

WEDNESDAY, 20 MAY 1992

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. Fouras, Ashgrove) read prayers and took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Community Legal Centres

From **Ms Robson** (32 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will continue to fund community legal centres.

Pacific Highway Access, Elanora

From **Mr Coomber** (597 signatories) praying that the Department of Transport provide for traffic access to the northbound lanes of the Pacific Highway opposite the Pines Shopping Centre at Elanora.

Youth Curfew, Inala/Durack Area

From **Mr Palaszczuk** (931 signatories) praying that a curfew on youths aged 5 to 17 be imposed in the Inala/Durack area seven days per week and the curfew be 10 p.m.

Abortion Law

From **Mr Rowell** (42 signatories) praying that action be taken to ensure that the law prohibiting abortion on request be enforced.

A similar petition was received from **Mr Palaszczuk** (2 091 signatories).

North Queensland Emergency Response Group

From **Mr Stoneman** (20 233 signatories) praying that the services, infrastructure and facilities provided by the North Queensland Emergency Response Group in Townsville be retained and that the practice of charging hospitals in the area a full fee to use NQERG be discontinued.

Petitions received.

GENERAL BUSINESS—NOTICE OF MOTION No. 1**Dissent from Speaker's Ruling**

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Rockhampton—Leader of the House) (2.33 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

“That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would enable General Business—Notice of Motion—Dissent from Speaker's Ruling in the name of Mr Borbidge to be debated at a future sitting of the House.”

Motion agreed to.

LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (2.34 p.m.): I seek leave to move a motion without notice.

Question—That leave be granted—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 32		NOES, 51	
Beanland	Stoneman	Ardill	Mackenroth
Booth	Veivers	Barber	McElligott
Borbidge	Watson	Beattie	McGrady
Coomber		Bird	McLean
Cooper		Braddy	Milliner
Dunworth		Bredhauer	Nunn
Elliott		Briskey	Palaszczuk
FitzGerald		Burns	Pearce
Gilmore		Campbell	Power
Goss J. N.		Casey	Robson
Gunn		Clark	Schwarten
Harper		Comben	Smyth
Hobbs		D'Arcy	Spence
Horan		Davies	Sullivan J. H.
Johnson		De Lacy	Sullivan T. B.
Katter		Dollin	Szczerbanik
Lingard		Eaton	Vaughan
Littleproud		Edmond	Warburton
McCauley		Elder	Warner
Perrett		Fenlon	Welford
Randell		Flynn	Wells
Rowell		Foley	Woodgate
Santoro		Goss W. K.	
Sheldon		Hamill	
Slack	<i>Tellers:</i>	Hayward	<i>Tellers:</i>
Springborg	Neal	Hollis	Prest
Stephan	Quinn	Livingstone	Pitt

Resolved in the negative.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Yesterday, the Premier made a personal attack on a member of my staff and tabled a letter that he had sent to Sir Max Bingham making serious allegations. I table—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! What is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition doing?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I want to table a response.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition must seek leave to make a personal explanation, rise to a point of order, or rise on a matter of privilege.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I rise on a matter of privilege and wish to table a response.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. My understanding is that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has just tabled a document; it cannot be untabled.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will allow the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to table the document.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

1.

Seaworld Crown Lease

Mr BORBIDGE asked the Minister for Land Management—

“With reference to the Seaworld lease that was subject to re-negotiation in

June 1989—

(1) Will he confirm that at a time when Crown rentals have been increased by up to 1000 per cent, that a company headed by the Chairman of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation was not subject to a similar policy and that the Crown rental for Seaworld has remained constant since 1989?

(2) Was the Honourable the Premier at any stage involved in any discussions with the Minister in relation to this matter?"

Mr EATON: (1) Firstly, I can only assume that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to the Carter report when he claims that some Crown rentals have increased by up to 1000 per cent. The fact is that the Carter inquiry was established by his Government to investigate the level of Crown rents paid for grazing homestead perpetual leases and pastoral holdings. That inquiry recommended that rents for grazing homestead perpetual leases be increased by an average of 200 per cent and that Crown rents for pastoral holdings be increased by an average of 100 per cent. As the Leader of the Opposition should be aware—it was his Government's inquiry—the Carter inquiry did not include rentals paid for properties other than those already mentioned.

As to the second part of the first question—Seaworld has one lease, a sublease and a permit to occupy over a total area of 29.412 hectares. The company's main lease started in 1974 and is due to expire on 30 June 2049. Under the previous Government's arrangements, a rental of \$22,500 was payable for 10 years starting from 1 July 1979. That rent was reassessed to \$630,000 per annum based on 3 per cent of the unimproved capital value of \$21m. The Department of Lands is currently negotiating an amalgamation of all the above leases and an appropriate rental level. Further, because of the delay in the consolidation of the leases, the Government has negotiated with the company and it has agreed to pay \$250,000 per year for the first five years as back rent on the major pre-amalgamated lease.

(2) No.

2. **Financial Institutions Legislation; CUFSA**

Mr SLACK asked the Treasurer—

"With reference to recent legislation establishing the Australian Financial Institutions Commission (AFIC) and to the assurance that he gave that Queensland Credit Unions would not be disadvantaged under the legislation and that Special Service Provider (SSP) status would be available to appropriate bodies in Queensland—

(1) Is he aware that the Order in Council effectively gives New South Wales based CUFSA an advantage over 'would be' Special Service Providers in Queensland as it will allow Queensland Credit Unions to place deposits with CUFSA, before the scheduled operating date of 1 July for AFIC, while at the same time, provision does not exist for Credit Unions outside Queensland to place their funds with the Queensland Credit Union League?

(2) (a) Why was this action taken and (b) does he acknowledge that it gives de facto SSP status to CUFSA, prior to the formation of AFIC, which places the Queensland Credit Union League at a considerable disadvantage, given that SSP status for Queensland may not be forthcoming as of 1 July and, until such time as the Queensland Credit Union League gains SSP Status, considerable Queensland funds may flow over the border to NSW?

(3) Does he also acknowledge that the recently released Draft Standards, Part 5, will involve major costs for the industry and, contrary to assurances he gave when the legislation was debated, make it extremely difficult for a Queensland based organisation to achieve SSP status, particularly when coupled with the recent referred to regulations which will result in a loss of funds that could be vital to the organisation in terms of meeting the requirements as outlined in Part 5 of the Draft Standards?

(4) In light of this, does he stand by the assurances that he gave at the time of the passing of the legislation through the House?"

Mr De LACY: (1 to 4) I have a lengthy response to the honourable member's question. I seek leave to table it and have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

It is regrettable that once again the House is debating issues that relate to the internal politics of the Queensland Credit Union industry. The Honourable Member has raised a number of questions regarding the future operation of the credit union industry, particularly those industry owned financial intermediaries known as Special Services Providers.

First, let's consider the facts:

The entire Australian industry, including the Queensland Co-operative Credit Union League, was aware last October that Association-type functions and financial intermediation functions would need to be separated under the new NBF framework for the purposes of supervision, control and disclosure to member credit unions.

Financial intermediation functions must be properly supervised for industry security, and will therefore be provided by Special Services Providers (or SSPs) or other properly supervised financial intermediaries, such as banks. SSPs will be:

owned by their member societies to provide financial services to their industry;

incorporated under the AFIC Act; and

supervised by the Australian Financial Institutions Commission in accordance with applicable prudential standards.

In the seven months since being made aware of these requirements, the Queensland industry has been bitterly divided over whether the Queensland Co-operative Credit Union League should develop and seek registration for an SSP, or whether Queensland Credit Unions should support some other organisation, also seeking registration as an SSP. This industry division culminated in Directors from the two largest Queensland Credit Unions being voted off the Board of QCCUL at a Special Meeting in early April.

The questions raised by the Honourable Member also highlight concerns over an Order-in-Council which recognises CUFSAL as a body in which Queensland credit unions could lodge excess liquidity. Currently, the Credit Societies Act (1985) allows bodies incorporated under the Act to invest or lodge funds with recognised bodies.

Further, CUFSAL is such a body for the purposes of equity and other investments and deposits relating to settlement accounts, such as ATMs. QCCUL itself holds shares in CUFSAL and has previously sought recognition of CUFSAL for the purpose of lodging liquid deposits and providing national liquidity support.

These facts aside, the philosophies and principles of the two largest Queensland Credit Unions have been, along with their directors, rejected by the league. Under these circumstances, it would be untenable to require, as the Honourable member has suggested, that these institutions lodge their liquids with an organisation that they, in principle, oppose.

Further, there is an inference that the loss of these funds may prejudice the formation of a Queensland SSP because of the potential organisation's inability to meet the required standards. I would be deeply concerned that a financial intermediary such as an SSP would have an operation so fragile that it could not withstand the withdrawal of support from just two of its members.

In relation to developing proposals for an SSP, it has been argued that QCCUL was not able to develop plans for an SSP until the standards had been published. This is a nonsense. Any organisation which needs a set of minimum rules to develop a prudent operation may not have much of a future.

I would like nothing more than to see a successful Queensland-based SSP, but it will be up to the expert body, AFIC, to approve, register and supervise such organisations. Organisations and Governments which choose to ignore or interfere with such prudential guidelines and supervision have done so at their own peril. I do not need to remind the House about Tricontinental, State Bank of Victoria, State Bank of South Australia and Pyramid Building Society.

It is unlikely that AFIC will have reviewed and registered any SSP by 1 July 1992. However, the transitional arrangements ensure that relationships between credit unions and their

members will not be effected, where these relationships involve would-be SSPs. AFIC will move quickly to review and register SSPs on the basis of the objective criteria and guidelines published in Book 5 of the Prudential Standards.

There is also concern that the standards make it extremely difficult to gain registration as a SSP. That these draft standards for SSPs are tough must be of comfort to all States and the industry. As recently as last week, at both the Law Society's Continuing Education Seminar and at the Credit Union Auditors Conference—attended by some 80 credit union auditors from around the country—these reforms, the legislation and the standards were applauded for their detailed uncompromising approach to the supervision and prudential management of these industries.

I trust that the Honourable member is not suggesting that AFIC waive its prudential standards, such as those concerning the commercial viability, before proceeding with registration of an SSP.

My assurances, that I have given time and again, in relation to the Scheme and registration of SSPs, stand.

At the outset, I have stated that I hope an SSP for either building societies or credit unions is successfully established in Queensland. But, efficient financial intermediation knows no State boundaries except for those falsely imposed through the old legislation. Applications for Special Services Providers will be assessed by the Australian Financial Institutions Commission on their merit, not on the basis lobbying of politicians and not on the basis of their State of Origin.

I trust that this will put this issue to rest, once and for all. In this important transitional period, it is important that all societies focus on their objectives of meeting the requirements of the new scheme, and more importantly, delivering efficient financial services to their members.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Queensland Electricity Commission

Mr BORBIDGE: In directing a question to the Minister for Resource Industries, I refer to the rejection by the Acting Queensland Electricity Commissioner, Mr Keith Hillless, of this Government's corporatisation plans and in particular his comments that the policy fails to recognise the fundamental business need to satisfy customer demands; that the electricity industry's ability to offer competitive electricity prices may be jeopardised by an inappropriate dividend policy; and that corporatisation will result in intrusive regulation of the electricity industry. That is what this Government's Acting Electricity Commissioner has said about its policy. I ask: does the Minister support the remarks made by Mr Hillless? What action has he taken to protect the QEC?

Mr McGRADY: I read with interest the remarks attributed to the acting commissioner. I have not spoken with him. However, the acting commissioner has sent me a message to the effect that the remarks attributed to him in the media were taken out of context. The acting commissioner and I fully support the Government's plan regarding corporatisation of the industries in this State. I will be meeting with the commissioner this afternoon and I have no doubt at all that that subject may arise during those discussions.

Mr Stephan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gympie will cease interjecting.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, seeing that the gentleman was misrepresented——

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BORBIDGE: I table the remarks that were made at a public forum on corporatisation.

Cape York Space Base

Mr BORBIDGE: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to the Cape York

space base project and the reported desire—according to the *Courier-Mail*—of both State and Federal Governments to see \$20m from spaceport backers in the relevant bank account. In view of the fact that the land has yet to be secured, the project may still be jeopardised by Aboriginal land claims. In the absence of any Government incentives at all, I ask: under what conditions does the Premier expect financiers to put the cash up front when his Government is yet to take any positive action to assist in securing the project?

Mr W. K. GOSS: The matters to which the Leader of the Opposition has referred are very much premature at this stage. I think that is evidenced by the fact that under the National Party Government this project effectively stalled. It is and has always been very much a fifty-fifty prospect. I personally have had a number of meetings with interested parties and proponents, the most recent of which involved Mr Ahern and associates of his consortium. I make it plain for the record that all of the parties with whom I and the State Government have had discussions have been more than satisfied with the encouragement and support that they have received from the State Government.

In terms of the kinds of matters that have been referred to by the Leader of the Opposition—and, as I understand it, he has made reference in radio interviews to payroll tax and special legislation—those are fairly routine negotiations which, as we have indicated, can and will follow some practical demonstration that a consortium or any particular group of proponents is in a position to proceed. The only significant hurdle facing this project is the need to raise \$850m. No-one during the term of the previous National Party Government and no-one during the term of this Government has been able to indicate the capacity to raise those funds. Under the previous Government, the project had basically lost momentum and lost prospect. After we had been in Government for a period the only serious prospect to come on the scene—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr W. K. GOSS: As I was saying, the only serious prospect to come on the scene was the STS consortium—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: That consortium, which was associated with Mr Ahern, came to us and indicated that it had put together a reasonable proposal. We indicated to the consortium that we would be happy to work with it to assist in alleviating what was a major concern at that time. The consortium did not want to talk about tax breaks, special legislation and all the other peripheral bits and pieces to which the Leader of the Opposition has referred.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego will cease interjecting.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The private sector proponents told us that the next major hurdle was not those peripheral issues to which the Leader of the Opposition has referred, but the raising of finance. Mr Ahern, the former Premier, said to me in my office that he would know within four weeks—this was last October—whether or not the consortium had the finance—

Mr Stephan interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: The only request that the consortium made of the Government was that it be granted an exclusive mandate. The Federal Government, through Senator Button and me, agreed to that on the basis that the consortium produce verification of finance by 31 December. We extended that deadline through January, February, March, April and up until the close of business last Friday, with a further temporary extension

until the close of business on Tuesday of this week. The consortium failed to come up with the finance. We could no longer justify the exclusion of other potential bidders. Other potential bidders should not be excluded from registering their interest. We will continue to work with any interested party. In terms of the froth and bubble from the Leader of the Opposition—it is not relevant at this stage. It is a cheap shot from somebody who did nothing when he was in Government and has still got no idea of what this consortium is all about.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition under Standing Order 123A.

Fightback Package

Mr PREST: In directing a question to the Treasurer, I refer to his comment yesterday on the tight budgetary position and the prospects for 1992-93, and I ask: can he say what impact the coalition's Fightback package would have on the already difficult Budget outlook?

Mr De LACY: I thank the honourable member for the question because it is a very important one. All members of this House ought not be left in any doubt as to the impact of Professor Hewson's Fightback package on Queensland and on the Queensland Budget. Yesterday, I made it clear that despite the economic recovery that is taking place in Queensland, our growth in tax revenue will be very sluggish. We will not—I repeat "will not"—be resorting to the easy option of increasing taxes to fund pre-election promises. Let me repeat that as it was with our first two Budgets, so it will be again in the case of the 1992-93 Budget. There will be no new taxes and no increases in taxes—

Mr Beanland interjected.

Mr De LACY: I inform the member for Toowong that there will be no increases in taxes or charges greater than the rate of inflation. Clearly, the next Budget will be a difficult one, but not nearly as difficult as future Budgets would be, should the unhappy event occur in Australia of Professor Hewson taking over in Canberra. His Fightback package would do untold damage to Queensland's budgetary position. For the benefit of honourable members, let me point out that the following information is spelt out in the package: a 5 per cent cut in financial assistance grants—

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr De LACY: It is spelt out in the package that the 5 per cent cut will be worth \$140m. Where is the Leader of the Liberal Party going to find that amount? There will be a further \$150m cut in financial assistance grants, mostly in favour of New South Wales and Victoria, due to the impact of the distribution of such grants as a result of the abolition of payroll tax. There will be a \$60m reduction in funds for public housing; a \$15m reduction in urban public transport funding; a \$30m cost in the transfer of responsibilities to the States by the Commonwealth in areas such as legal aid, the environment and occupational health and safety; and, in addition to this annual cost of nearly \$400m, Professor Hewson will also abolish, as the Deputy Premier made clear yesterday, the Better Cities Program, which will cost the State Government \$100m, the people of Townsville \$11m, and the people of the Gold Coast their rail line. In fact, Professor Hewson will cost the people of Queensland very dearly indeed.

Queensland's Credit Rating

Mr PREST: I ask the Treasurer: is he aware of any proposals from the coalition parties that would threaten Queensland's AAA credit rating?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I point out to the member for Toowoomba South that I am on my feet. I warn him under Standing Order 123A. Honourable members, are we right? I

call the Honourable Treasurer.

Mr De LACY: Judging by the response from the House, I think all honourable members know already what the effects will be on Queensland's AAA rating. It will go through the floor, and the reason is that—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr De LACY: Listen to the Leader of the Opposition! He is the one who is running up and down the State of Queensland promising to abolish land tax.

Mr Burns: Only on the Gold Coast. He's not going up and down Queensland.

Mr De LACY: I was going to say that he was running up and down the coast of Queensland, that is, from Coolangatta to Southport. To secure his little electorate on the Gold Coast, the Leader of the Opposition will abolish land tax, which will amount to \$200m, and he will spend hundreds of millions of dollars on any project he can find. If somebody puts up a good idea, he will spend another \$100m. Today, he has even asked questions about the Cape York space station. I presume that means that he will fund that from the public purse. It is easy to be in Opposition because politicians can cut taxes and increase spending, but the only reason why the markets are not taking any notice of what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is that they know full well that he has two chances of being the Premier of this State and winning Government after the next election.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Southport!

Mr Johnson interjected.

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

Mr De LACY: Those two chances are his and Buckley's. What is his approval rating—11 per cent, 12 per cent, or 13 per cent?

Mr Prest: It is 9 per cent.

Mr De LACY: Nine per cent, is it?

Mr Prest: I don't think it's even that high.

Mr De LACY: And that is the reason why the markets are taking no notice. The reason why Queensland has the only unchallenged AAA rating in Australia is that this Government balances its Budget by reducing its debts.

Mr Borbidge: It's a lot higher than your credit rating.

Mr De LACY: Higher than my crowd? The Leader of the Opposition has the lowest public approval rating ever. It is even lower than Jeff Kennett's. I can inform the House of the Leader of the Opposition's new policy for increasing his approval rating. He comes up to Cairns and meets with the National Party mayor, Mr Byrne. When someone wants to take a photograph of them, the Leader of the Opposition will not allow that. He goes over and talks to Tom Pyne, the Labor Party's local authority chairman and then brings in the photographers. This is what people call bathing in a reflected glow. Tom Pyne has an approval rating of about 80 per cent and the Leader of the Opposition has an approval rating of 10 per cent, so maybe a little bit will rub off onto Mr Borbidge. It is a sad day when members of the National Party travel all round Queensland looking for Labor Party people to be photographed with.

