not be treated like serfs by this arrogant Minister for Environment and Heritage. The Minister then went on to say to this distraught family—

"I am sick of you people at Riversleigh, I'll take the land and more."

Can the Minister for Land Management condone this new sheriff of Nottingham addressing land-holders with overpowering contempt. I hope that the Minister does not, and that he takes the opportunity available to him tonight and at any other time to dissociate himself from such a despicable attitude shown by a Minister who should know better.

Time expired.

**Mr McGRADY** (Mount Isa) (10.04 p.m.): It has been quite interesting to listen to some of the comments from Opposition members—

**Mr Dunworth:** You're not going to talk about Riversleigh, too, are you?

**Mr McGRADY:** At least I know where Riversleigh station is. That is more than the honourable member or some of his parliamentary colleagues know. It is about time that some of the people in this Parliament realised the significance of the fossil find on Riversleigh station. It has been described as one of the greatest fossil finds ever. It is a pity that members opposite do not stand up for Queensland.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Mount Isa City Council Development Committee for some 12 years, and then six years as mayor of that city, I have over 18 years had constant contact with the Department of Lands. During that period, that department had a reputation in local government and other circles as being inactive, and certainly inefficient. I can recall a meeting I had with senior officers of that department during which one of the surveyors who operated from Mount Isa asked me to find out why a letter had not been replied to for some two years. When I made the inquiry, I was told by a startled officer, "We don't reply to letters. We are too busy." Things have changed, because under the leadership of the Minister and the director-general, Mr Bruce Wilson, there has been a massive change in the department. Before I get too carried away and excited, I add that the department still has some way to go. Certainly, it is on the right track. I want to take this opportunity tonight to thank the Minister's private secretary, Mr Greg Wither, for his help and assistance over the period that he has been in that position, and also the ladies who work in the office. I can say that it is a pleasure to have contact with the department now and I certainly hope that it is a sign of things to come.

In the last two years there have been many changes in the department. In particular, I want to mention tonight the inquiry which was set up by this Minister and this Government to look into land rentals and leases throughout the State. I refer to the Wolfe committee, which travelled the length and breadth of this State and gave Mr and Mrs Average Citizen the opportunity to have their say. As a result of those hearings around the State—and some of the Liberals in the corner would not have a clue about what is going on—this Government received recommendations that enabled it to make decisions which will have a great effect on the people who live in the country areas of this State. Members of the Opposition are always talking about the fact that they were the ones who looked after the people in country Queensland, yet it is this Government that has, in fact, set out policies on regionalisation. This department is no exception, because it has shown great commitment to regional development by regionalising its functions in order to bring them closer to local communities. That is what this Government is all about. This complicated process is expected to be completed by the end of next year.

The benefits to regional growth and to the people of Queensland are self-evident. The department's regional structure has been formulated with regional and district managers appointed to the 10 regions and 14 districts. These managers are not puppets tied to Brisbane. They have real decision-making powers and will oversee the transfer of the department's functions to their respective areas. To aid in the regionalisation of the functions of the department, a sum of approximately \$7.6m has been allocated to fund the direct costs of this process. Included in this sum is \$2.4m for the development of regional communications systems. This Government and this Minister realise that the development of a first-class communication system would be wasted if the data held by the department were not held in up-to-date databases. Consequently, funding from internal sources and from Treasury has been combined to develop, upgrade and maintain the department's computerised systems and databases. The total amount involved is some \$10.5m, and the break-down of this amount into programs is—

- land use program, just under \$1.5m;
- land information program, \$377,000;
- land boundaries program, over \$2m;

land titles program, just over \$2.5m;  
land valuations program, \$3.2m; and  
corporate and executive programs, just under \$700,000.

This regionalisation process has had positive effects on the range and quality of services provided by the Lands Department throughout Queensland. Services previously available only in Brisbane are now available right across this State. An example of this is the Wide Bay region covering Maryborough, Bundaberg, Gympie and the Wide Bay/Burnett area where staff numbers will move from 48 to 78, an increase of some 63 per cent. So much for the Opposition's claim that this Government does not care about regional Queensland! This will mark a positive injection of funds and resources into these areas. Maryborough is a region that was hard-hit by the decision to halt logging on Fraser Island—and, of course, this case has been well presented in this Parliament by the Government representatives from that area. That area will receive 20 new positions, and it has been estimated that these 20 positions will inject up to half a million dollars per annum into the local economy.

In Rockhampton, the opening of what is known as a one-stop shop for departmental services has removed the irksome practice of traipsing from office to office when dealing with the same parcel of land—and all honourable members know what I am referring to. The people of Queensland will be able to visit these Lands Department one-stop shops or land service centres, as they are known within the department, at each of the 14 district offices across Queensland once the regionalisation process is complete. A further nine land information centres connected to the land service centres by the communications network I referred to earlier will provide a more limited range of services. It is important to note that these land information centres will be providing a wider range of services than are presently available from land agents' offices. However, existing land agents' offices will not be closing. They will be connected to regional centres, and they will be able to readily access the resources of the department anywhere at all in Queensland.

Of the 33 offices—that is, 10 regional, 14 district and 9 land information centres—12 are situated west of the Great Divide, close to the department's rural clients. This Government has not forgotten the rural community and the hardship that it is presently experiencing. What this Government is doing is returning services to these rural centres, and providing the support by way of extra staff and equipment. By having offices based in local communities, departmental officers will be more accessible. Decision-making will be brought closer to people directly affected by the decisions that Government and its officers make. An example of this is in the Mackay region, where officers are already on the consultative committee for the optimum use of Crown land at the mouth of the Pioneer River, and the Whitsunday Development Committee. With more staff, and decision-making being carried out in Mackay, the lines of communication with these committees will be shortened. This will be of great benefit to the community at large.

Another benefit accruing from having more staff in regional offices is the increased number of departmental projects that can be managed locally instead of, once again, being managed from Brisbane, as was the case under old system. For example, there is a large mapping project under way in the Mackay region. The Mackay Whitsunday Mapping Project involves the production of some 273 map sheets covering 2 600 square kilometres between Midge Point and Flaggy Rock. By involving local departmental officers with industry leaders and client groups, greater consultation has achieved a better product. Local involvement improves the understanding of issues such as soil conservation and land development, planning and administration, productivity and job satisfaction.

In the northern region, which stretches from Townsville right across to the Northern Territory border, there will be a 15 per cent increase in staff numbers. Staffing in the office

of the premier mining city of Australia and probably the world, Mount Isa, will increase from two to four, and in Cloncurry it will increase from four to five. The Townsville land service centre has been in operation since July this year, providing fully integrated services previously provided by the old Department of Lands. Land information centres in Charters Towers, Hughenden, Cloncurry and Mount Isa will provide similar services once they are fully established. Again, local consultation has been improved by having more staff in the region. At present, staff from the northern region are involved in several studies with the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, and organisations involved in tracking of global positioning satellites.

In the department's far-northern region based in Cairns, the installation of direct dial-up systems allows the land information centres in Atherton and Innisfail to directly access databases in Brisbane for information not stored locally. For the first time, residents in this part of Queensland can now receive services as good as those available to residents of the more densely settled parts of the State, and that is the way it should be. Following the introduction of this improved service, sales of Sunmap products have trebled, and other requested land services have doubled. An extra staff member has been appointed to cope with the increased workload in this office. The Cairns land service centre is in the process of relocating its functions to the one building where all services will be available in the one complex. Staff from the region are involved in several important committees dealing with land management issues in far-northern Queensland. Those committees include the Port Douglas and Environ Planning Study and Crown Land Management Strategy, land use consultative committees for the Mitchell River Watershed Management Group and the Cape York Pastoral Advisory Committee. The far-north region will have major input into those and other projects involving land management as they arise. Local expertise will also be available for a coordinating role on project teams associated with the schemes. The Darling Downs region, with a land service centre at Toowoomba and land information centres at Dalby, Warwick, Stanthorpe and Goondiwindi, will be providing more services to local communities as a result of regionalisation of operations.

The communications network referred to earlier will give greater access to the department's databases in the Brisbane area. The information that will now be available that previously had to be obtained in Brisbane or Toowoomba includes Crown reserve details, titles check searches, valuation and sales information and Sunmap products. Land management problems will now be able to be dealt with on a local basis, leading to a quicker turnaround time for decisions affecting local councils. This is where I started. The western region, based in Roma, will not be receiving an increase in staff but will have an enhanced level of service due to its connection via computer to the department's databases. Residents of Charleville and Cunnamulla will now have unprecedented access to this information which, again, was previously accessible only in Brisbane. Departmental working maps giving the latest status of land-related matters will now be stored and updated in Roma. On a more local basis, Balonne Shire, which had been split between the western and Darling Downs regions, will now be looked after completely by the western region. The creation of a south coast region with new offices at Beenleigh and Bundall will provide the residents of that rapidly growing part of Queensland with easy access to departmental products and services.

In the short space of time I have left, I again congratulate the Minister and, in particular, the director-general. As I said in my opening remarks, there has been a tremendous transformation of this department. Members of all parties represented in this Parliament can contact this office and obtain speedy advice. In conclusion, I mention a problem which I have encountered recently in my own electorate regarding an abattoir site. Some 15 years ago, the department allocated a special lease for the purpose of

building an abattoir in Mount Isa. The abattoir was built and, at its peak time, slaughtered some 800 head of cattle and employed up to 800 people.

Time expired.

**Mr STEPHAN** (Gympie) (10. 20 p.m.): In joining the debate on the Land Management Estimates, I point out that many land problems exist. Some of the good points have been overlooked and should not go unnoticed. Recently, when I attended a Lions convention, I noticed in a publication what many people believe about the land. The article stated—

“Say not I inherited the land from my parents but rather that I keep it in trust for my children.”

People who own land believe that they keep the land not only in trust for their children but also in trust to be handed over to their children in a better condition than it was in when they took it over. If people care for their land properly, there is no reason why it should not be handed over in a condition better than it was in when they took it over. Land is the subject of many problems, not the least of which is the effect on it of drought. Because drought is a natural phenomenon, we tend to ignore it. However, we should take steps to reduce the effect that drought has on the land. When land is in a bare condition, heavy storms and strong winds remove a great proportion of the topsoil and create extensive damage. It is necessary that we recognise the need to conserve not only land but also water. If we are genuine in conserving our land and keeping it in good order, we should be genuine in storing water or searching for methods of utilising the underground water system. We should also investigate the use of desalinated ocean water. That would be an expensive proposition, but we must utilise all areas at our disposal to ensure that our land is kept in a condition better than it was when we took it over.

Fire is another enemy of land. Not many people realise its effects on land. At present, the Government is setting land aside for national parks and environmental purposes. However, I sound a note of warning that, if the Government intends to lock the land up and allow the undergrowth to take over, fires started by electrical storms have the capability of destroying the land. In other parts of Australia and throughout the world, fires have caused extensive damage to the land and also to people. I make those points because there is much more attached to looking after the land than merely preventing it from being used. Sometimes, that is far worse for the land than utilising it for our benefit. Furthermore, timber can be used to rejuvenate the land. The best method of rejuvenation is to grow wattle, which is a legume that can be planted in rows for protection and removed after a couple of years. No-one in his right mind would consider growing wattle for profit.

I compliment particularly the Gympie office of the Lands Department and Ken Stark. In the very near future, Ken will retire. He has been a tremendous officer. Anybody who has come in contact with him would recognise his knowledge and ability. Nothing is ever too much trouble for him. He is an example for all of us to follow, wherever we might be. If there were more Ken Starks in the world, it would be a better place in which to live. I take this opportunity to thank Ken for his work and his efforts over a long period, particularly since I have been the member for Gympie.

