TUESDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 1993

———

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following Bills reported by Mr Speaker—

Meat Industry Bill;

Intellectually Disabled Citizens Amendment Bill;

Eagle Farm Racecourse Bill;

Regulatory Reform Amendment Bill;

Stock Amendment Bill;

Revenue Laws Amendment Bill.

PAPERS TABLED DURING RECESS

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I have to advise the House that the following papers were tabled during the recess in accordance with the details provided on the Daily Program circulated to members in the Chamber—

The Clerk of the Parliament—

26 October 1993—

Annual Reports for 1992-93—

Department of Consumer Affairs

Podiatrists Board of Queensland

Queensland Treasury Corporation—Capital Market Operations

Suncorp Insurance and Finance

27 October 1993—

Department of Lands—Annual Report for 1992-93-Addendum

Trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund—Annual Report for 1992-93

1 November 1993

Queensland Coal Board—Annual Report for 1992-93

2 November 1993

Annual Reports for 1992-93—

Optometrists Board of Queensland

Royal Brisbane Hospital Research Foundation

3 November 1993

Department of Primary Industries—Annual Report for 1992-93

Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts—Report on the Financial Management of the Department of Primary Industries

5 November 1993

Annual Reports for 1992-93—

Chairman of the Retail Shop Lease Tribunal

Police Superannuation Board

8 November 1993

Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority—Annual Report for 1992-93.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Rosewood, Rail Electrification

From **Mr FitzGerald** (97 signatories) praying that an improved railmotor shuttle service be provided to service Gatton, Helidon and Laidley and that buses not be considered as an alternative when the electrification of the railway to Rosewood is completed.

Superannuation Entitlements

From **Mr J. N. Goss** (19 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will take action through the Local Government Minister to ensure that the decision of the Soorley administration to increase superannuation entitlements for Brisbane City Council aldermen be not approved.

Association of Motoring Clubs

From **Mr J. N. Goss** (7 271 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will support the Association of Motoring Clubs of Queensland for the right of the individual to own and drive the motor vehicle of their choice without Government interference by way of persecution, discrimination, overtaxing, or limiting the age of vehicles on our roads.

Nicklin Way, Road Surface Noise

From **Mrs Sheldon** (204 signatories) praying that steps be taken to alleviate road surface noise levels on the Nicklin Way between the Beerburrum Street intersection and Caloundra Road.

Petitions received.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

In accordance with the schedule circulated by the Clerk to members in the

Chamber, the following documents were tabled—

Appeal Costs Fund Act—

Appeal Costs Fund Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1993, No. 387

Education (Teacher Registration) Act—

Education (Teacher Registration) Amendment By-law (No. 2) 1993, No. 383

Fauna Conservation Act—

Fauna Conservation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1993, No. 379

Fruit Marketing Organisation Act—

Fruit Marketing (Committee of Direction Levies) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1993, No 400

Golden Casket Art Union Act—

Golden Casket (On-Line) Amendment Rule (No. 2) 1993, No. 380

Harbours Act—

Harbours (Abbot Point) Amendment By-law (No. 4) 1993, No. 398

Harbours (Repeal of Orders) Regulation 1993, No. 391

Health Act—

Health (Analyst's Certificate) Regulation 1993, No. 402

Land Tax Act—

Land Tax Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1993, No. 397

Local Government Act—

Local Government (External Boundaries of Cities of Brisbane and Logan) Regulation 1993, No. 392

Reference, dated 1 November 1993, of a reviewable local government matter to the Local Government Commissioner by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning. The reference relates to the Shire of Clifton.

Magistrates Courts Act—

Magistrates Courts Amendment Rules (No. 1) 1993, No. 388

Magistrates Courts Jurisdiction Amendment Act—

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act not in force commence 1 November 1993, No 384

National Parks and Wildlife Act—

National Park 56 County of Tingarra (Extension) Order 1993, No. 378

Nursing Act—

Nursing By-law 1993, No. 394

Proclamation—the provisions for the Act (other than section 75(2)(b)(i)) commence 1 November 1993, No. 393

Officials in Parliament Act—

Proclamation—that certain officers of the Crown liable to retire from office on political grounds are capable of being elected Members of the Legislative Assembly and sitting and voting in the Legislative Assembly at the same time, No. 381

Partnership (Limited Liability) Act—

Partnership (Limited Liability) Regulation 1993, No. 386

Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act—

Primary Producers' (Prescription of Growers) Regulation 1993, No. 399

Psychologists Act—

Psychologists By-law 1993, No. 395

Small Claims Tribunal Act—

Small Claims Tribunals Regulation 1993, No. 385

Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act—

Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements (Investment) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1993, No. 376

Statutory Instruments Act—

Statutory Instruments Amendment Regulation (No. 8) 1993, No. 382

Stock Act—

Stock (Cattle Tick) Notice 1993, No. 401

Superannuation (Government and Other Employees) Act—

Superannuation (Definition of Employee—Border Rivers Commission) Order 1993, No. 390

Surveyors Act—

Surveyors Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1993, No. 389

Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act—

Proclamation—the Act (other than sections 56 and 57) commences 1 November 1993, No 396

Workplace Health and Safety Act—

Workplace Health and Safety Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 1993, No. 377.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

(a) Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development (Mr W Goss)—

Bikeways Project Board—Annual Report for 1992-93

(b) Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs (Mr Burns)—

Trustees of the Funeral Benefit Trust Fund—Annual Report for 1992-93

(c) The Treasurer (Mr De Lacy)—

Annual Reports for 1992-93—

Mortgage Secondary Market Board

Nominal Defendant (Queensland)

Queensland Treasury

Queensland Industry Development Corporation

Queensland Government Superannuation Schemes

(d) Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development (Mr Hamill)—

Annual Reports for 1992-93—

Bundaberg Port Authority

Cairns Port Authority

Gladstone Port Authority

Port of Brisbane Authority

Rockhampton Port Authority

Townsville Port Authority

(e) Minister for Primary Industries (Mr Casey)—

Queensland Hen Quota Committee—Annual Report to 25 June 1993

Annual Reports for 1992-93—

Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations

Chicken Meat Industry Committee

Council of Agriculture

Gladstone Area Water Board

Grain Research Foundation

Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Organisation

Queensland Dairy Industry Authority

Queensland Fish Board

Queensland Fish Management Authority

Queensland Sugar Corporation

Timber Research and Development Advisory Council of Queensland

Reports—

Exporting Queensland Primary Products—unlocking a new view of the future

Government response to Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee Report No. 24

(f) Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services (Mr Braddy)—

Queensland Corrective Services Commission—Annual Report for 1992-93

(g) Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning (Mr Mackenroth)—

Report of the Local Government Minister in relation to reviewable local government matters and electoral arrangements for the 1994 Local Authority Elections—

City of Mackay, Shire of Pioneer, parts of the Shires of Whitsunday, Mirani and Sarina

Annual Reports for 1992-93—

Queensland Building Services Authority

Queensland Local Government Superannuation Board

Queensland Local Government Grants Commission

(h) Minister for Health (Mr Hayward)—

Annual Reports for 1992-93

Chiropractors and Osteopaths Board of Queensland

Dental Board of Queensland

Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Board of Queensland

Medical Board of Queensland

Nurses Registration Board of Queensland

Occupational Therapists Board of Queensland

Pharmacy Board of Queensland

Physiotherapists Board of Queensland

Prince Charles Hospital Foundation

Princess Alexandra Hospital Research and Development Foundation

Psychologists Board of Queensland

Royal Children's Hospital Foundation

Royal Women's Hospital Research and Development Foundation

Speech Pathologists Board

(i) Minister for Environment and Heritage (Ms Robson)—

Annual Reports for 1992-93—

Department of Environment and Heritage

National Trust of Queensland

Brisbane River Management Public Information Paper

Whitsunday National and Marine Parks Draft Management Plan.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2)

Estimates Debate, Procedure and Time Limits

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (10.07 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That notwithstanding anything contained in the Standing Orders or Sessional Orders, the following procedure and time limits shall apply for the Estimates of Consumer Affairs and Corrective Services on this day's sitting—

12 noon to 3.30 p.m.—Consumer Affairs

3.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.—Corrective Services

In each case the Minister shall be given 15 minutes to introduce the Estimates; the Opposition spokesperson, 15 minutes; each member, 10 minutes; and the Minister in reply, 10 minutes."

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Changes in Ministry

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier and Minister for Economic and Trade Development) (10.08 a.m.), by leave: I desire to inform the House that on 18 October 1993 Her Excellency the Governor—

(a) Accepted the resignations of the Honourable Thomas James Burns, the Honourable Paul Joseph Braddy and the Honourable Glen Richard Milliner as Ministers of the Crown;

(b) Appointed—

the Honourable Thomas James Burns to be Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs;

the Honourable Paul Joseph Braddy to be Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services; and

the Honourable Glen Richard Milliner to be Minister for Administrative Services.

I lay upon the table of the House a copy of the *Queensland Government Gazette Extraordinary* of 18 October 1993 containing the relevant notifications.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Overseas Visit

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development) (10.09 a.m.), by leave: On 7 October, I was pleased to join the Vietnamese Minister for Trade, Le Van Triet, at the port of Brisbane, witnessing the loading of three locomotives which arrived in Hai Phong Harbour yesterday for use by Vietnam National Railways on mainline passenger services between Hanoi and Hai Phong. I am now able to report to the House on a follow-up visit I made to Vietnam between 21 and 27 October with Mr Vince O'Rourke, Chief Executive of Queensland Rail, and the Executive Director of the Trade Investment Development Division of the Department of the Premier, Economic and Trade Development, Mr Loftus Harris. I would like to mention specifically the links that have been forged and are being developed within my own portfolio and then focus on some wider issues that affect Queensland business.

Our visit to Vietnam undoubtedly strengthened the relationship between Queensland Rail and Vietnam National Rail. Following on from the sale of the three diesel hydraulic locomotives, QR has sent two locomotive technicians to help Vietnam for a period of two months. It is clear that QR's consultancy service is well positioned to provide advice to Vietnam National Rail, and there are also opportunities for other Queensland engineering and consultancy groups.

During my visit, I met four senior ministers. They were the Minister for Transport and Communications, Professor Dr Bui Danh Luu, the Vice Minister for Transport and Communications, Dr Bui Van Suong, the Minister for Trade, Mr Le Van Triet, and the Vice Minister for Light Industry, Mr Nguyen Minh Thong. Those discussions covered a number of areas where cooperative ventures could be pursued, such as marine technology, transport infrastructure and road safety.

I was also encouraged to learn that there are many Queensland business representatives at work in Vietnam in a wide range of activities, including mining, engineering, law and banking. While in Hanoi, I was pleased to introduce members of a trade mission from the State Chamber of

Commerce and Industry. Among the achievements of that mission were the sale of two models of water purification systems, and serious joint venture proposals are being examined for infrastructure developments, including residential, industrial, commercial and tourism project management, and also for meatworks, tanning and dairy produce.

During my visit, I was privileged to witness the signing of a joint venture contract between the Power Brewing Company and the Dong Nai alcohol and brewing factory for the development of a major brewing enterprise in Dong Nai province, where my department has also developed strong links through our Partners in Progress agreement.

There is one last area of which I would wish to make specific mention. The development and equipping of health facilities is presenting substantial trade and investment opportunities for Queensland. Initially, opportunities may be confined to small-scale hospital installations servicing the expatriate community, where companies are already meeting high costs to enable medical evacuation of expatriate staff for any medical condition. However, a foothold in the market for health care will open a range of opportunities for Queensland companies. One of the first of these opportunities will be the Ho Chi Minh Private Hospital with 50 beds being provided by a consortium of Brisbane companies. The project started in January, and I met Mr Mike Berry and his joint venture partners in Ho Chi Minh City during my visit. This project is an excellent example of the cooperative work that can be achieved by Queensland firms in Vietnam.

Doing business in Asia is a specialised activity, and any business which thinks it can arrive in Vietnam with a portfolio of goodies to be eagerly snapped up will be disappointed. Queensland business must be attuned to the culture of Vietnam and its business practices; must be aware of the requirements of the Vietnamese Government; must have the right goods and services for Vietnam's needs, and must be prepared to go back on many occasions in order to become well known and accepted.

Nevertheless, we can strengthen our bilateral relations by building on the goodwill and a base of activity that we have already. Australians and Australian expertise and standards are highly regarded in Vietnam, and with the prospect of increased levels of foreign investment there is no doubt that the Vietnamese economy will participate more fully in the dynamism of our region. The Queensland Government will certainly do all in its power to further the ties which exist between us and the Vietnamese people for our mutual benefit. For the information of the House, I table the details of meetings and the itinerary of my visit to Vietnam.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Electoral Commission, Annual Report

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba— Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (10.12 a.m.), by leave: In accordance with section 19 (3) of the Electoral Act 1992, I table for the information of honourable members the annual report for 1992-93 of the Electoral Commission of Queensland. Honourable members will be aware that this is the first annual report of this statutory authority, formally established on 19 June 1992 to administer the State's electoral laws impartially and to restore public confidence in the State electoral system.

The report documents the charter, goals, establishment and performance of the new commission in its first year of operation—a year in which the commission was called upon to conduct the forty-seventh general election of members to this Parliament.

In the commissioner's overview and report of the commission's performance, attention is drawn to some of the most notable of the commission's achievements in its foundation year, among them being—

the establishment of the new client-focused commission including recruitment of skilled staff, installation of systems support and strategic planning;

the consistently positive response from client satisfaction surveys; and

the efficient and effective administration of the 1992 general election, including:

a record enrolment of electors;

a significant reduction in information campaign costs while maintaining the effectiveness of that campaign;

an increase in voter turnout and the participation rate;

a reduction in both the total number and rate of informal voting;

the shortest period ever recorded for the return of the writ;

the completion of the first ever ballot paper survey in Queensland; and

an overall reduction in election costs.

I table the document.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Report

Mr DAVIES (Mundingburra) (10.16 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House a report of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee titled Report into Allegations made by Robert David Butler and Christopher Charles Adams regarding former Superintendent John William Huey and the Criminal Justice Commission.