Mr I. Davies

Mrs SHELDON: In directing a question to the Minister for Justice, I refer to last Thursday's story in the *Courier-Mail* about Mr Ian Davies, a small businessman whose spray-painting shop at Stafford has been broken into so often that he now sleeps at work with a rifle at his side. The story mentions that Mr Davies' daughter, Shari, was knifed five years ago by a convicted rapist who was free on parole. I ask: does the

Minister agree that the story of the Davies family demonstrates Labor's abject failure in the administration of police, prisons and justice in Queensland? I ask him to keep in mind that I intend sending a copy of his reply in *Hansard* to Mr Davies and his daughter.

Mr MILLINER: I am absolutely staggered by that question, because, when Osborne was paroled, the National Party was in Government. Former National Party Minister Muntz exposed where Osborne was, which prevented the police from catching him and allowed Osborne to go to Perth to commit a vicious murder. The honourable member should not talk to this Government about Osborne; she should talk to the previous National Party Government about what happened. The honourable member would be well aware that parole is granted by a judge.

Victims of Crime

Mrs SHELDON: What a non-answer!

Honourable members interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: I direct a question to the Attorney-General—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I cannot hear the member for Landsborough. I know that we are doing something about the acoustics in the Chamber. In fact, we have engaged some consultants. Hopefully, some time in the future we will be able to hear people when honourable members are yelling, but at the moment I cannot hear. I call the member for Landsborough.

Mrs SHELDON: I direct a question to the Attorney-General, Mr Wells. As Mr Davies was one of 360 000 victims of crime in Queensland last year, I ask: can the Minister inform the House of the progress of his promises to introduce legislative backing for the charter of victims' rights, the principles of which were spelt out in this Parliament three years ago by the Attorney-General in the previous Government, and will the Attorney-General advise that he will approve funding for the coming financial year for the Victims of Crime Association, the umbrella organisation which offers information and counselling services to all crime victims in all categories and which is also pressing the Minister to honour promises on legislation for a charter of victims' rights?

Mr WELLS: I am very grateful to the honourable Leader of the Opposition for the question that she asked. It is the first question that she has asked me, and it gives me the opportunity to point out that every question that she has ever asked as Leader of the Liberal Party has been disorderly. During this sitting period of the Parliament, it is disorderly for a member of this House to refer to another member of Parliament by that member's name. She should refer to the member by the member's title.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr WELLS: The honourable member asked about the progress in respect of victims of crime. In February 1989, I think it was, I tabled in this House a charter of victims' rights. I put forward the proposition that that charter ought to be recognised by this House. Some time later, the then Attorney-General introduced a declaration of the rights of victims, which was indeed based on the charter which I had previously tabled. Administratively, that became a significant part of the functioning of the Government of Queensland. The declaration contains a number of provisions which improve the manner in which victims are looked after by the system. At the time when the then Attorney-General introduced that document to the Parliament, I said that I thought that it would be a good idea if that charter were to be given legislative recognition. That still remains my view, and it is the policy of the Government to ensure that victims' rights are secured in that way.

A number of initiatives have been taken to improve the lot of victims. Those initiatives include the restoration of an appropriate recognition for the suffering of victims through the victims' compensation scheme. Under the scheme that was administered for many decades by the Liberal/National Party Government, a penurious system existed whereby a court ordered a certain amount of money by way of

compensation to victims and, when it was impossible for the person who was the subject of that order to pay any money, the State Government would pay an ex gratia payment, but an ex gratia payment of only between 40 per cent and 80 per cent of the amount that the court had ordered. That former Liberal/National Party Government was scrimping and saving with the lives of victims. As a result of the policies of the Liberal/National Party Government, the most ill-done people in the State were put into an even worse situation. From day one of the Goss Labor Government, that position changed. Since then, the Goss Labor Government has paid 100 per cent of the amount awarded by the courts. That has meant that, in respect of particular payments of ex gratia criminal injury compensation, the Goss Labor Government is the most generous of any State in Australia.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I suggest to the Attorney that he is debating the question, and I ask that he come to a conclusion.

Mr WELLS: During the period of the Goss Labor Government, many other aspects have been addressed, and the process of reforming the system for the benefit of the victims in Queensland will be continued.

Effect of Coalition Proposals on Indebtedness of Rural Producers

Mr PITT: I ask the Minister for Primary Industries: is he aware of any proposals from the coalition parties that would increase the indebtedness of rural producers?

Mr CASEY: The short answer is, "Yes". However, members opposite do not seem to realise that. Certainly, the people in country Queensland have not yet recognised what will happen. In recent years, through a combination of depressed prices, high interest rates and severe drought, rural Queensland has suffered tremendously. As a result, since 1986, the total indebtedness of rural Queensland has increased by about 50 per cent. Along comes the good Canberra professor, Dr Hewson, who will introduce the 15 per cent tax on everything that rural producers buy—with the support that he will receive from honourable members opposite.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I refer to Standing Order 67A relating to questions, under which questions may be put to a Minister relating to public affairs with which he is officially connected, to proceedings pending in the Legislative Assembly or to any matter of administration for which he is responsible. With respect—and thank heavens—the Minister will never be responsible for Opposition policy.

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

Mr CASEY: The honourable member for Surfers Paradise does not have a great recognition of rural Queensland. Might I spell it out? The question was addressed to the Minister for Primary Industries, and that portfolio covers the whole of rural Queensland. I am afraid that the Leader of the Opposition is not very familiar with that, nor is he familiar with the fact that he and his party are supporting this impost of 15 per cent on all farm purchases. This means that harvesters will go up—

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. All farm purchases are to be free of GST.

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

Mr CASEY: All the Telecom bills will go up by 15 per cent. Freight rates will go up by 15 per cent. Country Queensland will pay dearly. We all know that, because of their low incomes, rural Queenslanders have paid very little tax. The Federal Opposition says, "Okay, we are going to have tax credits for the GST." But the punch line is that tax credits are payable after income is earned. So the farmer makes his purchases at the beginning of the year but it is not until he sells his crop, his cattle or whatever that he actually qualifies for a tax credit under the system that Professor Hewson talks about. It has been estimated by—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego and other members were calling out an unparliamentary phrase. I ask them to withdraw that and I ask members to come

to order. This is just getting ludicrous.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We will take it nice and easy. Are we right? I call the Minister for Primary Industries.

Mr CASEY: The upshot is that farm indebtedness will increase again, and it will be the farmers who will have to pay additional costs. At a time when interest rates have been at their lowest in 20 years, under the GST proposal farm indebtedness will go up by 20 per cent. Queensland farmers will be the people who will have to carry that burden.

Mr KATTER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr CASEY: The farmers of this State will be paying for it, yet members of the National Party are supporting it.

Mr KATTER: I rise to a point of order. The further the Minister goes, the more he reinforces the argument put forward by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. I am on my feet. I warn him under Standing Order 123A. I call the member for Mulgrave to ask his second question.

Effect of GST on Provision of Services by Local Councils

Mr PITT: I direct a question to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing and Local Government. Following his visit last week to a number of regional centres in northern, central and western Queensland, can he outline any concerns expressed to him about the likely impact of a goods and services tax on the provision of services by local councils in such areas?

Mr BURNS: I thank the honourable member for Mulgrave for the question. Wherever I go in western Queensland, people make two points to me. The first is about the Leader of the Opposition representing Surfers Paradise and never going out to those areas, and the second is about the GST. They make very clear their view regarding the GST and they ask why the National Party and the Liberal Party in this place are supporting the southerners in Canberra who are going to rip them off.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

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

Mr BURNS: Councils in western Queensland will miss out not only through a 5 per cent cut in financial assistance grants but also a 5 per cent cut in their road funding. Funding for roads is the lifeblood of country councils. In country areas, council is all about building roads. Most of the staff of country councils are members of the road gangs. Everyone on the other side of the House——

Mr Katter interjected.

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

Mr BURNS: All of those members opposite who are making a noise now have done nothing about making a noise against the GST. They have done nothing about making a noise about——

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, with respect I again draw your attention to Standing Order 67A. If the Deputy Premier and the Government want a debate on Fightback and One Nation, we will give them one.

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

Mr BORBIDGE: What we are seeing today is the prostitution of question time in this place.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet. I warn the Leader of the Opposition under Standing Order 124. Honourable members, I am not going to have members——

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am not going to have members talking over me when I am on my feet. That is a warning to all members of this Chamber.

Mr BURNS: A 5 per cent cut in financial assistance grants and a 5 per cent cut in road funding will mean that councils in western Queensland will have to start putting up their rates. For example, Barcaldine would have to increase its rates by 10 per cent. In the Barcoo Shire, right out in the far west, there would be a 20.7 per cent increase in rates. In Boulia, the increase would be 11.4 per cent; in Bulloo, 9.7 per cent; and in Burke, 7.5 per cent.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lockyer!

Mr BURNS: In Croydon, the increase would be 29 per cent; in Diamantina, 15.9 per cent; in Eidsvold, which is at the back of Wide Bay, 17.2 per cent; in Etheridge, which is up in north Queensland, 10.6 per cent; in Quilpie, 10.9 per cent; and in Richmond, 11 per cent. I could go on and refer to council after council whose ratepayers will have to put their hands in their pockets to pay for the GST that these people—

Mr Lingard interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I just heard the member for Fassifern ask why I do not throw away the chair. I warn him under Standing Order 124. I also inform him that this warning will stand for the rest of the session. The member is now warned that if he makes any further disparaging comments about the Chair, I will name him under Standing Order 124.

Mr BURNS: The Liberal and National Parties in this place are supporting a policy that will result in everybody being hit with a 15 per cent increase on everything they buy. It is a policy that will hit the councils and the ratepayers. Those parties have sold out on their own people in the west.

Repainting of Kingair Aircraft

Mr HOBBS: I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services: can he confirm that in January this year the Government spent approximately \$20,000 to have the Aviation Division's Kingair stripped and repainted by a New South Wales company instead of using competitively priced Queensland workers and that the plane returned to Queensland with the word "Government" spelt wrongly, and with the Australian flag, not the requested Queensland flag, featuring in the design? Can the Minister indicate to the House the total cost, including correctional work, of this exercise in exporting work from Queensland?

Mr WARBURTON: Unfortunately, I am completely unaware of the circumstances surrounding that question. If the member would like to put it on notice, I will endeavour to respond at a later time.

Mr HOBBS: I do so accordingly.

Sale of BAe-125

Mr HOBBS: I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services: can he confirm that last July the BAe-125, the so-called Joh jet, was onsold by its American buyer to another American company almost immediately for approximately \$2m more than this Government received from its fire sale of this valuable Government asset?

Mr WARBURTON: The answer is, "No." I cannot confirm that.

Electoral Bill

Mr ELDER: I draw to the Premier's attention comments made in the House earlier

this morning by the National Party's Justice spokesperson, Mr FitzGerald, during the debate on the Electoral Bill. He stated—

“Members of the National Party are philosophically opposed to optional preferential voting.”

I ask the Premier to inform honourable members of how this comment squares with the National Party's—

Mr FITZGERALD: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The question refers to a debate that was held in this Chamber yesterday. I rule the question out of order.

Public Housing

Mr ELDER: Bearing in mind the Government's commitment to the provision of much-needed public housing in this State, can the Deputy Premier, Minister for Housing and Local Government outline the likely impact of the Federal coalition's Fightback package on public housing programs in Queensland?

Mr BURNS: I am only too pleased to talk about the effect on public housing of the Hewson GST package, which is supported by the Liberal Party and the National Party in this place—

Mr BOOTH: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the fact that members cannot direct to a Minister questions that ask for an opinion.

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

Mr BURNS: Mr Hewson has said that he will take \$400m net annual savings out of housing and will cut the Commonwealth housing budget outlays by \$1,138m. Under those circumstances, Queensland's share of the \$400m cut would be \$66m in a year. In the first full year, there will be a 26.7 per cent reduction in the program. Due to the Hewson package, 750 houses will not be commenced, jobs will be lost in the building trade, and there will be a reduction in required services for all of the people who supply the tiles, bricks, cement and other materials to the housing industry. There will be 2 560 jobs lost in the construction industry. An additional \$31m will be lost in wages in ancillary industries. An amount of \$150m will be lost in output. I will tell honourable members how this will affect Queensland. Since it came to office, the Government has spent \$56m on housing in Cairns, Townsville and Mackay; in Rockhampton, the figure is \$16m; in the Hervey Bay, Bundaberg, Maryborough and Gympie districts, it is \$20m; in Toowoomba, it is \$18m; in northern, central and western Queensland, it is \$9.5m; on the Sunshine Coast, it is \$50m; in Brisbane, it is \$313m; and on the Gold Coast, it is \$55m. All of those funds have been spent on public housing construction. Thousands of jobs—

Mr Dunworth interjected.

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

Mr BURNS: The member for Sherwood, of course, does not want Housing Commission people in his area. He rejects them. He runs campaigns to stop them moving into his area. The Liberal Party has spent half its life trying to prevent decent Australians from owning a house. The Government has spent \$50m on public housing on the Sunshine Coast. Members opposite spend most of their lives trying to stop those people from living there. No wonder members opposite support Dr Hewson! No wonder members opposite are on the side of the people who are going to cut out housing for the poor! That is the Liberal Party policy. It means no houses for the poor and no jobs for the workers who at present are building the thousands of houses in this State under the public housing scheme.

Foreign Language Program

Mr PEARCE: I refer the Premier to the Government's foreign language program in Queensland schools, and I ask: can he inform the House what recent initiatives the Government has taken to boost the study and understanding of foreign languages and cultures in our schools?

Mr W. K. GOSS: This morning, the Minister for Education, Mr Braddy, and I announced that International Day is to be held in Queensland schools on 17 June. International Day provides an opportunity to focus on the teaching of foreign languages in the Queensland education system, and indeed is an important part of the most comprehensive program of foreign language education of any State in Australia. There is no doubt that Queensland is leading the country in the teaching of foreign languages, and I am sure that International Day will be supported enthusiastically by primary and secondary school students throughout the State. Under this Government and under the stewardship of the Minister for Education, the proportion of students studying foreign languages in primary schools last year jumped more than 20 per cent to almost 70 per cent. The aim of this Government is to have all primary school students undertaking the study of a foreign language by the year 2000. Furthermore, it is the aim of the Government that 20 per cent of Year 12 students will have studied a foreign language through 12 years of schooling.

More than \$16m has been spent on this program to date, and the Government will continue to provide the funding to ensure that Queensland continues to lead the country in this area. There will be an increasing emphasis on those languages which have been neglected in recent years. I refer to Asian languages, and in particular to Japanese, Chinese and Indonesian, which are becoming increasingly important, not just for educational reasons, but also for reasons associated with the growing trade and commerce between Queensland and Asia. The Government believes that, as the frontier between Australia and Asia, this State has a leading role to play in those interactions. The policies and programs being pursued—and they are typified by initiatives such as International Day—will continue to ensure that Queensland remains the leader in the field of foreign language education.

Queensland Coal Board

Mr PEARCE: I refer the Minister for Resource Industries to the Queensland Coal Board, which has undergone a restructuring following a review commissioned by the former Minister for Resource Industries, and I ask: will he encourage the Coal Board to continue operating as an important link between Government and the industry?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for Broadsound for his question. As I travel around the coalfields of this State—and in particular the coalfields of the electorate of Broadsound—I become aware that the member for Broadsound is held in very high regard because he understands the industry, he comes from the industry and he knows the concerns of the people who work in the industry, which is more than can be said for the members of the Opposition. When I became Minister for Resource Industries, I was aware that some people in this State had some reservations about the real need for a Coal Board in Queensland. I held discussions with both sides of industry, and I came to the conclusion that there was a desperate need to have a Coal Board in this State. The Coal Board advises the Minister for Resource Industries and the Government of the needs of the industry, it provides the Government with expert advice on the international export markets and it informs the Government of all industry developments. The Coal Board promotes Queensland as a supplier of coal on the world markets.

Of course, the Opposition does not realise that the great wealth of this State is generated by the coal industry. Until recently, the Queensland coal industry had very little opposition. In recent times, it has experienced competition from Indonesia, South Africa, Colombia and the United States of America. In the PSMC review of the Department of Resource Industries, the Coal Board came out with flying colours. I am considering some amendments to the Act under which the Coal Board is constituted, but before those amendments are introduced, I will have discussions with members of both sides of the industry. Recently, I attended a conference in Canberra at which the

industry paid tribute to the Queensland Government and the way in which it is conducting its coal policy. As recently as last weekend on the Gold Coast, I attended an international conference at which, again, people spoke in glowing terms about the way the Queensland Government conducts itself with regard to the coal industry. The Queensland Coal Board is here and the Queensland Coal Board will stay.

Cape York Spaceport

Mr FITZGERALD: I ask the Minister for Land Management: what action has he taken, or is he prepared to take, to guarantee the securing of land tenure for a designated site for the Cape York spaceport?

Mr EATON: I think that will be negotiated at the proper time and an appropriate lease will be given.

Judges' Remuneration

Mr FITZGERALD: I refer the Minister for Justice and Corrective Services to the judicial entitlements for judges of the Court of Appeal whereby the remuneration for judges appointed before 30 June 1992 is set by the Governor in Council and not by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. Because the Minister has publicly stated that this was not a secret deal, I ask: will he table the arrangements just as the arrangements of all other judges' remuneration are tabled? If he will not, is the deal a secret?

Mr MILLINER: The deal is not a secret deal. I will not table the arrangements in this House. It is quite wrong and improper for the honourable member to try to drag the judiciary into a political brawl. However, it is quite right and proper that in determining the remuneration of the judiciary, one goes through the correct channels. That is about to take place.

Logging on Fraser Island

Mr BARBER: I refer the Minister for Environment and Heritage to an article in today's *Maryborough-Hervey Bay Chronicle*, in which the local National Party candidate, Mr Gilbert Alison, claims that logging and sandmining on Fraser Island will recommence, and I ask: is the Minister aware of any plans for the reintroduction of logging or sandmining on this unique island? Can the Minister advise the House whether the Goss Government plans to do so?

Mr COMBEN: I am certainly not aware of any plans by the Goss Labor Government to reintroduce logging or sandmining on Fraser Island. It would not be done during the term of this Government. I think that it would also be true to say that it would not be done during the term of any Liberal Government in this State, or federally. The one party in Australia that has the potential to reintroduce logging or sandmining on Fraser Island is the party that once reigned in this State. That party is still made up of environmental vandals. It would still allow Fraser Island to be mined and logged, and the economy of Maryborough destroyed. The National Party still does not understand the way the world is going. The article in the *Maryborough-Hervey Bay Chronicle* with the headline "Logging will return to Fraser Island: Alison" shows that the National Party has learned nothing. It is still the old environmental vandal. It may have a yuppie from the Gold Coast to lead it, but it is still the same.

Noosa's Human Services Network

Mr BARBER: I ask the Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs: can she advise the House what she observed of Noosa's human services network when she attended the Noosa Needs Forum on 2 April? What can Noosa, Coolum and Cooroy/Eumundi look forward to in the delivery of human services in the future?

Ms WARNER: I was very pleased to visit the Noosa area and to attend the forum

which was also attended by a number of people who have been involved in the delivery of social services to people in that area. The population in the Noosa area is growing very, very rapidly. It has had a huge population increase. Young families have moved in, leaving their family support behind in the places from which they have come. That places enormous stress on those families. This stress occurs in many areas along the north coast in which there are enormous pressures placed on the population, such as Hervey Bay, along the Sunshine Coast and in the Noosa area, and Airlie Beach. Similar characteristics emerge in those areas. The social infrastructure has not kept pace with the growing population needs. I thank the honourable member for Cooroora for drawing this problem to my attention and assisting in organising the meeting that was held in Noosa recently to try to consolidate some ideas for future planning and to deliver some support services to the young people of the north coast, and to the families of the north coast.