The annual report contains a section about land sustainability. This carries on from what I was speaking about. Under land sustainability, land is managed to meet present social and economic development needs, without compromising the needs of future generations. The unit itself is being established within the Department of Lands to respond to the recommendations of the Wolfe report. The purpose of this unit will be to draw on information and expertise from within Australia and overseas to create a database, which will assist the formulation of sound technical principles for land sustainability and the preparation of appropriate legislation. When “appropriate legislation” is referred to, it is

found that Queensland nature conservation legislation is being drawn up. Again, I become a little concerned when this type of attitude is displayed. Although only a Green Paper has been presented, it has been suggested that the director will have fairly strong and overriding control. According to the Green Paper, subject to the Minister, the director will have the following functions for the purposes of the Act—

- acquisition, enhancement and application of human, financial and material resources;
- establishment, maintenance and implementation of a nature conservation strategy for Queensland;
- establishment and management of protected areas;
- protection and management of wildlife and habitat;
- collection, analysis, management and application of information; and
- development and implementation of programs of works and other operational activities.

On the following page, some of the other activities are listed. They include the capture of the biodiversity of the State within a protected area system. The legislation will place a much greater emphasis on the protection and management of nature on all lands. It is the expression “all lands” that concerns me. Under the legislation, the director will have authority over protected areas, other Crown lands and reserves, leasehold land and freehold land. Many people are concerned that because an animal or plant in a particular area may be unique or considered to be unique by someone, the department may have the authority to say to a person, “You shall close that up. You shall not touch that because of the unique plants or animals that might be there.” I see Mr Palaszczuk shaking his head. Many people are shaking their heads over this matter and are concerned about just what the future holds. I sound a note of warning that the community has very great concern about what may happen. As I said at the beginning of my speech, I am not decrying the need to ensure that land is kept in a sustainable condition and in better condition than what it was when it was taken over.

Another area of the Minister's responsibility relates to miners' homestead leases. I have spoken about this on a couple of occasions in the past, and I spoke about it during debate on the legislation that is presently before the Parliament. I note in the annual report that new legislation was enacted on 1 September 1990, transferring district administration of the Miners' Homestead Leases Act, the Mining Titles Freeholding Act, business areas, market garden areas and residence areas from the Resource Industry Department wardens to Department of Lands personnel. I believe that is a step in the right direction. It puts land under the one umbrella so that when people come to deal with land they know where they are going. The annual report states that no further miners' homestead perpetual leases will be granted under the new legislation. That is fair enough; I do not think too many would have been granted, anyway. Consequently, the number of new leases granted has decreased substantially. Nevertheless, the workload is continuing to increase because of the need to address inconsistencies in rent levels and preparatory work to meet the expected increase in applications to convert leases to freehold. There is a considerable number of those. I would like to think that there will be a considerably higher number converting from leasehold to freehold. The workload has increased also because of heavy public response to recommendations for change of lease conditions and because of the transfer of lease administration to the Department of Lands.

It is interesting to note that the number of mining titles freeholding leases continues to increase. In view of the recommendations contained in the Wolfe Report into land policy and administration, it is anticipated that this number will increase substantially in the next two years, together with the number of leases being converted to freehold. In the next two

years, freeholding will be carried out under the old, or the 1980, Valuer-General's valuations. I note that there are 12 691 miners' homestead perpetual leases in this State which return an annual rental of about \$746,000. As I pointed out, this is of concern when miners' homestead perpetual leases are compared with miners' homestead leases, many of which relate to land which is side by side. A lot of confusion exists in determining one from the other. Because those leases have existed for a long time, many people cannot understand why miners' homestead leases, which are fully paid-up leases, require no payment to be made on them each year whereas the perpetual leases do. As to freeholding—there is a big difference in the cost. At present, a person can freehold a miners' homestead lease for the transfer costs of the title, whereas a perpetual lease still must be paid to the Crown. As a matter of interest, there are 10 211 miners' homestead leases in this State. I believe that about 6 000 of them are located in Gympie. Therefore, more than half of the miners' homestead leases in this State are located in the Gympie gold field area. The total number of mining titles freeholding leases is 180. There are approximately 21 leases in market garden areas. Other areas have smaller numbers of different types of leases.

Other members have mentioned annual valuations and the problems associated with them. The annual report mentions land valuation targets. It states—

“Within 5 years 90% of all appeals to the Land Court on revenue issues result in decisions which vary the Department's valuation by no more than 10%.”

That is a worthy target for which to aim. However, it must be borne in mind that the real problem is not necessarily the percentage of increase in land valuations, although that does come into it. The real problem lies in land valuation variations from one property to another. For one reason or another, this problem still has not been overcome. There are still variations between one part of a district and another, or even between places in close proximity. Some land valuations of similar properties vary by as much as 200 per cent, and this is where the anomalies lie.

**Mr Dollin:** We're just fixing that up.

**Mr STEPHAN:** I understand that the Government is just fixing that up. I wish it luck if it believes that it can fix it up in that period. It does not matter what method has been used in the past, it has not been fixed up.

**Mr Dollin:** Don't worry about it.

**Mr STEPHAN:** Don't you worry about that, it will happen. It certainly has not been fixed up as we would like it to be. I turn now to regionalisation, which has passed Gympie by. The regionalisation of Gympie does not seem to rate a mention with the Lands Department.

Time expired.

**Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (10.34 p.m.):** Tonight, I rise to participate in this Estimates debate and talk about a new and exciting direction in which the Lands Department is expanding its responsibilities this year. I speak particularly of the establishment within the department of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Interests Program. As most members would be aware, I have a particular interest in all matters affecting Aboriginal and Islander people, including their interests in land. Many of the existing large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of Queensland are located in my electorate. As the member for Cook, I have had the privilege and opportunity to meet and work with elders, councillors and many other individuals from those communities. In addition, I have previously had the opportunity to speak in support of the legislation which recognised the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to land. I refer to the Aboriginal Land Act and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act. As members will recall, that legislation was passed by the House in May of this year. I believe

that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Interests Program will be central to the implementation of those Acts.

I am certain that I do not need to remind the Committee of the special relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with their land. That relationship was recognised and acknowledged by the Government with the introduction of the Aboriginal Land Act and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act. I am sure that I do not need to dwell on the finer points of that legislation, nor to spell out the benefits that the legislation will offer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Let me say—only by way of a reminder—that the Aboriginal Land Act and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act provide for land to be claimed either by a group of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people or an individual Torres Strait Islander. It is also noteworthy that the grounds on which a claim may be made are intentionally broad based. They include traditional affiliation, historical association, and economic or cultural viability. The three categories of land that may be claimed are vacant Crown land gazetted as claimable by the Governor in Council; national park land gazetted as claimable by the Governor in Council; and certain other lands—largely the existing DOGITs and reserves classed as transferable lands under the Acts. Together, those categories of land comprise a significant portion of the land area of the State.

At this point, it is important to note that, since the passage of this important legislation, the Government has not been idle. My colleagues the Minister for Land Management and the Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs have been working continually with key staff of their departments to institute new administrative mechanisms and to bring about practical change to the structure of their departments. These changes will ensure that the most efficient processes possible for the implementation of the legislation are put into place. I must emphasise that I have been a keen and interested observer and follower of all of these processes, particularly as they relate to the Department of Lands. For this reason, I am pleased to speak in support of the allocation of the extra funding required for the proposed structural changes within the Department of Lands. Those changes will permit it to undertake and capably administer the many highly important functions allocated to the department by the Aboriginal Land Act and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act. I am certain that the Department of Lands as a whole will undertake its duties in administering the legislation efficiently and with all due consideration for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this State.

The Department of Lands will not have sole responsibility for administering or discharging the functions of the legislation. This responsibility will be shared with three other Government departments and independent tribunals. The Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs will facilitate the development of claims and resource communities to discharge land management responsibilities. The Departments of Resource Industries and Environment and Heritage are responsible for discrete sections of the legislation relating to their present departmental responsibilities. The role of the land tribunals, which is explicitly defined in the legislation, centres on the assessment of land claims. However, it must be emphasised that the Department of Lands will have particularly important responsibilities for administering the legislation.

The position of Land Claims Registrar—a key position under the legislation—will be held by the chief executive of the Department of Lands. The Minister alluded to that point earlier. Many of the functions performed by, and responsibilities allocated to, officers of the Department of Lands as they relate to the operation of the legislation will be directly delegated from this position. The activities and responsibilities of the other departments concerned with administering legislation and the land tribunal to a large degree will be dependent upon the Department of Lands discharging its responsibilities accurately and efficiently. The Department of Lands will coordinate arrangements for the identification

and gazettal of land, the processing of claims and the issuing of titles. The department is conscious of its responsibilities and the expanded role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land interests will have in its operations. It is proposing to administer its responsibilities in the most cost effective and efficient manner possible.

I speak in particular here of the establishment of a new program within the Department of Lands. By establishing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Interests Program as a distinct departmental program in its own right, the Department of Lands has provided a clear indication of the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land-related issues and the priority that the department intends to allocate to that important initiative. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land interests will therefore not only be taken into account in the formulation by my Government of future land policy for the State of Queensland but will be a prominent consideration of all land management decisions undertaken by the State's administrative arm. Many of the specialised or problematic decisions, aspects of the process of consultation and negotiation between Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land claimants and the overall management of the claims process, including the acceptance or rejection of a particular claim, are functions that will be performed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Interests Program. In addition, that program will monitor closely all other processes and functions of the Department of Lands that relate to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Acts.

I would like at this point to turn briefly to the broad aspects of the claims process undertaken within the Department of Lands. Let me deal in the first instance with making land available for claim. As I have stated previously, three categories of land are available for claim, including vacant Crown land gazetted as claimable by the Governor in Council. In order to make such lands available for claim, they must first be identified. That is not an easy task in itself. A computerised record of vacant Crown land does not currently exist, and so to the officers of the Department of Lands will fall the painstaking and eminently important task of precisely locating areas of vacant Crown land. Those may then be subsequently gazetted and made available for claim.

I turn now to the land claims process. Lands claimed as transferable land under the Acts, vacant Crown land and certain national parks that have been gazetted as available for claim will be subject to the claims process proper. In receiving land claims, the Department of Lands will always act to ensure that the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are taken into full account. That is particularly important as the officers of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Interests Program of the Department of Lands will frequently function as the first point of official contact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are making a land claim. Under the legislation, those officers will be required to ascertain that people making a claim satisfy certain minimum requirements before accepting any claim as duly made. Those minimum requirements may include the basis on which a claim is made, in certain cases the details of use to which the land will be put and responsibilities to be assumed by successful claimants in relation to the land. Any claims that are not considered as duly made will not be simply rejected outright. Officers of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Interests Program will provide advice in writing as to why the claim was not accepted and may otherwise assist in the resubmission of claims.

As members would be aware, duly made claims are forwarded to the Land Claims Tribunal for adjudication. In reaching its decision in relation to a claim, the tribunal will be obliged to consider both the interests of individuals who may be affected by the granting of a claim and the interests of the wider community. Should the tribunal be made aware of any detriment that may arise in the granting of a land claim, it must inform the Minister for Land Management. The Minister may then direct officers of his department to attempt to

resolve issues of detriment prior to granting a claims. The Department of Lands will be responsible also for the issuance of title over successfully claimed land. That would be either as a deed of grant in fee simple or as an appropriate lease as dictated by the legislation. Land would be made available under lease where a claim succeeded on the basis of economic and cultural viability. Any title documents issued must comply with the requirements of the legislation. In either case, the title document must show, among other things, that the land is held by the grantees and their descendants for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It must also show the specific responsibilities that the grantees have agreed to assume in relation to the land.

In addition to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Interests Program, the Department of Lands will provide the administrative infrastructure for the land tribunals. I commend the strategy of the Minister for Land Management of expanding the registry of the Land Court rather than creating a costly and unnecessary new structure. As members would be aware, the costs of establishing an independent registry with the associated access to legal reference material would have been considerable. The effective use of the existing infrastructure will minimise the costs associated with the creation of the tribunal.