This report follows allegations by Mr Robert Butler, a director of Trial Consultancy Pty Ltd and Mr Christopher Adams of Channel 7 against former Queensland Police Superintendent John William Huey and the Criminal Justice Commission. The conclusion reached by the majority of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee—Messrs Davies, Barton, Watson, and Briskey and Mrs Bird—with the Honourable Neil Turner disagreeing and the Honourable Vince Lester being absent, is as follows—

> "The Committee has undertaken a detailed and considered examination of the complaints raised by Messrs Adams and Butler in their letter of 14 December 1992 and the further correspondence of 11 March 1993. In addition, the Committee has been assisted in its deliberations by a senior member of the Criminal Bar.
>
> . . . the Committee is of the firm view that none of the complaints raised by Messrs Adams and Butler can be substantiated or sustained. The Committee believes that the report of the New South Wales investigators was thorough, independent and professional.
>
> Finally, the Committee believes that this report will bring this matter to an end."

On behalf of the committee, I wish to acknowledge the work of the committee research staff—Mr Dan O'Connor, research director; Mr Tony Woodyatt, former research director; Ms Luisa Pink, consultant; and Ms Sandy Rowse from the committee secretariat. Our sincere appreciation is also extended to Mr John Jerrard, QC, a senior member of the criminal Bar, for his independent and expert opinion. I move that the report be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE

Report on Conference

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (10.18 a.m.): As a member of the Travelsafe Committee, I attended the National Road Trauma Advisory Council Conference titled "Safely on the Road to the 21st Century" held in Canberra on 19 and 20 October. The conference addressed strategic planning and road planning trauma.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not think that this is the proper time for that statement to be made in the House. Is there any other business?

Mr CAMPBELL: I am reporting on a trip to attend a conference as a member of the Travelsafe Committee. I ask whether that is allowed under the Standing Rules and Orders.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the honourable member to seek leave to make the statement.

Mr CAMPBELL: I seek leave to give a report on the road safety conference.

Mr SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

Mr CAMPBELL: I thank honourable members. The conference addressed strategic planning and road trauma, and issues relevant to road users, vehicles, the environment, road trauma and enforcement. The direct and indirect costs of road trauma in Australia now amount to more than $6 billion a year. Each year, about 2 500 people are killed and a further 30 000 are admitted to hospital as a result of road trauma. But there is good news. Over the past 20 years, the safety of Australia's roads has been consistently improved. Despite an almost doubling of the amount of travel, deaths on Australia's roads have fallen from 3 800 in 1970 to 2 300 in 1990 and to 2 112 in 1991. For the information of honourable members, I table the conference program, the National Road Safety Strategy, the National Action Plan for Road Safety, the report of the working party on trauma systems and a strategic road safety research and development program for Australia.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

Mr BORBIDGE: In directing a question without notice to the Premier, I refer him to the 339 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody, and I ask: how many of these recommendations has the Premier implemented?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I cannot give a precise number, but implementation is proceeding.

Furthermore, the Government has undertaken to compile a report in relation to the whole of Government response.

Mr Borbidge: How many?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I have answered that.

Mr Borbidge: You do not know.

Mr W. K. GOSS: If the Leader of the Opposition wants to know, he should just listen. We have undertaken to compile a whole of Government response about what the State Government has done to implement the recommendations and, indeed, about the success or the progress of implementation up to the present time. That report will be made publicly available by the end of this year, or early next year at the latest.

Department of Primary Industries

Mr BORBIDGE: In directing a further question to the Premier, I refer to the scathing reports of both the Auditor-General and the Public Accounts Committee into the administration of the Department of Primary Industries and, in particular, to discrepancies including $7m unaccounted for, $1.5m in uncashed cheques and widespread financial mismanagement, and I ask: in view of the Premier's previous statements that the ultimate accountability lies with the Government, the Premier and the Minister, how can he justify his failure to take action against either the Minister for Primary Industries or the Director-General?

Mr W. K. GOSS: Dealing firstly with the Minister, I want to say that the Minister has my full confidence and support on this matter. It was simply a bit of political point scoring orchestrated by the Leader of the Opposition that produced the dissenting report by National Party members, who did not even turn up to key sessions of the committee. I understand that one of them, Mr Elliott, was ill. I am prepared to accept that. The other, I understand, was attending a car race in Bathurst. So much for their concern about public accountability!

In relation to senior officers of the Department of Primary Industries, the report of the committee appropriately highlights inadequacies in terms of performance when it came to the transition period of bringing together the three departments, and in particular their accounting systems. When the deficiencies were drawn to the attention of the Minister and the Government, action was taken to repair and rectify the problem. I am assured by the Minister, and I am reassured by the unqualified report of the Auditor-General, that the problems have now been rectified. I point out to the Leader of the Opposition that, indeed, the unqualified report from the Auditor-General came out before the parliamentary committee reported.

I would like also to draw the attention of the House to what I think may be a disturbing matter in relation to the Public Accounts Committee. It is the question of outside interference, which is fairly and squarely raised. The National Party members, I understand, produced their minority report after a meeting in the office of the Leader of the Opposition. My suspicions in this regard are confirmed by the fact that the press secretary to the Leader of the Opposition has this week written a letter to a financial newspaper that is published in full in which he talks about the Opposition's attitude in the committee. He uses the term "we". There was a corporate approach adopted by these people for political reasons.

I conclude on this note: I think the Leader of the Opposition needs to be careful about the precedent of outside interference, because it can happen elsewhere as well.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I find the remarks made by the Premier objectionable. I will, however, point out to the House that the chairman of the committee sought to influence me. Mr Hollis came to see me in my office.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition asked for something to be withdrawn because it was offensive. That is all he is entitled to do. I warn the honourable member. I was on my feet, and he continued to talk. I warn him under Standing Order 124. This goes for all members of the House: when I am on my feet, I will not have members continuing to talk over me. I warn the Leader of the Opposition under Standing Order 124. I now ask the Premier to withdraw.

Mr W. K. GOSS: With pleasure, Mr Speaker. I withdraw the allegation of outside interference. But I simply said that those matters raised a concern, and I simply raised the concern. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to prattle on about outside interference, maybe he should talk to some of his Federal Liberal colleagues who are trying to deny him and Mrs Sheldon, with their outside interference in the internal affairs of the honourable members, their historic role as being the prince and princess of the "Pineapple Party".

Death of Mr D. Yock

Mr PITT: In directing a question to the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services. I refer the Minister to the investigation into the death of Daniel Yock, and I ask: what steps has the Minister taken to ensure that this investigation is undertaken in a prompt and thorough manner?

Mr BRADDY: On 7 November 1993, Daniel Yock was arrested by police on charges of disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. Prior to his entering the city watch-house, it was noticed that he was in a condition which required medical attention. He had been transported to the watch-house in the back of a police vehicle. In relation to this matter, of course, there have been serious public demonstrations since then. I wish to assure the House that the Police Service and the Government will do everything in their power as quickly and as efficiently as possible to make sure that all aspects relating to this matter are investigated thoroughly and laid before the House and the people of Queensland.

The Criminal Justice Commission has indicated that it wishes to take full control of the investigation. I have indicated to it that I fully support that decision. I believe it is appropriate in all of the circumstances. It will mean that all witnesses in relation to the matter will be able to be interviewed by people in the employ of the Criminal Justice Commission in premises under their control, or elsewhere, without the necessity of their being involved in interviews with people who are currently in the employ of the Queensland Police Service. All these things, of course, have to be done so that justice is seen to be done as well as being done.

This morning I spoke to Mr Mark Le Grand, the Director of the Official Misconduct Division of the Criminal Justice Commission and indicated to him that it had the Government's full support. He assured me that this investigation would be conducted as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. He understood the need for it to be done very quickly, but very well. Speed alone will not dictate that the thing will not be done thoroughly. He understands that, and indicated to me that the CJC will undertake this investigation as a matter of utmost urgency and priority. The Government, of course, indicated through me its full support.

I also indicate that I today contacted Commissioner Jim O'Sullivan, who is in Papua New Guinea. I have requested—and he has agreed to this— his immediate return to Queensland and the resumption of his duties. He will be back in Queensland tomorrow. He is in Madang at the present time. This very unfortunate incident requires thorough investigation.

I also indicate that with my support, and that of the Queensland Police Service, at the request of relatives of the deceased and the Aboriginal community, a doctor nominated by the relatives and the Aboriginal community was present at the first aspect of the post-mortem examination of the deceased yesterday. The post-mortem was also videotaped. Again, to ensure thoroughness and absolute objectivity in relation to the matter, the videotape will be available. All of these activities will be carried out in that way—thoroughly, quickly and efficiently—until we receive a report from all relevant authorities, including the doctor who performed the post-mortem, and the CJC.

Teacher Staffing Levels

Mr PITT: In directing a question to the Minister for Education, I refer him to media reports alleging large-scale teacher reductions in Queensland secondary schools, and I ask: do those reports accurately reflect likely staffing levels for those schools in 1994? If not, can the Minister inform the House of the actual situation?

Mr COMBEN: The reports to which the honourable member refers are totally inaccurate, mischievous and misleading. I do not understand from where the Queensland Teachers Union obtains its figures. The early media reports claimed that those figures had been compiled by Queensland principals. Over the last three days, I have been in four country centres speaking to principals, and I have had informal discussions with the Queensland Secondary School Principals Association. All of the people to whom I spoke told me that the figures were not supplied by principals. The figures reported in the media bear no relationship to the facts. We have spent three months carefully ensuring that any changes in the education system minimise any impact on students. The facts are well known. There was a $97m increase in the Education budget, a decrease of 98 teachers across the sector and a decrease of one or two teachers in any high school in this State. The overwhelming opinion of high school principals is that they can accommodate those changes with no impact on education standards in schools.

I have reached only one conclusion, which any reasonable person could draw from the release of those details to which the

honourable member referred. That action was mischievous and was more to do with the internal election of an external body than it was about releasing valid debating points or valid information.

Correctional Facilities

Mrs SHELDON: I direct a question to the Minister for Corrective Services. Given the crisis facing the Queensland prison system and the need for more capacity, I ask: will the Minister reopen Woodford prison, and will he rule out the re-opening of any part of the old Boggo Road gaol, particularly Block H?

Mr BRADDY: As I am sure members are well aware, as part of the statutory role of the Minister for Corrective Services, a review is currently under way of the Corrective Services Commission, which has now been in existence for five years. My predecessor indicated that that review should be undertaken initially by the Public Sector Management Commission, which the Government, of course, supports. That is a professional body set up for just that purpose. That review has commenced.

One of the matters that will be examined during that review is the immediate, short-term, medium-term and long-term need for correctional centres in this State. I will not pre-empt that review by stating my views on that matter at this time. I certainly have views on that matter, and I will be making my views clear to the reviewers and to the Government.

It is appropriate that this review is under way now. I anticipate that it will be completed within two months. At that time, I will be in a good position to make recommendations to the Government on the need for correctional facilities up to the year 2000. I have certainly requested the PSMC to consider the likely numbers of prisoners and the needs that they will have between now and the year 2000. Several options are being canvassed. Those options will all be considered, after which a decision will be made by the Government on my recommendation.

Department of Primary Industries

Mrs SHELDON: I direct a question to the Premier. His Cabinet appointed Mr Jim Miller as the Director-General of the Primary Industries Department, it approved the appointment of all senior managers and agreed with the PSMC recommendation that DPI, Forestry and Water Resources should be combined and scores of jobs lost from the Corporate Services section. I ask: how does the Premier intend to absolve both himself and his Minister from the financial fiasco that has befallen the DPI?

Mr W. K. GOSS: It is true that we decided to amalgamate those three departments, that we appointed Mr Miller and that there are other senior staff in that department charged with the responsibility of bringing into being an appropriate corporate services structure and an appropriate financial accounting system. The fact that they failed to do so is now evident. As I said earlier to the Leader of the Opposition, when this matter was drawn to the attention of the Minister and the Government, action was taken.

As to the Minister—I have said before that he has my full confidence and support, and he does. With respect, the Minister does not bank the cheques. As to the failures that occurred there——

Mr Stoneman interjected.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Burdekin and the member for Lockyer!

Mr W. K. GOSS: The issue for the Government is not some of the point scoring that has been going on. The issue for the Government is fixing up the problem. We have fixed the problem.

I am interested in the new-found concern on the part of the National and Liberal Parties in relation to accountability. Those parties had an appalling record in Government. I can cite to the House plenty of examples of that record. Because I want to allow more time for questions, I will cite to the House just one example to highlight the double standards of members opposite, and in particular——

Mr Hobbs interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS:—the double standards of the Leader of the Opposition. Some time ago, an Auditor-General's report was produced in relation to the Queensland Film Corporation. Mr Borbidge launched out, calling it "the worst Auditor-General's report ever". The report found, among other things, that due to the passage of time it was not feasible to recover most of the advances.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. Under Standing Order 70, I request that the Premier answer my question.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I have not finished yet. The Deputy Leader of the Coalition is obviously very touchy on the double standards point. Let me tell the House about this best example of the double standard.

Mr Johnson interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: I will quote from what Mr Borbidge called "the worst Auditor-General's report ever". That report found that, in this case, it was not feasible to recover most of the advances. It found also that significant amounts of public money totalling over $4m in the form of outstanding loans and advances had to be written off. There was a litany of problems. When the Leader of the Opposition opened his mouth, of course, he did not realise that the report was referring to the administration of that unit of public administration under the National Party and, in particular, under the stewardship of Mr Tony Elliott, who was the responsible Minister from 1980 to 1983—the same person who did not turn up for the Public Accounts Committee hearings in this case, who is not here today, as far as I can see, and who has the hide to make criticisms with respect to this matter. There was a problem; it has been fixed; and we do not take seriously the point scoring and the double standards of people who do not have a clue.

Public Liability Insurance

Mr LIVINGSTONE: In directing a question to the Treasurer, I refer him to comments last week by the Deputy Leader of the Coalition that the Treasurer hid in the Budget papers a massive revenue hike through increased stamp duty on public liability insurance, and I ask: can the Treasurer inform the House of the facts of that situation?