I can inform the House that to date the Government has managed to improve the situation in the Noosa area. It was much neglected by this Government's predecessor, I am sorry to say, and with the support of a number of very good, community-minded people who have given their own time and energy selflessly to provide services, people in those areas are now beginning to have access to funding programs. This year, \$42,000 has been given to support the Noosa accommodation project for young people. The full year total of that funding will be \$80,000. There will be a further \$69,000 given to the Noosa Shire family accommodation service. Recently, a very good long day care centre has been constructed in Coolum that will provide adequately for the long day care needs of children in that area. It is an excellent centre, and I was very pleased to inspect it with the honourable member. Also, in that area there is a growing problem of domestic violence which must be dealt with. A group of very experienced volunteers from the family and youth support centre have been working out of Cooroora and have given their time selflessly to provide personal counselling and support for families in that region. The Government will be able to assist that group with \$10,000 in funding under the domestic violence initiatives program. I note that the member for Cooroora has been personally involved in making sure that the groups in his electorate are adequately financed. I commend the member for the interest that he has expressed in this subject and the constructive work that he has done with the community to ensure that it has in place the right kinds of mechanisms to receive funding and to enable it to deal with the issues that have affected families in Noosa.

Workplace Rehabilitation Courses

Ms POWER: I direct a question to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. After recently attending the Mount Gravatt College of TAFE to present certificates to graduates of a workplace rehabilitation course, I ask: what is the extent of those courses? How are they being received by Government and private companies? What benefits will those courses have for Queensland workers and the community in general?

Mr VAUGHAN: One of the factors to remember when considering workplace health and safety, particularly workplace rehabilitation schemes, is the extent to which work injuries impact on the people of this State. I do not believe that it is widely known that workplace injuries cost this State around \$1.1 billion per year. As a result, the Workers Compensation Board, in conjunction with the TAFE system in this State, has embarked upon a campaign to conduct workplace rehabilitation courses. As at 30 April this year, approximately 1 000 people in various workshops around the State had successfully undertaken workplace rehabilitation courses. About 83 companies have received workplace rehabilitation certificates. The whole idea of the workplace rehabilitation scheme is to train people in the workplace to identify potential hazards in that workplace, to educate them on the functions of the Workers Compensation Board, and to enable them to counsel fellow workers who might be unfortunate enough to sustain injuries at work. As I said, about 1 000 people throughout Queensland have already been trained in those courses, which are very well attended and accepted by

industry generally.

Unfortunately, in the past, people who sustained injuries at work went onto workers compensation and were forgotten. Today, through the workplace rehabilitation courses, we are training workers to take care of their injured fellow workers, counsel them and encourage them to return to their position in the workplace within a very short time. It must be remembered that a workplace injury impacts not only on the community at large, by virtue of the huge costs, but also on families. This Government is attempting to get workers back to work—whether it be in their previous employment capacity or in a new sphere of employment—so that their self-esteem can be restored.

Eastern Corridor Extensions

Ms POWER: I direct a question to the Minister for Housing and Local Government. In a recent advertisement, the National Party candidate in Mansfield, who is a member of the community consultative committee on the eastern corridor, stated that there were no assurances that the corridor would not continue through the koala habitat in Sheldon and Burbank, despite the decisions of the Minister for Transport and Cabinet. I ask: can the Minister explain to the House what steps this Government is taking to ensure that the koala habitat is safe from further extensions of the eastern corridor?

Mr BURNS: As part of a Cabinet decision made on 24 February this year concerning the Brisbane-Gold Coast eastern transport corridor, Cabinet directed that a report be prepared for consideration by the Cabinet committee on planning and infrastructure coordination. The Government really is concerned about koala habitats and that whole environmentally sensitive area. We have stated that a regional master plan must be produced for the area between the Gateway Arterial road and the Beenleigh-Redland Bay road.

Mr Elliott interjected.

Mr BURNS: I do not mind reading it. The member wants this information, and it is better to be accurate. In the wider area of bushland around Burbank and Mount Cotton, potentially significant koala habitats have been identified. It is important to note the existence of those habitats. When we talk about transport and roads, we must also consider housing. Because of rapid growth in the Redlands area, housing has encroached on the koala habitat. That is a problem, because that area must be protected. The Honourable the Minister for Environment and Heritage, the Minister for Land Management, the Minister for Transport, my department, the Logan City Council, the Redland Shire Council and the Brisbane City Council will eventually be involved in the work that must be done in that area.

The honourable member for Mansfield has spent considerable time working with my department and me on this particular matter. She has demanded that we give serious consideration to that koala habitat and that no work be done on road corridors through that area without proper consultation with her and the people who are interested in this matter. This Government will give consideration to the findings of the eastern corridor planning study and a determination into the areas that ought to be included in such a master plan. As I said, those various departments will be involved in that. To date, officers of the Department of Transport and my department have undertaken the preliminary work. The options are available to reflect what they claim are environmentally sensitive areas into the relevant local authority planning instrumentalities, into legislative and/or administrative procedures and on consultation requirements. In other words, in council plans and our own transport and housing plans we must acknowledge those environmentally sensitive areas to prevent encroachment onto those areas. In the past, dozens of departments were not made aware of those habitats, and they made plans without consultation. One of the reasons for the planning and infrastructure coordination committee is to ensure that each department knows what other departments are doing and can cooperate in the regional master plan. Mr Comben's department, Mr Hamill's department, Mr Eaton's department and my department are trying to set up that process.

I guarantee that people will be consulted and a proper plan prepared so that the koala habitat is protected.

Staffing of Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, Cairns

Mr ROWELL: In directing a question to the Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, I refer to what appears to be yet another major restructuring of her department in the far north administered from Cairns. I ask: does that involve a cut of 150 positions, leaving only 50 in the proposed new establishment for that region? Can she guarantee jobs to the officers who will be displaced by this restructuring, or are they facing redundancy? Is that massive cutback a direct result of the Treasurer's tough-minded attitude towards expenditure expressed in this House yesterday?

Ms WARNER: I wish that the honourable member was at least marginally literate about the activities of the department and its various responsibilities. The question was a little obscure in that the honourable member did not make clear what sort of restructuring he was referring to. As well, he made grandiose claims about 150 people losing their jobs.

Mr Rowell: Is there any restructuring going on in your department in the far north?

Ms WARNER: Ongoing restructuring is occurring in a number of areas of the department. The honourable member's question was not sufficiently clear for me to be able to give the precise sort of answer that I would like to be able to give him. The honourable member should go away, do his homework, find out what he is talking about and then organise the question so that it can be answered more appropriately. I can say that there is no such thing as the loss of 150 jobs in my department in the north, the south, the east or the west.

Cape York Space Base

Mr ROWELL: In directing a second question to the Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, I refer to the proposed Cape York space base development and a recent decision by the Federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Mr Tickner, which blocked the Alice Springs flood mitigation project because of Aboriginal claims on sacred sites. I ask: is she aware of any similar claims affecting the proposed Cape York space base site? If so, does she support such claims to the extent that they may jeopardise a vital project?

Ms WARNER: I thank the honourable member for the question. At least it has some relevance to current issues that are before the public and the Parliament. I am also grateful that these are the first two questions that the honourable member has asked me since he has taken up his current position. The issue to which he refers—I suspect that he is fighting shadows here—is that there was a report in the paper on Monday about the possibility that the Federal Minister may intervene if there are Aboriginal claims of sacred sites in the area where the space base may be located. Firstly, I do not know the proposed location of the space base apart from the fact that it will be in Cape York, which is a very large area. There are many sacred sites in Cape York. To my knowledge, at this stage the space agency has not pinned down particular sites that it is looking at, nor at the projected sites that have currently been under examination are there any Aboriginal people who are claiming that particular sacred sites need to be protected. However, I mention to honourable members that ongoing work is being carried out by anthropologists from universities and by local community groups to try to codify the sacred sites of their ancestors and to try to make sure that we do not lose a lot of the tradition and culture that, under the National Party, was unfortunately lost. We are doing our best to make sure that it is conserved and we are working closely with Aboriginal groups to come to some arrangement and an understanding rather than the

confrontation to which we were so used in Queensland in the past when such issues emerged. At this stage it is premature to start talking about conflict between the Federal Minister and the State Government or the space base agency. The honourable member opposite is indulging in wishful thinking that at last he has found a political issue.

National Party Position on Optional Preferential Voting

Mr LIVINGSTONE: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to the statements by members of the National Party on the question of optional preferential voting and, in particular, to a statement by the party's Justice spokesman, Mr FitzGerald, who said that members of the National Party philosophically oppose optional preferential voting. I ask: will the Premier inform honourable members how that squares with the National Party's position a little over 12 months ago when he introduced into this House legislation giving effect to changes to the State electoral and voting system introduced by the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission?

Mr FITZGERALD: I rise to a point of order. I wish to take the same point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the member for Lockyer seeking to take the same point of order as he took earlier?

Mr FITZGERALD: Yes.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The difference is that there has been no reference to the previous debate.

Mr FITZGERALD: Could I ask where the statement was made?

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I will put the question on notice.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The question is placed on notice. The time allotted for questions has now expired.

MATTER OF SPECIAL PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Use of Road Transport by Queensland Rail

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I advise the House that I have received a proposal for a Special Public Importance debate pursuant to the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 16 July 1991. The proposal submitted by the honourable Leader of the Opposition is for a debate on the following matter—

“The purchase by Queensland Railways of road transport vehicles and the expansionary moves by Queensland Railways into the highly competitive road transport field is unwarranted.”

I now call on the member for Gregory to speak to that topic.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory) (3.44 p.m.): Well might the Minister refer to Queensland Rail's door-to-door freight services as Q-Link. If he had not, others may have named it the “missing link”. It has missed out on showing how it can pay its way, missed out on market positioning and missed the Minister's much-publicised undertaking to make small freight pay for itself. This makes hypocrisy of the policy of the Labor Party prior to the 1989 State election, which stated—

“A Goss Government will engender competitive and efficient multimodal freight services throughout the state to ensure Queensland grows.”

Cop that! It continued—

“A Labor Government will aggressively market the potential of Queensland’s railways as a freight haulier, and in particular with respect to bulk commodities. Where appropriate, Queensland’s railways will enter into commercial arrangements with road transport operators to provide door to door goods and parcel services.”

It continued further—

“Under a Goss Government community obligations to those living in remote areas will be honoured by the provision of an affordable freight service to these areas.”

Q-Link holds an unfair advantage over private operators because it does not have to pay a 20 per cent sales tax and it does not have to pay a 2 per cent stamp duty on vehicles that it purchases. It also has a ready-made client who pays its bills with a Government secured credit rating—something private operators only dream about. The client is, of course, Queensland Rail—an institution that runs with taxpayer- provided subsidies and now seeks to cut into one of the few genuinely competitive areas of transport—road freight.

Will rail small freight ever pay its way in Queensland? Let the figures speak for themselves. In the period January to March 1992, Q-Link had increased net tonne kilometres by 16 per cent over the same period last year and increased net tonnage by 14 per cent. Well done! What about the effect that this had in moving Q-Link’s figures into the black? Honourable members have learned that, in the same period, cost recovery increased from 13 per cent to 16 per cent—what a miserable effort! There was a 3 per cent increase in revenue in spite of a 16 per cent increase in business. At that rate, Q-Link could carry every last shoe box full of small freight in Queensland and it still would not make a profit. This is particularly so, considering that every extra dollar of business is more expensive to attract than the dollar that came before it. The Minister is forgetting about the real issues, and I assure him that he will be reminded of them in the short term.

The experience interstate is no better. In the 1990-91 financial year, the New South Wales Trackfast system lost about \$10m. At least there was a saving from using private enterprise freight contractors to deliver freight from major freight centres. This was responsible for reversing a good deal of the loss of some \$30m in that State in 1989. Why has Queensland not taken heed of the New South Wales experience and used private contractors? Surely the New South Wales experience is compelling proof of the benefits of using private services instead of applying the dead hand of Government, as has been done by this Goss Labor Government in Queensland. The New South Wales Transport Minister, Mr Baird, stated—

“. . . the Government could no longer justify allowing Trackfast to provide a door to door service at a loss in the Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong areas—which were already well served by other operators.”

He stated further—

“These regions will only be retained in the Trackfast network if contractors are prepared to service them on a full commercial basis using the Trackfast name.”

The mixed messages that the Minister for Transport is sending are confusing the market. One minute he speaks about privatisation and corporatisation in an effort to improve railway efficiency. The railways are, by contrast, also buying semitrailers and entering into the road haulage business. In case he has not read the answer, I will quote what his colleague the Minister for Environment and Heritage said in answer to a question by our shadow Treasurer, Mr Slack.

Mr Hamill: This one?

Mr JOHNSON: That is probably it. He stated—

“(2) (a) 11 x 12 tonne body trucks and dog trailers, plus 6 x prime movers and 9 trailers were purchased.

- (b) The capital cost was \$2,588,722.
- (c) They commenced operations on 28 October 1991.
- (d) The overall operating costs including wages and overheads amounts to approximately 75 cents per kilometre."

The Minister stated further—

"(5) The operation involves one or two semi-trailers on the road between Brisbane and Gympie and likewise on the Kingaroy and Toowoomba runs and this level of delivery is so small that any impact on roads would be minimal."

The Minister stated in his circular that the Queensland Department of Transport railways network is keeping semitrailers off Queensland roads. What an absolute joke!

Mr FitzGerald: Running half-empty trailers around.

Mr JOHNSON: They are half-empty. I can give many examples of that. It was regrettable to see that the 1990-91 annual report of the Transport Department departed from the previous practice of presenting a table in the appendix showing the tonnages of wool, grain, timber, etc. carried by rail during the year. These figures are of much interest to the rural people of Queensland, and I ask that the Minister consider resuming the publication of these statistics next year. These commodities are the real lifeblood of this State. They are the products that produce the money that keeps this State wealthy and have kept it viable since day one. It is these commodities that keep the railway personnel working. I will quote some of those figures. Between 30 June 1990 and 30 June 1991, QR carried 41 456 tons of wool, 348 518 tons of livestock and 1 848 753 tons of grain. Between 30 June 1991 and 31 March 1992, it carried 22 342 tons of wool, 255 688 tons of livestock and 777 125 tons of grain.

Mr Hamill: That has got nothing to do with Q-Link.

Mr JOHNSON: It has plenty to do with Q-Link. Those figures created employment for Queensland Rail workers. The Minister is trying to put Queensland railway workers into the jobs of private enterprise operators, therefore sending private enterprise operators to the wall in rural Queensland and rural Australia. The Minister is the person who will be responsible for the downfall of those people. In conclusion, Queensland railway personnel need not fear for their jobs. Their jobs will not be lost under a National Party led coalition. We will be replacing the missing link that Q-Link has created. The National Party is now the workers' party. Members of the Government who sit opposite me are hiding behind the mantle of what the old Labor Party stood for. They have sold out the workers of this State. They have engaged in no consultation whatsoever with the practical people of this State. Perhaps they consulted with union heavies in the railways or other union heavies, but they have not consulted with the real people who have kept Queensland Rail functioning for the past 127 years and who, I might add, have done a grand job. Members of the Labor Government have had no consultation whatsoever with practical people; theory only is their policy, and this will doom the destiny of the Minister. After the next election, he will not be laughing. On 25 February this year, I mentioned to him the problems that Q-Link has created in the western areas of this State. I have no doubt that my colleagues the member for Burnett and the member for Condamine will address those issues. As my time is running short, let me simply mention that many businesses in the central west are now resorting to private courier operations, such as Fitzroy Taxi Trucks which operates out of Rockhampton, and Central Western Couriers which is running daily services into the central western region five days a week. These businesses are taking away jobs from railway personnel, yet members of the Labor Party claim they represent railway workers. I can tell members of the Labor Party right now that they do not represent the workers. Members of the National Party represent the workers.

Time expired.

Dr FLYNN (Toowoomba North) (3.54 p.m.): The hypocrisy of this debate in the House today and the negative, knocking attitude of the Opposition amaze me. During the first 18 months of the life of this Government, a concerted scare campaign was led

by the member for Flinders who has now retired to the back bench before retiring from politics altogether. He made wild claims that 6 000 railways workers would be sacked and about the closure of services such as the Westlander and other rural rail services. Now that this Government has been in office for two and a half years and since none of those things has happened and all the threats made by the member for Flinders have been proved to be absolutely groundless, he now has to undertake a new scare campaign, and that is what members of the National Party are doing today. All of the services that the member for Flinders claimed would cease have been retained, but there has been a reduction in the number of jobs in QR through the voluntary early retirement program and with the cooperation of railways employees. The Government has stood by its individual railway employees.

Because this Government is trying to rebuild Queensland Rail instead of running it into the ground by not investing in it and by letting its infrastructure deteriorate, and because we are trying to rebuild Queensland Rail with positive policies such as Q-Link, we are being attacked time and again. This simply shows the hypocrisy of this motion. At the outset, let me say that I support Q-Link for three reasons. Firstly, it provides a better customer service. Why should people who choose to have their small freight moved by rail suffer an inferior service? These days, individuals and business people want and expect to receive a service that will pick up their goods from the doorstep and drop them at the door of their destination. Q-Link provides a better customer service. Secondly, it is more efficient. The Government is committed to reducing the losses that QR small freight operations have made and must do that. The movement of parcels around this State is not a community service. It must be done in a cost-effective manner so as not to burden the taxpayer. The money saved by reducing the losses incurred by the small freight operations can be spent on schools and hospitals. I can tell honourable members that the Labor Party will win the support of the people of Queensland in trying to achieve those aims. By December this year, we will find out whether or not that is true, but I think I can already say that we know we will have that support. The third reason why I support Q-Link is that it helps to retain jobs in the railways. The restructuring of Queensland Rail is reducing the size of QR's work force. That became necessary because of a number of inefficiencies that existed in the past, but this Government will not stand by and approach the restructuring in a negative, cost-cutting exercise, which is the approach that the National Party would adopt. It seems to me that the National Party intends to sell off or otherwise dispose of the entire small freight operations whereas the Government is trying to restructure that branch in a positive and constructive way with a view to creating permanent, secure and long-term jobs for people in QR. There are fewer jobs now than there have been in the past, but members of this Government are determined to do whatever they can to save every productive job possible, which is why I support Q-Link.

I turn now to address the topic of the motion, which could be described as scare campaign Mark III or Mark IV because it suggests that the Q-Link operation will destroy private transport operations throughout this State. It is necessary to look at the facts and the reasons underlying the establishment of Q-Link, the history of Q-Link and its current functions. Under previous Governments, QR could only perform the line haul function of the freight business from one railway station to another. Private road operators who were working on a contract basis for individual clients undertook the pick up and delivery section of the service. Prices charged for the road link often exceeded the revenue received by QR, even though the rail line haul component accounted for the bulk of the distance over which the freight was carted. Basically, QR was doing most of the work in a lot of instances, but was receiving the least reward.