I believe that I have demonstrated the important role that will be played by the Department of Lands throughout the entire claims process. In the short space of time available to me, I have tried not to overemphasise the role to be played in the claims process by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Interests Program but to present a more balanced view of how an enhanced Department of Lands will contribute to the effective implementation of the legislation. Before I conclude, I thank the Minister and his staff, particularly Greg Withers, for the assistance that they have provided me. I also commend the department for its regionalisation process. I know that my relationship with the Assistant Land Commissioner in Cairns, Ian Anders, and his staff has been very productive and fruitful over the past two years and I am sure that that relationship will be enhanced as the regionalisation process proceeds further. As I mentioned in the debate on the Lands Legislation Amendment Bill last week, land matters are probably the most significant issues with which I have to deal as the member for Cook, and I appreciate all the assistance that I have received.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the quality of the legislation will ultimately be judged on the effectiveness of its implementation. In forming the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Interests Program, the Lands Department has not created a large bureaucratic structure; rather, it has enhanced and streamlined existing areas and established a small unit to undertake the new responsibilities. The program represents the most efficient mechanism possible to correctly administer the legislation and is fully deserving of an appropriate funding allocation. I support the Estimates of the Minister for Land Management.

**Hon. A. G. EATON** (Mourilyan—Minister for Land Management) (10.45 p.m.), in reply: Firstly, I thank all those who have made a contribution to the debate tonight. Of course, many issues were raised, some which deserve to be considered, others do not. Unfortunately, we have heard tonight from those opposite more of the same old rhetoric—more of the same tired, negative comments and more of the misleading and wild claims. It is unfortunate that members opposite do not take the opportunity that these Estimates debates give for a serious and detailed debate on the issue of land management. What we are debating tonight is not some silly point-scoring by those opposite. We are discussing the very issue that is the basis of our economy, that is, land. It is our most basic resource. It should not be used as a political football. The management of our land is far too important for that.

Some claims were made tonight that our regional centres are concentrated on the coastal area. What rubbish! If the member had taken any notice at all, he would have

known that 12 of the 33 country centres are based west of the Great Dividing Range, close to our rural clients. Regionalisation also means that more staff will be based in rural and regional Queensland, unlike under the former Government when staff and decision-making were based in Brisbane. We are eliminating the need for major decisions to be referred to Brisbane. These decisions can now be made on a regional basis with local knowledge.

It has been suggested that national parks are looking at taking over stock-routes. I think the member used the term "the dogs are barking". They may be barking, but they certainly do not know what is happening. Despite some of the wild claims by the Opposition, there has never been any suggestion that national parks would take over stock-routes. All that has been suggested is that a management committee, including representatives from the Lands Department, be set up to look at developing the best management for these areas. I agree that they are important to the rural community and that they must retain their traditional use, particularly in the current economic climate. It has never been suggested otherwise and I have been appalled by the scaremongering indulged in by some members of the Opposition in rural Queensland. My department is concerned with preserving and managing the stock-routes system, unlike some former Governments whose main concern was to exploit them or to flog them off to their mates.

The matter of the valuation pause was raised by some members. A Statewide survey showed that there was little evidence of sales movement, with the exception of four areas where there had been a dramatic slump. This decision was taken following consultation with the Local Government Association. If some members opposite understood the valuation system, they would have known that any downturn in the market would not have been reflected in valuations carried out this year. The downturn in the market will in fact be reflected in next year's valuations. The valuation pause will have no impact on rental levels. As I have already said, rental levels will be determined closer to the introduction date of 1 July 1993, after taking into account the economic conditions and following consultation with industry groups. On this subject, it was suggested that the industry groups have had no input into the lands legislation. They have had considerable input, firstly, through the Wolfe inquiry and, secondly, through the land use consultative committee that I established earlier this year. All rural organisations were represented on that committee, such as the Cattlemen's Union, the UGA, the Queensland Farmers Federation and the Queensland Graingrowers Association. All these organisations discussed the legislation before it was introduced.

The member for South Coast suggested that we had dramatically increased the funds going into corporate and executive service salaries. There was no such change and the increase this year in that item has been caused by an allowance to pay for voluntary early retirements across the whole department. He would have noticed the increase compared to last year's annual report. On a number of occasions the member for Warrego mentioned the freeholding and rental arrangements. This matter will be handled in three stages. A Bill that the Government will introduce next year will look at tenure reform and grievance mechanisms to give people a more structured and sound basis to air their grievances. The Liberal Party member mentioned that the Government was doing things too quickly tonight. Not only is the Government trying to implement these changes at a pace at which it can do the job properly, but also it only has to do it once and not twice. We have been accused of being a bit slow in some areas and in others we have been accused of moving too fast. It depends where the benefit is going as to who makes the criticism. The member for South Coast, Mr Quinn, raised the reasons for the valuation pause. The decision to have a pause was based on sound reason and in consultation with the Local Government Association. At present, we are monitoring valuations and that is why we picked up early in the piece a significant drop in the four regions mentioned where land booms occurred, that is, Port Douglas, Cairns City, Mulgrave and the Gold Coast. Land

booms do not benefit anyone, other than the entrepreneurs who are wheeling and dealing in land.

**Mr Hobbs:** Wouldn't there be people up in the Brisbane CBD area who would in fact be paying land tax on higher values than they really should be this year?

**Mr EATON:** Not really, because there would be a slight increase, if anything. For example, at one end of Brisbane there may have been a slight increase or a slight decrease, but no area suffered a significant drop. Discussions were held with representatives of the Local Government Association to make them aware of what we were contemplating doing. The representatives of that association came from all over Queensland. It was not a decision made in haste or without consultation.

As to stock-routes and the Rural Lands Protection Board—in the past there has been some criticism of that board. The Government has a research station and it has been successful in some areas. However, the Government has not been as successful as it would have liked. No doubt our scientists would like to come up with something tomorrow that would allow us to do away with poisons, chemicals and similar products and get back to biological treatment. The use of biological treatments on plant life and pests and vermin would alleviate many of the problems in our society today. That is what the Government has been trying to do. The dingo fence was mentioned. Quite a large project is under way concerning the dingo fence, and rabbit-proof fences have been established for south-western Queensland.

I turn now to the Green Paper on building units and group titles. That is a very complex matter. The Government put out 12 000 papers and received 300 submissions from all sections of the industry. Irrespective of what people say, there are not too many saints in any of those organisations. I interviewed all of them. Some people wanted to throw a blanket over one particular group and say, "All these people are good and all the rest should be in gaol." They are all talking through their hats and, when the chips are down, the Green Paper has been released, which will give these people a chance to deliver the proof. It is all about consultation. They have had a few months to do it. It is a very complex area and a lot of accusations have been made. There are even some civil matters before the court, and there are many no-hopers involved in certain sections of the industry. It is not possible for the member to pick out only one section of the Building Units and Group Titles Act, whether they be managers, unit-owners, unit investors or investors.

I am very conscious of the importance of this aspect of the tourism industry, but I point out that the tourist is not putting up his or her money to build the units. The Government must establish a system of building and managing units. Without Government intervention, tourists will not come to Queensland because there will be no units to accommodate them. Investors will leave the unit development sector of the building industry, and I would say that a large percentage of investors in unit development projects would love to get out of that type of investment. There is any number of units on the market presently, but the owners cannot sell them because of the strife in the industry that has been so widely publicised and is so well known. People who have confined their investments to unit properties are being forced to retain those properties, which leads to friction among unit-owners, investors and managers. There is not one party that can claim to be the innocent victim of what has occurred because there are faults on both sides, depending on the particular project involved. Some unit development projects are completely harmonious and the owners and occupiers are happy with the managers, but in other cases the opposite is true.

At 10.55 p.m.,

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 1 October, I shall now put the questions for the Vote under consideration and the balance remaining unvoted for Department of Lands (Consolidated Fund and Trust and Special Funds).

The questions for the following Votes were put, and agreed to—

\$1,493,000—Law, Order and Public Safety, Department of Lands (Consolidated Fund).

\$5,680,000—Agriculture, Forestry and Water Resources, Department of Lands (Consolidated Fund).

\$13,000,000—Agriculture, Forestry and Water Resources, Department of Lands (Trust and Special Funds).

\$92,032,000—Economic Services, Department of Lands (Consolidated Fund).

\$1,089,000—Economic Services, Department of Lands (Trust and Special Funds).

Progress reported.

## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE

### Tabling of Submissions

**Mr BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central) (10.57 p.m.): In accordance with a unanimous decision of the Parliamentary Committee for Criminal Justice, I seek leave of the House to table 141 submissions received by the committee at the closure of submissions at 5 p.m. yesterday, 28 October, in relation to the committee's review of the Criminal Justice Commission's report *Regulating Morality? An Inquiry into Prostitution in Queensland*. The submissions are tabled for the information of members and the people of Queensland. The committee received 142 written submissions in response to Statewide and national advertisements seeking contributions from individuals and interested groups. One submission requested confidentiality and, therefore, has not been tabled. The committee is now working on its report to this Parliament, which will be tabled in the House during the next few weeks.

Leave granted.

## LANDS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Debate resumed from 24 October (see p. 2164).

**Mr PERRETT** (Barambah) (10.58 p.m.): Members of the Opposition are fundamentally opposed to this legislation because we believe it expresses Labor's commitment to eroding the traditional right of Queenslanders to enjoy the use of private property. We believe also that it encroaches on the ability of land-holders to manage land, and to derive adequate productivity and reasonable profit. This legislation and a range of measures threatened by the Minister for Environment and Heritage will make it impossible for many primary producers in this State to make a living off their land. This is horror legislation for every land-holder in Queensland because it takes the Labor Government's money-grab a giant step further. It changes the basis of setting Crown land rentals and takes it away from anything to do with the productive potential of the land. Simply by

regulation, it will give the Minister power to send the cost of land as an input right through the roof. This legislation represents the promised land for those people who still adhere to the old Fabian ideal referred to by the member for Warrego because, indeed, this legislation allows the Minister to tax people off the land. When I listened to that quotation, I was reminded of the babblings of the member for Isis last year in this House when he started all the rubbish about land belonging to everyone and something about it being as free as the air that we breathe. It is people such as the member for Isis with their prehistoric ideas who find the private ownership of land so abhorrent. They are the people who are truly represented by Labor—the people Labor is paying off with this legislation. They are the people who resent the idea of others working hard and gaining a reward for that work.

**Dr Flynn:** If you want to own it, you have to pay for it.

**Mr PERRETT:** I repeat that they are the people who resent the idea of others working hard and gaining a reward for their work because the underlying principle of land-ownership is free enterprise—that is, getting ahead as a result of hard work and effort. Members of the Labor Party want to punish enterprise by raising the cost of inputs and by weaving a bureaucrat web to strangle enterprise. With this legislation, they get the lot because it provides for a huge rise in the rental costs of leasehold land which, in many cases, will make the profitable operation of that land impossible. They also get the type of intrusion on management that achieves the same result. Those people are always mouthing off about sharing, but it is easy to ask for a share when one has built nothing.

This legislation stems largely from the Wolfe report, which was the end product of a Government inquiry appointed at the early stages of the present Government's term of office. That inquiry was appointed to come up with the answers that the Government wanted and to give some sort of legitimacy to what the Government wanted to do anyway. The Government ensured achievement of the result it wanted by appointing people who, for the most part, knew absolutely nothing about rural land or rural industry. If that inquiry had been conducted by anyone who had a knowledge of rural Queensland, the result and recommendations could not have been more different. The new system of land rentals has emerged from the application of city ideas to a rural situation. The basis of it is the movement to the unimproved capital valuation of land. Such a system works on urban land because there are plenty of sales that can be used to set a realistic value. There are also much smaller parcels of land, ensuring that the valuations cover comparable situations. One has an entirely different proposition with rural land. Sales are very few. One extraordinary sale can have a massive effect on local valuations. Special circumstances may make that sale price totally unrepresentative of the district. The size of normal blocks makes a very great difference as well. For example, a large block—say 30 000 hectares, which would not be unusual in the pastoral belt of Queensland—might contain some river flats, some black soil coolabah country, some mulga country, some black soil plain country and some lighter red country. If one of those elements is missing, that property will have a totally different production potential from another property nearby—even a neighbouring property.

The people involved in the Wolfe inquiry would have no way of knowing how different mixes of country on one property can affect the production potential and the interrelationships that are possible. If one property has black soil plain country, its value will bear no relationship to the value of another property that does not contain such country. That problem exists in the country with which I am familiar. It is bound to be repeated in some way all over Queensland.