Mr De LACY: As I understand it, last Friday the Deputy Leader of the Coalition discovered that some changes were included in the Budget in respect of the stamp duty that applies to public liability policies. That is to her credit. However, I remind the House that it had been passed by this Parliament and debated exhaustively in this Parliament prior to that. The Deputy Leader of the Coalition also breathlessly related to anybody who wanted to listen that we were going to reap a $200m bonanza from the changes. The real facts are that we expect to receive an additional $1.5m this financial year, and $3m in a full year. But this is part of a sequence. The week before, the Deputy Leader of the Coalition had another blinding flash of discovery. She found that we were changing the conveyance duty on principal places of residence. But that was not all! She stated in a press release—

> "Hundreds of Queensland home buyers . . . are now being ripped off through the premature imposition of increased Stamp Duties."

She went on to state—

> "Labor is thumbing its nose at the Parliamentary and public processes in which budget measures are reviewed.
>
> . . .
>
> 'He should provide Parliament with a clear statement of the dates of implementation of all his revenue raising measures . . . ' "

Let me tell the honourable member how I did supply Parliament with a clear statement. When I introduced the legislation, I said during my second-reading speech—

> "The additional concession for a first principal place of residence will be restricted to properties valued at up to $160,000. These changes will take effect from the date of assent."

Mrs Sheldon: Where is it in the legislation?

Mr De LACY: It says in the legislation that it is from the date of assent. That is what always happens in respect of Bills.

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

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

Mr De LACY: What I would like to do is just give the Opposition a little bit of advice. Before they debate a Bill, many shadow Ministers actually read the Bill. Some other shadow Ministers actually listen to the second-reading speech, or if they do not listen to it, they read it. By doing that, they might find something in it. This piece of legislation was introduced, it lay on the table for a week, and it was then debated exhaustively by this Parliament. The Deputy Leader of the Coalition spoke for 45 minutes. Those members who were here could hardly forget it—45 minutes! Never once was the issue of the date of implementation raised, even though it was made crystal clear.

Mrs Sheldon: No, it was not.

Mr De LACY: Perhaps by way of a final bit of advice to those people who do not intend to read legislation: if they do not know, they should shut up.

Small Business Planning Practices

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I ask the Minister for Business Industry and Regional Development:

can he inform the House of initiatives that have been undertaken to improve the planning practices of small businesses in Queensland?

Mr ELDER: I certainly can. The Government takes very seriously the role of the business community in this State, and particularly the contribution of the small-business sector. Queensland's small-business sector growth has outstripped that of the other States. It has grown at about 6 per cent a year, whereas the average growth nationally in that area is about 4 per cent. When I speak to people from the small-business sector, they tell me that they have difficulty in accessing capital. When I talk to the banks, they tell me that they do have capital available for expansion. However, the difficulty is that the small-business sector—those new and growing small businesses in this State—does not necessarily have the information and bankable documents that are required by the banks. When one looks at the growth in this sector—some 37,000 new businesses last year—one can see that, apart from having an economy that fosters growth in the new business sector and the small-business sector, and having low taxes that encourage and again foster that growth, we need to assist it in terms of providing businesses with the ability to produce bankable documents. In other words, they should be getting sound business plans in place so that we can help them take that next step. They can then foster growth, employ and further develop themselves.

What we have done to address that deficiency is to put in place a new scheme called Business Plus, which will be run through the Small Business Corporation. As an example, for a $3,000 business plan, the Government will provide up to $1,000 to already established businesses. A further sum of $1,000 will be contributed by those businesses. As Minister, I have not been into handouts. We said we will give them a hand up, and we will do that on this occasion. The business consultants of this State will do the consultancy work for $1,000. That is a significant contribution from business consultants, from the Law Society, and from accountancy organisations throughout this State. So, for $3,000 small businesses will be able to get good, sound business plans in place and then develop good, sound bankable documents that they will be able take to the banks to put a case for accessing finance for future growth.

That has been a gap in the system for some time, and this move will provide that means of support for the small-business sector. It will give us, and particularly the small business sector, better opportunities for obtaining finance, better opportunities for achieving growth and, in the long-term, far better opportunities in the job sector for Queenslanders.

Department of Primary Industries

Mr LINGARD: In directing a question to the Minister for Primary Industries, I refer to the damning report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Department of Primary Industries. I remind the Minister that we have heard today of the recall of Commissioner O'Sullivan over a police matter. I ask: why did the Minister allow the director-general of his department to leave for a trip overseas for two weeks on the very day that the PAC report was presented? Why has the Minister not recalled him since the contents of the report have been made public so that he can answer the criticisms, especially like those made today when the Premier said that there were failings by officials?

Mr CASEY: I think it is probably necessary just to draw to the attention of the House the timing in relation to these matters. The problems recorded in the PAC report relate to the early part of the 1991-92 financial year—two years ago. Those problems, as the Premier correctly pointed out in answers earlier, and again just a moment ago, have been fixed. The fact that the problems had been fixed was reported to the Auditor-General, who was satisfied with that report, to the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee and to me. Because the problems have been fixed, I see no basis whatsoever for the member's question. The point is that at that fisheries conference in Rome, Mr Miller is not just representing Queensland—he was selected by all of the States to be our national representative.

Water Pricing Policy

Mr LINGARD: In directing my second question to the Minister for Primary Industries, I refer to widespread producer concern over the Government's water pricing policy and the Minister's public comments that there was no intention to introduce new fees or charges for licences applying to private water facilities such as bores, dams and creeks. I also refer to a new clause included in a schedule of terms applying to a waterworks licence renewed in Toowoomba on 21 October, which requires the licence holder—

> "to pay the prescribed licence fee and other such fees and charges as are determined by the Commissioner from time to time together with interest thereon."

I ask: on what basis is this new provision being added to waterworks licences and why has the Minister clearly and deliberately been untruthful to the rural properties of Queensland?

Mr CASEY: I thank the honourable member for his question. I will not go to the trouble of reading the prepared answer I have here in relation to it but thank him for giving me the information in relation to it. Let me quite clearly say that the Government, in the same way as it does with all other matters of community concern, prepared and distributed an options paper. Concerns about water pricing policy have been expressed to us since we came to Government. The present policy was put in place by the previous National Party Government.

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Western Downs!

Mr CASEY: As promised, we carried out a review of this particular policy. Consultants were engaged, and a report was prepared for us. As a result of that major report that we received, we prepared an options paper that has been circulated throughout Queensland to enable full and open discussion at places other than National Party meeting rooms, as used to be the case under the previous Government. That paper has been circulated, and when we receive replies from people, we will consider them.

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Western Downs will cease interjecting!

Mr CASEY: My final point is that not only do I not do the banking in the department, as the Premier has said, I do not sign every licence issued by every Water Resources Commission office throughout Queensland.

Immunisation

Mrs EDMOND: My first question is to the Minister for Health. Can the Minister indicate what steps are being undertaken to improve levels of immunisation in the community?

Mr HAYWARD: I am sure that the falling levels of immunisation in the community have been of growing concern not only to members of this House but also to the medical profession in Queensland. To address this situation, the Government has moved in a number of sectors. Importantly, during the middle of last year, a working party on childhood immunisation was set up to draft a policy on childhood immunisation in Queensland. That working party initially consisted of representatives of Queensland Health. It has been expanded to include a number of other groups and organisations, including the Family Medicine Program at the Queensland University of Technology and the Brisbane City Council. Late last year, the first draft of that report was circulated to all regional health authorities and central office branches. The concerns and issues raised have been dealt with in the second draft, which has been more widely circulated to all organisations that have an interest in childhood immunisation, including the Australian Medical Association, the Family Medicine Program and the Royal College of General Practitioners.

This is an important issue. The policy as it now stands has three main objectives, including increasing childhood vaccination rates to the levels recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council. By 1994, 90 per cent of school-age children will be fully vaccinated; by 1996, more than 95 per cent of school-age children will be fully vaccinated; and by the year 2000, more than 90 per cent of two-year-olds in our community will be fully vaccinated. That is the first objective of the National Health and Medical Research Council. The next objective is to ensure that vaccines are transported, stored and administered in ways that maximise their efficiency and useability and to improve the efficiency of childhood vaccination programs.

This policy is a result of the Government's promise to "vigorously promote universal vaccination for childhood diseases". It is estimated that about 60 per cent of children in this State have completed the full program of vaccinations. As part of the Government's primary health-care initiatives, the long-term savings to the community of such a vaccination program can be measured not only in dollars but also in the terrible heartache and pain that can be avoided through the prevention of terrible diseases such as polio, rubella and hepatitis B.

Mental Health Care

Mrs EDMOND: I ask a second question of the Minister for Health. Is the Minister aware of concerns raised by Brian Burdekin, human rights commissioner, on the care of the

mentally ill in Queensland, and what measures are being taken to counter those concerns?

Mr HAYWARD: This question raises a very important issue. Again, as all honourable members would realise, the Burdekin report into human rights and mental illness was released recently. It is an important report, because it provides a very strong standard against which we can measure the significant improvements that have occurred in the past couple of years in the provision of mental health care in Queensland. Obviously, when one prepares a document as detailed as Mr Burdekin's document, it is impossible—or certainly very difficult—to continually update the figures. It is important to get that into context. Many of the figures used within that report are a couple of years old. However, the report provides a very important measure of the improvements that have occurred in the provision of mental health services in this State.

The report mentions 1990-91 figures for the per capita level of spending on mental health services in Queensland. As I recall it, the figure of about $40 per capita was compared with a national figure of about $50 per capita. In the past two years, we have increased that level to $48 per capita, so there has been significant movement in that spending over that period. There have also been significant recent improvements. A new mental health policy is now in place in Queensland, and a review of the Mental Health Act is being undertaken. The purpose of that review is to ensure that, when all the information that is gathered from consumers, providers, administrators and other interested groups is pieced together, next year or at the beginning of the year after that, we will be able to have the most progressive Mental Health Act in Australia.

It is also important to acknowledge the importance of the recently released Solomon report, which provides clear recommendations to spend about $300m over the next 10 years in the upgrading of mental health services in this State. That is important. That provision exists in the Government's commitment to spend $1.5 billion over the next 10 years in upgrading and improving the infrastructure of public hospitals in this State. That money is clearly set aside. Queensland was the first State to adopt minimum standards for mental health care. So very importantly, out of all that——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is beginning to debate the question.

Mr HAYWARD: I make the point that what is very important and what needs to be understood is that Burdekin emphasises continuously the importance of the process of deinstitutionalisation and the importance of providing people who have suffered mental illness with the opportunity to move through the various systems that are involved in the treatment of mental illness. Through the signing of the new Medicare agreement, I have been able to provide $18.6m to upgrade and build up the community facilities.

Aboriginal Death in Custody; Riot at Transit Centre

Mr COOPER: In directing a question to the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services, I refer to the riot in Brisbane yesterday near and in the Transit Centre following the Aboriginal march protesting the death in police custody of an Aboriginal youth on Sunday night. While noting the Minister's answer to a previous question, I ask: is the Minister completely satisfied that the Police Service is complying totally with the recommendations of the black deaths in custody royal commission? If not, will he demonstrate his bona fides by ordering an immediate audit of progress in regard to the recommendations that pertain to the Police Service?

Mr BRADDY: In relation to the incident that occurred yesterday, that is, the riot after the delegation had attended at police headquarters, I would like to make these comments. First of all, the marchers had been to police headquarters, and the Acting Police Commissioner admitted——

Mr Cooper: What about the recommendation?

Mr BRADDY: The member referred to the riot in his question, so I am entitled to reply to that. The Acting Police Commissioner admitted a delegation—and rightly so—of relatives and Aboriginal leaders. They had a full and frank discussion. Although there was a fairly serious disturbance outside police headquarters in terms of a lot of shouting and abuse of police, the police were able to control that situation very well. Unfortunately, upon all of the marchers leaving there and proceeding, as I understand it, down to the Roma Street Forum, a bystander—unassociated with either the police or the Aboriginal movement—made some unfortunate remark, and the melee and riot resulted. Unfortunately, this resulted in injuries to Aboriginal people and police officers.

I believe that the police handled the situation very well yesterday. They are very well attuned to all current matters, including the Aboriginal deaths in custody report and other reports. They are being trained continually in relation to race relationships. In fact, there has been an acceptance of all the recommendations of the Aboriginal deaths in custody report relating to both police and Corrective Services. I am aware that information relating to each of those reports is available. Most of them have been implemented in full or in part. There is no further need for any audit. We know precisely which ones have been fully complied with and which ones have been partially complied with. I inquired about that previously in my capacity as Minister for Police. Recently, I received similar information in my new capacity as Minister for Corrective Services. There has been substantial compliance with the recommendations, and there is no need for any further audit, because all the information is available to me in both capacities.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Department of Primary Industries

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (11 a.m.): In August 1988, the member for Logan, when Leader of the Opposition, told this place—

> "When it comes to the ultimate accountability, the ultimate accountability lies with the Government and it lies with the Premier and the Minister."

I submit to the House today that the Premier has betrayed his rhetoric and he has exposed his duplicity. When the Auditor-General handed down his second report on audits performed for the 1991-92 financial year he stated in relation to the Department of Primary Industries—

> "In my long audit experience I have never encountered a more extensive series of discrepancies in the accounts of a public sector entity."

That was in March of this year. In September 1989, when the current Primary Industries Minister was the Opposition spokesman on Primary Industries, and he was responding to the report of the Public Accounts Committee into alleged rorting of the drought relief scheme then in operation, which was unproven, he asked in a question of the then Premier—

> "In view of this indictment of Mr Harper's behaviour as Minister, will he now sack Mr Harper from Cabinet, or will there be a continuation of Bjelke-Petersen standards in relation to ministerial responsibility and propriety . . ."

By his own standards, the Minister must and should resign now—today.

This report is damning of his negligence, damning of his incompetence, damning of his ignorance, and damning of his lack of leadership. If the Minister is to abide by his own standards and the standards of this Government, and if the Government is to take the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee seriously, then he must go and he must go quickly.

The first report of the PAC on the problems identified by Mr Rollason clearly implicated the Minister in the massive problems in that department. That report, supported by all members of the committee states—

> "The Minister"—

I repeat "the Minister"—

> "and the Director-General of the Department of Primary Industries share"—

I repeat "share"—

> "responsibility for the department's accountability."

Clearly, by his own standards and the standards of the first PAC report on the massive failures of management in the DPI, the Minister must resign. The Premier, whom we all know has very special standards of openness and accountability—we witnessed that here again today—leaves the member for Mackay no option whatever.