Trucks were introduced on the line haul runs to locations on the perimeter of the south east of the State because it was found to be quicker and cheaper to load a truck and take goods directly to the centres of Warwick, Toowoomba, Dalby, Kingaroy and Gympie. Similarly, delivery by rail to small stations along the main lines meant frequent stopping and shunting for low volumes of load, but those areas still required a delivery service, so QR trucks now sweep through those intermediate locations between the major centres of Brisbane, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and also

Richmond, picking up and delivering goods as they go. The door-to-door delivery services from each freight distribution centre are provided by either private contractors or QR trucks. The difference in arrangements between centres has been determined on the basis of community preference and relative cost. The member for Gregory referred to a lack of consultation. If one believed his story, one would think that Q-Link magically appeared after it was conceived by senior rail executives and then imposed upon the public, but that is not the story or the history of Q-Link at all.

In September 1990, a comprehensive consultation process started, with the distribution of initial proposals for discussion. Submissions were invited from communities not included on the original list of 23 centres. As a result of that community consultation process, the number of freight distribution centres increased to 48. Honourable members will remember that, at that time, there was a scare campaign. When members of the Opposition saw that initial proposal for 23 freight distribution centres, they subtracted 23 from the total number of railway stations in the State and suggested that the Government was going to close that number of railway stations. That was another absolutely groundless scare campaign by the Opposition. The original proposal of 23 was the start of the concept. After consultation with local communities, that number was increased to 48. In January and February 1991, QR management toured the railway stations across the State to discuss the proposals with QR staff.

Mr Hamill: They actually spoke to real people.

Dr FLYNN: That is right. They spoke to real people. In April and May 1991, QR held meetings with businesses and community representatives at 18 different locations across the State to discuss and to further develop proposals for the distribution network. Between October and December 1991, and again between January and March 1992, a further round of meetings with communities and customers took place, with QR explaining the final distribution network and eliciting comment. As a result of that process, there are now 48 freight distribution centres, from which door-to-door delivery is provided to 58 locations. It is well worth noting that, of those 58 locations serviced, 33 of the delivery routes are serviced by private contractors. Only 25 are serviced by QR vehicles. As I have said, that was determined by community preference and by what was appropriate. In many areas, the Government has provided for the free-enterprise road transporters more work—not less. In the Toowoomba area, Q-Link trucks operate a daily sweeper service from Acacia Ridge through Gatton to Toowoomba and deliver to locations around and just outside the city. As a result of the recent expansion, Q-Link has purchased eleven 12-tonne body trucks with dog trailers, and six prime movers and nine trailers, worth a total of \$2.6m. That is some investment in infrastructure, a positive move, rather than letting things go down the drain.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Dr FLYNN: I would like the member for Gregory to listen to my next point. Those purchases brought the total fleet of trucks in QR to 64. The total number of trucks registered in Queensland is 80 000. So, 80 000 trucks in Queensland operate commercially in the delivery of goods. Of those 80 000, QR owns, runs and operates 64. That one simple fact makes an absolute mockery of this debate. When the road transport industry has the remainder of the 80 000 trucks, how will QR assault the entire road transport industry in Queensland with 64 trucks? Road line haul operations are performed by QR to maintain unfettered access to revenue from those services that were previously performed by trains. It is not an assault on new markets. No doubt, because a better service is provided, there will be some new customers. Those operations are designed to retain and to prevent a further erosion of the business of QR, which was occurring under the previous National Party Government because of its refusal to invest in infrastructure, its refusal to come up with a positive policy, and because its approach to the losses in QR was a negative, cost-cutting exercise.

Mr Hamill: And their refusal to allow QR to compete.

Dr FLYNN: And the previous Government's refusal to allow QR to compete.
Time expired.

Mr SLACK (Burnett) (4.04 p.m.): The Opposition welcomes this debate——

Mr Hamill: So does the Government.

Mr SLACK: I am pleased to hear that the Government welcomes the debate because it is time that we had a debate on the issue. I refer to what has happened in Queensland Rail since October. I do not know whether the Minister knew that Queensland Rail would take the action that it did, and to the extent that it did. Certainly, the Treasurer did not know, because that was not indicated in answer to a question that I asked on the subject. In all fairness, I cannot understand why the Government embarked on the program of competing against the very efficient, cost-effective road transport haulage business. As much as the Government likes to claim that it is competing in a small way, it is not competing in a small way. In the company stakes in Queensland, 58 large trucks form a fairly large transport company.

Mr Hamill: There aren't many enterprises in Queensland that have 20 000 in work, either.

Mr SLACK: The Minister has a right to reply. I would appreciate it if he would allow me to deliver my speech without constant interjection. As I said, basically I cannot understand the move; but, on reflection, I can understand it to a degree. The member for Toowoomba North made some claims about scaremongering tactics. I attended meetings of railway employees throughout my electorate. I was aware of letters that were written to the Minister by people, whose parents were foundation members of the ALP, complaining about what the Minister was doing with rail services in this State. At those meetings, the Minister's name was mud. I doubt whether the Minister would have got out of those meetings alive. I withdraw that statement. I retract that. It is not true. We were dealing with decent, honest people who were afraid for their jobs. They saw the Minister as an academic who was going to reorganise the railways.

Mr Beattie: Oh!

Mr SLACK: They did. I am repeating what came out of those meetings. Those people saw the Minister as an academic who was going to reorganise the railway system without any compassion for them or for their jobs. As a result of that meeting and, no doubt, union pressures, the Minister formed a committee, which made some recommendations, out of which evolved Q-Link. For the life of me, I cannot understand why the Government took that action. In most cases, in whatever region the Government took that action, the existing transport operators were trying to operate in a recession and were having problems getting cargoes for their road-haulage businesses throughout the State.

The Minister may try to play down the exercise that has been undertaken and the intrusion into the business of road transport operators. Some of them have been put at risk. Any little intrusion will put them at risk. Although the Minister may try to play that down, the facts remain that, while it may be said that they are only minor services to Kingaroy and the periphery of the south-east corner, etc., at the very beginning there was a service three times a week from Brisbane to Monto. That replaced three rail services. That was a major decision, not a decision concerning a small door-to-door service. It certainly was not a door-to-door service, because the service was to go to Gayndah, to Mundubbera, to bypass Eidsvold, and then to go to Monto. If people in Eidsvold were sent freight, they would have to go to Monto, which is some 40 miles—or whatever that is in kilometres—away to get it. It was not a small door-to-door service, as the Minister tries to explain to the public. It is a definite move by the Queensland Rail into a highly competitive area at an expense to the taxpayer. The department will not be able to compete effectively and efficiently against the private operators who are cutting their freight levels to the bone.

Mr Hamill: So what do you want to do?

Mr SLACK: Our answer is that that business should have been contracted.

Mr Hamill: Close it down?

Mr SLACK: No. It should have been contracted. Where those services were

unable to be provided, and where the Minister was not prepared to provide them, it was only fair that a tender should have been let, thus saving taxpayers the \$2.5m that has been invested in the trucks.

Mr Hamill: Contract the whole lot out?

Mr SLACK: No. We are not suggesting that. We would have also reorganised some of that transport on to rail. According to the Prime Minister's One Nation statement, he wants to see goods off the road and on to rail. Yet the Minister has embarked on a policy which is directly in contrast to that. It is the direct opposite. For what reason? Is it some grandiose plan on behalf of QR to expand into the road transport business? Is it intended that QR will be a big and powerful operator in the road transport business? The Minister has said that Queensland Rail is not trying to undercut and that it is not looking for business outside its traditional supporters. Like hell it isn't!

An extensive advertising campaign has already been undertaken by the department to get as much business as it can. That is fair enough. If it is going to go into the business, it has to go into it properly. But the Minister should not tell us that it is only a little operation that is not trying to take business away from the already efficiently operating road transport operators who, incidentally, do not want a confrontation with the Minister. They do not want any confrontation with Queensland Rail and the Government. They just want to be able to earn a living for their families. I have talked to operators with families who have not had road transport work for three or four weeks. They are faced with the prospect of finance companies repossessing their trucks. I know that the member for Gregory will agree that so many thousand will go to the wall before the middle of this year. They are losing their houses. Yet the Minister wants to go into this field of industry, and he thinks that he is going to make it pay.

Let me refer to the situation in Victoria, from which the Minister should be able to gain some information. Actually, he should have gained some information before he went into this enterprise. In 1986, V/Line introduced the fast track freight system in an attempt to improve the financial performance of its Freight Service Division. Does that sound familiar to the Minister? The division was noted for its unreliability and inefficiency, even though the State Transport Authority, the body that ran the Victorian railway system between 1983 and 1989, had extensively restructured V/Line's operating divisions during the previous three years. The division's performance did not materially improve between 1983-84 and 1990-91, despite the restructure and the introduction of the fast track system. What this Government is doing is going down the Victorian track.

The division's revenue fell slightly over 1 per cent in nominal terms, and about 37 per cent in real terms, from \$160.8m in 1983-84 to \$158.9m in 1990-91. The volume of freight carried by the division also fell slightly, from 10.5 million tonnes to 9.7 million tonnes. One possible explanation for the fall in revenue is that during the mid to late 1980s, V/Line attempted to increase its freight volumes by reducing its rates to commercially unsustainable levels. I ask the Minister to deny that his Q-Link is not doing that. It is out there in the marketplace. Many truckies have come to me and told me their minimum cost, yet Q-Link has come in and undercut them. There is no way in the world that the Minister can deny that Q-Link can do that without losing money. There is no doubt that the experience in Victoria was a disaster, as the experience in Queensland will be. The tragedy of this is that the Minister had other options. When the National Party is in Government, it will take those options.

Mr Hamill: Privatise it?

Mr SLACK: No. We will look at contracting out that business that is done purely by Q-Link. That is the way to go. The Minister and the taxpayers of Queensland would have to admit that that is the way to go. We will disband Q-Link within a period. However, at the same time we will not put in jeopardy—

Mr Hamill: All private contractors—privatisation? You are going to privatise it? And the 1 200 jobs that go with it? You are going to disband them all, are you?

Mr SLACK: At present, jobs have been transferred from Queensland Rail to the trucking business. The Minister is saying that he is efficient and that those people are

being gainfully occupied. Those positions would still be gainfully occupied by somebody in the trucking or the transport industry. There is no question about that. That is why we have before us as a matter for debate that this House "considers the purchase by Queensland Railways of road transport vehicles and the expansionary moves by Queensland Railways into the highly competitive road transport field to be unwarranted". The Minister should not say for one minute that there have not been complaints about the service. Hundreds of complaints have been made about the service provided by Q-Link. The Minister should not try to tell me for one minute that more goods are being carried on the trucks than have been carried on the rail carriages. I have been told of instances in which trucks with an 8-tonne carrying capacity have in fact carried very little cargo. Queensland Rail has an unfair advantage in its competition with the road transport industry in that it is not paying sales tax, nor is it paying stamp duty on the transfers. Yet the Minister is saying that this is a freer Government.

Time expired.

Mr SMYTH (Bowen) (4.14 p.m.): I rise to speak in opposition to the National Party in its endeavour to prove to the Queensland people that Q-Link is not a viable proposition for Queensland taxpayers. I think we should also note that the Liberal Party is not taking part in this debate. That is a clear indication that it is not interested in country Queensland. The other matter that the member for Burnett brought to the notice of the House was that Mr Hamill is an academic with no interest in railways. We know that he is an academic, but something else that should be made known is that his father worked in the Ipswich railway workshops all his life. I am sure that a great deal of Mr Hamill's knowledge of the railways system was passed on to him by his father. The Goss Labor Government strongly believes in the importance of providing a viable, competitive rail freight network. It is vital that all Queenslanders have access to an efficient and effective freight system. It is also important to have some competition in the services offered to remote areas, otherwise the potential exists for the local transport operator to wield monopoly power. All Queenslanders should endeavour to avoid that state of affairs, irrespective of where they live. It does happen in the west.

As it was unable to offer the convenience of door-to-door delivery, rail was steadily losing business to road transport operators, who were enjoying growth generated through improvements to the safety and efficiency of the road network. Those improvements are paid for by Queensland and Australian taxpayers. The National Party believes that QR should not operate trucks and that it should leave that activity to the private sector. This was the environment in which rail lost a majority share of the freight business in Queensland. The industry now has a market share of around 10 per cent. People have always had the option of having a local contractor pick up their freight from the station. The problem was that the local contractor often got paid more for that short road trip than QR received for the provision of the line haul. This extra impost from the road operator often made the total transport cost prohibitive. Therefore, QR needed to have some control over the provision of the supplementary pick up and delivery services. It needed to assure its customers that a regular, cost-effective service was available. QR sought to achieve that surety of service through a combination of contracting local road operators to provide a regular delivery service and using its own fleet of trucks. In my area of interest, private contractors perform the delivery service for Julia Creek, Richmond and Hughenden. Q-Link trucks provide the delivery service in Charters Towers and perform a daily sweeper service which picks up and delivers from any point between Townsville and Richmond.

Mr Johnson: Tell us about the 100 facing the sack.

Mr SMYTH: That is nothing compared to what members opposite took away when they were in Government. Under the previous Government, track examiners were made redundant, and I will enlighten the member for Gregory on that topic later. These arrangements have been decided upon after an exhaustive series of consultations with rail employees, their unions, shire councils, community groups and individual businesses. The member for Gregory stated previously that this Government did not have consultation with the right people. I do not know what the honourable member

means by "the right people". I believe that the Government has had consultation with all the relevant people in the industry.

Mr Johnson: The only one who has had consultation with anybody is John Aiken, and I put that on record.

Mr SMYTH: I do not know if I will take that interjection. There can be no doubt that if QR is impeded from matching the convenience of the road transport service, it will continue to lose business to such a point that the Government will not be able to justify maintaining the service. That is the future of Q-Link under the policy of the National Party, as stated before in this House by the member for Burnett. The National Party purports to be the great protector of rural communities. It wants to privatise the Q-Link road transport operation and take QR back to the dark ages whereby it freights from station to station. In this environment, QR will be captive to the whim of the local road transport operators, who could simply decide to take business away from the rail industry by providing a service with their own line haul trucks. At stake here are hundreds of rail jobs throughout the State and also the livelihood of the communities that rely on keeping that employment within their region.

There have recently been claims by some in the road transport industry that QR had an unfair advantage over private operators. The National Party was quick to jump on the bandwagon and reiterate clear errors of fact without seeking to verify the accuracy of those facts. The circulation of this largely false information in the public arena developed considerable antagonism between private truck drivers and drivers working for QR. This antagonism could very easily have erupted into violent confrontations. QR drivers reported cases of harassment on the road and over the CB radio. The QR drivers were so concerned for their safety that they requested that all drivers were to be accompanied in the cabin when travelling. A lot of the claims raised in the public smear campaign can be attributed to Mr Bob Katter, the member for Flinders. I believe that the honourable member for Flinders has a lot to answer for when he instils fear into workers and families in this State. The claims included in that public smear campaign included: exemption from log book requirements; exemption from weight restrictions; exemption from fuel excise; concessions on registration fees; exemption from licence to hire fees; exemption from sales tax and exemption from stamp duty. With two exceptions, Queensland rail must comply with all regulations and fee requirements, just like any other business which chooses to operate road transport services. The two exceptions are that QR is currently exempt from payment of sales tax and stamp duty. However, this situation is currently under review as the Government develops its policy on corporatisation.

Detractors of Q-Link have also claimed that QR is able to quote cheaper rates than road transport operators. Rates quoted by QR are normally either equal to or higher than rates offered by competitors. Small freight currently receives a subsidy of just under \$100m, but this cannot continue into the future. Subsidies will not be designed to support artificially low prices to undercut competitors. QR is obliged to charge prices at competitive rates—rates that the market can bear—to minimise the level of subsidy. That is why it is crucially important that QR bring its services up to a competitive standard. Without a comparable standard of service, QR will not be able to win business without discounting its prices. Together with other sections of QR, Q-Link will be expected to achieve optimal levels of efficiency over the next few years. Therefore, the level of subsidy will decline as the performance targets become more and more stringent. Some level of subsidy is expected to remain as the Government meets its obligations to maintain a reasonable level of service across the community. The challenge facing QR is to shore up its remaining business by offering a competitive service, and to win back some of the business. QR needs to bring the Q-link operation to a level of viability which will ensure the long-term provision of a comprehensive network of freight services. Given those objectives, there can be no doubt that greater utilisation of road transport by QR is entirely warranted.

Previous Governments were not interested in providing an efficient rail service in Queensland. They were into giving away the services to free enterprise. The previous

Government allocated an expansive budget to electrify the line from Brisbane to Rockhampton. It electrified the line, without maintaining and improving it. It will now cost this Government a lot of money to relocate overhead power lines. The previous Governments did not rely on efficiency, they were concerned with getting money for their election campaigns. In regard to Citroen ETP—each contract was \$5.5m over the department's estimates. The previous Governments were not interested in looking after the jobs of Queenslanders, they were not interested in looking after Queensland Rail, they were interested in looking after their jobs in Parliament and their positions in the Government of the day. The people of Queensland realise that they do not need a National Party back in Government in this State ever again.

Time expired.

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Condamine—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.24 p.m.): I support the remarks of the member for Gregory that were supported by the member for Burnett. It appears to me that the Q-Link initiative of the Government is a good example of a theoretical model that has been imposed from the top down. I can understand that the Government has approached the project with the best of intentions and wants it to work. As the member for Gregory has so ably said, the initiative is putting people in private practice out of work. It seems to me that the model works to a certain extent down to the regional level, but from comments that I have received from people in the smaller towns in Queensland, the Government has a real problem. Retailers and other people in those small towns have real commercial problems, and problems with access to the services. I will give examples of some of the problems that have been referred to me. First of all, I mention the town of Dalby. It is a regional centre and it is serviced daily—

Mr Beattie: An important town.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: It is an important town. It is a regional centre.

Mr Hamill: Where QR workers are providing the door-to-door service—the sort of job you would take away.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The Minister can speak in 10 minutes' time. There is a day-to-day service in that town. From talking to local people, particularly those who are employed in the railways, I have found they are a little bit confused. It seems a little bit inconsistent that another haulage company, Hile Carrying Company, has a door-to-door service. I am told that every day the Hile Carrying Company gets its goods to Dalby by rail. To the best of my knowledge, Q-Link, which is in competition with that company, sends a truck to Acacia Ridge every day to pick up the small freight and bring it back to Dalby. The people in Dalby ask me why the Government would go to the expense of running a truck purely to pick up the goods that Q-Link is going to handle door to door—and I grant that it is a good service—when at the same time Queensland Rail is running a train to Dalby with goods for the Hile Carrying Company that are then off-loaded. The locals are scratching their heads. It does not seem to work and they want an explanation.