If one takes the combination of very few sales and varied blocks, there is just no way that the Valuer-General system of establishing unimproved capital value can work equitably. One will soon see totally unrealistic values being placed on land. The land-

holders will then pay rent calculated as a percentage rate of the value of the land. A more unfair system could not be devised. On top of that, Queenslanders have to contend with the Minister making the decision about those percentage rates of land values. He is showing just how selective Labor is about implementing the findings of inquiries by choosing to accept the valuation recommendation but not the recommendation dealing with the rates. Obviously, the Minister wants to have the freedom to soak producers as hard as he likes, depending on the year or the season. The Minister has also conveniently left out the recommendation of a three-year moving average valuation.

It is also significant that this legislation contains specific provision for the Minister to abandon revaluations in any particular year. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this Labor Government is happy to revalue on a rising market and reap the percentage rewards in rental payments. The other side of the coin is the Labor Government neglecting to revalue on a falling market, because that would mean lower rentals. This Government has given just cause for cynicism on this issue by the way it handled rental increases recommended by Mr Carter. The Government accepted his recommendation in relation to increases but ignored his recommendation dealing with timing. Mr Carter made it clear that increases were to be based on good seasons and good markets. They were not to be implemented during the disastrous conditions already emerging last year when the Government decided to go ahead with the increases. This Labor Government showed its true intentions towards rural Queensland by forcing upon it massive increases at a time when industry could least afford them. The Labor Government will do so again and again.

The new rental system is clearly designed to extract as much money as possible out of rural leaseholders. There seems little possibility that the owners of freehold land will escape unscathed. It will not be long before the Government starts collecting higher rates of land tax to match the increases in rents. Those old Fabians, and their more modern cousins on the Government side of this House, will have plenty to applaud. They either do not know, or do not care, about the serious implications for rural industry, and the consumers it supplies.

Land is a basic input to rural production. Its cost has a part to play in both the viability of the enterprise and the price that must be put on its output. It is hard to see the rural industry being able to afford these new imposts when they begin to apply in two years. If one needed evidence of that, it was provided today in Canberra by the Federal Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Crean, who announced a \$60m assistance package for rural industry. I think that speaks for itself as to the state that the rural industry is in. At this stage, the rural industry can ill afford to pay any increases whatsoever.

This legislation is not just about direct cost impositions on the rural industry; it is also about shoring up Labor's marriage of convenience to the more extreme environmental lobby. Again, the Minister is using the Wolfe report as his excuse for introducing green elements that will make property less viable and more difficult to manage properly. One can understand the people involved in the Wolfe inquiry falling for the greenies' line about every piece of vegetation being vital. City people can afford that luxury. They cannot be expected to know what is involved in getting productivity out of some country. City people cannot be expected to know—as primary producers know—how to enhance productivity without ruining the country. It is simplistic, to say the least, to adopt some of the attitudes contained in the Wolfe recommendations. The Minister should have known better. His department would have advised him to take a different course from the Wolfe recommendations. Perhaps the Minister did not seriously seek the advice of his department? Perhaps, instead, he followed the nonsensical reasoning in the Fraser Island report, or the academic pap that emanates from the policy gurus in the Cabinet office. However the legislation came about, it creates a real nightmare for practical people battling to make a living in primary industry.

The timber provisions defy logic. What does the Minister say to land-holders who need to replace fences lost in bushfires or floods? Does the Minister say, "No, you cannot cut timber for posts until we have been out to inspect and until we have marked the trees you must use"? Does the Minister tell land-holders to wait weeks until someone can come out to their property? Does the Minister tell land-holders to forgo management of their properties until the Government gets around to saying "Yes" or "No"? What does the Minister say to people who need to cut a track, or a firebreak, or to clear trees away from a fence line? Does the Minister tell land-holders to organise their work schedules around the convenience of the public service? What happens if the public servant is a radical greenie who will not allow any tree-felling at all? The mind boggles at all the possibilities. I suppose the Minister will say that there is no intention to enforce the timber provisions in any strict way. If that is the case, those provisions should not even appear in this legislation. There certainly should not be provisions for fines of up to \$24,000 and \$48,000 for destroying a single tree, but the provisions are there. We have to assume that they will be used. There is a great deal in this legislation about caring for the land, about legislative means to avoid land degradation. That is a gross insult to all the hard-working people who struggle to raise livestock or to grow crops. They already know the great truth about land: if you abuse it, it will fail you. They have known that truth, and they have acted on it, for decades. The record speaks for itself.

Honourable members will be aware of the discussion paper published recently by the Queensland Land Care Council, and I refer to some of the things it says about the record producers have in looking after their country. It says—

"Over 1.22m ha of cropping land are now protected with soil conservation measures throughout the State.

In the grazing lands 53 000 ha of permanent pasture land, mostly in central Queensland are protected with pondage banks, pasture furrows and water ponding spreading systems."

I think that record speaks for itself. It continues—

"A total of 5 500 properties in Queensland now has property plans."

Once again, I think that indicates the desire of land-holders to take care of their land and ensure that it lasts for generations. However, I think the prime statement in that particular document is that value is related to either value of produce or potential for alternative uses such as residential development, hobby farms or tourist development. As most of Queensland does not have potential for those alternative uses such as residential development, hobby farms or tourist development, in the great majority of Queensland the value is related to the value of produce that that land can furnish.

The greatest threat of land degradation lies in desperation on the part of producers. A man in desperate trouble might be tempted to overuse his land, to have one last throw at getting out of trouble. That is human nature. Legislation such as this, huge rental increases and great restrictions on the ability to manage for profit, will lead to desperation. It will be another nail in the coffin of rural industry. It will force people to abandon the land. All that will mean is the unchecked growth of pest plants and the unchecked increase in feral animals. The best thing for the land in this State is good management by people who have a vested interest in it, owners who are making a decent living. If this legislation passes, that can never come about.

I want to end on one of the worst aspects of this legislation—conditions which make it almost impossible to convert to freehold tenure. Labor's real agenda comes out in these provisions. There are bans based on the Government's idea of heritage value. There are bans based on the possibility of degradation—and who presumes to judge that? Another ban comes from the Government's judgment that the land might have a higher use. The

list is almost endless. The end result is that almost every useful block of land in Queensland is ruled ineligible for freeholding. Where an application does get through, the financial terms have been stiffened so much that few producers could afford it. Labor is clearly attempting to put an effective end to freeholding. This is Fabian legislation of the worst sort. It gives the lie to Labor's claims about private enterprise and the free market.

**Mr NUNN** (Isis) (11.12 p.m.): Because there has not been a review of the Land Act or, indeed, land administration or policy in Queensland in over 30 years, it has fallen to this Government, as is usual, to make the hard and fair decisions. This Government has the will and the courage, through the Minister for Land Management, to review, for the first time in a third of a century, the administration of land in Queensland. To this end, the Wolfe report was commissioned—a report of a review of land policy and administration in Queensland, and subsequently a review of the Land Act. The Wolfe report made recommendations encompassing a wide range of complex land management issues with respect to, among other matters, rent assessment, requirements for freeholding, and the introduction of a more consistent and commercial approach to Crown land dealings.

Before proceeding with a mild-mannered discussion regarding the merits of this Bill, it is important to mention briefly the last review of land policy for Queensland. This was the Payne report on progressive land settlement in Queensland, commissioned in 1959, which dwelt mainly on the administration of rural land. This was because at that time it was accepted that secondary industry was just about totally reliant on the prosperity of primary industries. I was a young man in those days, and I remember how exciting it was. It was as if there were no tomorrows, and Australia was indeed the lucky country. Payne presented his report as somewhat of an historical document. He used history as his guide when making his recommendations to manage the present, with very little thought of the future. He failed to look to the future and make allowances for any changes to the base of the State's economy and its effect on land administration. The Payne inquiry was conducted over 30 years ago, and still it provides the basis for our present legislation. This was despite the fact that the percentage of the Queensland labour force employed in farming and rural activities had fallen to just over 8 per cent at the time of the 1986 census; and I believe it has now fallen further still. This was despite the fact that the contribution of the farm sector to the gross State product declined from 25 per cent in 1955 to 8 per cent in 1985. The table which illustrates this may be found on page 8 of Appendix 2 of the Wolfe report. It is not necessary to speak of the rapid growth of the mining and tourism industries, and I mention them only to illustrate the changes which have occurred.

Changes to the Act which have occurred over the last 30 years have been on an ad hoc basis. Some people have been unkind enough to say that some changes have been made simply to accommodate certain people, and I guess it would be even more unkind to say that they had a certain matey feel to them. This has resulted in a mishmash of legislation, framed without public consultation, which has become an administrative nightmare and extremely costly to manage. The present Land Act is so complex that no one person fully understands it. It is because of that that the department has become a little unwieldy, and that results in delays that are costly not only to the department but also to the client. The Government is going to address the matter of the recovery of costs and a fair return to the Crown while also being mindful of the concerns of the land-holder, as this reflects upon the ability of the department to budget efficiently for the sound administration of its affairs and also provide good service to its clients.

Rents on leasehold land have been charged in a somewhat cavalier fashion. A study of the history of rents in Queensland brings to light some interesting comparisons. On page 121, the Wolfe report makes the comparisons in some detail. For the benefit of those who have not read the report, I will summarise it. When Labor came to power in 1989,

existing rental standards for both sheep and cattle were the same as those which had been set in the early 1970s after the grazing industry had suffered adverse conditions. In the seventies, two members of the Land Court, namely, Barry and Smith, both presented reports and the new rents, replacing those in force since 1957, were struck. Those rental standards were to be temporary measures only, but a form of absent-mindedness set in with the National Party Government of the day and it stuck with the discounted rentals of the 1970s, even through the good times. So, nearly 20 years later, the same rents apply. However, in 1988, another Land Court member was commissioned to inquire into the rental situation. That inquiry resulted in the Carter report. The rents set in the 1970s were 19c per sheep and 76.3c per beast. Mr Carter recommended 35.3c for sheep and \$2.29 for cattle. On page 122, the Wolfe report presents graphs representing sheep to illustrate the rents paid in 1957 in today's real money terms. I will quote from the last paragraph on page 121 of the report, where Wolfe stated—and remember that she is speaking of the translation of 1957 rents into today's dollars—

“The mean rent per sheep in 1957 thus translated is \$2.12 compared with 35.3 cents as recommended by Mr. Carter. The 1957 rents carry through to 1970. The 1970 relief rents similarly translated are \$1.08 as compared with Mr. Carter's 35.3 cents.”

I submit that blind Freddy and even the member for Warrego would be able to recognise a crazy situation when they see one. I am not arguing the rights or wrongs of the rents charged. Certain things are obvious. What I am saying is that the basis for calculating the rents is very much flawed. This Bill will introduce a standard method of calculating rentals as a percentage of the unimproved value of the land, a method which already applies to some leases. There are two major advantages in using this method, and honourable members know them well. However, I will repeat them. As a result of the use of this standard method, rental levels will reflect general economic trends by being varied upwards or downwards in line with market fluctuations, and consistency will prevail throughout the State. Members of the Opposition are prone to become paranoid if someone other than them drafts legislation regarding land matters. To them I say this: “Don't worry! Be happy!” The Minister has signalled his good intentions towards the rural community by his preparedness to consult with the industry with respect to both the machinery and the principles to be employed in the determination of appropriate percentage rates. That is something that the previous Government failed to do, even though it had 32 years to do so. That is why the legislation does not deal with the percentages that should apply in determining rents. The rate will be set after consultation with the industry. That is because the Minister is determined that all reasonable rights of tenants will be preserved.

It is timely to mention the section which deals with the hardship provisions of the Bill. The new legislation has expanded the hardship provisions for lessees and, in times of hardship, the Minister can defer rental payments and annual freehold instalments, and penalty interest does not apply for the period of deferral. The Minister for Land Management is now able to offer hardship provisions in cases of serious illness, accident to the lessee, drought, flood, fire, artificial and natural disasters, and economic recession or severe downturn in the industry. The Minister will also be able to recommend further assistance by advising the Governor in Council to give other added benefits, including the remission of rent and interest, or part of rent and part of interest. There are prerequisites which must be met before the hardship provisions apply. For instance, a lessee may have to provide financial statements as required by the Minister.