The Premier's *Cabinet Handbook* states—

> "Responsibility for departments is placed in the hands of Ministers and, to the greatest possible extent, through Ministers to their chief executives. It is the policy of the Government to enhance ministerial responsibility and accountability consistent with its collective commitments."

The Premier therefore has absolutely no choice in this matter unless he is a massive political fraud. After what the Auditor-General himself has described as, in his long audit history, the most extensive series of discrepancies in the accounts of a public sector entity, the Premier, by his own standards, must sack the member for Mackay,

if the member has a crisis with his own standards.

Anybody who reads this report will see very clearly that the ministerial culprits in this matter ultimately include not only the Minister but also the member for Logan and his entire Cabinet. They have, in the past four years, collectively thrown more hospital passes through ignorance and inexperience to the Queensland public service than it received in the previous 40 years.

Their joint failure is clearly established by a great deal of evidence before the committee, and never more clearly than by correspondence from the Premier himself on 22 December 1989 in which he informed Mr Miller of the formation of a Cabinet—I repeat "Cabinet"—machinery of Government subcommittee which was, and I quote directly from the majority report—

> ". . . to oversee the interim restructuring of these departments prior to their review by the Public Sector Management Commission."

That PSMC review did not start until February 1991. Where was that subcommittee of Cabinet established by the Premier for over a year—from December 1989 until February 1991? Apparently fast asleep, along with the Minister.

The fact is that the Director-General of the DPI, whom the majority seek to make the fall guy for the Minister in this report, was anything but secretive in the way he went about the restructuring of his department. From shortly after the announcement he clearly and openly adopted a three-year plan which gave the integration of the three separate financial administration systems a low priority. This is the area where problems ultimately developed.

Mr Miller devised this approach after a visit to Canberra where he spoke to bureaucrats in Commonwealth departments who had gone through this sort of change—people who had actually experienced it. It is very clear from the evidence that Jim Miller was given some sound advice. If there was a problem, even a perceived problem, with the approach that Jim Miller was adopting, then either the Minister and the subcommittee of Cabinet had both the authority and the responsibility to pull him up. They did not.

Jim Miller was doing his job to the best of his ability, on substantial advice from people who knew something about the scale of what he was seeking to achieve. Clearly, both the Minister and the Executive were not. They were still abrogating their duties—still fast asleep—as late as March 1991, even after the PSMC review began. That is when the Premier wrote to the Minister, according to evidence before the committee, urging a hurry-up on the DPI amalgamation. There was no evidence before the committee that even this personal intervention by the Premier woke the Minister.

According to the majority, it was only when the report of the Auditor-General on the state of financial management within the department was revealed in August 1992—yet another year and more down the track—that the Minister recognised the scale of the problems in his department. The Minister was asleep. He was missing in action, along with the Cabinet subcommittee, from December 1989 until late 1992, and there are no mitigating circumstances for them. In some of the most extraordinary evidence before the committee, it was clear that the PSMC knew of the financial management problems emerging in the department as early as the first months of 1991, when it began its review. Did Dr Coaldrake pass this on to the Minister? Apparently not.

The Minister is to this Cabinet what Sergeant Schultz was to Hogan's Heroes. He knew nothing. As was the case with Sergeant Schultz, "Sergeant" Casey's only means of survival is to be seen to have known absolutely nothing and for that to be found by the people of Queensland to be an acceptable state of affairs for a Minister.

The bottom line is that the transition to a single financial system covering the former departments of Water Resources, Forestry and the DPI fell apart because, when the Government finally started taking an active interest in the affairs of the department, the directives were too late and too wrong. The fact is that while the Minister and the Cabinet subcommittee were asleep, Mr Miller was going about the job in the manner he had devised, without contradiction, immediately following the amalgamation announcement in December 1989. At the time the Government not only decided that it wanted him to amalgamate the financial management structures of the department in time for them to operate in the 1991-92 financial year but also actually put in place, via the PSMC, some mechanisms for ensuring the project went ahead at the dictated rather than the guided and controlled pace. The department was neither ready nor equipped to proceed.

The corporate services management of the department had been gutted by forced

redundancies—redundancies that the Minister knew about, redundancies that the Treasury knew about and redundancies that Cabinet had endorsed. The report shows that there was hardly a soul left, in any position of authority, with knowledge of the three complex and different financial management systems, when Jim Miller was forced to rapidly amalgamate the corporate services areas of the plan he had been clearly and openly working on, without ministerial contradiction or Cabinet subcommittee contradiction, since the final weeks of 1989. No wonder the system fell apart. This would have been perfectly obvious to a Cabinet subcommittee which was doing its job and to a Minister who was doing his job. Clearly neither was.

There is now a rapidly growing body of evidence that this Government cannot manage. The Queensland public service did not change in December 1989; only the Government changed. Jim Miller must go because he is the responsible officer under the Financial Administration and Audit Act. The Minister must go because he has displayed such a signal lack of leadership and such unmentionable ignorance of what was happening in his department as to make him unfit for office.

Time expired.

Amalgamation of Liberal and National Parties

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (11.10 a.m.) I rise today to raise a grave matter which is extremely sad for the Queensland Liberal Party. It is very sad indeed. I refer to the takeover of that once-proud Queensland Liberal Party by the National Party. This takeover of the Liberals has been misnamed the amalgamation of the Liberal and National Parties. Let there be no doubt in the minds of all Queenslanders: this is not amalgamation but the final collapse of the Liberals as a result of the National Party onslaught—an attack which was started by Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen 10 years ago in 1983 when the then Liberal leader, Terry White, had the courage to walk out of the National Party dominated coalition over the need for a parliamentary Public Accounts Committee. This takeover, through a so-called amalgamation of the Liberal Party with the National Party, would see the end of what was once indeed——

Mr Livingstone: A sell-out!

Mr BEATTIE: I take that interjection. It is a sell-out. It will see the end of what was once a proud political party. I ask the weak-kneed Liberals of this Parliament: what would the late Sir Robert Menzies think of their wimpish collapse?

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Crows Nest under Standing Order 123A. I am going to listen to the member for Brisbane Central and not to other members in the Chamber.

Mr BEATTIE: Maybe Paul Everingham was right, and the Liberals in this House are a pack of wimps. Maybe I judged poor Paul too harshly; perhaps he knew them better than I did.

Let us look at the standing of the Liberal Party in the community. An analysis was carried out by the *Courier-Mail* , which gave an indication of why the Liberals are cavalcading down the road of amalgamation with the National Party. The independent political reporters of the *Courier-Mail* stated of Joan Sheldon—

> "Struggles in the cut and thrust of debate against the experienced sluggers."

What do those reporters say about John Goss?

> "Probably the most exposure he has received is the latest publicity that he is a 'stud' rather than the wimp label applied to him by Paul Everingham."

What about Denver Beanland?

> "Still thought of as Mr Dreamland."

What about Santo Santoro?

> "Sees himself as a power broker within the party, but has no support."

Mr Stephan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Gympie under Standing Order 123A. I am going to have silence from members in the House, except, of course, the member for Brisbane Central.

Mr BEATTIE: What about Ray Connor?

> "Too often went off half-cocked on prison stories not properly checked out."

What about David Watson?

> "An honest trier, but does not have much presence and is a disappointment to colleagues."

What about Bob Quinn?

> ". . . has not been heard of to any great degree."

What about Bruce Davidson?

". . . does not have the political sophistication for higher office."

What about Bruce Laming?

"New to politics and still to make any mark."

Is it any wonder that that lot is capitulating to the National Party onslaught? If members read the press releases, they would see what led to this debate. One only has to look at the picture of Mr Borbidge and Mrs Sheldon in the newspaper article that I am holding. Are they not cuddly? What a pretty picture of the honourable members! The real question is: will this marriage ever be consummated?

Peter Charlton summed up this amalgamation issue very well. He stated—

"Mr Rob Borbidge's promise that neither party in a future coalition would use its numerical strength in Cabinet is short-term expedience for instant gratification. A kind of political 'of course I'll respect you in the morning.' "

What a marriage! I thought this cartoon in the *Courier-Mail* that I am holding up was pretty accurate. It illustrates that a duck is on the bed and the marriage is about to be consummated. All they can get is a very loud "quack".

Let us look at the history of this issue. When the honourable member for Indooroopilly was elected as the Leader of the Liberal Party in May 1990—they go through leaders—a newspaper article stated—

"The new Queensland Liberal Leader, Mr Beanland, yesterday rejected renewed National Party calls for closer ties as 'flogging a dead horse'.

And he said the Opposition Leader"—

at that time Mr Cooper—

". . . was embarrassing the Nationals by continuing his push for conservative party unity."

Mr Beanland stated further—

"Mr Cooper had completely misread the signs if he believed the resignation from Parliament of the former Liberal leader, Mr Innes, would lead to a closer working relationship between the two parties."

A Government Member: At least he got something right.

Mr BEATTIE: He did. What does Mr Beanland say about that today? I will come back to the point. What would the Late Sir Gordon Chalk think of this Liberal capitulation? He was a great Queenslander in the true Liberal tradition—a man for whom I had great respect. Sir Gordon, who stood up to Sir Joh and the bullyboy Nationals, would have been mortified by such a Liberal capitulation. Where is the old Liberal courage? Where are the gutsy Liberals such as Chalk or Menzies in the Liberal Party now? Sadly, they have all gone, to be replaced by Paul Everingham's wimps. Indeed, as I said, I owe Everingham an apology: they are wimps. This amalgamation is the rape and pillage of the Liberal Party, its traditions and what it once stood for. All that the Liberals in this House can do is lie back and think of England—let it happen.

What, pray tell, will this new amalgamated party be called? Maybe they could call it the White Shoe Trendies, because very few of its members live in Brisbane; they are all on the coast. Maybe I am being too harsh on them. Perhaps they could call it the Niblets, or the Pawpaw Party, or, better still, the Queensland Reactionary Party or the Queensland Whingers' Party. Even better, perhaps they could call it the Queensland United and Conservative Coalition—QUACC for short. Maybe they could call it the Country Liberal Alliance Party. What an acronym that would make! I can assure members that no-one would fall for that claptrap.

But it does not matter what they call this amalgamated party because in Brisbane the party will be an electoral disaster. Make no mistake about it; Labor will laugh all the way to the ballot box. The people of Brisbane will see this new party as simply the National Party trying to move back into Brisbane seats. The people of Brisbane remember well the corruption that the National Party brought to Brisbane, particularly in parts of my electorate such as Fortitude Valley, and they will not have a bar of it. I repeat: the people of Brisbane will not have a bar of it; do not worry about that.

What about the policy difference between the parties? The member for Clayfield is supporting the reintroduction of the death penalty. The member for Callide is single-handedly following Sir Joh's hatred of the parliamentary committee system in this Parliament. On every occasion on which she rises to speak, she says that she wants it destroyed. The policy differences between the parties are immense. Prior to the last election, an article in the *Sunday Mail* set out those differences in policy. I table that article for the information of the House, because it is important that members be aware of those differences.

The differences in policy include industrial relations and tax. Each party stood a candidate against the other's leader. Honourable members would remember that in June 1992, Joan Sheldon, the Leader of the Liberal Party, asserted that Trevor Coomber would beat Borbidge when the Liberals jumped the electoral fence and challenged the Opposition Leader in that seat. So not only are there differences on policy to the extent that the National Party is trying to support some sort of orderly marketing and the Liberal Party is supporting market forces but also, during the last election, the leaders of both political parties were opposed in their own electorates.

The chances of an agreement are small indeed. However, I turn to one difference in policy that concerns me. In May 1992, Mr Borbidge released a document containing his local government policy, which he said would be implemented as part of his program. He stated—

> "Parts of the City of Brisbane would be excised and added to those contiguous local authorities nearby."

Mr Borbidge wants to bust up the low-rates Brisbane City Council and give parts of Brisbane away to surrounding high-rates councils. If Mr Borbidge wants to do away with the concept of a Greater Brisbane local authority, I want to know where Bob Ward stands on this issue. Does he support giving away bits and pieces of the City of Brisbane to the neighbouring councils?

Mr Johnson: You've made that up.

Mr BEATTIE: The member should read his own policy document. He does not even know what his party is promising. Does Bob Ward support the breaking up of the Brisbane City Council? Does the former Lord Mayor, Sallyanne Atkinson, agree with that? What does Joan Sheldon think of it? What will the Liberals be saying at the Brisbane City Council level? Will they be supporting the break-up of the City of Brisbane? It will be very interesting to hear what they have to say, because they have been misleading and they have been trying to be deceptive about their policy. The people of Brisbane will not wear a break-up of the City of Brisbane, which is what is being supported by the Nationals.

I will deal with a couple of other matters. Not only will there be policy differences but also the parties will have difficulties with a whole range of personalities, and the brawl will continue. A good illustration of that followed some comments that were made by John Hewson and that intellectual giant Tim Fischer when they expressed caution and opposition to amalgamation. We heard this response from Mr Everingham on the ABC program *Daybreak* —

> "I think if you wait for the rest of the coalition to catch up with the Queensland Liberals, you would never do anything. After all, Queensland Liberals are far ahead of the rest of the country."

If that is the sort of thing he is saying, one has to ask: what is he on? What does he smoke? What does he drink? That gives a clear illustration of how out of touch the Liberals are. They will be thrashed at the ballot box. They had better enjoy the short time that they have left.

Department of Primary Industries

Mr PERRETT (Barambah) (11.20 a.m.): The central element in Wayne Goss' rhetoric has always been openness, honesty and accountability. We have been hearing it incessantly for the past five years. But the Premier's inactivity since the Public Accounts Committee reported last week shows that rhetoric for what it is: it is nothing more than empty words and hollow boasts aimed at deceiving voters. Even the majority report of the inquiry into the DPI offered the Premier all the evidence he needed to make his rhetoric reality.

The majority did its best to ignore ministerial responsibility for the proper running of departments, but the Premier knows better. He has preached ministerial responsibility for too long to ignore it now and retain any credibility. In simple terms, the Minister for Primary Industries, Mr Casey, must go. He has failed the Government, his department and the primary producers of Queensland. The Auditor-General reported to Parliament that he had never encountered a more extensive series of discrepancies in a public sector body.