A moment ago, I was talking about some of the smaller centres of Queensland. I now wish to mention a little town called Yuleba. It is a small town midway between Chinchilla and Roma. Chinchilla is a small freight centre, as is Roma. Both towns receive a good service and do not complain about it. However, Yuleba is a little place between those towns situated close to the railway line. I visited Yuleba because it is part of the new electorate of Western Downs. I spoke to a local shopkeeper who owns a store situated approximately 50 yards from the railway station. When I introduced myself, straightaway he complained about Q-Link and the service that it provides. I asked him to tell me what was unsatisfactory. He pointed out that he relied on the trains that come from Brisbane to deliver, among other things, fresh fruit and vegetables. The train arrives at approximately 6 o'clock in the morning. The shopkeeper asked the Queensland Rail if he could go across and take his goods off the train, because he knew the train was en route to the small freight centre of Roma. He was told that that was not possible. He offered to help the people employed by Queensland Rail to take the goods off the train. He was told that that was not possible, that the goods have to be delivered

from Roma by Q-Link. The shopkeeper further explained that by the time the train reached Roma, a rail motor, which is usually empty, leaves Roma and comes back to Toowoomba. The shopkeeper requested that his goods be loaded onto the rail motor because he would then receive them at approximately 9 o'clock in the morning. He said that although that was not his first preference, that arrangement would suit him fine and he could get his goods off the rail motor. Queensland Rail told him that that could not be done and that he had to wait for the goods to be delivered by truck. Although the shopkeeper had proposed two alternatives for the delivery of his goods, he was told that the goods had to be delivered by truck. He received them at about 11 o'clock in the morning. Two days each week, as honourable members would understand, in those small towns a truck goes out and delivers mail, fresh fruit, and small supplies to various properties—

Mr Elliott: The mail truck.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The mail truck. Because that mail truck has to travel 60 kilometres to 80 kilometres, it leaves Yuleba before 11 o'clock in the morning. On Fridays, the shopkeeper, who would love to have his fresh fruit and vegetables, has part of his order loaded onto the mail truck which goes out to those various properties, and the truck does not visit those areas again until the following Tuesday. Unfortunately, the Q-Link truck arrives after the mail van has departed.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I am talking about the service. The Minister will have his chance to speak in a minute. I am saying that the theoretical model that works down to the level of large towns is all right, but it falls apart in regard to the smaller centres. Those centres are just as important as any other part of Queensland. I thought that that was a bit strange, and I could understand why that shopkeeper was upset. Not too long afterwards, while travelling through central Queensland, I spoke to a minister of religion who services the area around Jericho and talks to people about Lifeline and other similar organisations. He brought to my attention a similar problem that is experienced in Jericho, which is located on the eastern side of Barcaldine. The arrangement with Q-Link is that the train takes the goods as far as Barcaldine, then they are put on a truck and taken back to Jericho, which is located on the railway line. The member for Toowoomba North spoke about shunting problems. Because of the amount of small freight that would be dropped off in a place such as Jericho or Yuleba, it is probably kept in the guard's van or close to it, and it would be simply a matter of opening the door and throwing out those goods at the various centres. No shunting is required for that small freight.

Mr Beattie: No guards any more.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Other staff can do that. There are no guards because there is now a regulated labour market. The people of Jericho complained to that minister of religion, who is looking after their welfare and working for Lifeline. The shopkeepers and other residents of Jericho have complained because, when goods are dropped at Barcaldine, they are left out in the open. If products such as butter, cheese, fresh vegetables and ice cream are left there for a while before a truck picks them up and takes them to Jericho, those products reach Jericho in a state that people here would not accept. But that is the only service provided by the railways, and people do not like it. One would have to accept that those two examples demonstrate that procedures must be tightened up and that the present situation is not quite good enough.

Mr Hamill: But how is privatising going to solve that sort of problem?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The railways have a commitment to service. The member for Toowoomba North completely ignored that. I turn now to costs. Mitchell, which is a small country town west of Roma, is struggling. Roma, which is a fairly prosperous regional centre, is the capital of the south west. The people of Mitchell have suffered because Government services have been removed from that town. As a result, when people from Mitchell want to access Government services they must go to Roma, where they also do their shopping. So it is not solely a matter of removing a Government

service; people are also doing their retail shopping in Roma. The people of Roma already have a commercial advantage because of the size of scale of their operations. Because of the way that freight charges are being costed, produce carried by rail to Roma is charged at a particular price. If it is then loaded onto a truck to Mitchell, all of a sudden people at Mitchell must pay something like a \$28 per tonne loading. Of course, I recognise the labour content involved with that. The poor retailer at Mitchell has not only lost retailing business because local people have gone to Roma to access Government services; he also faces a \$28 per tonne increase in the freight charged on his goods, compared with what a retailer in Roma is charged. That creates a double whammy for people in places such as Mitchell and Miles.

Mr Hamill: There is a private contractor doing the delivery in Mitchell.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I shall come to that. There is a very real suspicion that the railways have a deliberate plan to discontinue the carriage of small freight around Queensland. I realise that the railways are more suited to carrying bulky produce such as grain and coal, but there is also a requirement on the part of Queensland Rail to provide a service. The member for Toowoomba North would do away with that service altogether.

Let me deal with the strategy, "Make the costs higher in those places to which we do not want to send it." That has already occurred. As a result, demand will decrease as people turn to truckies and other private enterprise. After that, Queensland Rail will undertake a survey and will determine, "There is no demand. No-one is using our services to Mitchell or Yuleba." As a result, Government members will come into the House and say, "We can state categorically that there is no need for Q-Link services to places such as Yuleba and Mitchell because no-one uses them." Of course they will not use those services, because the prices have been increased. That is all part of a very serious strategy, because the railways want to get right out of the carriage of small freight. When the Labor Party was in Opposition, the member for Ipswich belly-ached for half an hour about cutting rail services in the Brisbane Valley. He is a hypocrite.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development) (4.34 p.m.): I believe that the Opposition has been exposed by its members to show how hypocritical its position is in relation to this very important initiative of the Queensland Government through Queensland Rail. Some members, such as the member for Condamine, complained that Q-Link's rates are too high. Another member claimed that the rates are too low. Some members complained that Queensland Rail is cutting services in country areas. Others complained because Queensland Rail is providing additional services in country areas. Complaints were made that Queensland Rail is slashing jobs. Complaints were also made that Queensland Rail is propping up jobs. Opposition members cannot have it both ways. On the one hand, they argue that Q-Link is a means of removing small freight services from country people. On the other hand, they argue that they want Q-Link to disappear so that the entire small freight service is provided by private contractors.

The facts are clear. The point was well made by my colleagues on this side of the House that the Q-Link service has been structured to provide a better quality of service to the people of Queensland. For 30 years the National Party Government allowed freight services provided by Queensland Railways in this State to diminish, and country people were denied a door-to-door pick up and delivery service. As this Government has taken up the challenge of rebuilding the rail services, it is also rebuilding small freight services.

To further illustrate the hypocrisy of the National Party on this issue, I refer to an article that appeared in the *Herbert River Express* on 10 January this year. It stated—

"The railways will be trying to compete with the road transport people and get efficiency to a point where a lot of businesses and private people would use rail.

Making the rail service faster, efficient and more competitive must be supported as transport is vitally important to North Queensland."

That was not part of one of my press releases. It was said by the member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Rowell, who was endorsing Q-Link.

A Government member: He got one right.

Mr HAMILL: Yes, Mr Rowell got one right. I give him full marks for getting that one right. Another newspaper article stated—

“Given the massive losses faced by the Small Freight Sector (\$100m) it must be realised by us all that something must be done to cut the losses yet provide an efficient service.

...

Queensland Rail has not kept pace with modern transport techniques yet must now enter the 21st century.

It is up to all of us to help this happen, not by knocking, but by taking an interest on a continuing basis.”

That article was written by the member for Roma, Russell Cooper, in his local paper in a column headed “Q Link designed to cut rail losses and provide an efficient service”.

I welcome Mr Cooper's endorsement of Q-Link. I table the article and I hope that certain other members of the Opposition might take a leaf out of Mr Cooper's book. What are they on about? They are denying Queensland Rail the opportunity to provide that efficient service, denying Queensland Rail the opportunity to stay in the small freight business and denying people who are working for Queensland Rail the opportunity to turn up to work on Monday knowing that they have a job. Railway workers in centres throughout Queensland ought to know what their representatives in this place said today. I will visit Barcaldine and Emerald and talk to the railway workers who are providing the Q-Link door-to-door service from those centres and say that Mr Johnson, their representative in this place, reckons that they should not have a job in Queensland Rail. I will visit Chinchilla and Dalby and talk to the railway workers there.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I did not say that those people should not have a job in Queensland Rail. I said that members of the National Party would be protecting their jobs in Queensland Rail.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hollis): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr HAMILL: Well might the honourable member be sensitive.

Mr JOHNSON: There is a point of order. I ask the Honourable the Minister to retract that statement because it is not true.

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

Mr HAMILL: When a member states in this place that Queensland Rail should not run a Q-Link service, that is a true threat to 1 200 people in the organisation whose livelihood depends upon that small freight service.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I find the Minister's statement offensive. I ask him to withdraw the statement about the railway workers in my electorate.

Mr HAMILL: I withdraw anything that the honourable member might find offensive. But I find it offensive that he can deny 1 200 workers in Queensland Rail a job, particularly the workers in Emerald and Barcaldine whom he is supposed to represent. He is no better than the member for Burnett, who wants to deny employment to railway workers in Bundaberg. The honourable member has stated in this place that those people should not be working for Queensland Rail.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I did not say that I denied 1 200 railway workers their jobs, and the Minister knows that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. I will regard any other similar points of order as frivolous and I will warn him under Standing Order 123A.

Mr HAMILL: It is not only the member for Gregory and the member for Burnett who want to deny railway workers and their families a livelihood. The member for

Condamine also wants to deny the railway workers in Chinchilla and Dalby the opportunity of secure employment with Queensland Rail, because the National Party wants to privatise the service. They are not the only areas affected. I am sure that the railway workers in Tully, Atherton, Mareeba, Bowen, Sarina, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns, Cloncurry, Innisfail, Charters Towers, Ayr, Gladstone, Barcaldine, Emerald, Biloela, Bundaberg, Capella, Theodore, Goondiwindi, Warwick, Chinchilla, Dalby, Gympie and Dirranbandi also want to know how the National Party in this place sold them out. What a farce! The member for Gregory champions himself in this place as the friend of the workers. If I had a comrade like comrade Johnson, I would be looking for a few other friends in this place. He is certainly no friend of the railway workers. He wants to sell out their livelihood, their jobs and their future to his mates in the road transport industry. He probably wants to hand that service over to his brother's transport business. I am sure that is the reason.

The honourable member for Gregory endorsed the approach of the New South Wales Government in respect of Trackfast. I am surprised that honourable members come into this place and bleat and carry on, as they have done in the past 18 months, about cutbacks to services in country areas. I am surprised that they have the audacity to endorse in this place the approach of the New South Wales tory Government. Look how the Bruce Bairds, the Wal Murrays and the Nick Greiners have dismantled the railway system in that State. I receive letters from the Mayor of Glen Innes pleading that Queensland should provide a railway service to the people of Glen Innes. Why? Because the Government—the honourable member's tory mates in New South Wales—took it away. Yet the honourable member endorses that approach in this place. It is like the emperor's new clothes; we can see right through him for what he is—a sham, a fraud and a charlatan.

Mr Rowell: That's two of us.

Mr HAMILL: There are about 24 on the other side of the Chamber. At the rate they are going, there will not be 24 back here at the end of the year, because the railway workers will know exactly what they are on about. Their attitude is on record today. I will make sure that it is read throughout the State.

This Government has a proud record with respect to rail. Honourable members might ask, "Why have these changes been put in place?" The changes have been put in place to ensure the viability of the system. Not one rail worker in this State has been sacked or has lost a job through the reform process. In the space of two years we have achieved a dramatic turnaround in the fortunes of Queensland Rail—an investment policy which in the small freight area alone is committing \$12m to freight centres throughout country Queensland. Earlier, an honourable member mentioned Goondiwindi. Recently, I visited Goondiwindi to inspect the freight centre in that town. What a disgrace! What an indictment on the neglect of railways under a National Party Government for 30 years! As a matter of fact, Goondiwindi was fortunate to have a forklift in the freight centre, but it could not be used because the floor boards were rotten and it was up on stumps. So much for the concern, the care and the attention that National Party Governments of this State provided to rail workers, particularly in country areas.

Q-Link has been a success story and it is lifting rail stocks in the small freight area. It is a genuine endeavour to extend and improve services to country Queensland. The Government is concerned about all Queenslanders, whether they live in the cities or the country. It behoves all members of this House to support the Government's initiative in providing a new service to country Queensland while ensuring continuing employment and secure employment for rail workers. We will fight strenuously to prevent the sort of vandalism that has been announced by successive members opposite this afternoon and by their spokesman in wanting to privatise the small freight operation, to hand it over to other operators and to take away jobs. We will fight that tooth and nail. The fraud from Gregory has indicated that he wants to take away those jobs in Barcaldine and Emerald. As the election gets near, I will be going out there to fight for the railway workers and their families.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I did not say anything about taking away railway jobs. I endorsed the railway workers.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hollis): Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member's time has expired, and the time for the debate on the Matter of Special Public Importance has also expired.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Housing and Local Government) (4.45 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

“That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act 1990.”

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Housing and Local Government) (4.45 p.m.): I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

The primary objective of the Local Government (Planning and Environment) Bill is to streamline the planning system, provide greater autonomy to local government in matters of local concern and achieve a greater integration of State and local government planning objectives. I will now provide an overview of the more important aspects of the Bill aimed at achieving these objectives.

The Government is committed to reducing red tape and streamlining the planning decision making process in accordance with the principles of the development approvals systems review. Where provisions in the Act for ministerial involvement do not add to the quality of local authority decision making and where matters are of a local or administrative nature, the Government should not be involved. The Bill therefore provides for removal of ministerial powers in matters of an administrative nature. The Minister's power to request details of recordings and expenditures of trust fund money, and to enforce the observance of a works contract made between a local authority and a developer, will be deleted. The Governor in Council will no longer be required to approve the amount of contribution towards the provision of parks. The Minister's approval of an extension of time within which a local authority must make a decision on certain planning matters will also be deleted. The local authority will now have the discretion to extend the decision-making period. The Minister will, however, have the power to issue a written direction to shorten or cease the extended period if a local authority is not exercising its decision-making responsibilities in a bona fide manner.

The Bill also provides for deletion of the requirement for approval of the Minister to commence preparation or extend the area of a development control plan and approval of the Minister to include an additional area in a planning scheme or to consolidate a planning scheme. Furthermore, it is considered that the existing restriction upon the power of a local authority to make minor modifications to a range of planning applications and approvals is unwarranted, does not contribute to the quality of a decision and adds unnecessary costs to the development industry. The Bill therefore provides that local authorities may make minor modifications to applications and approvals for amendment of a planning scheme, for consent to use land and to

subdivide land. Currently, only an application for staged rezoning or consent to use land can be modified.

The Bill provides that the Governor in Council may make policies on planning matters that are of State significance. Such policies would comprise a set of principles or more specific criteria which must be taken into account when making planning decisions. The purpose of a State planning policy will be to identify the Government's position on planning matters of State significance and to provide guidance for all decision makers on strategic planning and development decision making. State planning policies will provide a framework within which local authorities exercise discretion in accordance with local circumstances.

The Bill makes provisions to enable early notification to local authorities of whole of Government advice on matters of State significance that have implications for the local planning process. It provides that where a local authority intends to prepare a strategic plan or development control plan, it adopt a resolution to that effect and forward the advice to my department. Where a local authority intends to amend a planning scheme, it must give my department written notice of the reasons for the amendment prior to advertising. This early advice will also allow the Government to plan more efficiently for the provision of major infrastructure items such as schools, water supply and power provision. This is supported by the provision within the Bill for a planning study to be undertaken to establish a community profile when a planning scheme is prepared. Currently, the Act provides that a planning study must be prepared in connection with the preparation of a strategic plan and development control plan. The matters incorporated in such a profile would include public utility infrastructure systems, the social and cultural features of the population, including housing, and information on key natural resources.

In recognition that these changes will improve the quality of strategic planning, the Bill provides that certain decisions by a local authority, the Governor in Council and the Planning and Environment Court must accord with the provisions of a strategic plan or development control plan unless there are sufficient planning grounds to warrant a departure from the plans. It is essential that the integrity of local authority planning intentions be preserved, particularly under the circumstance of the Government using the strategic planning process to consult with local authorities on infrastructure priorities and programs. It is also recognised that the planning climate is not static and that there will be circumstances where a departure from the provisions of a strategic or development control plan may be appropriate because of particular circumstances.

The Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act currently provides that a contaminated land site investigation report is required for rezoning and staged rezonings. The Bill provides that a site investigation report may be required for a wider range of planning applications, including—

Mr Elliott: Who is going to pay for that?

Mr BURNS: We will handle that in the Bill. This is a speech introducing the Bill. I should not be answering the honourable member's interjection. The Bill provides that a site investigation report may be required for a wider range of planning applications, including consents and subdivisions.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BURNS: There is no reason why we cannot break the rules. There are also a number of other provisions, including provisions which clarify ambiguous or incorrect terminology currently used in the Act. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Randell, adjourned.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Housing and Local Government) (4.50 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

“That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Local Government Superannuation Act 1985.”

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Housing and Local Government) (4.51 p.m.): I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

The Local Government Superannuation Amendment Bill has three main objectives. Firstly, it will enable Aboriginal, Island councils and other bodies not constituted as local authorities to make occupational superannuation contributions to the Queensland Local Government Employees' Superannuation Fund on behalf of their employees. Secondly, the Bill will enable the Queensland Local Government Superannuation Board to manage other superannuation schemes in addition to the local government employees' superannuation scheme. The final objective of the Bill is to permit an employee of a local authority to elect to become a contributor to the Local Government Employees' Superannuation Fund without needing the prior approval of the local authority.

I will now give a brief outline of the issues which have led to the formulation of these amendments. The question of permitting Aboriginal and Island councils to become contributors to the superannuation scheme came to the fore as a result of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and the Australian Industrial Relations Commission varying the respective industrial agreements relating to employees of such councils. The agreements call for three per cent award superannuation contributions to be paid by the relevant councils on behalf of these employees to the Local Government Employees' Superannuation Fund. Minor amendments to the Local Government Superannuation Act have been incorporated into the Bill so that these industrial agreements can be accommodated.

The Bill also provides the mechanism whereby employees of these councils may make contributions to the scheme should their employing councils be in a financial position to make the additional non-award contributions on their behalf and should they wish to do so. This set of amendments has the support of the Australian Workers Union, the Australian Services Union and the Local Government Association of Queensland. The Queensland Local Government Superannuation Board has presented the new superannuation arrangements to the Aboriginal Coordinating Council and the respondent Aboriginal councils to the industrial arrangements. The relevant councils are awaiting approval of the proposed legislation so that they may commence contributions.

I now turn to the operations of the Queensland Local Government Superannuation Board. The board comprises an independent chairman, two local authority representatives and two union representatives. Their investment performance is above average and their administrative costs are below the average. The board and its administration are to be congratulated for its efficient performance. I also take this opportunity to put on record the Government's thanks to the late chairman, Mr John Wyatt, who worked very hard to improve benefits under the scheme. Following discussions with the board, it is apparent that there is scope for the board to manage additional superannuation schemes and that the board wishes to do so. In this respect, it is considered that the board should be given the opportunity to tender as scheme manager for other boards of trustees of superannuation schemes. If successful, the board could then act as scheme manager. The Bill therefore provides that the board can manage other schemes, subject to the approval of the Governor in Council by Order in

Council. Any resultant income is to be paid into the Local Government Employees' Superannuation Fund to help offset the board's administration costs.