If ever there was a crying need to reform any section of land management in Queensland, it was manifest in the area of the freeholding of Crown land. Under the present set-up, that area of land management is riddled with inconsistencies, inequities

and a downright immoral and dishonest attitude to the distribution of the most valuable asset belonging not only to the privileged few but to all Queenslanders, big or small, great or humble, no matter who they be or where they are. The land belongs to the people and they deserve a fair return from whoever makes use of their land under whatever tenure may be held.

This Government, in proposing amendments to the present legislation, will initiate several changes to conditions for freeholding. Those will include land protection measures, the financial terms relating to the purchase of freehold tenure, and the removal of those freeholding inconsistencies which exist between certain lease types. If this Government does not bring about a more commercial approach to Crown land dealings, it will perpetuate a system designed to make sure that some sections of the community are guaranteed an advantage in land dealings at the expense of others. Let there be no mistake—this Government has every intention of taking away the unfair edge. There will be no free issue of white shoes, nor will we encourage the exchange of brown-paper packages between those in power and the corporate cutthroats. Let us now take a few examples. Take for instance a lease for tourism purposes. On occasions when the members of the public have become concerned enough to protest to the Minister, those leases have been issued with a protection condition which is worded “never to be freehold”. Safe enough, one would think. No fear! It is not. It is a simple matter—and it has been done—to forfeit the lease and issue a new one without the non-freeholding condition—simple, but very effective.

Next, take the grazing homestead freehold lease. This lease provides a tenure mechanism for obtaining freehold title over a grazing homestead perpetual lease and is converted from a grazing homestead perpetual lease which, of course, can be made freehold subject to matters pertaining to public interest, which is a different proposition indeed. However, what bites in relation to this tenure, what concerns members of the public, are the purchasing terms. The purchase may be paid off over 40 years. Do honourable members want to guess the rate of interest which applies? No? I will tell them, anyhow. The interest is nil, nothing, nought! The purchaser may have a conscience, of course. He may not wish to take advantage of his fellow Queenslanders; he may not wish to take advantage of a 40-year interest-free loan. The purchaser may wish to pay cash, probably out of the goodness of his heart. So under the present legislation he agrees on a price determined by the Minister or the Land Court. Does he pay this price? Not on your nelly! He receives a 50 per cent discount—not 25 per cent, not 10 per cent, but 50 per cent. Half is knocked right off the top. How grand! What a magnificent situation, a fire sale of the State's most valuable asset, a knock-down, once-only bargain price for the basis of our wealth. The land which is the rightful and undisputed property of all Queenslanders is practically given away to perpetuate the view held by the privileged that Crown land will always be cheap and will always be available to them by right of birth.

Let us go to the other end of the scale. Let us look at auction purchase freehold. This tenure is normally used for the sale of urban lands and provides a mechanism for the sale of Crown land with freehold title by auction or subsequently after auction. The purchase price can be paid outright in full or can be paid over varying terms which attract interest. The present policy with respect to term sales for urban land is as follows: over three years, 50 per cent deposit and 10 per cent interest; over five years, 30 per cent deposit and 11 per cent interest; and over 10 years, 15 per cent deposit and 12 per cent interest. It is a case of, “Up the Aussie battler, he will pay his way.” There is no 50 per cent discount and no interest-free 40-year loan. One might well ask what monumental oversight allowed this inequitable situation to arise. These anomalous situations will now be able to be addressed, and that really is good news for honourable members opposite.

There is a case in which the freeholding of Crown land in Hervey Bay did not go unnoticed by the public. A water reserve was made available for a pittance to a prominent member of the National Party. It is now partially developed and money was made on the deal. Of course, this man has never been identified as a bludger. That title has been reserved, particularly by people on the Opposition benches, in blanket fashion for the unemployed. This Bill will have one important effect: it will lift the freeze on freeholding which was imposed on 5 February 1990. That, of course, was a necessary step as the land sharks and the vultures were poised for the greatest land grab in Queensland's history. Those people may now apply under the new conditions. There is nothing to stop them. Increased emphasis will be given to the matter of public interest, and when defining "public interest", strategic, social, cultural, recreational, planning, environmental and heritage and land-protection matters will be taken into account. This Bill provides for a maximum term of 30 years and variable commercial interest rates. This is fair and reasonable. Some people opposite view this Bill as being vindictive. They take this view because it removes some of the perks of the past. But this Bill introduces some fairness into the situation without interfering with the arrangements entered into in the past. Generally, previous contracts to freehold land remain as is. The no-interest or the fixed-interest rates will still apply to those contracts. Discount provisions already in force are also to remain. Provision has been made for grazing homestead perpetual lease freeholdings to have concessional interest rates because, given expectations, based on previous concessional arrangements, this would have an effect not only on lessees' equity but also on the market. While the payment arrangements for commercial timber will now include minimum instalments and commercial interest rates, existing arrangements are not affected. Now, who can say fairer than that? I am doing the best I can for members opposite.

In closing, I would like to say how happy I am with the provisions in the clause of the Bill which relates to environmental and land protection matters and the clause which deals with resource considerations. A recent case of wanton destruction of timber and the environment in Hervey Bay would have incurred a penalty of only 400 bucks. Under this Bill, the penalty in today's dollars is \$24,000 for an individual or \$48,000 for a company. The Minister has consulted with the rural industries on the issue of permits to destroy trees on Crown land. As a result, he intends to implement a system of permits which dovetails with land-care, and property management will become an integral part of land-care. It is envisaged that, if a lessee is prepared to submit a management plan for the property and the plan may require the destruction of some timber, on the acceptance of the plan a permit to destroy certain timber may be issued. This permit could be valid for a stated period and would be transferable if the lease changed hands. This is a broad outline of the proposal as I understand it, and it has been discussed with industry leaders, who are supportive. We can all be pleased that quarry materials are to be reserved to the Crown in future freehold titles by amendment to the Forestry Act. This Bill deals with the first and most urgent stage of the recommendations arising out of the Wolfe report. It is a good start, but it is only the beginning, not the end, of the reform of land administration in Queensland. It is the intent of this Government to implement more fundamental changes to the Land Act, which will occur at a later stage.

In the short time left to me, I want to mention some of the matters raised by previous speakers in this debate. It was quite interesting to hear the member for Warrego speak of the lack of consultation in the framing of this Bill. This demonstrates that he is out of touch with industry leaders in Queensland. The fact of the matter is that the Minister and his departmental officers had wide and profitable discussions with those industry leaders. I am not surprised that those people did not communicate with the member for Warrego. Why should they? They say that he knows very little, they rarely see him and they hardly know him. They consider him to be irrelevant, illogical and ill-informed.

The member for Gympie echoed the spurious comments of the member for Warrego, and then got lost. It was quite obvious that, if he were given 10 years to study the Bill, he would understand very little of it. I believe that the member for Gympie is basically an honest man. Therefore, I was surprised to find him so supportive of such a system of land management as was perpetrated by the previous National Party Government. Of course, this is not to say that that Government acted with anything other than a degree of naivety with regard to land dealings. Sadly, it was taken advantage of by its less than scrupulous acquaintances.

Tonight, in the Estimates debate, the member for Flinders kept harping on a supposed reluctance on the part of the Labor Government to subdivide leasehold land. For a start, it is common knowledge amongst those who have any knowledge at all that it is not permissible under the Act to subdivide leasehold land; first comes the freeholding, then the carve-up proceeds. Even so, the rezoning and subdivision of freehold land is the province and responsibility of the local authority, and must be dealt with in terms of the authority's development control plan or its strategic land plan. It is well known that, in the life of the last Government, ministerial rezonings were rampant. At this stage, I congratulate the Minister and his department on their efforts so far. They have done an excellent job. I congratulate the Minister on this Bill, and look forward to the continuance of the reform of land administration in Queensland.

**Mr STONEMAN** (Burdekin) (11.33 p.m.): I join in this debate on the Lands Legislation Amendment Bill. In doing so, I am reminded of, and happen to be able to turn up a copy of, a comment made on 29 October 1990—some 12 months ago, almost to the day. It is worth while drawing to the attention of the House that particular article, which relates very much to the attitude that prevails amongst a great number of thinking members opposite and, more particularly, seems to be the guiding light of the member for Isis. I sat in silence while he delivered his speech, because I did not want to interrupt the flow of some of the most damning statements that I have ever heard, and which must surely make any thinking member or any member of the Government who understood what was being said writhe in his seat. It was old-fashioned, vitriolic, hate-the-boss type of stuff. It is bitter and twisted thinking. That is sad. Undoubtedly, the Minister is trying to create what he believes to be some reasonable amendments. I am not suggesting that they are all wrong, but the basis and the premise upon which they are made are wrong.

I draw the attention of the House to that article titled "Many a dry eye while the farmers cry" written by David Clark and which appeared in the *Australian Financial Review* on Monday, 29 October 1990. I suggest that the member for Isis read that article, because he will learn just a little more to add to his next speech on this subject. The article states—

"The whingeing cockies and lachrymatory media are at it again. Just four years after the last great 'Rural Crisis', we are once again being inundated with 'protests', bank-bashing and forecasts which make Nostradamus look an optimist.

For example, we are told by the head of the NSW Farmers' Association, Mr Peter Taylor, that 'no farmer will make any money this year' and that they face their 'greatest crisis in living memory'."

Mr Clark went on to say—

"Even if such wild claims were true, why do the media ignore the plight of non-rural small business?"

The small businesspersons of our cities and towns are not sitting on multi-million-dollar properties crying poor, while enjoying tax lurks not available to other Australians.

They cannot just sell off a paddock or two to stave off the receivers and liquidators. Their problems are much more complex than too many sons refusing to leave the family farm."

That is basically the style of rhetoric used by the previous speaker. Further in that article, David Clark stated—

"Farmers' total institutional indebtedness has risen from \$7.2 billion in 1985 to \$10.9 billion"—obviously in 1990. He said further—

"Either they are all silly borrowers, conned by avaricious bank managers, or . . . have some confidence in the future of the rural sector."

That brings me to the point that I wish to make. The fact of the matter is that any person who is striving to make a living under the current economic conditions—and when I say "current", I include the last decade; and sadly, it could increase into the next decade—not only has his time cut out but, in fact, is facing a virtual impossibility. As I mentioned earlier today in this Chamber, some 50 per cent of primary producers in this State have their backs against the wall and are facing an almost impossible proposition. This applies particularly to the pastoral areas of the State.

I draw to the attention of the House some figures in statistical land tenure terms. Of the area of Queensland, 52.5 per cent is encompassed by pastoral leases and occupational licences; 17.7 per cent is encompassed by grazing homestead perpetual leases, etc; 11.3 per cent is freeholding leases; and 18.5 per cent is freehold. I am really talking about that 52.5 per cent that is encompassed by pastoral leases and occupational licences, and the almost 18 per cent that is encompassed by grazing homestead perpetual leases. Those are the areas that can be converted to freehold. I assure the House that I have not taken these figures off the top of my head. I can claim 30-odd years' experience in the pastoral areas of this State. Sadly, during those 30 years, I have witnessed a depreciation in the living standards, the structure and the very make-up of those pastoral areas of this State. Yet people such as the member for Isis and, unfortunately, the Minister—by way of this legislation—come into this House and effectively say, "We are going to get a fair return. We are going to increase the return to the State, because these people have been having it too easy for too long." I assure the Minister and honourable members that those people are not having it too easy. Under the current terms, there will not be too many of them left. I grant that the State can do nothing that will ease the pain in many cases, because we are suffering from an imposed fiscal structure at the Federal level that has resulted in high interest rates and an overvalued dollar that makes the debt structure impossible to service—impossible in terms of the interest rates, impossible in terms of the potential for earning income, impossible in terms of people's capacity to service the interest and to maintain their properties and, in any case, impossible to rationalise against the equity and the investment that they have in those properties.