An inquiry by the Public Accounts Committee was both proper and inevitable. It was also inevitable, but certainly not proper, that Labor blamed the public servants. But the public servants should not have been alone on the PAC griller. The Minister should have had the courage to front up and explain his own failure to realise what was happening and to act on it. The Goss Government's own *Cabinet Handbook* has this to say—

> "Responsibility for Departments is placed in the hands of Ministers and, to the greatest possible extent, through Ministers to their Chief Executives. It is the policy of the Government to enhance

> Ministerial responsibility and accountability consistent with its collective commitments."

The *Cabinet Handbook* is dead right. Under our Westminster traditions, the buck stops squarely on the Minister's desk. It is futile for the Minister to proclaim his ignorance. If he wants the pay, the limousines and the jets, he must take some responsibility. After all, he has a huge personal staff of highly paid and politically appointed operatives to help him know what is going on. They should have kept an eye on things and then briefed the Minister, who would have to accept responsibility in any proper Government, of course. But this is the Goss Labor Government, and it has betrayed the public service. That it was public servants who was asked to wear the rap for the scandal is evidence of the political cowardice and treachery of the Labor Government.

Public servants can operate only in accordance with the wishes and directions of their political masters. That is basic to the Westminster traditions of ministerial responsibility and a professional and apolitical public service. Those traditions demand that public servants give their loyalty and best efforts to the Government of the day.

The other side of the coin is that Ministers are the public face of the department, accepting both blame and praise for the way their policies work out. That is the part of the equation that the Government and its Ministers choose to ignore. This is just the latest example of a Government whose Ministers take the credit for what goes well, but blame public servants for everything else. The Labor Party has heaped responsibility onto public servants for a scandalous situation flowing directly from political decisions with respect to the DPI.

The decision to amalgamate DPI with Water Resources and Forestry was taken by Labor. So was the massive budget cut which denied proper resources to amalgamate the separate accounting systems. Even the direct evidence quoted in both the majority and minority reports makes that much plain. While the State Budget grew almost 18 per cent, there was a budget cut of 20 per cent over three years for the DPI. This was denied over and over again by the Minister in the House and everywhere else, but it was accepted by the committee. That cut alone would have made for dreadful problems for the director-general and his management team.

There was a massive redundancy program to cope with. Despite years of ministerial denials, the Budget papers show a net loss of 726 staff since he took over nominal control of the DPI. The most critical staff losses came about after a review of the department by the Public Sector Management Commission. That redundancy program included the key people who would be needed in managing the complex amalgamation decreed by a Government determined on change for the sake of change.

There was the forced pace of change—an insistence that everything should happen quickly, instead of the three years advised to the director-general by the Federal department. But, as usual, the academics in the PSMC knew better than the Canberra people who had already experienced such an amalgamation. There was also the massive change in the focus for the department. Again, that change has been denied by the Minister time and again, but it is there in the evidence given to the committee.

I refer honourable members to evidence given by Mr Miller at the public hearing. He stated—

> ". . . we were required within that constant dollar budget to move quite a bit of our resource away from our traditional regional research activities which support production systems, to integrated catchment management, land care—a whole range of the new type of activities in terms of natural resource management that we had not done to that extent previously."

How often has the Minister in the media and in the House denied that these things were going on? There can no longer be any doubt that the Minister and the Goss Government have consistently misled Parliament, producer groups, DPI staff and the people of Queensland. There can be no doubt that there were massive difficulties facing the DPI staff in getting amalgamation bedded down. There can also be no doubt that there were failures, but they were not failures of the public servants alone.

Last week, the PAC minority report made that clear with this paragraph—

> "The minority believes the Minister was fundamentally negligent of his specific statutory responsibilities in not leading, and adequately supporting, his Department at a time of massive change."

What a pity the majority chose to ignore the words of the PAC Chairman, Mr Hollis, when

he wrote in April this year what we all know to be true—

> "The Minister for Primary Industries and the Director-General of the Department of Primary Industries share the responsibility for the Department's accountability."

If the Goss Labor Government really believed in honesty, openness and accountability, the Minister would have resigned the day the report was released. If he did not do that, the Premier would have had the courage to sack him. Nothing less will be satisfactory. Today in this House, we heard the Premier not only condoning the report but also defending his incompetent Minister.

Labor's damage control team is already denying that the Minister should be held in any way responsible for what happened in his department. Like the Minister himself, they are saying that the accounts are now in order and that the Minister acted fast when problems were brought to his attention. The minority report, based on the evidence before the committee, puts the lie to that. It makes it clear that the Minister knew there were major problems in the department in March 1992 and not, as the majority would imply, in August 1992.

The unchallenged evidence, again, came from Mr Miller, who stated—

> "I must say that I was not aware until the risk analysis was done in March 1992 of the state that we were in in terms of the actual books of account. The Minister was advised about that. He received a copy of the risk assessment report, as did the Treasurer and the Auditor-General."

The Minister and Mr Miller found out with the financial mess by means of the same report, which went to both men at about the same time.

If Mr Miller should be held responsible for what was going on before he found out about it, then why not the Minister? It is also no use the Minister trying to wash his hands of the day-to-day running of his department—to claim some virtue in an arm's-length style.

The minutes of a senior management team meeting in June last year record the Minister's personal intervention to ensure the removal of $900,000 from the Agricultural Production Group. He intervened when it suited him and ignored the department at other times. For most of the time, he has abrogated his responsibilities. The PAC report provides disturbing evidence of a Minister putting the squeeze on his department and then bolting when things went wrong.

That the hearing had to be held at all is a damning indictment of the Goss Government and the Minister for Primary Industries. That it was public servants who were asked to wear the rap for the scandal is evidence of the political cowardice and treachery of the Labor Government. A Minister with even basic competence or a passing interest in his duties would have known what was happening. He would then have helped his management team to work through the problems. This one chose to throw his public servants to the wolves, and the Labor Party has chosen to lop off public servants' heads to protect a grossly incompetent Minister. If the circus manager does not like the tune, he sacks the organ grinder, not the organ grinder's monkey. The monkey is much better trained and much harder to replace. The Public Accounts Committee reports into the DPI scandal should see the Minister removed on the ground of ministerial responsibility having been abrogated. Rural Queensland can no longer afford his mismanagement of such an important department.

Amalgamation of Liberal and National Parties

Mr BARTON (Waterford) (11.30 a.m.): It is my intention to talk about the proposed amalgamation between the National and Liberal Parties. I think that we are all entitled to ask the question: can they achieve amalgamation? If those parties achieve amalgamation, what form will it take? Can they become an effective Opposition? They are certainly having a lot of difficulty with that task at present. I also suggest that, in light of what has taken place in recent months, if we are waiting for amalgamation for those parties to be an effective Opposition, we will obviously be waiting for a very long time. We are entitled to ask the question on behalf of the public of this State: are the National and Liberal Parties committed to the idea of amalgamation? Are they really serious about it, or are some other plots being played out behind the scenes?

It is interesting to examine some of the comments made in the press in recent months because, in my view, those comments cast doubt on the commitment of the Liberal and National Parties to amalgamation. The *Bulletin* of 10 August 1993 stated—

> "Sheldon refuses to accept time

> limits for amalgamation, which puts her at odds with Borbidge, who has demanded an agreement by next December."

There then appears a direct comment from Mrs Sheldon—

> " 'There would be nothing worse than amalgamating in haste and then finding it is not going to work,' she says. 'That would be disastrous. He might say it but Rob's not the only player in the field.' "

What sort of commitment to amalgamation is that? It is also interesting to read the comments by Paul Everingham, the President of the Liberal Party, in the same *Bulletin* magazine. He stated—

> " 'December is a completely arbitrary date which has been plucked out of the air by Mr Borbidge. He has his eye on only one thing—he believes amalgamation will help win the next Queensland election—but it is a much bigger issue than that.' In language which does not bode well for a merged party in any form, Everingham describes the ultimatum as 'ill-considered and petulant'."

That comment was made by the President of the Liberal Party in this State. The only sensible decision that he has made in recent times is to set up a practice in the town of Beenleigh.

There is also a direct comment in that article from the Leader of the Opposition. The article states—

> "Borbidge maintains he is serious about his December deadline. 'As far as I'm concerned, it's December or nothing', he says. 'We can't allow limited resources to be consumed indefinitely looking at our own navels.' "

The article also contains comments by the previous Liberal Party Federal President, Ashley Goldsworthy, which indicate that he is opposed to the State amalgamation. I suggest that, in the light of those comments, and particularly when the Leader of the Opposition is saying very clearly and very coldly, "It is December or nothing", we have to be a bit concerned about whether the National and Liberal Parties are sincere in proposing this amalgamation, or whether there is another agenda behind it.

Mr Robertson: Is it any wonder the member for Gregory looks so worried?

Mr BARTON: I think that the member for Gregory would be very worried, because he is facing a long term in Opposition.

If this amalgamation were to take place, who would be the losers and who would be the winners? The Liberals would very clearly be the losers, because it has already come to pass in the discussions between the Liberal Party and the National Party that there will be no more three-cornered contests, except by agreement in Labor's marginal seats. The Liberals hold nine seats now. That is a recipe for ensuring that they will hold fewer than nine seats in the future. In the past, the only seats that the Liberal Party had any real opportunity to pick up were those on the north coast and on the Gold Coast that they swapped with the National Party, depending on where our preferences went.

It is my suggestion that the abolition of three-cornered contests would put the National Party in the box seat. But what do some of the Liberals say about it? Recently, Senator Ian Macdonald made a comment in the press about the subject. About the only thing that he has going for him is that he comes from my home town of Ayr. I used to have to put up with him as a prefect at high school, and that was not easy. In the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* of 1 November this year, Senator Ian Macdonald called on the Liberal Party not to abandon three-cornered contests. The article stated—

> " 'Under no circumstances should we give in to National Party suggestions that Liberal candidates not contest seats in North Queensland, particularly in the Cairns, Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton regions.'
>
> . . .
>
> Senator Macdonald said there had been a resurgence of the Liberal Party vote in the North at the expense of Labor and National.
>
> 'In the last federal election the Liberal vote increased by 11 per cent on average in the seats of Leichhardt, Herbert and Capricornia.' "

He then went on to talk about Dawson being a potential gain for the Liberal Party and that, at the State election, the Liberals gained a 16.4 per cent swing in the Cairns-based electorates of Barron River and Cairns and a 5 per cent swing in Townsville and Mundingburra. He then stated—

> " 'Under no circumstances should we relinquish these types of seats to the Nationals. If not already they are rapidly becoming natural Liberal seats.' "

Again, that does not seem like a very good basis for amalgamation.

We also need to scrutinise closely comments by the Leader of the Opposition on the Rod Henshaw program on 1 November this year. Mr Borbidge stated—

> "We're not operating to a two year timetable. I consider the matter has to be resolved one way or the other, not later than about the middle of next year. But what I do want to see is substantial progress made by Christmas, and I believe that the matters arising out of the negotiations . . . "

At that point, Mr Henshaw interrupted the Leader of the Opposition. In other words, he is pushing the matter along. However, on the same program, the Deputy Leader of the Coalition, Joan Sheldon, stated—

> "You're talking about merging two major political parties in the State and in this nation. Now if this isn't done properly, then we're going to have problems down the line."

Later in that interview, the Leader of the Opposition, Rob Borbidge, stated—

> "I can assure him that I will not be supporting any proposal that will jeopardise John Hewson or Tim Fischer or the Federal coalition."

Talk about double talk and mixed messages being sent out! The two leaders seem to be in conflict about who is in favour of amalgamation, but Mr Borbidge maintains that he will not jeopardise his Federal colleagues.

The *Toowoomba Chronicle* of 1 November also contained an article about this matter. In that newspaper, the National Party stated very clearly that it has thrown the ball to the Liberals. The article stated—

> "The party earlier decided to drop three-cornered contests against sitting MPs and select a single conservative candidate to contest marginal Labor-held seats.
>
> However, this move is yet to be ratified by the Liberals."

The article goes on to talk about the ball being in the Nationals' court in relation to joint Senate tickets. It seems that the push is being led by the Toowoomba people. The article gives a fairly good indication that it seems to be all about the National Party getting the Liberal Party to drop three-cornered contests and coming on board with them for a joint Senate ticket.

As recently as yesterday, the *Courier-Mail* contained an article in which the Young Liberal Federal President, Trent Zimmerman, was sulking about how amalgamation would be an absolute disaster and that they are better off having "strength in division". That was an interesting headline; it was probably thought up by the *Courier-Mail*.

The National and Liberal Parties certainly do not have unanimity in Queensland, and they certainly do not have it nationally. It seems that the National Party is pursuing amalgamation very heavily at the expense of the Liberal Party. The two parties do not seem to have agreement on the timetable for amalgamation. Rob Borbidge has been given the banner by the National Party to try to get this up quickly and to get a good deal on behalf of the National Party at the expense of the Liberal Party. Of course, Rob Borbidge's leadership is so weak that the famous Toowoomba connection of the National Party—David Russell, and Mike Horan and the other members from around Toowoomba who are not happy with Borbidge's white-shoe brigade type leadership—are pushing him into a position in which he potentially cannot achieve the timetable that has been set for him. Those people will sit back and wait until after the Brisbane City Council elections, and then we are likely to see a push by the National Party to replace Rob Borbidge with Mike Horan. In effect, amalgamation will be the present Opposition Leader's last stand. Very clearly, there does not seem to be any other conclusion that can reasonably be construed from this because he has been sold a dummy. Everybody in the Federal Opposition, Fischer, his Federal Leader Hewson, Howard, the Young Liberals——

Time expired.

Whitsunday Shire Council

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield) (11.40 a.m.): I wish to raise today an issue which is of great concern to the councillors of the Whitsunday Shire Council and the majority of the people represented by them. The issue relates to allegations which have been raised in relation to various councillors on the Whitsunday Shire Council, investigations of these allegations by the CJC and the lack of finality to these investigations. The councillors affected are concerned that, with the local government elections due early next year, it is imperative that the issue is resolved as soon as possible—very preferably prior to Christmas—so that the political campaigns and the outcome of the election are not

tainted by the innuendo and smear inherent in this issue.