Finally, I mention the issue of new employees becoming contributors to the superannuation scheme. Under the existing legislation, an employee of a local authority automatically becomes a contributor to the scheme on the completion of 12 months' continuous service with one or more local authorities. Prior to the expiry of 12 months, he or she could, with the approval of the local authority, elect to become a permanent employee and therefore a contributor to the scheme, and hence be eligible to receive the retirement, and death and incapacity benefits under the scheme. However, it is seen to be more appropriate if local authority employees are able to choose when they wish to become members of the scheme within the 12-month qualifying period, without the prior approval of the local authority. The Bill so provides for this amendment and has the support of the Local Government Association of Queensland, Australian Services Union, Australian Workers Union and the Queensland Local Government Superannuation Board. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Randell, adjourned.

DISABILITY SERVICES BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 28 April (see p. 4596).

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook) (4.54 p.m.): Today, it is my pleasure to join in this debate. Throughout Queensland, there are many people who suffer disabilities. Some are born with their disability; others, through accident or other factors, have the misfortune of finding themselves incapacitated. Their dependency on family or carers ranges from absolute dependence to partial reliance. Opinions of society and methods of caring for the disabled have varied in the past. In times gone by, there was a culture of both medical and public opinion that was directed towards institutionalised care. For the intellectually and profoundly disabled, the method of care centred around placing these people, many of whom had disabilities from birth, in isolated facilities. I am told that the facilities were inadequately resourced and, generally speaking, a very low level of consideration was provided.

In recent times, much has changed and, from my observations of one of the facilities, the level of attention could only be described as very good. In 1988-89, the National Party Government of the day instigated a task force of individuals with expertise and skills in the area of the intellectually disabled. A total of 215 organisations were informed and invited to make submissions. The task force travelled throughout Queensland. A total of 239 submissions were received, and over half of those came from individuals. The four major issues raised were—

housing;

residential services;

effect of resources, which include staff and finances, lack of post school options by way of vocational and educational initiatives; and

the need for coordination of services, evaluation and monitoring of service standards.

Preschool children require an early intervention program to identify their needs, with in-house assistance. Identification can assist in the child's development through programs such as family support and early special school services. Gaps in the services need to be identified to assist in the development of intellectually handicapped children. In fact, generally the area of monitoring and coordinating services needed to be upgraded and updated. Therapy services are important to the disabled. Whether the service is physiotherapy, speech therapy or occupational therapy, the enhancement of a disabled person's life can revolve very much around a form of stimulation. Very often, it may prevent secondary disabilities, particularly in children. This service can be facilitated by a wide range of people who could be volunteers, family friends or

professionals.

There was a strong level of support for all categories of disabled people to enter the normal school system with the appropriate levels of support. Generally, integration will be slow, as additional facilities need to be provided. The basic intention would be to give all disabled children an opportunity to gain the basics of learning and, depending on their capacity, to go on with their education in a normal environment. Consideration should also be given to enabling them to carry on at whatever age within the system in accordance with their capabilities. A major challenge is for post school options for the disabled in education and recreational activities. The TAFE system can be a major provider of further education and training for all kinds of people with disabilities. For the intellectually disabled, specialist agencies such as Q-Rapid, Crossroads and the Volunteer Friend Program can assist greatly. Sheltered workshops have met with a degree of success by providing therapy and an occupation. The degree of disability is an inhibiting factor for the disabled in workplace and recreational activities. With a very tight labour market and high levels of unemployment, any disability would create difficulties in finding employment. A difficult period for any person is when he or she leaves school or training, but for the disabled it is now even harder to find a job because of the high unemployment levels.

Many people with intellectual disabilities stay in the family home. Those families that are capable of supporting a person who is intellectually disabled are the best providers of support to that person. Provision of services can be a critical factor to assist families to cope with their children or adults at home. People and children who are not able to live in a family situation may require foster-care programs or hostel-type accommodation. Medical services are paramount. Diagnosis of intellectual disabilities and treatment by medical practitioners, along with the necessary facilities, in many instances can improve the quality of life. Recognition by the State of the need to provide specialised services is essential for a wide spectrum of specific problems. Speech difficulties are an example. Specialised attention can greatly assist disabled people with those impediments, enabling them to enjoy the means of expressing themselves and communicating.

Considerations with accommodation, which took the disabled out of institutionalised care, appear to be the blueprint that has been adopted today. The task force put forward a list of comprehensive changes that have characteristics similar to those in this legislation. The current Government had an extended period of consultation with more than 3 000 people and, between October and December last year, held 500 meetings around the State. A total of 75 submissions was put forward by various organisations, and more than 100 individual submissions came from people who wanted to participate in the consultative process. Although those numbers seem large, the consultative process would not have reached many people, and others would have doubts about becoming involved.

The Bill is part of the national approach to the disability issue and is a necessary component of the Commonwealth/State disability agreement. All States and Territories made a commitment to introduce legislation that was appropriate following the Special Premiers Conference in July 1991. Initially, the agreement allows for the transfer of \$1.9m to Queensland for this current financial year. It appears that the Commonwealth will then release funding for the States to take over control of existing services. I understand that the current program will extend over a five-year period. The Commonwealth has indicated that it will provide \$200m for existing services and growth. If the States bring in legislation that is supportive of the Commonwealth legislation before the end of the financial year, an amount will be allocated to improve the quality of existing services. As the major share of the responsibility will rest with the Queensland State Government once the agreement is ratified, an ongoing commitment must be revised with the Commonwealth on a regular basis to ensure that the disabled are not disadvantaged with the arrangement.

The legislation espouses the parameters of the type of organisation that will be eligible for funding. A mechanism should be provided to enable consultation with a wide range of organisations representing the disabled for the monitoring and review of needs

of the Government's direction. Objectives for development and implementation of services are set out, but, generally, the legislation does not state criteria for the way in which the service to the disabled will be provided or a definition of what a service really is. Disabled persons organisations are concerned that the legislation gives no clear indication of that very important point. I must reiterate that point. Quite a number of organisations have requested that a definition of a service be included in the legislation. I know that it is difficult to arrive at a solution to that. I considered the problem very carefully. When I spoke with the Minister about various points of the legislation, he indicated that the legislation should have some flexibility. However, people have a concern, and I hope that the Minister will take note of that.

It appears that the agreement will open up funding for the disabled that was too difficult to facilitate under previous funding arrangements, due to restrictions with the previous framework. The Opposition welcomes a better deal for people with disabilities and particularly those who care for them. It is vitally important that the carers are able to supply that support mechanism for many of the people who have disabilities. Very often, the burden rests on families or friends. Many people and families throughout Queensland have experienced extreme difficulties in coping with services required for people with disabilities. Although the initial funding was welcomed, there is a concern that the Commonwealth commitment might, in the future, expose the States to a burden beyond their capacities to cater for an adequate service. In relation to the negotiations with the Commonwealth—I would like the Minister to indicate what commitment the Commonwealth has given to contingencies that may require increased funding in the future. There is an indication that there will be a set rate, which will be in the order of \$50m at the end of the five-year period—an amount that could be far short of the funding needs at that time. I would like the Minister to explain to the Parliament the role of HACC, which provides a service for the disabled in their homes and will be provided under the State/Commonwealth agreement.

For some time, there has been a change of thinking regarding delivery of service to those with a high level of dependency on service-providers in institutions. The movement away from institutional-type care for the disabled to the appropriate care in community-type facilities has a wide level of acceptance. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved. In some instances, parents of minors may purchase a residential home jointly, if there is compatibility with the disability of the clients. Through their pensions, a similar type arrangement could be made for an adult disabled person. A rental type situation could also be an option. Those people who are intellectually disabled, who have attained the age of 18, coming under the responsibility of the Legal Friend, may be eligible for similar consideration. The area of concern with guardianship should be brought to the fore. Parents, other family and friends should be considered to continue with the responsibility of making decisions for the intellectually disabled once they reach the age of 18. This matter requires examination, as there are many people out in the broader community who are concerned about the current situation.

Ms Warner: It was your Government that introduced the Intellectually Disabled Citizens Act.

Mr ROWELL: I am not trying to disparage who did it. I am just talking about some of the things that need to be looked at in the future in a bipartisan way. Once a child who is intellectually disabled turns 18, a decision is made by the Intellectually Disabled Citizens Council about the future rights of these people and who will make decisions for them. The Legal Friend has taken on this role, which was once provided by the family or friend. It is quite disturbing for many parents to lose control of a child they have raised over 18 years. Despite the continued care and devotion they are prepared to give, they are denied the right to make decisions for their child. They are stripped of all right, legally, to participate in the decision-making process of the child they have cherished for those 18 years, though consultation does take place through the Legal Friend. I believe that, in the event that the parents, family or friend are prepared to continue on with providing a direction for the child, provision needs to be made for them to take on the mantle of guardian, provided they are capable of doing so. There is still a very necessary role for the Legal Friend for those intellectually disabled who are not

fortunate enough to have the backup of their family or friend.

There is no doubt that this matter needs to be addressed throughout Australia with uniform legislation. Transfer of people between States makes it particularly difficult for the intellectually disabled. There is some doubt in my mind as to how far the direction of placing people with severe multiple disabilities in residential-type accommodation should go. In the past, facilities have had shortcomings but, with the "lock the place up and throw away the key" attitude changed, the quality of life for these people has vastly improved. During a visit to residential accommodation for the intellectually disabled in Townsville, I was able to gain an appreciation of the type of arrangements that would prevail. The policy of placing these clients in a variety of suburbs around the city avoided concentration of houses in any one area.

Ms Warner: Where did you go in Townsville?

Mr ROWELL: I went to two particular homes—one in Isabella Court and another in Mundingburra. I understand that contact was made with the adjoining neighbours to make them aware of the program. Favourable acceptance of the program was received. In some cases, it was necessary to construct around the property a reasonably high fence that could not be seen through. This was required, as some of the clients' habits could be disturbing to neighbours—habits such as just staring at the neighbour's guests while a barbecue was in progress, or throwing objects over the fence. The autistic may be difficult to look after and require some specific control when placed out in residential settings. Epilepsy can be very effectively controlled with medication but, at times, people suffering from epileptic attacks can prove noisy. The need for medication and a carer sufficiently well trained to cope with a variety of situations depends on the nature of the client's problem. Many of these clients require constant attention. The people responsible for providing that care would need to be able to administer medication and have sufficient knowledge to know what to do in an emergency.

There is a great deal of scope for a family friend. In fact, in some instances, neighbours have befriended these disabled people. While the scheme is still only in its infancy, the effects on the value of adjoining properties has yet to be tested. There is no doubt that the most critical aspect of the scheme for the placement of the disabled—particularly the intellectually disabled—out in the community will lie in the assessment of the client. With the placement of the aged into nursing homes, a high level of success has been achieved with the geriatric assessment team. Assessment of the individual needs of the disabled will be important to ensure that the client is able to be placed in the least restrictive environment. By making an appropriate assessment of each individual's needs and providing the services which meet those needs, people with a disability will be able to take their rightful place as members of the community. Some will need to be close to medical facilities.

I agree entirely with the intentions of the Minister to improve the quality of life of those many people with disabilities. A visit to the Maryborough disabled ward made me aware of people with severe and multiple disabilities. Many of those people were immobile and required more than one person to assist them. They have a number of weekly activities, such as horse riding, educational programs, swimming and outings that would improve their quality of life. The nature of their complaints keeps them indoors. For some disabled people, a reasonable level of medical attention may be required at short notice. A medical opinion would be required to determine whether the quality of life of these people would improve if they were away from the existing facility and housed in residential accommodation. That may be difficult to ascertain, because it seems that there is no way of determining what these people are thinking. Perhaps there should be a variety of options available to cover the spectrum. I am aware that the parents of one of the disabled people in the special ward at Maryborough have a concern that residential accommodation would be inadequate.

Although the urgency to bring on the debate on this legislation may have been to attract Commonwealth funding, the process of change should be pursued very carefully. A major factor in the stability of the intellectually disabled person's life depends upon the building up of a relationship with their carers. I noted that fact very

carefully in my visit to the disabled ward at Maryborough. I noticed that the carers were well known to the disabled people. I can assure honourable members that the carers reacted favourably to my consideration of a number of the needs of those people with severe and multiple disabilities. Staff who are able to persevere with the numerous problems of the severely disabled make an immeasurable contribution to their wellbeing. The reservations about the personal accommodation review project stem from a lack of knowledge of how those people with multiple disabilities will be affected by the proposed changes.

Significant changes were made in the education system due to the placement of disabled children in the public school system. It was thought to be a good idea to close down the special schools and integrate those children into the normal school system. Many people saw merit in the concept, but what did not eventuate was the commitment by the Department of Education or the Department of Administrative Services to the work that was needed for the integration of those children into mainstream education. There is a lack of showers, hand rails in toilets, ramps and a number of other items that are essential for the disabled in public schools. The teacher aides who can assist those children with learning disabilities have been allotted insufficient time for the requirements of those children. Those children with learning disabilities are demanding a considerable amount of time away from other children in the classroom, and the special needs of those children are not met because of the number of other children in the classroom.

As some of the parents of the people with multiple disabilities live some distance from the institutional care now provided, it is understandable that they are concerned about the change. There needs to be further consultation with parents, relatives, etc., to ensure they are comfortable about the proposals the Department of Family Services is considering. It is important that families and friends of the intellectually disabled persons are part of the decision-making process to enable a mutually agreeable outcome to eventuate.

Placing some of the disabled out amongst the average Queensland family will normalise the client's life. It will also have a sobering effect on the person in the street, making people aware of others less fortunate than themselves. There would be a number of people prepared to share their daily lives with the disabled to enrich the lives of those disabled people. The exposure to the public will only strengthen the needs for support. I believe that is a very important point because, unless support is provided through the Government, it will be very difficult to fund a number of schemes that the disabled require. However, change of this nature will take time, as many of these people have grown up in a different culture. While there is a large body of support for the normalisation process, there are some who are yet to be convinced about the benefits of change. Programs of change with the profoundly and intellectually disabled should be implemented slowly. Though there were significant responses to the survey carried out on disability issues, there would be pockets of people who did not participate. In the country regions of the State, the lack of communication facilities would be a factor in that non-participation. Those people not involved with a respite group or providing the needs of a disabled person within a family may not have been aware of the survey. There could be resistance through doubt or fear about what the survey was designed to achieve. Ethnic groups could have a communication problem due to the language barrier. In the past, those people have tended to associate more with people of their own nationality, resulting in limited contact with the outside world. Getting any message through from Government is difficult with such people. Even when the message gets through, it may not achieve the desired reaction, as many ethnic people have come from countries where it was necessary to be subservient to the Government or there was scepticism about questions asked by Government.

Currently, there are people in their late seventies who have a disabled adult—who may actually be termed a child—in his or her late forties who is totally dependent on them. At that time in life, not enjoying good health themselves, those people are very concerned about the future of their child—although that person is actually an adult. There are many families who have a disabled child or adult who requires constant attention. Not only are the parents tied to the requirements of the child, but other

children in the family are denied opportunities. Some parents have been denied a social life entirely because the nature of their child's disability restricts them to staying at home. Country areas, in common with city areas, require respite care to provide relief to the families of those people who have to receive constant care and attention. Not only do centres need to be provided, but the funding of staff is equally important. Programs such as those being implemented in the more populated areas of the State should be extended to the country towns to facilitate regular contact with those disabled people needing levels of treatment beyond the capacity of family and friends.

Isolated communities need to be considered. The disabled in those communities should not have to be taken to an area some distance from their families and friends. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders come into this category. Consideration must be given to those people in remote communities. One of the problems with calling for expressions of interest from people with disabilities is that the groups with the most professional support are able to put forward the most convincing case. Those who have a lesser ability may not produce a convincing case for their needs, yet they could be in a desperate situation. I have seen this in many instances. It is something that requires attention. It is a very difficult matter to handle because those people are difficult to communicate with and they do not respond easily.

The basing of the Department of Family Services in five centres around the State gives limited access to many people who have a limited ability to express their needs. Many of the disabled lack the ability to communicate their needs, and they have great difficulty in getting their message across. The tyranny of distance adds to the problems associated with having their disabilities recognised. Transport for those disadvantaged by distance, especially those who do not have a support group, is a major problem. This factor must be considered, either for providing treatment or generally providing a better quality of life. Educational programs to prevent accidents that might cause head and body injuries must be pursued. For instance, the wearing of bicycle helmets is a step in the right direction.

Mr Hamill: Hear, hear! I agree with you.

Mr ROWELL: I acknowledge that. The Minister does not often agree with me, but this time he does.

Mr Hamill: I quoted you earlier today and I said you got it right for a change.

Mr ROWELL: Yes, I know. Workplace health and safety has a number of positive aspects. There are many risks in the workplace for people with permanent disabilities. Programs of awareness of how accidents can be prevented are important. It is difficult to draw a line between productivity and the cost of accidents. Adopting a commonsense approach is the main criterion in assessing risks involved in the workplace. People who have been part of a particular workplace generally develop a sixth sense in regard to risk taking. Programs in schools, such as those proposed by the Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Association of Queensland Incorporated, are worthy of support. It is difficult to educate the older generation about the major causes of and the ways to prevent spinal injuries. More notice of those matters will be taken by the younger generation, and the program involving visits to schools would have an impact on our youth. Having people who have sustained these injuries demonstrate the particular preventive measures to our younger generation will assist in reducing the incidence of spinal injuries.

There is a large number of paraplegics and quadriplegics in the northern region of Queensland. That is a reflection not of a high number of accidents that have caused spinal injuries, but rather of a preference for a constantly warmer climate. Providing people in wheelchairs with access to both Government and private-sector facilities and allowing individuals to conduct their own affairs are important to this group. This can be achieved by planning buildings and constructing well-designed public utilities. A number of organisations in Queensland care for and represent people with disabilities. Without their involvement, the task of Government in providing for many disabled people throughout the State would be difficult. Their fundraising activities provide a foundation to assist those who have been born with a disability or who, as a result of an accident,

have the misfortune to lead a restricted lifestyle.

Generally, the Opposition accepts the legislation. Some issues will be raised during the Committee stage. It will be important that the funding for the disabled does not get burnt up in administration, as there has been a high level of expectation with the injection of the Federal contribution. In the concepts being put forward, it will be paramount that all people with disabilities are covered equitably. Encouraging community participation will be essential if many of the changes are to be accepted. The planning to meet the needs of the disabled should involve the families to ensure that the hopes and aspirations of this vitally important group are understood. Many disabled people can make a significant contribution towards helping people who have similar problems and society as a whole. Improving their lifestyle and that of the people who support them is a major challenge for Government. The Opposition generally supports this Bill. I believe that the disabled have many problems that need to be recognised. Although this legislation is loose in many aspects, I am sure that the essential ingredient, that the Government recognise those people and provide services that make life for the disabled so much more bearable, will make for a better future.

Mr SZCZERBANIK (Albert) (5.29 p.m.): My colleague the Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs referred in her introductory speech to the crucial need for the establishment of a legislative framework for Queensland's disability services. We need to remind ourselves that such a framework has been sought by Queenslanders with disabilities and other interested parties since the International Year for Disabled People in 1981. People with disabilities—and that is the key to this legislation—not disabled people, but people with disabilities, represent almost one sixth of the population of Queensland. Many of them will use the supports provided by the services which are the focus of this legislation. This Bill focuses on the entitlement of these people to enjoy the same rights as other Queenslanders.