Contrary to statements by Mr David Clark, who says that those people can sell off a paddock or two, whether they like it or not the vast majority of those people cannot sell out. As the Minister would well know, that is impossible. They cannot sell off a paddock or two, except in circumstances arrived at by negotiation with the Minister and the department. They cannot go and snip off a paddock or two. They cannot even sell their properties. If one were to conduct a straw poll in Queensland now, one would find that three quarters of pastoral properties in this State would be for sale. People want to get out and to get away from the interest rate that has been applying in recent years, but they cannot do that. It is impossible. If they could get out for half price, most of them would be happy. The critical factor is that, regardless of whether it rains tomorrow, regardless of

whether commodity prices increase to levels that we would hope to see again, many people will not be able to make any return off the land, much less a fair return and much less be able, in the terms of the Bill and in terms of the statements of some Government members, to pay a reasonable return on the investment of the State.

Earlier in the debate on the Estimates, I referred to the problem of the maintenance of the future value of the land—the maintenance of improvements. After all, without improvements the land has no value. I cannot believe what I heard today about Queensland needing a more commercial approach to land rentals. If the Government were to take an absolutely commercial approach to land rentals, lessees would utilise that land for free. The commercial reality is that one cannot now get a commercial return on the investment in any of the leasehold land in this State. I defy any member of this House to take me to one property in this State that, under current conditions, would show a fair commercial return in the normal sense of the word. It is not possible. It does not apply, yet the legislation seeks to apply a commercial approach to land rentals.

**Mr Hobbs:** It's crazy.

**Mr STONEMAN:** I agree with the honourable member for Warrego. It is crazy. The commercial approach cannot be applied. Remissions and those types of things were spoken of, but all they do is put off the evil day. They let the bills mount up. I am not suggesting that the State Government can overcome the problem; it cannot. However, it can assist by not screwing down the thumbscrews any further and by not introducing the legislation, which makes it even more difficult not only to pay the bills but also to maintain the basic structures of many of those pastoral and smaller holdings.

At the end of the day, unless there is a dramatic restructuring of the debt in primary industries across the nation, regardless of the type of industry, a peasantry will develop. The States cannot do very much about that at all, because the problem relates to core debt that has accumulated through no fault of the primary industries. Again, I refer to comments by David Clark. He seems to think that a benefit that might accrue to a primary producer is gained at the expense of those involved in other commercial fields. I assure members that no-one in this nation will not be affected by the status of the current primary industries structure in Australia. The snowball effect—the domino effect—might take a while, but it hits sooner or later. It is interesting that Townsville, a large city near the electorate in which I live, is largely claiming to be insulated from the pastoral or the rural economic recession. The recession is only beginning to nibble at the fringes of regional cities, but it will eventually affect them. The member for Townsville is grinning. I hope that he can continue to grin because, at the end of the day, the rural recession will affect cities.

Because of the small amount of money available for investment, the cement manufacturers do not sell quite as much cement for new buildings. Real estate values decrease because the pastoral operations or cane farms no longer provide the excesses that they once did. Sales of steel and polythene pipes decrease. The capacity of people to buy fencing material decreases. At one stage or another, all of those industries employ people. The effects of a rural recession are felt everywhere. The tank-sinkers do not buy machinery, nor do they repair machinery that is not used. They do not buy fuel. The shippers, the bulk-storage depots, the carriers, the people who work the petrol bowsers, all become affected sooner or later. The reality is that the primary sector across Australia has a level of indebtedness that cannot be sustained by the people in those industries.

**Mr Davies:** What did they borrow it for?

**Mr STONEMAN:** What a question! "What did they borrow it for?" That is the problem that we have with the mentality of Government members who say that the Government will take a more commercial approach. The honourable member for Townsville

should know better. A debt at 7 per cent interest will double in 10 years' time with compounding terms—give or take a fraction. We have interest rates that are double and treble that figure. If a person starts out with a debt of approximately \$100,000—which might provide a 30 per cent equity in an operation—but has been unable to service the interest and the redemption and has had to continue to maintain his operation over a number of years, he will find that the debt has accrued to such a level that he cannot service it. Members might say that these people should sell out, but whom will they sell out to? If they are forced into a sale, the values come down and those people who have a reasonable equity find that their equity is reduced to such a degree that they are in a similar untenable position. To a large degree in the 1930s and, to a lesser degree, in the 1960s and 1970s there was a large-scale forgiveness of debts that allowed people to maintain operations and pay their bills. The small towns were maintained, which in turn improved the larger towns and so on into the cities. There is no way for primary industry in this nation to confront its problems unless that sort of an approach is taken. Those people have had to absorb high interest rates and the overvalued dollar simply so that the nation could pay the bill called the Accord. The sad fact of the matter is that that is the responsibility of every person in this nation, not just the primary producers or the lessees of the land that is under debate tonight.

I have a major concern in respect of the changes to valuations on an annual basis. In the good old days—and when I say that, I do not go back into history—when a rent was applied people knew for the next 10 years that that rental was set. A person could work through the vagaries of the seasons knowing that at least the rental structure was fixed. All the other factors could vary up and down, but at least the producer knew that the base rental was there. They knew that the shire rents could go up, but those matters can be tackled at local level. Now the position is that people do not know what will apply. It could well be that it is at the whim of a Government that wants to take a more commercial approach. If that is the truth, I applaud it. I applaud a more commercial approach, provided that it is applied correctly. If that system is applied at the moment there should be no rental because there is no commercial return on any of the pastoral or farming lands in this State under leasehold tenure. There simply is none. I cannot believe that those people who have their backs to the wall and who are the backbone of the economy of this nation will now be confronted with another unknown—this fairyland, crystal-ball gazing at Crown rentals.

People on the land will have to deal with growing numbers of pests in national parks and the unknowns. They will not know whether stock-routes will be available for stock or even whether they can afford transportation because of matters that are being addressed on a wider scale than in this House. If the land is freeholded, it will be Mickey Mouse freehold. For instance, they will no longer be able to use their rotten country, such as the bad hill up the back of the property, to earn a few dollars—like my neighbours do in my electorate—by quarrying some of the gravel on their land and at least making something to keep them going. They can then put that money back into improvements. If a primary producer, pastoral operator or a businessman in any calling is given some money to spend, he or she will invariably put it back into that business or into another business that generates more production, jobs and income for the nation. In that way, the economic cycle continues. When the opportunity to make some income is taken away, it will lessen the value of the land to the producer, the capacity of that land to produce an income and the capacity of the producer to take a more commercial approach.

Those are the sorts of things that are happening. More and more covenants are being put on freehold land. Effectively, “freehold” will become just another term for “leasehold”. I do not believe that that sort of attitude can sustain investment confidence and prompt a re-emergence of the growth that is so vital for this nation and this State in

particular. I am aware that these matters were contained in the original structure of the Act that is to be amended by this Bill. Matters considered by the Minister as appropriate were contained within the conversion factors. However, the fact is that this Bill will screw that down even further. There will be more and more unknowns. When a person goes to the bank manager to take out a loan, the bank manager can say—as has been said to me on many occasions—“Hang on. They can apply this or they can apply that or they can take your lease back off you at the end of the term.” That was always hanging over one's head. I had it hanging over my head for many years. It is one of the main bases of the viability of any operation.

In conclusion, I believe that the amendments contained within the Bill are so serious as to be a damning indictment of the capacity of the Government to understand what is really happening out there, that they are another nail in the coffin of the viability of the pastoral and grazing industries of this State and, therefore, another nail in the coffin of the viability of this State. The reason why this has been so successful to date is that we have been able to open up our arms with a greater degree of benevolence. This is a sorry threat.

Time expired.

**Mr FOLEY** (Yeronga) (11.53 p.m.): I want to speak a little on the politics of land tenure. It is 34 years since the last Labor Government was in power in Queensland. Thirty-four years ago, there was a policy in Queensland against the freeholding of Crown leasehold lands. However, from 1957 an increasing tendency emerged to allow the freeholding of those lands. The decision on how to strike the balance between the Crown's ownership of land and the right of private citizens to own land is quintessentially a political problem, and the debate on this topic has changed significantly over the past three decades. It is significant that we in Queensland find ourselves striking a new balance between the public interest in the Crown's retention of freehold title of land and private interest in acquiring freehold title for the purposes of exploiting land just as, at the moment, the citizens of the Soviet Union are struggling with trying to strike a new balance between the old order, under which land was owned collectively and by the state, and the new order, whereby the opportunity is given to private citizens to own and develop land. This change in striking the balance between whether the Crown or the private citizen should own freehold title is characteristic of the change in the political debate generally. The tired old quarrels between the proponents of socialism and the proponents of capitalism have no place in the current debate.

The policy of previous Labor Governments against the freeholding of Crown leasehold lands was eroded by sequential steps throughout the sixties, seventies and eighties by a succession of non-progressive Governments in this State. However, it is significant that the Wolfe report recommends no simple return to past certainties but, rather, recommends a new regime for striking a balance between the public interest and the private interest. I mention in passing that the Wolfe report is yet another of the fine reports produced by a barrister in Queensland. Patricia Wolfe was the deputy commissioner of the Fitzgerald commission of inquiry which brought about so much good to Queensland.

**Mr Ardill:** Not to the National Party, though.

**Mr FOLEY:** Perhaps not to the National Party, but that is perhaps a consequence of justice that involves other matters. The Wolfe report concedes that the freeholding of land for residential purposes should be encouraged, and I wish to speak for a short time on the balance to be struck in the freeholding of grazing homestead perpetual leases, because it really illustrates a very simple change that has occurred in the political debate, namely, that the old slogans between the public sector and the private sector have been overtaken by a new debate over the role of the environment which has intersected the

traditional and classic debates between the public and private sector in a way that has produced a new and more sophisticated approach to the law.

The proposed new section 140 cures the old problem of uncertainty attached to considerations of the public interest under the Land Act. Indeed, it is very puzzling to come into this Chamber and hear arguments advanced by members of the Opposition in favour of the old regime because the existing section 140 of the Land Act requires consideration to be given to, among other things, the "public interest" in ascertaining whether or not land should be converted from leasehold to freehold, whereas under the proposed new section 140, the definition of "public interest" is set out with greater particularity. In other words, the ordinary citizen is being given clearer guidelines to enable him or her to know exactly how this discretion will be exercised.

I find it puzzling indeed to hear that this is the object of criticism when one would have thought that the Opposition would have welcomed the move towards plain and straightforward English rather than having to rely upon the mystical notion of "public interest" that applies under the existing legislation. It is not often that a barrister has the opportunity to argue in this Parliament the case for plain and simple English against an argument advanced by the other side in favour of mysticism and vagueness. I speak in defence of the common citizen and his or her right to know exactly the principles that guide the exercise of this discretion. Under the proposed new section 5, "public interest" includes a reference to the strategic, planning, social, cultural, recreational, environmental and heritage interests and land protection interests of the public.

**Mr Randell:** I would like to invite you to come to Nebo and talk to the graziers.

**Mr FOLEY:** I should be delighted to accept the honourable member's offer. In the course of visiting various shire councils, I have spent the last few weeks talking to many graziers throughout the length and breadth of Queensland, and I am delighted by their welcoming of many of the recent electoral and administrative review reforms. If the member for Mirani genuinely represents their interests, I look forward to his championing those interests by urging acceptance of those electoral and administrative reforms in this Chamber.

I will come back to the point that not only is consideration to be given to matters about the availability of forests for the production of indigenous timbers, not only is there to be given consideration for the public interest, but also, very significantly, consideration is required to be given to environmental or conservation purposes. That is to say, what comes through this legislation in that section is the realisation, so long resisted by honourable members opposite, that one cannot afford any longer to maintain the sterile debates of the nineteenth century, reciting the class warfare that so divided previous generations, for one must attend to the need to conserve the environment, the need to maintain the planet, and the need, in particular, to avoid the serious land degradation which has been the result of the neglect of previous years.

**Mr Smyth** interjected.

**Mr FOLEY:** Perhaps the honourable member has been a little unkind in that remark. Hope springs eternal in the human breast and I see the evidence of life from the Opposition benches. I am an optimist by nature, and who knows what may arise out of the course of the debate.

Finally, the proposed new section 140 requires consideration of other matters, such as whether any part of the land is on an island, whether it has heritage importance, aesthetic appeal, or whether like matters make it special.