This issue first came to public notice in 1991 when malicious rumours were spread about an alleged conflict of interest on the part of the Whitsunday Shire Council Chairman, Councillor Glen Patullo. The allegations were given their greatest force and impetus in a speech made in this place on 28 April 1992 by the honourable member for Whitsunday, Mrs Lorraine Bird. Within that speech Mrs Bird, under parliamentary privilege, accused Councillor Patullo of feathering his own nest via a conflict of interest involving a privately owned quarry, the Whitsunday Crushers, which operated on land owned by his brother, and the Whitsunday Shire Council quarry. Mrs Bird went on to suggest that Councillor Patullo was trying to close the shire council's quarry so that the Whitsunday Crushers' quarry, operating on Councillor Patullo's brother's land, would benefit.

Members might be interested to know that allegations of conflict of interest arose in 1991 when commercial quarry operators complained that the council's quarry was undercutting prices for supplying a private construction project and selling material at below cost. Whitsunday Crushers was one of the complainants and, during a deputation of Whitsunday Crushers management to the council, it was established that, whilst the council quarry was charging the private construction project $14 per metre, Division 2 of the Whitsunday Shire Council—in other words the ratepayers—was being asked to pay $28 to $32 per metre for the same material.

It is no wonder that Councillor Patullo and other councillors targeted by Mrs Bird immediately set about making inquiries with the view to protecting the financial interests of their constituents and also making the council's operations more accountable. Two of these councillors were Councillor Moscato and Councillor McCullough. With rumours about corruption and malpractice flying, the Whitsunday Shire Council, led by Councillor Patullo, in October 1991 called in the CJC to scrutinise and investigate, in the most minute detail, the affairs of the council. Members should note that this occurred a full six months before Mrs Bird raised this issue in the Parliament.

It should also be noted by members in this place that Councillor Patullo also offered not to participate in any council decisions involving the Whitsunday Crushers' applications to the council, given that the company operated on land owned by his brother. At this stage, I wish to quote Councillor Patullo directly—

> "When the Councillors and the Shire Clerk found I was to make no financial or other gain from my brother's business dealings, they declared I had no pecuniary interest but I decided to stay neutral and left the room."

The State Ombudsman also found to this effect. Despite this, Councillor Patullo and his council decided to call in the CJC and open their affairs totally to the investigative might of this body.

This is where I come to the main point of this contribution, that being that the CJC has still not brought down a finding or concluded its investigation—two years after Councillor Patullo and the council asked it to look into their affairs and 18 months after Mrs Bird made her rather scurrilous and defamatory speech in this place. This unacceptable situation is, of course, having very detrimental effects on the personal and political lives of the people concerned. Innuendo and smear are being circulated in the local community of Whitsunday. In the absence of a finding and announcement by the CJC, the ferocity of the innuendo and smear will only get worse. This is, of course, having a very harmful effect on the personal lives of people such as Councillors Patullo, Moscato and McCullough. They are personally suffering as are, of course, members of their families.

Secondly, the lack of a CJC determination is having a serious impact on the ability of the council to function properly and efficiently. I am told that the CJC holds many council documents and files, some of which are required for the normal running of the council which, after all, is trying to properly represent and look after the interests of its constituents.

Thirdly, we are now rapidly approaching the 1994 local government elections and it is understandable that the councillors who have been slandered want the cloud which hangs over their names quickly removed. It should be noted that, at the last local government election, Councillor Patullo received a huge majority, and the other councillors who have been slandered similarly enjoy great electoral and community support. They are perceived, and rightly so, as being part of a progressive and forward looking council, which is doing a good job for the people of the Whitsunday shire.

They cannot understand why Mrs Bird displays so much animosity and maliciousness towards them. Perhaps it has something to do with the story doing the rounds that Mrs Bird's husband, John Bird, is thinking of running against Councillor Glen Patullo at the forthcoming elections. I should add at this point that Councillor Patullo has absolutely no fear and no reservations of concern about that possibility. He would welcome——

Mr Stoneman interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I take the interjection because, from discussions that I have had with people in that area, that is a common belief. They cannot understand why Mrs Bird, right from the start of her time in this Parliament, has fought with Councillor Patullo and his council. She has accused the council of being "the environmental vandals of the decade"; she has supported the formation of a rebel anti-Patullo group; she has failed to support the majority of the council in its attempts to bring back efficiency in its administration by resolving the shire clerk debacle; and she has assisted the opponents of the Whitsunday Shire Council's position on the local authority boundary issue. As the local member, she has not been at all supportive of a democratically elected council—a council which is quite prepared to work with her, as the local State member, in the interests of their constituents. I call on Mrs Bird to work with Councillor Patullo and his council for the benefit of their constituents. I say, "Forget the politics and look after the people, just for once!"

Also, I intend writing to the CJC and encouraging it to bring its investigation into the affairs of the Whitsunday Shire Council to a conclusive finality.

In my view, Councillor Patullo has behaved in a proper and accountable manner in his capacity as chairman of his council. He requested—and his request was granted—that investigations be conducted into the allegations made against him—and he did this well before the politicians in this Parliament became involved in this issue. He and his council deserve an answer, and they and I believe that two years has been more than a sufficient wait for this answer.

On 6 October 1992 Council Patullo, on behalf of his council, in fact wrote to the Criminal Justice Commission—

> "As Chairman of the Whitsunday Shire Council, I would like to make a formal complaint to the Criminal Justice Commission about certain allegations made by the Member for Whitsunday, Lorraine Bird under parliamentary privilege.
>
> It is my belief that the Member for Whitsunday, Lorraine Bird has attempted to conspire to pervert the course of justice by the misuse of parliamentary privilege . . . as the matters pertaining to Mrs Bird's allegations have already been requested to be investigated by the Whitsunday Shire Council and investigations had already been proceeding for the Criminal Investigation Branch, Whitsunday Branch.
>
> In closing I request that you acknowledge receipt of this complaint and deal with same accordingly."

Councillor Patullo and the shire council have never sought to hide any information and have never sought to pervert the course of any investigation conducted by the CJC. They have always been totally up front and utterly and totally open and accountable to any investigative body, including the Ombudsman, who cleared Councillor Patullo.

The latest and very public victimisation of the Whitsunday Shire Council relates to that council's attempts to dismiss its current shire clerk. It should be noted that the council's dismissal of the shire clerk, which was subsequently overturned by the Goss Government, was supported by the majority of the councillors on the Whitsunday Shire Council, the Local Government Association of Queensland and the majority of constituents who had to deal with the incompetencies of the office of the shire clerk. It should be noted by honourable members that the shire clerk was sacked for reasons that had nothing to do with any investigation under way by the CJC. The council has denied the claim by the Minister for Local Government that Mrs Brookes was being fired for being a CJC whistleblower. It should be noted that the dismissal was supported by staunch Labor supporter—and Mrs Bird's supporter—Councillor Beryl McLennan, who has been ignored by Mrs Bird ever since. I am told that Ms McLennan is not particularly perturbed by that fact, either.

Of course, only yesterday the Goss Government announced that an injunction has been sought and issued against any action on the part of the council to take further dismissive action against the shire clerk. So much for this Government's respect and support for the independence of local government! The question is why? Why is the Whitsunday Shire Council again under fire, targeted and victimised? That is a question

that only the people on the other side of this place are able to answer. I would urge them to do so.

In the few minutes remaining to me, I shall address briefly the remarks by the previous two Government speakers. Whenever the Government starts paying so much attention to processes such as amalgamation and closer and greater cooperation, it is clearly worried. The latest opinion polls show clearly that the Goss gloss is on the decline and that Liberal Party and National Party support in the community is on the increase. The last thing that members on the Government side of the House want is an amalgamation or closer cooperation between the Liberal Party and the National Party.

Mr Beattie: That's not true. I'm a strong supporter of amalgamation.

Mr SANTORO: I have news for the members opposite. We are cooperating. Perhaps over the next few days, in common with Mr Beattie, we will also pick up the local newspaper and read the litany of ridicule and abuse that was hurled at this Minister a week later by the very same columnist. To pick up a paper, as Mr Beattie and others did, and read from it without any research or recognition of the balance that needs to be instilled in that contribution is facile.

Amalgamation of Liberal and National Parties

Mr PITT (Mulgrave) (11.50 a.m.): I rise to speak about marriage—that institution which has been the foundation of our Judaeo-Christian society for over two millennia. Some would say that successful marriages are made in heaven; that they are characterised by certain fundamental features which are clearly recognisable. Let us examine what these features may be. In that way, it may be possible to predict with some sense of surety the chances of success. Perhaps on reflection it may be obvious that the partners to this contract should rethink their position before rushing to the altar.

Let me be so bold as to suggest that for a marriage to be truly successful it should exhibit all or at least most of the following characteristics: a mutual respect by both partners for the values of the other; a desire for the union to produce outcomes which will bring joy and happiness to both of their families; a willingness to accept and accommodate the strengths and weaknesses of not only the partner but also those they call relations; and an understanding that the union should be forever and that to think otherwise would indicate lack of commitment.

Bearing these in mind, why then would the Liberal and National Parties in Queensland be considering marriage, given the fact that on all counts they fail the test and fail it comprehensively? The marriage—and they call it an amalgamation—has been conceived not out of love but out of desperation. Both the Nationals and their city cousins face a long and lonely life in the political wilderness, and both see this as their last chance to avoid that eventuality.

This is not the first time that this odd couple has tied the knot in this State. On 26 June this year, in the *Weekend Independent,* Paul Reynolds pointed out—

> "Amalgamation was tried in the 1920s. The Moore government (1929-32) was an amalgamated conservative government, defeated by the depression and its own ineptitude. As the 1930s progressed, urban conservatives began to drift away, culminating in the formation by Brisbane businessman J. B. Chandler, of the Queensland People's Party which, in turn, in 1949 became the Liberal Party (Queensland Branch). The Liberals thus have an organic history of 44 years, although protean 'Liberal' political groupings can be traced back to the 1870s-1880s.
>
> The same can be said for the Nationals. The formation of the QPP coincided with the reorganisation of rural conservatism in the form of the Country Party, later the National Party. Both groups could thereby come together with a common enemy, Labor, at a time when Labor governed (1932-57). After they won power, common needs kept them together until the Liberals sought to become the larger party and the Nationals decided to go out alone."

The lessons of history obviously have not been learned. They have tried this particular practice and it has failed. Just what do the bride and groom actually have in common? Just what does each bring to the marriage? At first glance, the answers to these questions are quite obvious: both are implacably opposed to Labor; both have their own constituency; and both see themselves as the natural party of Government. However, these characteristics were present in 1983 when both parties went through a very public and very messy divorce.

Let us now consider the parliamentary behaviour of the now love-struck pair in this

Chamber. Let us examine the National and Liberal Party performance in 1990 during question time, the Adjournment debate and the Matters of Public Interest debate. While suggesting what each opposition party regarded as important in 1990, these parliamentary activities also reveal the lack of coordination between them when it came to confronting the Government. For the Nationals, the most popular subjects during question time were State economic issues, ministerial accountability, rural matters, health, education, welfare and transport. Only the State economy and health, education and welfare issues were congruent with Liberal questions, which additionally focused on judicial, penal and legal issues, and party political propaganda. There were too few Liberal contributions to the Adjournment debates—only 17—and for the Matters of Public Interest debate, only 11. For the Nationals, parochial concerns, health, education, welfare, rural matters and the environment were popular Adjournment debate subjects, whereas for the Liberals, party political issues, rural matters and State economic policy predominated.

Division lists give some added emphasis to the case I put. In 1990, there were 133 divisions, all of which were won by the Government. However, only on 68 per cent of these occasions, that is, in 91 cases, did the opposition parties combine against the Government. On 24 per cent of those occasions, that is, in 32 cases, the Liberals combined with Labor against the Nationals, and for the remaining 8 per cent the Nationals and Labor combined against the Liberals. Obviously, there were serious differences of a policy nature between the two opposition parties. It is apparent that the Liberals were not pulling their weight. Their recent romance notwithstanding, these differences remain, not only within the confines of this Chamber but also out there in voter land amongst their respective dwindling bands of supporters.

The most cogent argument put forward to support the amalgamation has come from the financial backers of conservative politics in this State. I refer to an article that appeared in the *Cairns Post* on 30 October this year, which stated—

> "One powerful argument for amalgamation has been the withdrawal of donations to party funds, mainly because backers are sick of wasting their money on the Nationals and Liberals fighting each other in a number of seats when the intent of donations was to fight the ALP."

In the *News Weekly* of 14 August this year, the following comment was made—

> "Political visions are not born simply because financial interests warn two parties to get their act together, or else."

As I said, this marriage has more to do with money, or lack of it, than it has to do with policy. Both parties are bereft of policies, and where they do have them, they find it difficult to find some common ground. The amalgamation is not born out of any hope for a bright and new future. It is born out of fear by the leadership of both parties at the parliamentary level and out of frustration at the organisational level. Fear on the part of both leaders is quite clearly evident. The member for Caloundra retains the No. 1 spot in her party only because the various pretenders to the throne cannot gain the support of four of their colleagues. The Deputy Leader of the Coalition continues to look over her shoulder at the 1992 National Party candidate Liz Bell, who sees herself as the member in waiting for that electorate.

Surely, an amalgamation accompanied by an edict precluding three-cornered contests must be seen as a welcome life raft for the embattled member for Caloundra. The rest of the Liberals—with the exception of the member for Moggill and the member for Indooroopilly—have not really had experience of what a bunch of political thugs the Nationals can be when they have the whip hand. The member for Mooloolah, as a previous member of the National Party Senate team before he became a Liberal, knows that. There is no doubt that, as the Trojan horse for the Nationals, he will be urging others to embrace the amalgamation cause. The member for Aspley—when one can get him out of the cupboard or out from under the bed—knows that he will lose his frontbench position with amalgamation, as will the member for Merrimac.

Amalgamation is no real worry for the member for Clayfield, because he will not be here after the next election. No Liberal, under whatever name, actually trusts him. And why should they after the stunt he pulled on the *7.30 Report*? In addition, one wonders just how many sitting Liberal members will survive preselection under the party's new rules. The Liberal members opposite can no longer rely on the local coterie of sycophants to get their names on the ballot-paper. Now they have to convince party members across a whole Federal division. And won't that open up a can of worms!