This Bill is a significant document in the development of Queensland's future and, as such, is long overdue. It will provide a firm legislative base for the delivery of disability services by both Government and non-Government agencies. This Bill will clarify the Queensland Government's objectives in funding both Government and non-Government agencies. It will also clarify the criteria against which disability services will be assessed and evaluated. Further, this Bill will provide Government departments with broad policy directions for any future review of their programs and services. It affirms the Queensland Government's commitment to protecting the rights of people with disabilities; to furthering their inclusion in Queensland communities; to achieving increased independence in the way they live, work and recreate; to having their confidentiality and privacy respected; and to enabling people with disabilities to enjoy a quality of life. It comes at a time when these rights are being clarified and heightened by various pieces of legislation introduced recently in this House.

A rationalisation of roles and responsibilities for disability services between the Commonwealth and State Governments was proposed by the Council of Social Welfare Ministers in March 1989. An agreement outlining the terms of the rationalisation—the Commonwealth-State Disability Agreement—was signed by heads of Government at the Special Premiers Conference in July 1991. At that time, the Queensland Premier made a commitment to introduce State legislation complementary to the Commonwealth's 1986 Disability Services Act. The implementation of this agreement, which involves a transfer of Commonwealth responsibilities in the disability area as well as associated funding totalling approximately \$205m over five years, will follow the enactment of this Bill. That agreement contributes to a uniform national approach to the development, funding and assessment of disability services, which are the three key elements of this Bill. As well as a rationalisation of responsibilities and roles between the Commonwealth and this State, this agreement provides for joint planning arrangements. Through a joint planning process, Governments will work together to better identify where services are needed. An immediate benefit for people with disabilities, their families, carers and service providers is that it will be clear which level of government they must deal with. In the longer term, this means that one level of government has clear responsibilities for addressing service needs. This will also reduce duplication of services and service

gaps.

Development of this Bill began with the release of a discussion paper on the proposed legislation for Queenslanders with disabilities developed by a working party comprising representatives from all relevant State Government departments. At the same time, staff of the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs met with a large number of interested individuals throughout Queensland to frame a process for consultation that would be comprehensive and accessible and allow real input. Statewide consultations were held from October to December 1991 to ensure maximum input on the proposed legislation from people with disabilities, families and carers, service providers and others involved in the disability field. I point out that one of my neighbours, who used to give me a bagging, was involved in that consultation process. He felt that the process was extensive, and enjoyed it. Information from the consultations was incorporated into this Bill. Through this Bill this Government recognises its crucial role in supporting those individuals through protecting and promoting these rights. Programs and services for people with disabilities should be designed and implemented so that their focus is on developing the individual and on enhancing the individual's opportunity to establish a quality life. These programs and services should ensure that the conditions of everyday life of people with disabilities are the same as, or as close as possible to, the conditions of everyday life enjoyed in the general community. Programs and services should also be appropriate to the age of the individual. They should be innovative, flexible and responsive to the needs of all people in this State with disabilities. These objectives are supported in this Bill.

Although a number of Queensland Acts relate to services for people with disabilities, there is currently no overarching legislation on the broad direction for disability services in Queensland. As mentioned by my colleague the Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, at this stage in Queensland the development of community services for people with disabilities is largely influenced by Commonwealth legislation. This Bill is significant in that it goes beyond the Commonwealth's Disability Services Act in a number of ways. Firstly, it has a whole of Government approach and applies to Government departments, funded non-Government agencies and other bodies. This is consistent with the role of the State as a significant provider of services. It also facilitates coordination between specialised and mainstream services. Secondly, this Bill recognises the impact on the family of a person with a disability, and requires that families be considered in the development and implementation of services and programs. This ensures that program and service development is done in the context of the State's broader responsibilities for families. These changes are welcomed by the community, which has also responded positively to the greater flexibility allowed under this Bill and to the broadening of the definition of "disability" to include people with psychiatric disability and acquired brain damage. As requested by service providers, this Bill provides a broader and more pragmatic approach to planning and service development in Queensland than has occurred in the past. They see this as a more predictable framework that will encourage long-term planning and better coordination and efficiency.

This Bill addresses and defines State Government priorities and establishes the setting up of a framework which would allow these services to respond to priority needs. This heralds a fresh approach to the needs of Queenslanders—an approach not adopted by past National Party administrations. The Bill provides the direction for this Government to work with the community to strengthen the position of Queenslanders with a disability. This approach offers an opportunity to develop new flexible approaches to policy formulation and service delivery and to give people with disabilities and other interested parties increased participation in all levels of decision-making. This Bill sets the basis for long-term planning and will ensure the integrity, flexibility and vitality of services and programs. Such service provision has been long called for and is well overdue in this State. Through this Bill, the Government will be able to foster an environment in which people with disabilities, service providers and others in the community can work in partnership to establish innovative solutions to the challenges we face together.

As I mentioned earlier, the objectives of this Bill were set following extensive Statewide consultations on Queensland disability services legislation at the end of 1991. Those consultations were the most extensive ever held on disability issues in Queensland and, quite possibly, Australia. To ensure real community input, those consultations were advertised in all Queensland metropolitan newspapers and in more than 40 regional newspapers. Almost 10 000 copies of the discussion paper on this Bill were circulated. That paper was made available in print versions, including plain English, on audio tape, in braille and on a computer bulletin board that was accessible throughout Queensland. More than 350 meetings were held in 30 centres throughout the State, with attendances over the 3 000 mark. Feedback through various media was available on regional and Statewide issues before the close of consultations. Submissions on the proposals were received from 75 organisations and from 110 individuals. All information received from those meetings and submissions has been taken into account and has shaped this Bill.

Disabilities covered by this Bill have been broadened to include psychiatric and neurological disability. Many young men and women who have been injured diving into shallow water are covered by this legislation. Previously, they would be left to fend for themselves. This means that the provisions of the Bill cover people who have sustained head injuries through no fault of their own except, perhaps, stupidity and people with psychiatric disabilities. These people will no longer slip through the gaps created by services which were not designed to cater to their particular needs. Following those consultations, the Queensland Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs and Queensland Health have been working closely together to address those issues and the potential for greater coordination between those departments. The working party established to develop the framework for this Bill was made up of representatives from all relevant departments. This has initiated a process of collaborative planning integral to the whole of Government approach inherent in this Bill.

A further significant issue that arose from consultations regarding disability was that of safeguards. This Bill addresses the issue of safeguards by including specific user-rights requirements for service providers. It also establishes the Minister's capacity to establish service agreements specifying outcomes which reflect the principles and objectives. Let me reiterate that this Government is committed to ongoing consultation with people with disabilities as it moves further on significant policy and program changes in setting Queensland's new direction. This Bill will be complemented by a directions statement for Queensland outlining the path the State Government proposes to take in responding to the issues of concern to people with disabilities and will offer a more detailed account of the collaborative manner in which this will occur. This directions statement will establish a process for the coordination of policy and programs for people with disabilities across departments and form the basis for complementary and coordinated planning. This document will examine the services and supports which Government should provide to people with disabilities through all stages of life. The significant and varied impacts of cultural difference, Aboriginality and Torres Strait Islander identity, gender and geographic location on life-stage development will be taken into account through specially focused Government responses. This directions statement will be released along with the enactment of Queensland disability services legislation.

It is proposed that, in future, all organisations approved for funding under the disability program will be required to enter into a service agreement. Those agreements will identify the service to be delivered, specific conditions, approved funding levels and projected outcomes for individual users in accordance with the principles and objectives of this Bill. Organisations that have sought funding for services which support people with disabilities have, to date, had to seek their funds from either the Commonwealth or State Governments primarily on the basis of a submission. This process will be replaced through the needs-based planning approach of Queensland's disability program. In the disability program, the primary input will come from people with disabilities themselves, together with families and carers, advocates and service providers—both Government and non-Government. It is recognised that it is vital that

standards for State-funded services reflect the specific operating environment for services in Queensland. This Bill establishes the principles and objectives for funding guidelines for disability services. These services will be revised to reflect those principles and objectives.

The Bill addresses the diversity of developmental opportunities for people with disabilities, the support required for the maintenance of the family unit and the rights of people with disabilities to be included and to participate in the community, as well as their right to be involved in decision-making and planning. For Government to respond to this diversity of challenges, there needs to be a strong partnership between Government and the community. This partnership will rely on effective coordination between Government agencies and cooperative planning with non-Government organisations. It relies on new service models which are innovative, flexible and responsive. It also relies on a set of safeguards which will ensure that consumers are informed about the range of opportunities and can establish their rights to take advantage of them. This Bill provides the impetus for this partnership to move forward positively and confidently. Throughout my speech I have mentioned people with disabilities, not disabled people. I support my colleague and I support the Bill.

Mr QUINN (South Coast) (5.46 p.m.): This Bill is complementary to Commonwealth law, and its passage is necessary to enable Federal funding to flow to the States. It seeks to put into place a broad framework in which programs and services for people with disabilities can be provided by both Government and community organisations and, in doing so, bind the Government to accepting the legislative and financial responsibility for this to occur. By stating the principles and objectives that will underlie the provision of these services and programs, the Bill affirms that people with disabilities, including children, have the same human rights as others in our society. To obtain funding under this Bill, services and programs must promote these rights. This is a laudable aim. In this regard, the spirit of the Bill is to be supported and commended. It will allow services to be tailored to the needs of clients who, if they are able, can exercise their rights in a non-restrictive way. The Bill covers Government and community services for people with a wide range of disabilities, namely people with mental, intellectual, physical and sensory disabilities, and it takes into account the impact that these services will have on their families. It is in these two areas—the whole of Government approach and the recognition of the impact on families—that this legislation differs from the Commonwealth version. Hopefully, these significant changes—and they are significant changes—will not see the same anguish being caused as some families are currently suffering under the Commonwealth's hand. I will make some more comments about these problems later.

I realise that the Bill needs to be broad and flexible so that it can accommodate a wide sweep of disabilities and the necessary supporting services, but some issues require clarification. I do not think that I would be alone in saying that we have had quite a considerable number of people approaching us to put their views quite forcefully. I can appreciate the emotional attachment that some people are putting on the provision of services under this legislation. I will reflect on some of the concerns they have expressed to me to get the reaction of honourable members on the record so that these people know where they stand and so they know what the State Government's position is in this regard. Firstly, I understand that should this Bill pass through this House before the end of the financial year, Queensland will receive an additional \$1.9m above the budgeted allocation for these services. Although this transition money is meant to provide incentives for providers to improve the quality of their services, no mechanism seems to exist in the Bill to outline how this will occur. The change process that will be used to improve the quality of programs and services already being funded should have received some attention in this Bill or in the Minister's second-reading speech so that the current service providers and their clients can react and know their position accordingly. This is a grey area, and almost all the people who have come to see me have said that this requires some sort of clarification.

The second area of concern relates to the lack of provision in the Bill for regular reviews and monitoring of services receiving funding. In light of this, how will the

Government evaluate the quality of such services to see if they really conform to the legislation's principles and objectives? Such a mechanism is necessary for quality control, and exactly how this is to be achieved ought to be explained also. Thirdly, there is no defined procedure which will allow clients to make complaints. Clause 21 acknowledges that such a procedure should exist, but fails to detail the mechanism, especially for any sort of independent assessment of those complaints. I understand that this point may be covered in a future statement. The honourable member for Albert mentioned that a direction statement may be made later on. It may be dealt with in that statement, but it should be addressed tonight as well. On this issue, the Liberals will be supporting an amendment foreshadowed by the member for Hinchinbrook, of which the Minister has already received prior notice. I think that that amendment, which we will be supporting, will overcome some of the difficulties that have been expressed. In other States where similar complementary legislation has been enacted or is even being considered, such procedures are deemed essential and are included.

Fourthly, there is an issue relating to the appeals made under this Act. It is causing concern amongst service users, although it may be loosely covered by a future administrative appeals tribunal or even under current legislation, such as health rights. Clause 28 of the Bill also gives the Minister the power to review decisions but, altogether, this area is too vague and I would be interested to hear how the Minister plans to accommodate such appeals. My fifth concern centres upon the interpretation that may be placed upon some of the clauses and the resultant anguish that may be visited upon service users and their families. I mentioned this issue in my opening remarks. It applies specifically to the Commonwealth legislation, although I did say that because this Bill takes a whole of Government approach and also takes into account the impact on families, these two extra conditions may mitigate this rather severe interpretation of the law that the Commonwealth seemed to have placed on it. Under clause 26, the Minister has the power to approve grants if he or she is satisfied that the principles and objectives as set out in the legislation are being promoted. However noble and well meaning these objectives might be—and they are difficult to argue against—it must be recognised that in some circumstances for some individuals with disabilities, these conditions may be detrimental to the family and the individual's wellbeing. In other words, there may very well be a conflict between the philosophy underlying the Bill and the realities and pragmatics of family life. That is the part that is now causing concern in relation to Commonwealth legislation. Much family distress, especially where there is a disabled child involved, has already been caused by this Commonwealth legislation based on these same principles and objectives. I do not believe that interpretations which would cause similar distress should be considered. Given that this Bill includes the two requirements that I mentioned before, hopefully this will not occur. But, as that is a subjective assessment, how these two competing requirements will be resolved in the best interests of all will measure the success of this aspect of the legislation.

Another concern that seems to be preying on people's minds is that clause 18 is aimed at preventing a single organisation from exercising complete control over a client's life. While philosophically appropriate, in practice this can lead to inefficiency within the system. It will cost more to implement this provision because services are not provided under one roof. In some cases they are now, but it will be difficult to coordinate and to satisfy the needs of the individual. That problem is becoming increasingly apparent in schools. Children with disabilities have been moved out of specialised schools back into the classrooms. The term used to describe that practice is "mainstreaming". While the initial proposition was put to schools and to p. and c. associations that the children would re-enter the classrooms with an adequate measure of support, indeed that has not been the case. A shortage of funding has exacerbated the problems.

Parents whose children attend a class that is attended also by a disabled child are concerned that the teacher spends an inordinate amount of time trying to accommodate the needs of that individual. Those parents perceive that the quality of education received by their children has diminished because of the time the teacher has had to

allocate to the disabled student. This problem is causing some distress within the classroom. The major concern seems to be that the promised additional support for the disabled child has not been forthcoming from the State Government. That is certainly a matter of concern among parents and teachers in the State school system. With the concept of independent advocacy in place, it is difficult to judge whether clause 18 will be a step forward for some children who have disabilities and who will be affected by this clause, given the low level of funding to which I referred earlier and which is continued in current budgetary considerations.

Clause 9 (2) (d) states the principle that people with disabilities should have the right to participate actively in decisions that affect their lives, including the development of policies, programs and services. However, the Bill fails to set out any mechanism to allow this to occur. It acknowledges the right of people to do this, but provides no way in which they can exercise that right. That may well eventuate, but I believe the issue is worthy of comment during this debate. Surely, if the Government wishes to give force to the principle which it endorses—and which I endorse—then the manner in which disabled people are to give effect to those rights should be clearly spelt out in the legislation. Another shortcoming was indicated by the member for Hinchinbrook. It has been put to me that as this Bill relates to services, surely one of the fundamental definitions contained in the Bill should have been “service”, and an explanation of exactly what that is. I note that definitions of that type appear in the Commonwealth legislation, and I point out that the very reason for the existence of this Bill is the provision of services. Therefore, what constitutes a service ought to have been expressed in black and white. I recognise that because of clause 26, the Government cannot step around the principles and objectives contained in the Bill by funding services that ignore the whole spirit of the Bill, but a clearer and tidier approach would have been to include a definition of “service” within the Bill rather than have it defined by default, which will be the result of this Bill. Even if the definition of “service” was as broad as “an activity funded under this Act”, it would be better than not having the term defined at all.

A positive aspect of this Bill is the fact that, for the first time, people with psychiatric disabilities have been included. Since the Commonwealth Government did not previously fund services for this group of people, many of the necessary services will have to be developed from scratch. While funding for these services will be a matter for budgetary considerations, it must be recognised that there is a large and growing gap that must be bridged as hospitals continue to prefer that people with psychiatric disabilities be accommodated in the community.

As I said in my opening remarks, the spirit of this Bill is to be commended. In general, the words stated on paper give effect to that good intention. I have outlined some defects in the Bill and I look forward to the Minister's response. Overall, however, the Liberal Party regards this piece of legislation as a positive step forward for people who have disabilities. By providing a mechanism for high-quality support, it gives certainty to their lives, although some of the safeguards need to be strengthened. It is for those reasons that the Liberal Party will be supporting the legislation.

Debate, on motion of Mr Braddy, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Rockhampton—Leader of the House) (5.57 p.m.): I move—
“That the House do now adjourn.”

Sugar Industry

Mr RANDELL (Mirani) (5.58 p.m.): In the limited time available to me, I rise to speak about the disgraceful treatment handed out by the Goss Labor Government and by the Federal Government to the great Queensland sugar industry. This once proud industry was built up over many years by hard-working canegrowers and their families

who created an industry that brings in an income of approximately \$1.5 billion yearly to this State's economy and creates massive employment for thousands of workers in the fields, mills and railways. It also has a flow-on benefit to hundreds of businesses right along the coast of Queensland.

This industry has been devastated and brought to its knees, firstly, by a State Government that is being driven by intellectuals and academics in Canberra who have vested interests and who stand to gain by legislation brought into the House in April last year, which is known as the Sugar Industry Act. By virtue of that Act, canegrowers no longer control their own industry. The completely regulated industry, which we all knew, had a total embargo on sugar imports and a guaranteed price for domestic sugar which was adjusted to the CPI every year, but that has now gone. The regulated expansion of the industry that was carried out in a manner that growers could afford to accept has also gone out the window. The security of assignments and peaks no longer exists. Farms are practically unsaleable or, if they are saleable, are being sold at greatly reduced prices. Farmers are deserting the industry to grow bananas and other crops which will have a flow-on effect for other industries. What we see now is an industry in a state of complete devastation.

I am a second generation canefarmer and my son is a third generation canefarmer, and I will never forgive this State Government and the Federal Government for what they have done to the livelihood of farmers, workers and their families. Those Governments have sold out the people and replaced security with no hope, no light at the end of the tunnel, and no hope for the future. When history is recorded and people look back over this period, they will realise that this is the blackest and most devastating period in the history of rural industry in Australia. After what the Minister for Primary Industries, Mr Casey, and the Queensland Government did to the sugar industry, the greatest hypocrisy of all is displayed in an article that was published in the *Cairns Post* and another one in the *Daily Mercury*, which was headed "Bright hopes for a \$5m sugar deal." In that article, Dr Warren Gellie said that he hoped to seal a \$5m deal. The article stated—

"Dr Gellie said he would be returning to Iran with Member for Mackay and Minister for Primary Industries Ed Casey at the end of the month.

Mr Casey's 10-day visit would reflect the Queensland Government's interest in the project.

...

Iran imported 800 000 tonnes of sugar a year and completion of the proposed project could reduce it to 100 000 tonnes a year."

With our expertise and technology, the Government is throwing 700 000 tonnes of cane on the world market, further diluting the price of sugar. I see that the member for Whitsunday does not support this. An article in the *Cairns Post* headed "Qld chases Iranian sugar jobs" states—

"Mr Casey said Queensland firms stood a strong chance of winning some of the \$1 billion worth of contracts for manufacturing technology. Contracts involve the construction of seven sugar mills and the cultivation of 84,000 ha of sugar cane."

It seems crazy to me that when our own industry is on its knees, when our own farmers are barely scratching out a living and when hundreds of businesses are closing down, we are going to help Iran to produce sugar, with our expertise and technology, and to compete with us on the world market. Make no mistake, even with all the assurances that Iran will produce only for its domestic market, there is no doubt in my mind that it will have an impact on the world price, which these two Labor Governments in Australia are determined to make us accept and from which we must try to eke out a living.