**Mr Stoneman:** You are delving into the unknown.

**Mr FOLEY:** I am indebted to that contribution from the honourable member for Burdekin. His own speech resembled so much the efforts of Orpheus in the underworld in grappling and grasping for some certainty in an uncertain world.

In short, what this legislation does is to give a plain direction for the exercise of a discretion which was at large. It restores the central importance of conservation and environmental issues in the exercise of the discretion of this Minister and future Ministers. It ensures that the Government does not capriciously trade off that land currently owned by the Crown and leased out, and it ensures that, where appropriate, the right of ownership remains in the Crown where it may be of benefit to future generations.

Debate, on motion of Mr Randell, adjourned.

### ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. A. G. EATON** (Mourilyan—Minister for Land Management) (12.05 a.m.): I move—  
“That the House do now adjourn.”

### Tour of Rural Queensland by Deputy Premier

**Mr HOBBS** (Warrego) (12.05 a.m.): The Deputy Premier has been tripping around rural Queensland. He was supposed to be listening to people's problems and seeing what he could do to help them. Let me tell the House how the Deputy Premier went about that. Let me tell the House how the Deputy Premier encouraged people, who right now need all the encouragement they can get. For example, let us look at what the Deputy Premier said in Thargomindah, where about the only jobs available are in the wool industry. How about this one—

“Well, who wants wool anyway?”

What sort of question is that? I will tell the Deputy Premier who wants wool; people who have been prepared to pay billions of dollars over the years to import it from Australia, and so do thousands of shearers who used to support the Australian Labor Party. Any shearers who still support the ALP after that question could not be serious about their jobs.

**Mr Stoneman** interjected.

**Mr HOBBS:** As the member for Burdekin says, they are deaf, dumb and blind. The Deputy Premier seems quite content for jobs in the rural parts of this State to go. That was the most important message to emerge from his flying whistle-stop tour of rural Queensland. The Deputy Premier admitted that in this House this morning. I remind honourable members of what he said—

“Because of regionalisation towns such as Charleville, Roma and Toowoomba will grow bigger.”

After some personal reflections, there was the punch line—

“Little towns will struggle.”

There it is, the Deputy Premier admitting that regionalisation is the death knell of the smaller towns throughout Queensland. He told people there was no real drama about business declining in Mitchell, because he has friends there who often do their shopping in Brisbane and Toowoomba. That is what the Deputy Premier said to the people in Mitchell. Of course, that statement went down like a lead balloon. One of the people who met the Deputy Premier in Thargomindah echoed a lot of the opinion that I have heard and his comments—not mine—are that the attitude of the man is that the inland and its industries

are unimportant, "He is unbelievable. He needs exposing as the fool that he is. He is uncaring and incompetent." That man went to the meeting with the Deputy Premier of the Labor Party Government because he was expecting something worth while to come out of it. Nothing did come out of that meeting, and that was the story all over the western districts of Queensland.

A lot of people went to a great deal of trouble to meet the Deputy Premier because they really thought there was some hope that he might try to understand their problems. Because of the short notice, many people had a real scramble to get there. Many people found out too late altogether. In my own area, the local paper was told about the trip after publication day. That is how importantly the Government regarded the exercise. It was nearly as bad as the rural task force that went out to western Queensland and did not tell anyone that they were travelling around there. The Deputy Premier and his travelling circus spent a lot of money tripping around and achieving absolutely nothing, except the disgust of the people of the west. The people went to listen and talk in the hope that they would get action. What they received was platitudes. The itinerary for the trip was inappropriate—19 towns in five days. What on earth can any man do in terms of any sort of in-depth study with a time-frame like that? That is what the Deputy Premier did. There was no chance that he would get to the real nitty-gritty of the problems arising from the Government's own actions. One must not forget that the infamous rural task force has just completed a similar trip.

The Deputy Premier would have done better by spending time with members of this House who represent rural seats. At least those members have taken the trouble to find out what is really wrong. Those members could tell him all the things the court house staff in country areas used to do and the services that they once provided, but for which people now have to travel hundreds of kilometres. They could tell the Deputy Premier the problem caused by the workload placed on the few stock-inspectors who are left in country areas. In one area, the stock-inspector is just too busy to do inspections to allow individual drought declarations. Because of the Government's penny-pinching, some producers have no access to drought relief, but without knowing that they will be declared, they cannot afford to go out and buy feed for their starving stock. This morning, the Deputy Premier fired a few cheap shots about the fact that a National Party supporter turned up at a meeting. Well, fancy that! He complained also that I was not at the meeting. There are few Labor supporters in rural Queensland these days, and as for my absence, I was here in Parliament, which is where I was elected to be. I was here fighting for the things that the people of the west need from this uncaring Labor Government—and I make no apologies for that.

### **Goods and Services Tax**

**Mr BREDHAUER** (Cook) (12.08 a.m.): Last week in this House, I raised the serious concerns that I have about the implications of the Federal coalition's policies, particularly the goods and services tax, on fixed and low income earners, in particular welfare recipients and low wage earners. In this House we have been led to believe by members of the Liberal Party on the cross benches and to a lesser extent by the Nationals—and I say "to a lesser extent" because it is obvious that the Queensland Nationals are far from committed to the GST—that such claims are untrue, and that our assertions about the impact of the GST are exaggerated. I would like to have a closer look at the motivation of the Liberals. On 4 October, the Federal Leader of the Liberal Party, Dr John Hewson, was invited to address the annual congress in Sydney of the Australian Council of Social Services. To the shock and dismay of the delegates, their organisations and the community generally, Dr Hewson launched what was described as a declaration of

war on the welfare lobby. As reported by Wallace Brown in the *Courier-Mail* on 5 October, Dr Hewson—  
“ . . . accused the welfare lobby of ‘pious breast-beating’ and of being good at building large bureaucracies whose role in helping the poor and under-privileged he questioned.”

ACOSS president, Ms Merle Mitchell, in the same article said—

“Dr Hewson was displaying ignorance and prejudice, and that all the congress had been shocked.”

Later in *Impact*, ACOSS’s monthly magazine, Ms Mitchell wrote further—

“We were greatly disappointed that Dr Hewson should so badly misrepresent ACOSS. As readers of *IMPACT* would be well aware, the examples of our work on addressing the longer-term structural causes of poverty are numerous and substantial. It is a credit to the many welfare organisations around Australia which make up ACOSS that they have been so willing to have us devote so much of our limited resources to these broader issues rather than only lobbying for more funds for welfare bodies.”

What we must ask ourselves is: what would have motivated even a hardline Liberal dry such as Dr Hewson to launch this unprecedented and stinging attack on the welfare lobby? Perhaps an insight can be gained from the report by Justine Ferrari and Glenn Milne of Dr Hewson’s speech in the *Australian* of 5 October. They reported—

“The Leader of the Federal Opposition, Dr Hewson, moved yesterday to restore resolve to the Liberal Party in support of his tough economic policies, with an aggressive attack on the welfare lobby . . .

Dr Hewson’s comments, aimed at reaffirming his commitment to big cuts to public spending and market economics were targeted at the Victorian Liberal Leader, Mr Kennett, who has questioned coalition policy and NSW dissident MP, Dr Terry Metherell, whose defection from the Liberal Party has put the Greiner Government in jeopardy.”

One notes that the two politicians named are both conservatives and critics of the goods and services tax. It is some time later that we gain the clearest understanding of what motivated Dr Hewson’s attack when on 14 October it was reported by Glenn Milne and Katherine Glascott, again in the *Australian*—

“With the release of its controversial goods and services tax imminent, the federal Opposition is planning a tough pre-emptive campaign against Government-funded community interest groups that come out against the tax.

The federal Liberal Party secretariat has compiled a national profile of publicly funded lobby groups which it plans to use if such groups attack the consumption tax while claiming to represent the interests of consumers.

Based on the profile, the Opposition will question the political independence of lobbyists, some of whom it claims are merely Government ‘front’ organisations.”

John Hewson’s and the Liberals’ attack on ACOSS—their inference that because these lobby groups receive Government funding they are some sort of front organisation for the Government—is both offensive and wrong. It also fails to give due credit to the enormous contribution made by the welfare organisations through their own fund-raising and through volunteer support for which the Government could never afford to pay if these agencies pulled out. The approach advocated by Dr Hewson will lead to a victimisation of those least able to survive Australia’s difficult economic circumstances. While Queensland does not have a top heavy welfare bureaucracy, the Department of Family Services and

Aboriginal and Islander Affairs provides direct services through a network of area offices and institutions throughout the State. It provides financial and developmental support to approximately 1 200 non-Government organisations. Analysis of the total of nearly \$50 million provided in grants and subsidies by the Division of Community Services Development in 1990-91 reveals that administrative salaries in service organisations constituted only 1.72 per cent of total grant funds, and the costs of direct service provision by community organisations constituted over 85 per cent of grant funds, with most of the remaining grants being capital outlays. In the words of Bishop Michael Challen of the Brotherhood of Saint Lawrence, this is the time for unity and cooperation, and not for division and confrontation. Clearly the GST, Hewson, the Liberals and the Nationals do not offer unity and cooperation to the people of Australia.

### **Government Mismanagement**

**Mr COOMBER** (Currumbin) (12.13 a.m.): Queensland as a State is in a shambles. Wayne Goss and Labor are not working in Queensland, nor are 143 000 Queenslanders. This Labor Government has turned Queensland from a State of growth and prosperity into a State of stagnation and despair. Business is leaving Queensland in droves, and this Government is more interested in its own public relations image than in providing jobs and stability in Queensland. When this State has a Premier who has made news management an art form; when this State has a Premier who now lectures the press secretaries of his Ministers; when this State has a Premier who is more interested in the number of press releases processed each month by each department; when this State has a Premier who sees news management as a higher priority than jobs—the people of Queensland have every right to be concerned. This State of ours has never seen a Premier who attaches so little importance to his position. Never would one see Joh Bjelke-Petersen, Nick Greiner or any other Premier castigating, cajoling or dismissing ministerial press secretaries.

This Government is so enshrined in public relations or news management that all else, the machinery of Government, has stopped. All that exists is a shell, an empty shell of Government, a Government run by committees causing a State to be paralysed while it is analysed. While Goss dithers, the unemployment rate in Queensland this year has increased by 1.3 per cent—a Labor Government in power with an unemployment record second to none in this State's history. In one month from August to September this year, an additional 300 females became unemployed. What are Mr Goss and Mr De Lacy doing to provide jobs for women? This September, eight fewer Queenslanders had jobs than was the case last September. In one month from August to September this year, the number of Queenslanders looking for part-time work increased by 7 000—and from September 1990 to September 1991 the number of unemployed Queenslanders increased by 22 000. The unemployed are giving up hope, and young Queenslanders are being affected most by this dithering by Goss and De Lacy. This September, an additional 3.4 per cent of young Queenslanders are looking for work when compared with the figure for last September. The Government is solely to blame for those figures of despair. It has failed to encourage business development. To quote Mr Godfrey Mantle—

“We had dreams of building a work-force and becoming Brisbane's biggest employer but we never received support from the public sector or the State Government.”

That is a damning statement about a Premier who directly interfered with this development by, in essence, refusing to provide access to the site. That cost Brisbane's unemployed up to 2 000 jobs. Mr Mantle has proved his business acumen and his ability to provide jobs, and his decision to relocate all his business overseas reflects the disgraceful attitude the Government has to business in this State. I say to Mr Mantle, “The Liberal

Party appreciates your tourism investment in Brisbane and your attempts to add to the tourism infrastructure in Brisbane." Meanwhile, the Premier is out jogging, abseiling or lecturing press secretaries, not caring about the real world or what is really happening on the streets. The degree of indecision and wishy-washy lack of direction is costing Queensland jobs and investment. More importantly, because of the Labor Government's dithering over the Tully/Millstream hydroelectric scheme, Queensland faces future power shortages. The Queensland Electricity Commission annual report states—

"If the Tully Millstream scheme is not approved for construction by July 1991, then arrangements should be made for the provision of alternative generating plant."