For the National Party, this amalgamation is driven by a cancerous weakness in that the people in the bush no longer trust their leadership. A motelier from Surfers Paradise was never going to appeal to rural Queenslanders. A quick glance at the opinion polls shows that country people reject the member for Surfers Paradise because he reminds them too much of the white-shoe brigade, who were largely responsible for the 1989 apocalypse. Additionally, the demographic shift in Surfers Paradise, as well as the member's failure to stand up for his electorate on the Indy issue, make the Leader of the Opposition vulnerable to a decent Liberal candidate. He sees amalgamation as a means of keeping the Liberals off his back. The same is true of a list of Nationals on the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. One could ask what a petrolhead has in common with the man on the land. Whilst farmers in this State are scratching to put fuel in their tractors, the good member wastes untold litres going around in circles. I might add that this pattern of behaviour is not uncommon amongst members of this divided and leaderless Opposition.

The member for Beaudesert also has a vested interest in the amalgamation. He is terrified by every new house being built at Jimboomba and Greenbank. He knows that progress will end his career unless he can come to some understanding with the Liberals. His support for amalgamation has self-interest at its core. By pushing for amalgamation, the Nationals are simply trying to shore up their positions in urban and semi-urban seats as their influence shrinks westward of the Great Divide. They see the Liberals as their main threat, as they strive desperately to provide some semblance of credibility in the face of a Labor Government appealing to a wider cross-section of the community. This amalgamation is more about neutralising the Liberals than providing a unified force.

This process is good for Labor. I say that because rural blue collar workers will not vote for the Liberals—the party of big business and the yuppie set. These same people reject the National Party because they perceive that it has deserted them to climb into bed with the Liberals. In my own electorate, at the last election, the minority candidates polled 9.3 per cent, outpolling the Liberals. In Maryborough, they polled 17 per cent. In Barambah, they polled 13 per cent. In both cases, the Liberals were left in their wake. This conservative force obviously has rejected the National Party and will not have a bar of the Liberals. I extend to them my thanks for assisting me in being re-elected with an increased majority. If the amalgamation does go ahead we will surely see the establishment of another breakaway conservative party in this State. The dream of unity is pie in the sky.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: The time allotted for the debate on Matters of Public Interest has expired.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2)

Resumption of Committee

Debate resumed from 15 October (see p. 5352) on Schedule 1—

Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs) (12 noon): As a result of the recent changes to ministerial portfolios, I am pleased to announce that the responsibility for Consumer Affairs now lies within my portfolio and within the new department of Queensland Emergency Services. The Office of Consumer Affairs will be established within this new departmental framework. Creation of the new office does not detract from the commitment of the Government to consumer issues.

The previous Minister, the Honourable Glen Milliner, has been recognised throughout Australia as lifting the profile of consumer affairs matters to the stage at which Queensland had become the pre-eminent State in Australia. Work started by Mr Milliner will not be allowed to falter. I look forward to the challenges associated with consumer issues.

In the short time I have been Minister, I have been very impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the staff of Consumer Affairs and the range of programs that they are undertaking or have planned. Some very exciting and innovative work is being done in this field that will put Queensland in the forefront of consumer protection in Australia.

The department has a solid track record. It has very sound plans for the future that I am keen to promote across the State. Under the new administrative arrangements, the creation of a single new department and corporate services support for Emergency Services and Consumer Affairs will not affect the day-to-day

programs and activities of Consumer Affairs staff.

Even though the Office of Consumer Affairs is now part of a larger and very senior department, it will continue to perform its own specialised role to educate and protect consumers in this State. The Office of Consumer Affairs will be given the high priority that this Government feels it deserves.

The office has developed a fully integrated management plan to target resources for those high priority areas that will have the greatest impact on achieving its program goals. The plan will provide a clear direction and serve as a basis upon which to develop performance standards that will enable the office to become the leading consumer affairs agency in Australia.

On behalf of the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs, Queensland will co-ordinate a survey of key interest groups in all States and Territories aimed at assisting the council to prepare a national consumer affairs policy agenda for the next three years. This agenda is an important step towards achieving a national approach to consumer protection. It will provide a framework within which to develop State consumer affairs policy that is in harmony with the needs of the national market place.

The Policy and Legal Division of the office is engaged in a number of projects to maximise co-operation between traders and their customers and to ensure that the advantages of competition flow on to consumers in a tangible and sustained way.

More than 30 years ago, in March 1962, American President John Kennedy spoke of the important role played by consumers in the economy and the challenging problems that then confronted them. Although that address by President Kennedy targeted an American audience, the rights and responsibilities he outlined are just as applicable to Australia today. In his message, President Kennedy included the following as consumer interests—

> The right to safety—to be protected against the marketing of goods hazardous to health or to life;
>
> The right to be informed—to be protected against fraudulent or misleading information, advertising, labelling or other practices, and to be given the facts needed to make informed choices;
>
> The right to choose—to be assured, wherever possible, of access to a variety of products and services at competitive prices; and
>
> The right to be heard—to be assured that the consumer's interest will receive full and sympathetic consideration in the formulation of Government policy, and fair treatment in its administrative tribunals.

Although these goals are broad, the Office of Consumer Affairs is working to ensure that in a real way they are reflected in the policies and practices of the Queensland Government and the traders of this State.

A consumer policy statement will be prepared to ensure that Government departments have a checklist of consumer issues which they need to take into account in developing policies, as well as interest groups which need to be consulted when formulating policy. I do not perceive there to be necessarily a conflict of interests between consumers and business, although this does occur from time to time. In fact, the interests of consumers and industry and business can really complement each other.

The objective of the Office of Consumer Affairs is to assist business in delivering a quality service to customers by providing traders with relevant and pertinent information on consumer laws and practices. The office has specifically set up liaison with the motor, real estate and retail industries in an endeavour to provide assistance and, at the same time, to obtain marketplace intelligence so it can respond to the suggestions and concerns of industry and modify its services and practices where necessary. Some of the tangible benefits that have flowed from this consultation include the development of a complaint handling procedure with the motor industry, as well as the development of a joint strategic plan. The liaison with the retail industry has already resulted in the development of a video with the Outdoor Power Equipment Association titled *Cutting it Fair*. The video is designed to ensure that traders are made aware of their rights and responsibilities under relevant State and Federal laws so that problems are prevented rather than being cured after the event. This video has been distributed throughout Queensland to traders selling equipment such as mowers, chainsaws, whipper-snippers and the like, and was developed at no cost to the office. It covers issues such as the handling of complaints by consumers and how to avoid problems arising in the first place. Other trade associations have expressed interest in having similar videos developed for their members.

The office is proceeding with a number of

key issues designed to substantially advance the interests of consumers including—

development and implementation of consumer education programs in Queensland schools, especially aimed at those in senior secondary school;

development of a policy on the clear and informative labelling of country of origin of consumer products, especially food; and

examination of the need for codes of conduct, including codes governing the introduction agency industry, the entertainment industry and bus travel.

A number of legislative reforms are currently under consideration. A comprehensive review of the Auctioneers and Agents Act will give effect to relevant reforms recommended by the Auctioneers and Agents Review Committee, which was established in 1991, and to certain recommendations by the VEETAC working party. Amendments to the Fair Trading Act will rationalise and modernise the legislation by bringing land transactions within its scope, providing for codes of practice, and allowing for interim prohibition orders for dangerous goods.

Following the receipt of a report from the Retirement Villages Review Committee, it is envisaged that the very important legislation related to retirement villages will be overhauled in the coming year to ensure that consumer protection for residents of villages is made more effective, and that a number of unnecessary bureaucratic impediments to the marketing of retirement village schemes are streamlined.

Another initiative of interest to members will be the review of the Associations Incorporation Act 1981. This statute provides protection to incorporated associations, but has remained largely unamended since its enactment in 1981. A number of the provisions of this statute are no longer relevant, and it is important that the law be amended to take account of the changing nature of incorporated associations.

Some incorporated associations are developing an increasingly entrepreneurial nature in their activities. It is therefore necessary to devise strategies to ensure that this statute remains a vehicle for regulating associations designed purely for non-profit activities rather than those associations which take on a significant business component.

Honourable members would also be aware of the development of consumer credit legislation over the past seven years. It is hoped that the end result of this lengthy process will be the introduction of a new consumer credit Bill into the Parliament during the autumn sittings of 1994. A draft bill has been released by the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs, and submissions are presently being received.

At this stage, Queensland may be introducing the template legislation for all States and Territories—with the exception of Western Australia—subject to agreement being reached by the Ministerial Council on submissions now being received. If agreement is reached on the introduction of the legislation, then I also wish to flag that I will be introducing cognate legislation designed specifically to assist rural producers. The cognate credit legislation will be designed to retain the existing moratorium provisions in the Credit Act. Presently, a farmer is able to apply to a court for a 12-month moratorium on the repossession of farm machinery. The object of this provision is to ensure that, if a farmer has a crop in the field and there is a likelihood that the retention of the farm machinery will enable him to harvest it, thereby enabling him to repay the debt, the law should allow him some leeway. We will have to introduce special legislation to ensure that that happens. I am sure that all honourable members would agree that the retention of such a provision is both desirable and responsible. I should add that, as far as I am aware, the Queensland Government is the only Government in Australia to have made this commitment to the rural community. The examples I have cited are intended to provide examples of what work is presently being undertaken and are by no means exhaustive of the projects under way or the initiatives planned.

The office will continue to ensure that, as far as possible, consumerism facilitates economic change and the activities of traders rather than being seen as impeding change or impeding the services of traders. The object of responsible consumerism is to assist and advance the competitive nature of the Australian economy by ensuring that unfair and unconscionable economic activity is minimised.

The Operations Division of the office has the principal external service delivery program role. Its function is to deliver education and marketing services to business and consumers and provide a range of services relating to occupational licensing, business securities and personal identity registration. It also provides advisory, mediation, inspection, investigation and prosecution functions designed to ensure compliance with fair trading legislation. The office is working on a

number of improved service-delivery mechanisms, and I am sure that members will be interested in the upgrading of the successful one-stop-shop business centre, which now allows for business names to be registered at the counter. Clients can register a new business name and obtain a certificate in as little as 10 minutes. Since the service was introduced in February 1993, there has been such demand that now 37 per cent of all business names are registered over the counter rather than people waiting for periods of two weeks for even uncomplicated applications.

The office has also installed a new telephone system to cater for the more than half a million calls that are received. The office currently projects that calls will exceed 700 000 during 1993-94. Part of the new telephone system is a 24-hour recorded information service, which has been installed to enable clients to access the department more readily on a range of general issues. As part of the client focus of the office, a proposal for a pilot project to provide an on-line business names registration service from the Townsville office will commence towards the end of this year. Registration procedures will still be performed in Brisbane by the use of a fax machine, which will enable registration to be effected on the spot. If successful and cost effective, this service will then be extended to other centres and rural communities.

To ensure that the office is able to provide the best possible service delivery to its clients, the office is rationalising its accommodation in all regions and upgrading where necessary. One of the most important projects under way is the development by the Office of Consumer Affairs of a consumer advocacy network. This will entail the identification of relevant community groups and an assessment of their capacity to deliver consumer services. Individuals will be trained by the office to a level which will enable them to provide consumer advice and information to their clients. Supporting literature and documentation will be available. If the pilot program, to commence in mid-1994, is successful, this proposed network will become an integral part of the provision of good consumer services throughout the State.

Honourable members will recognise that at a time when the resources of Government are stretched fully, it makes sense to use appropriate non-Government organisations to deliver these types of services. It has been carried out successfully in the Department of Housing through the tenants union and the housing resource workers that this Government has put in place over the last couple of years. This project will mean that properly trained and informed groups and individuals are able to deliver uniformly good consumer advice to all Queenslanders irrespective of where they live.

The office has inherited a very tight budget situation following the split from the Department of Justice. Notwithstanding that the budget does not permit a fully funded asset replacement program, the office will still maintain high and improved levels of service delivery. In response to this tight budgetary situation, the office has taken a pro-active approach which, in conjunction with Treasury, aims to develop forward estimates activity and workload indicators particularly in relation to registration functions. This will enable the base funding for the office to increase as workloads increase.

The office has also developed a number of business plans for the Trade Measurement Branch, Queensland Motor Vehicle Security Register—QMVSR—and Births, Deaths and Marriages. The trade measurement business plan has been prepared to improve services to the community by implementing a compliance strategy, which directs resources to where it is of the greatest need. Recently, the Trade Measurement Branch has constructed a flow meter testing station at Eagle Farm adjacent to the Brisbane Airport. This facility is unique in Australia and will be used to calibrate and certify flow meters for the oil industry. It is estimated already that this testing station has sufficient work for three months.

The Trade Measurement Laboratory performs a number of roles associated with standards of measurement and the calibration and certification of measurement standards used by industry as part of quality assurance programs. These services are very much in demand, and current resources within the branch cannot handle the increased demand. The QMVSR business plan is part of the move towards the establishment of a national database. The objective of the QMVSR system is to enable potential purchasers of motor vehicles to determine whether the vehicle is the subject of outstanding finance. The need for a national database was first raised at the 1991 Special Premiers Conference, and Queensland, along with other States, supported this initiative. Queensland will cooperate fully in ensuring that the national data base is established.

The Births, Deaths and Marriages business plan has been prepared in order to ensure that ageing equipment is replaced and

the needs of the community are met. The 1993-94 budget for the office includes a special provision of $250,000 for a compliance project to identify unregistered business names. The project is planned to start in late 1993.

The investigations area of the Operations Division is developing a compliance and enforcement policy which is nearing completion. This policy will encompass procedures and guidelines for assessing and prioritising the varied and substantial investigations workload, and for taking prosecution actions. It will also address the issues of proposed penalty notices and statutory cautions.

Elsewhere in this speech, members will note that I have mentioned the comprehensive review of the Auctioneers and Agents Act. My office is responsible for the management of the Auctioneers and Agents Fidelity Guarantee Fund. The Government will be making further grants this year from this fund for vocational education and community education programs, including credit counselling programs. It is also proposed to expand the investment powers under the fund to enable trust monies not only to be lodged with banks but also to allow for moneys to be lodged with permanent building societies and credit unions. This will hopefully improve the returns to the fund. The office is also developing new procedures to deal with claims against the fund. As part of its commitment to proper financial management and control of the fund, a new secretariat branch has been established to develop policy and procedures required under FOI legislation and management of the Auctioneers and Agents Committee process.

The Office of Consumer Affairs has identified six strategic priorities that are central to achieving the goal of a fair and equitable trading environment in Queensland. These priorities are consumer protection, regulatory reform, voluntary compliance, support for disadvantaged groups, effective enforcement, and best practice performance standards.