I wonder how many times in the past overseas delegations have taken our technology—which was paid for by the sugar industry and the Australian taxpayer—back to their own countries to build up an industry which became a competitor in the very competitive world sugar trade. I wonder what the wool industry

would say if we were to export merinos. In media reports, it is alleged that Iran plans to build seven new mills under its Khuzestan sugar project and that it intends to expand the sugar industry in the future. It seems as though Mr Casey is going to help our competitors to build up an industry that could, in the future, either take our markets or certainly dampen the price of sugar on those markets. I believe, as do most growers, that charity begins at home and that we must not do anything that might jeopardise the future of Australian canegrowers, their families and workers in the mills and other associated levels of employment. We should be extremely cautious before we consent to giving any competitor an edge in our sugar trade of the future. Members on the Government side of the House are prepared to do that. I call on Mr Casey and the member for Whitsunday not to enter into any contracts that might jeopardise or have any adverse economic impact on our already hard-pressed canegrowers and workers.

Time expired.

Townsville Basketball Incorporated

Mr McELLIGOTT (Thuringowa) (6.03 p.m.): There is much rejoicing in Townsville now that it is virtually certain that the Townsville Suns will take their place in the National Basketball League commencing in 1993. The Townsville Entertainment Centre is due for completion in November this year, funded by \$7m from the State Government, \$5m from the Townsville City Council, \$2m from the Thuringowa City Council and \$7m contributed by the Breakwater Island Trust. The centre will be the home of the Townsville Suns. Last Thursday in Townsville it was announced that Power Brewing would be the major sponsor, so there is now no impediment to the Suns taking their place in the national league, and I could speak at some length about the wonderful people who made it all happen. Unfortunately, there is a dark side to the story, and I wish to speak tonight about one of the most heartless commercial decisions that I can imagine and one of the worst con jobs perpetrated by a Government against amateur sport.

Moves to have a Townsville team in the national league go back as far as 1987. One of the conditions for entry was always that a stadium be constructed which would seat at least 4 500 people. In 1988, a company called Shine-On Pty Ltd was formed with the intention of acquiring the national league licence. Without any proper authorisation, Shine-On commenced construction of a stadium on land leased by Townsville Basketball Incorporated—TBI. It was intended by Shine-On, although never ratified by TBI, that, upon completion, Shine-On would lease the building from TBI. Finance was never secured. At its meeting held on 27 November 1989, the then Queensland Cabinet agreed to provide a \$3m guarantee conditional upon a detailed feasibility study of the project being completed. With the election of the current Government on 2 December 1989 and a proper assessment of the project, it became obvious that the numbers did not stack up and that neither Shine-On nor TBI could sustain the operating losses that would certainly occur.

The current Government moved to the concept of a three-way financial arrangement with local government and private enterprise for the construction of the entertainment centre where the Suns will be one tenant among other users and where any operating losses will be underwritten by the Sheraton Breakwater Trust. Construction of the so-called Sundome had been commenced, unfortunately, by local construction company Miller and Baldwin, and supposedly financed by local development company Avago. It soon became obvious that there was no money, and work on the project stopped. Both Miller and Baldwin and Avago have since gone bankrupt. Townsville Basketball has been left with debts totalling some \$500,000 from the failed Sundome project. In my view, TBI cannot be held responsible or accountable, as there was never any form of contract with TBI. However, to argue that in the courts would be beyond the resources of what is basically an amateur sporting body.

It could only have been Miller and Baldwin and Avago who established credit arrangements with suppliers. All goods and materials supplied to the project must have been supplied on the creditworthiness of those two companies. It could not possibly have been based on the creditworthiness of an amateur body—that is, TBI—occupying leased property, whose best trading result for the previous three years was a loss of

\$7,000. I will repeat that—a loss of \$7,000. However, the creditors want to be paid. In order to have the matter resolved TBI—very generously, in my view—has proposed to commit the basketball community to complete the ill-fated Sundome, although obviously not at the scale originally envisaged. The proposed building proposal includes an offer to the creditors of a 20 cents in the dollar payment. That offer has been accepted by 19 of the 23 creditors. Two of the major creditors, Readymix and Humes, are among the four who have refused to accept the offer. Readymix is owed \$66,160 and Humes is owed \$42,800. Readymix and Humes are, of course, part of the CSR group. I would suggest that CSR has done very well out of the Townsville area, yet its refusal to accept that offer will mean that TBI is unable to settle and will almost certainly be forced to cease trading.

What a tragedy for Townsville basketball just when the cup of joy should be overflowing. I am not talking about the glamorous side of the sport. The Townsville Suns will, no doubt, go from strength to strength. I am talking about the amateur association, the dedicated officials and the thousands of players and supporters who will be forced to accept the loss of their association because of a political stunt by the previous Government just days before an election and the heartless attitude of the corporate giant CSR. No doubt, another basketball association will arise. But as I understand it, the present directors may not be eligible to serve on any new body, so all of that expertise and experience could well be lost along with Townsville Basketball Incorporated.

Tonight, I call upon CSR to bare its corporate soul and to save the situation. Surely an organisation as big as CSR can be big enough to admit that poor commercial decisions were made with respect to the granting of credit to Miller and Baldwin and/or Avago. That was not the fault of TBI and its officials who simply want to pursue their love of sport.

Effect on Economy of Government Decisions

Hon. R. C. KATTER (Flinders) (6.08 p.m.): It was interesting to hear the member for Mirani refer to the sugar industry and to hear the interjections from the Honourable the Minister for Primary Industries and the member for Whitsunday. They have had the privilege of representing sugarcane growing areas and presiding over the first serious efforts to deregulate the industry and destroy the edifice which has been built over the last 100 years and which has kept one of the most important industries in this State alive. I would have thought that they had an enormous hide to be interjecting on the honourable member for Mirani.

The life of this Government has just about finished; it has only a few months left. It should look back over what it has achieved during the last three years. This Government introduced poker machines to the State of Queensland, which will see a lot of rich people become an awful lot richer, and a lot of poor people become an awful lot poorer. There is not one honest person in this House who would question that comment. This Government has legalised homosexuality in the State of Queensland. It can be judged upon that decision and a determination made on whether or not it was a good decision. Today, we have the deregulation—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order! Firstly, there is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Secondly, the honourable member for Flinders is not taking interjections.

Mr KATTER: The deregulation of the bread industry, which took place this week, has been a mortal body blow to the small bakers and the small businessmen in the State of Queensland. Let the newsagents and the milk vendors beware, because Mr Casey will stomp his big boots upon all of the small businesses in this State that he can stomp them upon, destroying small business and the owner/operator. There is not one single baker in this State—

Mr CASEY: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is deliberately misleading the House. His foot is about two inches longer than mine.

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

Mr KATTER: We have heard the people who were the Opposition and who are now the Government of this State constantly and continuously talking about the Japanese and how the National Party sold this State out to them. Never in my 18 years in this place have I heard a Japanese person publicly say, "Vote for the ALP." Yet Daikyo itself, the biggest Japanese operator in this State, has said, "Vote for the ALP."

Government members: Hear, hear!

Mr KATTER: Those members on the Government side of the House have all said, "Hear, hear!" They obviously think that that is extremely good. I am very pleased that *Hansard* can record those people who are in the House who have said that it is very good that a Japanese company should interfere in the politics of Queensland and advise the people of Queensland how to vote. I would hope that our side of the House pursues this matter and finds out how much money was donated by Daikyo to the coffers of the ALP before the last election.

Mr Nunn: They donated to you, too.

Mr KATTER: I suspect that we never got anything from them at all—obviously.

Mr T. B. Sullivan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nundah will cease interjecting.

Mr KATTER: In Queensland three years ago, 7 million acres owned by the first Australians, if you like, were taken from them. One venture that would have projected us to the forefront of technological change for the next century would have been achieved by putting solar energy into the Torres Strait. That was passed over to install the most primitive system known to man and to cause the pollution of what I can only describe as paradise—the Torres Strait.

Let me move on and be far more specific. On three occasions, the Pentland meatworks in Charters Towers announced that it was closing. As the National Party Government, by an aggressive policy we were able on three occasions to keep it open. The pathetic efforts of the Minister for Primary Industries have most certainly assisted in the closure of that meatworks. The gold tax introduced by this Government's Federal colleagues cost 200 jobs and forced the closure of seven mines in the Charters Towers region.

Let me go on to refer to something very interesting in Townsville. The cement works in Townsville, one of the great bastions and the industrial backbone of north Queensland, is about to be closed. Its closure has been announced. I checked up on the share register of those cement works. It is very interesting to note that 30 per cent of the company that owns the cement works is in fact owned by instrumentalities of this Government—the superannuation board for the generating authority and Suncorp. They must stand condemned as a result of the closure of the cement works in Townsville.

Time expired.

Kenilworth

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN (Glass House) (6.13 p.m.): Earlier this week in the halls on the ninth floor, I heard the member for Barambah say, in reference to the member for Flinders, "Bob musn't know that Parliament is sitting this week; he's here." If Bob had known that the Parliament was sitting, perhaps we would not have had to listen to the speech that we have just heard. This evening, I want to use the time available to me to talk about the situation faced by the people of Kenilworth, which is a small rural community in the north of my electorate. I express here also my very real regret that, as a result of the electoral redistribution, Kenilworth is not within the electorate that I will be seeking to represent after the next election. The people have responded well to me as their representative and I have appreciated the assistance that I have received from them, despite the obvious difference of political view between me and the majority of the residents of the area.

Honourable members may be aware that during the flooding that occurred in the Upper Mary River Valley in February this year—beginning specifically on Friday, 21 February—the bridge spanning the Mary River at Kenilworth on the Kenilworth-Eumundi road was washed away. That bridge formed a vital link with Nambour, the major centre to which Kenilworth residents look for services not provided in their local community. This crossing also forms part of the bus routes that bring in a large proportion of students attending Kenilworth State School. Moreover, a number of children from the area attend the independent Range School at Mapleton and rely on this crossing on their way to school. Tourist traffic, which forms part of the economic lifeblood of the town, lost its circuit route which has the potential to severely limit spending in the town from this sector. The people of Kenilworth have been through bridge wash-outs before. In March 1989, the bridge spanning Little Yabba Creek on the Mary Valley Highway was similarly washed away. A low level crossing was provided by the Department of Main Roads and the two local authorities, Maroochy Shire and Caloundra City. It was the Goss Labor Government that built the replacement structure. The Goss Labor Government was not even elected until eight months after the bridge was washed away.

Early last year, I had the pleasure of accompanying the Transport Minister to Kenilworth, where he performed the naming ceremony for the new bridge. The community had requested that the bridge be named after Bill Waldren, the bush engineer who had constructed the former wooden structure many decades earlier. The lack of consideration shown to the people of Kenilworth by the former National Party Government in relation to that bridge must be contrasted with the swift and decisive action of the current Government and, in particular, the Minister for Transport, Mr Hamill, in this latest case. The bridge was washed away in flooding that commenced on Friday, 21 February. It is fairly certain from reports that I have received that the wash away occurred on the Friday, although flood levels made it impossible to be sure. By Monday, 24 February, officers of the department had confirmed by means of a site inspection that the bridge had been washed away, and on Wednesday, 26 February, I was able to make the announcement—thanks to the assurances of the Minister—that planning and design work had begun on a replacement bridge. No more than five days elapsed after the bridge had washed away than planning was under way for the replacement. This information was well received in Kenilworth, but it did not address all of the problems caused by the loss of the bridge.

Although a safe and useable road alternative is available via the Moy Pocket Road and Wilcox Road detour, the route is indirect, time-consuming and not totally accepted as safe by the people of Kenilworth, particularly in regard to school bus traffic. There was a need perceived to have the department provide a low-level crossing at the site of the washed-away bridge. Two petitions to that effect were gathered and were forwarded to the Premier on 27 March 1992. These petitions, unfortunately, did not comply with the form set out in the Standing Orders and could not be presented to the House. Accordingly, I have asked the Premier whether I could table those documents, and I will do so at the conclusion of my speech. Two days prior to the petitions being forwarded to the Premier, the Minister, Mr Hamill, had accepted an invitation issued through me from the town's business community to personally inspect the site. At that inspection, the Minister gave assurances that if such a crossing could be constructed at the cost estimate of the Maroochy Shire Council, the Government would be a significant contributor to the construction of such a crossing. Subsequently, the council has accepted the offer of a one-off contribution of \$60,000 and will fund the balance itself. I expect that amount will be approximately \$30,000.

The new bridge will cost in the vicinity of \$1.7m. It is to be a concrete bridge of 120 metres in length. It will be elevated some 12 metres above the normal river height. The old bridge was 45 metres long and 6 metres above the river. The new bridge will be located downstream of the old site, giving better access and greater elevations. Local people have already witnessed much activity on the site in relation to the road and bridge design, and the Minister has advised me that tenders for construction will be called in August. On behalf of the people of Kenilworth, I thank the Minister, not only for his swift action in this matter, but also for his obvious concern about the plight of this

small rural community. At this stage, I express my thanks to the local councillor representing the Kenilworth area, Councillor Herman Schwabe. He has been a consistent and persistent representative on behalf of his people, and in this matter he has acted no differently.

Time expired.

Cape York Space Station

Mr HOBBS (Warrego) (6.19 p.m.): I wish to discuss the Cape York space station. This State needs jobs and development. The Cape York space station can propel Queensland into the twenty-first century through the launch of communication satellites. An amount of \$250m is expended by Australia each year on communication satellites. That money goes to other countries, but it should be staying in Australia. A township of 700 people is likely to spring up around the precincts of the space station. The space station would initially involve thousands of people working on the project, and would be a terrific boost to north Queensland, particularly Cairns and Townsville and the manufacturing areas around the northern coast.

Australia is in a unique position. Cape York is about 12 degrees from the equator and it would be able to provide a clear passage over the ocean to facilitate the launch of rockets. One could say that Australia is a politically stable country. As the National Party views the situation, while the country is not in a satisfactory position, by the same token, it is not likely to experience coups, as is the case in many other countries that are similarly situated for the location of a space station. However, as time goes by, Brazil and Indonesia will also be looking towards building formidable space stations. Australia does not want to miss out.

Honourable members should examine what this Government has done about this project. It gave preferred status to one company and now it has opened the project up to all-comers. I have no problem with that. However, the Government has supported a 10-year study of the area. One really has to ask oneself how this study involves the companies concerned and the people of Queensland. The preferred consortium has been asked to negotiate on the site—which is a pastoral lease—and it is hamstrung by this 10-year study. How will this Government induce investors to come to Australia and put \$20m in a bank account, plus another \$800m, when they do not even know whether they have security of tenure. The consortiums do not know whether they are going to own the land. They do not even know what their future will be. This Parliament needs to legislate to designate a site for the Cape York space station. This Government needs to be able to say to overseas consortiums or consortiums within Australia that the site is there and it is a suitable site. It could then be opened to all-comers. The Opposition believes that that is a more sensible way to plan the project.

At present, there is no access to the land. These consortiums have to go out and find their way through. There is no real access. As I have already mentioned, there is no security of tenure. In addition, only approximately 1 000 hectares are required for the site. It is not as though a large amount of country is involved. The site has been referred to as being located in clapped-out buffalo country. That is probably quite an accurate statement. There is no pristine rainforest in that area. It is not as though there are a lot of sacred sites in the area. As this House has heard today, there are probably no sacred sites in the area. However, this study is locking up that country for 10 years. I point out that the Kennedy space station in the USA is situated in the middle of a national park. It is a well protected park and people certainly have no problem at all with it. We could also have that situation in Australia.

Transport initiatives need to be investigated and implemented. People may not realise it, but it costs three times as much to get equipment transported to that area of Queensland by barge than it does to get it transported by road. Of course, during much of the year, the roads are blocked off. The Government should be involved in technology transfers because of the interests of American and Russian investors. Overseas investors have to want to get involved, and this Government has got to be able to want them to get involved. I challenge the Premier to give the Opposition the

resources to put together this project. There is substantial opposition to the Cape York space station from some people within the US space industry. We need to be able to contact those people, to have a good relationship with them, to let them know that we want them here. When the Minister for Land Management was asked what he had done to assist land tenure, he replied that he had not done anything at this stage and that he would look at it later on.

Time expired.

Mr and Mrs M. Barton

Mr SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton North) (6.24 p.m.): In the last couple of days, much has been said in this place about the role of this Parliament. Aside from its legislative function, its role is to protect the little people and the battlers of this State. Tonight, I wish to raise an issue which I believe could have been and, indeed, should have been resolved much earlier if there had been more recognition by a large company in this State of the fact that little people do matter.

I am not here to belt the company concerned, PGH Clay Bricks and Pavers, but rather to outline to this House the effect that the nonchalant attitude of a large firm can have on an ordinary Queensland family. This case involves a dispute between PGH and Mr and Mrs Merv Barton of north Rockhampton. The dispute is over the quality of bricks that PGH supplied to the Bartons for the purpose of renovating their home. The Bartons, in common with many people who live in north Rockhampton, have come to like the neighbourhood in which they live and decided to upgrade their home rather than relocate. They went into debt to fund such renovations and, having visited their home, I can tell the members of this House that they have spent their money wisely, at least on the interior of their home. The exterior is another story.

I have a considerable background in the building industry. I am able to report that I have yet to see a worse example of brick quality than that of the exterior of the Bartons' home. As I said, the bricks that were supplied by PGH are of such a standard that approximately 20 per cent to 30 per cent of them are cracking and flaking away. It is simply tragic to see this otherwise beautiful home ruined because the bricks, paid for in good faith by the Bartons, are substandard. Honourable members can probably appreciate the amount of stress that this has caused the Bartons. Every day, they look at their dream home, their one great investment in their lifetime, their retirement home, and they witness a deteriorating, ugly mess.

It has not been for the want of trying on the part of the Bartons that this matter has not been resolved. Indeed, they agreed to have the matter assessed. This was done and the assessor indicated that the bricks should be replaced. To be perfectly fair to PGH, the company agreed to do so. However, PGH would not guarantee that the mortar colour could be matched. Since the Bartons are not eager to have their home resemble a patchwork quilt, they have rejected the suggestion. In a letter to me Mr Barton states—

“If Mr Wintraaken”—

who is the general manager of PGH—

“were in our situation and it was his personal house involved, would he be prepared to accept the repair method proposed and, if so, would he be proud to live in a house with an obviously patched appearance?”

I think not. There is only one answer to the problem: PGH should, in an act of goodwill and good faith, replace the entire brick structure. I am told that this would cost approximately \$16,000. It is money that the Bartons do not have, but certainly it is money that is not beyond the means of one of Queensland's largest brick manufacturers. The only other alternative is for the Bartons to take the matter before the courts. Of course, this will cost them dearly, both financially and emotionally. It is a strain that I do not believe they should have to tolerate. They acted in good faith in

purchasing those bricks. They bought them because of their name, and accordingly, I believe that the company has a responsibility.

I make an appeal in this place to PGH to do the right thing by the Bartons, to fix this problem for them, and to restore the good name of PGH to the people of Queensland. I do not believe that is too much to ask. I do not believe that the \$16,000 is beyond the company's means. For the life of me, I cannot understand why the matter has gone on for so long.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 6.29 p.m.