That decision should have been made four months ago, but Goss passed the buck on that the decision to the Federal Labor Government. Queensland needs a Premier who will stand up to Canberra and make the decision to build the dam which will generate power for Queensland and provide jobs for Queenslanders. Yet nothing is happening. How many more projects will be lost from Queensland before the Labor Government acts? This lack of forward planning on power supplies will severely limit Queensland's ability to supply electricity for economic growth. But this Government is enshrined with public relations, dictated to by the media. It is a Government big on rhetoric but small on actual results. Wayne Goss has had four different opinions on daylight-saving. Keith De Lacy has had three different opinions in four days on privatisation, two different opinions on mining at Shoalwater Bay, two different opinions on logging in Maryborough, two different opinions on ministerial rezonings, two different opinions on foreign investment, two different opinions on the Sunshine Coast tollway—the list goes on. If anybody has to accept the blame for this Government's indecision, poor management and parlous unemployment level, the buck stops with Mr Wayne Keith Goss and Mr Keith Ernest De Lacy.

### **Noosa North Shore Development**

**Mr BARBER** (Cooroora) (12.19 a.m.): The north shore decision at Noosa has given Noosa room to breathe. In the *Courier-Mail* of 20 June, David Bray stated—

"The Queensland Government's decision to veto rezoning necessary for a resort on the north shore of the Noosa River is a good one.

All of the developments would no doubt have been . . . attractive in their own way, but they would be considerably removed from what occurs naturally."

The north shore decision has been celebrated throughout the national tourist industry, but Noosa deserves to know that the Liberals and the Nationals do not agree and, in Government, would concrete the north shore. In the *Sunshine Coast Daily* of 18 June, Russell Cooper stated—

"No local authority is safe . . . after yesterday's decision."

**Mr Beanland:** Run that again.

**Mr BARBER:** In the *Sunshine Coast Daily* of 18 June, Denver Beanland accused Premier Goss of abandoning his policy of creating jobs. Those were predictable knee-jerk reactions. There was no research. They were opposing for the sake of opposing and they were wrong. The Chamber of Commerce in Noosa opposed the decision. In the *Noosa News* of 21 June, Kevin Reilly stated—

"Noosa's going backwards at a rate of knots, and the way the State Government carried on I'm sure developers will give Noosa and probably Queensland a very wide berth."

He stated further—

"It seems trees are more important than people and jobs."

In the ensuing months, various Liberals and Nationals have trickled out criticising the north shore decision. Those members include Mr Littleproud, on 16 July in this House, and Mr Elliott, on 16 July in this House. On 2 October, Mr Connor said—

“The north shore decision is the last nail in the Government’s coffin as far as the business community is concerned.”

On 10 October in this House, Mr Coomber criticised the decision. The Liberals and the Nationals do not believe in Noosa. They do not believe in communities deciding their own destinies. They do not understand true conservation in the interests of the environment, the economy and tourism. They are still in the pockets of their developer mates—in this case, a resort development company from Sydney. In a document called *Nationals in State Parliament—September 1991*, Mr Littleproud criticised the north shore decision as a breach of Westminster traditions and unlawful. He was wrong.

During the north shore debate, I obtained a Queens Counsel’s opinion, which stated—

“In summary when an application comes to the Minister under Section 33 (5) he has an unfettered power of examining the application in any way that commends itself to him. He has the absolute right to decide for himself what recommendations he will pass on to the Governor in Council together with the application and the other documents.”

Mr Littleproud is ill-informed and he is wrong. I trust that the Liberals and the Nationals will continue to trickle out of the woodwork, deftly jumping off this cliff like lemmings, criticising the best decision that Noosa has seen from Government in many decades. “Beauty at Dawn” was the headline in the *Noosa News*, painting a picture of the inspection at dawn by Premier Goss, Mr Burns and me on the morning of the Cabinet decision. Those pictures were some of the best photo journalism I have seen on the Sunshine Coast. Of course, the Noosa north shore is eminently photogenic and was begging to be preserved, which is exactly what Cabinet did on 17 June. The north shore has been described as Noosa’s breathing space. It has also been described as the living room, with the south shore providing the bedroom for the tourists to come to the north shore in future. The Noosa north shore decision has given the town room to breathe. Let Noosa know that the Liberals and the Nationals oppose it; that they will stand in the way of it; and that, if given Government, they will overturn it and we will see concrete on the north shore.

### **Trip by Minister for Environment and Heritage to North Queensland; Railway Employees**

**Hon. R. C. KATTER** (Flinders) (12.24 a.m.): Mr Comben, the Minister for the Environment, has been dubbed the “Maharaja of Eyesore”. From his elephantine heights, he took what he saw and trampled all opposition. A chauffeur-driven LTD limousine was brought from Brisbane and was used for no other purpose than to take the Minister and his party from the private jet to their motel. The next morning, they were flown to Riversleigh. The two Toyotas, which were hired and driven to Riversleigh, were described as being packed with alcohol. All this was for a two-hour stay. In an endeavour to make himself a hero of the Range Rover environmentalists, Mr Comben and his land-grab commissars have left broken hearts, blighted dreams and wrecked lives. Phone calls from Yaraka, Kowanyama, Greenvale and Gunpowder told stories of misery and real fear. The Goss Government demands environmental impact statements from everyone, yet people such as the Seymours of Riversleigh can be destroyed without any environmental, economic or social statements whatsoever. Mick Seymour’s grandfather was one of Cloncurry’s original pioneers. His father worked in the railways; Mick started as a ringer. Yet Mr

Comben, like the maharajas of old, is a law unto himself. As he said to Seymour's partners and solicitors, "I am sick of you people at Riversleigh, I will take the land and more."

This evening I would also like to comment upon the railway figures. I have been constantly and continuously called a liar, particularly by the member for Mount Isa and the member who aspires to take the proposed seat of Charters Towers. They come into this House not to protect the railway workers in their electorates whom they are supposed to be looking after, but to protect the ALP Government. I ask both of them to reflect upon the kind statements which were made against my opponent at the last election, Mr Robertson, at the recently held railway union meeting in Charters Towers. I have been constantly accused of lying. Again and again, I have simply used Government figures and I will use them again here this evening. I have said that this Government has removed or is in the process of removing 3 000 jobs from the railways. The extract from page 281 of the 1989-90 State Budget papers indicates that, for 1988-89, the actual number of railway jobs was 22 039. The figure contained in the 1991-92 Budget papers is 19 281. If those figures are subtracted one from the other, we find that in two and a half years the ALP Government, by its own figures in its own Budget papers—not our figures—has done away with 2 758 jobs. The reports in 1979 showed that there were 24 546 jobs in the railways. When the Nationals left office in 1989, the reports showed that there were 21 465 jobs, which demonstrates that we eliminated 3 081 jobs. So it took us 10 years to eliminate 3 000 jobs; it has taken the Labor Government two and a half years to do away with nearly 3 000 jobs. The figures speak for themselves.

It must also be added that the Government has said that because it does not have the money it does not have the ability to maintain jobs and that it is putting in place austerity measures. Austerity measures? According to official Federal Government figures, in December 1989 some 178 300 people were employed by the State Government. On the latest figures for December 1991, 188 100 people were employed by it. That shows that 7 600 jobs have been eliminated, but it is more than that. Those figures are wrong, because an additional 9 000-odd jobs have been created.

**Mr Smyth** interjected.

**Mr KATTER:** Let me repeat them. The figures were 178 300 and 188 100. In the two years in which Labor has been in Government, some 9 000 jobs have been created in the State public service. Yet this Government has chosen to take 3 000 jobs off the railwaymen in this State. What have the railwaymen done to hurt the Government?

**Mr Smyth** interjected.

**Mr KATTER:** We will see the honourable member in Hughenden because we have some really exciting things lined up for him. The first blows have been struck by his coming into this House and defending Transport Minister Hamill. He is on record as doing that. What a fool!

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The word "fool" is unparliamentary. I ask the honourable member to withdraw it.

**Mr KATTER:** I withdraw it, Mr Speaker. I withdraw it immediately. Let me move on and apologise, too.

Time expired.

### Forestry

**Mr PITT** (Mulgrave) (12.29 a.m.): In the time available to me tonight, I wish to canvass amendments which I believe are required to the Forestry Act to permit continued management for multiple-use purposes by the Forest Service where timber production is not an appropriate land use. The cardinal principle to be observed in the management of

State forests is provided for under section 33 of the Forestry Act 1959, which in part states—

“ . . . the permanent reservation of such areas for the purpose of producing timber and associated products in perpetuity and of protecting a watershed therein.”

Recent events in the State forests of the World Heritage area of north Queensland and on Fraser Island have seen the removal of the timber production component of management and subsequent action to change their tenure. Both the Fitzgerald report on Fraser Island and the draft wet tropics of Queensland World Heritage area management legislation identify this legislative anomaly. It is also obvious from these documents that there is an absence of suitable land tenure oriented towards conservation/recreation where an area is not suitable for declaration as a national park and cannot be managed under State forest tenure due to restrictions on timber production. This is because of a polarisation of management objectives espoused in the cardinal principles of both the forestry and national parks Acts. While the cardinal principle of the management of State forests, as stated, is timber production, the cardinal principle of management in the National Parks and Wildlife Act is preservation of the natural environment—that is “the permanent preservation, to the greatest extent possible, of their natural condition”.

This absence of insufficient tenures to suit a range of conservation and recreational oriented management objectives is being addressed by the Department of Environment and Heritage. The proposed nature conservation Act will provide a range of tenures to ensure the protection of lands not suitable for national park but having conservation values. These tenures, in addition to national parks, will be managed by the Director of National Parks.

This legislation not only provides the avenue to acquire new lands for conservation-oriented objectives but also is likely to impact on the Forest Service's ability to continue to retain certain native forest areas as State forest, such as State forest parks, namely, Goldsborough Valley and the Tinaroo Dam State forest parks; feature protection areas, for example, curtain fig tree and cathedral fig; and also scientific areas. These specialised management areas declared under section 34A of the Forestry Act are still subject to the cardinal management principle. While policy generally excludes logging in these areas, legally it may be argued they could be subject to timber-harvesting. The retirement by the Forest Service from these areas is, of course, already occurring in north Queensland, as well as on Fraser Island and in the Conondale Ranges.

As societal views change—wanting increased protection for forested lands—the very narrow management principles outlined in the Forestry Act will force the Forest Service to withdraw as a management agency. I believe this would be a backward step indeed. While the Forest Service could not hope to argue that such lands should remain as State forest purely for self interest, it is clear that there are sound reasons to support the Forest Service's continued role in management on economic or logistical grounds. It can also be argued that the Forestry Act has a more satisfactory legislative mandate than the National Parks and Wildlife Act to provide for multiple-use management of forested lands where preservation is not the principal objective.

As I said at the outset, I wish to canvas some amendment options. There are a number of ways to amend the Forestry Act to allow the Forest Service to undertake multiple-use management which is no longer dominated by timber production. While in the long term an amendment to the cardinal principle would be the most desirable option, this would require considerable consultation, and would leave the Forest Service open for further land transfers in this interim period while the political climate is not amenable to the service. In the short term, an amendment to section 34A of the Forestry Act, which provides specialised management areas such as recreation areas, feature protection

areas and scientific areas, to prohibit timber-harvesting would give the Forest Service a far stronger case for arguing its continuing management of those areas where it appears to be the most efficient management agency. This short-term proposal would therefore be only a holding action prior to the amendment of the cardinal principle to provide for multiple use that is not dependent on a timber production primary function.

I also make the point that support needs to be canvassed for a number of further amendments to the Forestry Act. These amendments would allow the continuation of the Forest Service's management of existing State forests whose timber production role has been subjugated, or other lands principally set aside for conserving the environment where management by the Forest Service is more efficient for economic or logistical reasons. These amendments would include an interim amendment to section 34A of the Forestry Act to exclude reference to timber-harvesting, and a longer-term fundamental amendment to the cardinal principle to allow multiple use not dependent on timber production. I raise this issue in the House because of my concern for the future recreational use of the Goldsborough Valley in my electorate. The area provides a valuable amenity for my constituents. I feel it my responsibility to make every effort possible to give those people continued access, along with supporting any upgrading initiatives deemed suitable.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 12.33 a.m. (Wednesday)