Time expired.

Mr STONEMAN (Burdekin) (12.16 p.m.): First of all, I thank the Minister for his courtesy in making sure that a copy of the departmental annual report was made available to me. That was delivered to my office, and I thank the Minister for his courtesy. I also acknowledge the cooperation extended to me by the previous Minister, Mr Milliner, when I approached him about the matters of departmental briefings and contact. Of course, some of those matters are yet to be debated. In fact, most of the matters about which we have had briefings have not yet come before the House. However, I appreciate the fact that, without equivocation, the Minister made available officers to brief the Opposition and overview the intent of the Government's legislation.

The Department of Consumers Affairs is very important for consumers. It probably tends to be a little overlooked until such time as a consumer has been affronted, or people within the department are able to tease out some concerns about which we should all be aware.

Recently, as part of my trip to New Zealand, I had some discussions with departmental officers in that country, and in Auckland I met up with Tony Ilott, who is the manager under the Consumer Affairs Act, and Michael Mann, who is the investigation officer in charge of the Auckland area. It was interesting to note the different ways in which they approached consumers affairs in that country. It has blended in with such areas as the Trade Practices Act, and it encompasses a broader operation because it operates under a Federal Act. Nevertheless, I think we could learn from a number of the components of New Zealand's Act and the way in which the Government of that country involves itself in consumer affairs. I will be raising those matters in this Chamber from time to time.

Consumer Affairs was given departmental status on 24 September 1992, following the splitting of the Department of Justice portfolio to enable it to be attached to the Department of the Attorney-General. Obviously, the Attorney-General did not want Consumer Affairs, and it was equally obvious that Consumer Affairs had to have departmental status if it was to be retained by the then Minister who was responsible for Corrective Services. I must say that, through no fault of the Minister in this instance, it has been very difficult for Opposition members to follow the path of Consumer Affairs because we are not too sure who we will be approaching next about such matters. It has been very difficult for us to appoint shadow Ministers, because the original intention was that there would be a mix of Consumer Affairs and Corrective Services. However, that is now history.

At that time, Consumer Affairs could hardly have been included with Corrective Services. So, to overcome the problem, Consumer Affairs was given departmental status. As I said, Consumer Affairs is a very important issue, but the decision to give it

departmental status was purely a political decision to provide the then Minister with an adequate workload—a workload in which he was subsequently found to be wanting. That is not to take away from the decent and cooperative manner in which he met with me on a number of occasions.

The Labor Government is writing consumers out of the decision-making process in this State. A number of important Acts have been passed in the House whereby consumers have been removed from the consultative process, under the guise that we are all consumers. I listened with interest to the Minister talking about the process of bolstering consumer advocacy and about drawing consumer groups together. Obviously, in a number of the Acts passed in this House, the Minister for Consumer Affairs has not been able to ensure that consumer groups are represented in the advisory and administration processes.

In common with all other shadow Ministers and all other members, regardless of their side of politics, I receive a whole lot of letters of concern regarding portfolio areas. Most of the letters are very genuine. Some of them result from frustration with the bureaucratic process. I particularly refer to the tenancy legislation and payments to subcontractors. I have a mountain of paper in respect of those areas. So there is a genuine concern. I point out to the Minister something that has come to my attention as a consumer. There are some areas of new technology that we need to be aware of as we travel through life. The Minister, I note, has reached the age, as I have, where he needs to wear glasses. I guess they are bifocals and I bet that he has the same problem that I and many thousands of people have with the radios in new cars. Once we could reach over and switch them on or off or adjust the tuning easily. These days it is almost impossible to adjust them while we are travelling, and that must be creating a hazard on the road. On numerous occasions, I have searched for the buttons and have not been able to find them.

Mr Nuttall: You have only got one radio station at home; what are you worried about?

Mr STONEMAN: It might be a matter of great humour for the honourable member, but I am sure that statistics will show that the increasing complexity of these gadgets is adding to the road toll. We need to maintain a focus on those issues. I highlight that as one area embraced by the very necessary processes of consumer affairs.

The ad hoc approach to the construction of the department can be evidenced by the fact that, some three months after it was established in December 1992, the Organisational Services Division and the Policy Development and Legal Services Division of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General were transferred to the Department of Consumer Affairs. It is noted that, although Consumer Affairs has departmental status, its director-general is also the Director-General of the Department of Attorney-General and, as such, is answerable to two Ministers—the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts, and the Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities, who is also the Minister for Consumer Affairs. He will need a big bit of paper to write all of those headings down.

Surely, if the Government is fair dinkum about consumer affairs, the department should have its own director-general. The department administers some 89 Acts and 39 regulations. That is a huge number. As I say, they are important to the people of this State. We welcome the new Minister. It is to be hoped that he does not get any bright ideas to review Consumer Affairs or is not talked into such a review by the staff.

I note, somewhat fearfully, that the annual report states that there is a need to review how the department delivers its services. This is a gentle warning to please be careful. It should be a case of saying, “Steady as you go; keep your eye on the ball.” I note that some members opposite—those in the far reaches of the back bench where they will stay until they are moved to this side of the Chamber—find somewhat amusing the things that the Minister and I know are serious.

The Minister has a pretty poor track record when it comes to reviews. It is with sadness that I say this. Each review has turned into a major concern for the people involved. For example, the review of the internal and external local government boundaries has turned into a nightmare for thousands of ratepayers. The fishing inquiry has been nothing short of a horror story. We all wait with trepidation for the result of the infamous rail line closure review.

The Department of Consumer Affairs has just two programs. They are the protection of public interest program and the corporate services program. The protection of the public interest program has five subprograms, including licensing and registration, trade measurement and client services. The licensing and registration subprogram

encompasses auctioneers and agents, invasion of privacy, travel agents, land sales, retirement villages, funeral benefits, business loans, associations incorporation, collections, and registration of births, deaths and marriages. But, as the Minister said, the Department of Consumer Affairs does not have a large budget. It has a major area of responsibility to cover with a fairly tight operational fiscal structure. It appears that it is destined, for at least the next two to three years, to have to perform its functions with a relatively small budget. The annual report contains these words—

> "From the beginning . . . the Department has sought to build an open dialogue with Treasury based on trust and full disclosure so that funding proposals can be assessed on a competitive basis with bids from other agencies.
>
> It is against this background that budgetary projections for the next three years show that combined effects of annual productivity cuts and increasing demand for legislatively mandated services will leave little scope for the provision of discretionary services such as consumer education and business liaison notwithstanding their potentially large contribution towards the achievement of program goals."

According to the program statements, it has been allocated for 1993-94 a budget of $15.6m from the Consolidated Fund and $14.6m from the Trust and Special Funds.

In 1993 there was an unforeseen expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of $3.6m which, as stated in the annual report, related to the establishment of the department. This amount was not carried forward to this year. Funding from the Consolidated Fund is down $238,000 or 1.5 per cent compared with last year. Funding from the Trust and Special Funds is also down from $16.5m to $14.6m, a fall of $1.9m or 11.5 per cent. The net outlay for the department, however, is $20.4m, which means that there is a supplement of $4.8m. Seemingly, this includes an allocation to the corporate services program of administrative costs for the Fidelity Guarantee Fund. As confusing as it may seem, the 1992-93 actual expenditure was $32.4m, but that included a $13.1m transfer to the Department of Housing and Local Government under the Auctioneers and Agents Act as funding for the housing assistance program.

The Trust and Special Funds entry refers to the Auctioneers and Agents Fidelity Guarantee Fund. It would seem that that is self-funding. At 30 June 1993, the fund had an opening balance of $60m, which contrasts with an amount of $67.7m at 30 June 1992 and $95m in July 1991, when this Government decided to raid the fund. We all remember that occasion.

The Committee will recall that this is the very same path pioneered by the Wran Labor Government and turned into an art form by the Cain, Bannon and Burke Governments. The Committee will recall that in 1991 the Auctioneers and Agents Act was amended to provide that the fund could be used to pay for the operation of the auctioneers and agents registry and for the funding of education and consumer education and awareness programs and housing assistance schemes. At that time the Opposition did not support the amendment to the Act, and we stand by that stance today. There are a number of other issues that I would like to have taken up under this program today. Unfortunately, time is extremely limited, and I acknowledge the need for that.

Another issue of great concern to me is the classification of computer games and various publications. It is interesting to consider the attitude taken in New Zealand to obscene publications. Recently, an article appeared in a New Zealand newspaper that carried the headline "Porn offer still open". That article stated—

> "People possessing pornography and other objectionable material can still hand it to the Internal Affairs Department for destruction.
>
> Although a specific amnesty period has ended, security boxes will remain in Internal Affairs Link Centre offices for collection of material. Items can also be posted through the mail for disposal.
>
> The department says it will continue to destroy all material before the new censorship laws come into force next year."

I will be taking up this matter further in the future.

The point on which I want to conclude is this: although rights and freedom of expression have to be encompassed in our modern society, I believe that we are going too far. Some of the censorship laws need to be strengthened. The protection of the consumer is of paramount importance. Of particular concern is the fact that young

people have increasing access to computer pornography. I believe that legislation should be enacted promptly to prevent the availability of such material to young people. I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that fact and take it into account. I assure him and the Committee that the Opposition will work positively to maintain that security.

Time expired.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate) (12.32 p.m.): Before I commence to refer to the main subject of my speech, I want to pay tribute to the former Minister for Consumer Affairs, Glen Milliner. I was fortunate enough to serve on the legislative committee for consumer affairs. During the time that Glen Milliner was the Minister for Consumer Affairs, that committee had the opportunity to observe a number of the activities of the Department of Consumer Affairs. We learned about births, deaths and marriages. We also learned about the Rental Bond Authority, which is now under the control of the Minister for Housing and Local Government. The committee was also educated about weights and measurements and motor vehicle ownership. The officers of the Department of Consumer Affairs were most helpful and very supportive of the inquiries that the committee made when it was learning about those fields.

Today, I want to discuss a consumer issue that affects more and more people every day, and in particular a number of members of this Chamber. I refer to retirement villages. Unfortunately, it is true that we all grow older. Somewhere down the track, some of us will no doubt end up in a retirement village.

Mr Bennett: Some sooner than others.

Mr NUTTALL: That is correct. The retirement village industry is one that can be expected to grow as our population grows, and new villages will continue to be built. In Queensland, the industry operates under the Retirement Villages Act, which has been in force since November 1988. Under the legislation, rights to reside in a retirement village cannot be offered for sale in Queensland unless the scheme has been approved under the Act or until the operator has been granted an exemption from specific provisions of the Act. Exemptions are usually given to retirement village schemes operated by non-profit community groups. In Queensland today, there are 53 approved commercially operated retirement villages, and a further 220 are exempt under the legislation.

As all honourable members will be aware, the retirement village industry has not been without its problems. Early last year, the Palm Springs Retirement Village—coincidentally, it is located in the electorate of the new Minister for Consumer Affairs, Tom Burns—ran into some financial problems, and its approval was revoked. Consumer Affairs intervened to ensure that the residents' investments were secured by facilitating the registering of their leases. I am certain that the subject of retirement villages will come in for special attention from the new Minister, especially since the legislation has been the subject of a review.

The broad objectives of the present Retirement Villages Act are: to provide tenure for residents; to provide protection for residents' funds; and to define the rights of residents. As I mentioned, a review of the legislation was commenced in 1990. It was conducted by a 15-member committee comprising representatives of the retirement village industry, residents, relevant Government departments, the legal profession and the Registrar of Retirement Villages. The objective of the review was to address particular industry problems identified by representatives of the retirement village industry and the Office of the Registrar of Retirement Villages. The aim of the review was: to ensure a non-complex approval process for retirement villages; to ensure accountability of administrators of retirement village schemes; and, of course, to ensure consumer protection.

In June 1992, a public discussion paper was released and a number of workshops were held throughout the State. Submissions closed in August of the same year. More than 50 submissions were received. In May of this year, the working party provided its report to the then Minister for Consumer Affairs, Glen Milliner. The new Minister has indicated that amending legislation will be introduced in 1994. In the meantime, there is some very basic advice that should be followed by anyone contemplating moving into a retirement village. Naturally, like any major financial transaction, all documents should be checked carefully before signing a residence contract with a retirement village. It is vital that people ensure that they know what they are signing up for, and that they understand exactly the details contained in the contract.

The financial and legal arrangements for entering a retirement village can be quite complicated. It is wise to obtain professional and impartial advice before signing a contract on the dotted line. Operators of retirement villages must provide all prospective residents with a public information document. That

document provides an overview of the scheme of the retirement village. It should fully inform potential residents of their legal and financial obligations, and it should include a copy of the contract or contracts that they would be asked to sign. The public information document should give details on the following issues: the legal basis of occupancy—whether residents are leasing or whether they are buying the premises—and the type and the length of the tenure at the retirement village; the fixtures, fittings and furnishings that will be provided; the facilities—such as carports, garages, storage or other areas—allocated to residents; and, if the village is still under construction, the contract must contain plans showing the location, floor plan and significant dimensions of residents' accommodation and any facilities allocated to them.

Details about the services being offered at the retirement village should also be covered by the public information document. For example, it should cover all services and facilities provided by management and any charges for their use, as well as any potential restriction on services provided by independent agencies, and any restriction on access to those services. For example, some services may be provided on a user-pays basis, whereas all residents may be required to contribute towards other services, whether they use them or not. The document must also outline the types of fees or charges that residents could be expected to face, including: the amount of maintenance fees, when they are to be paid and what will be provided for those fees; any other ongoing charges and how they are to be determined; any charges for which residents will be responsible if they leave and the unit is not resold, re-leased or reoccupied; and who is responsible for the cost of replacement and maintenance of fixtures and fittings. Other costs that should be detailed include the cost of securing accommodation and the right to a refund, if any, on termination of the contract, and how that refund is to be calculated.

As everyone is aware, once people have moved into a retirement village, their personal or family circumstances can change. The public information document should also show the circumstances under which a resident can be transferred or reallocated from a self-care unit to other accommodation in the village and the financial arrangements that would apply, and the fees payable if a resident decides to leave the village. Like any major commitment, a contract to live in a retirement village should be signed only after it has been read and understood. However, the legislation does provide a cooling-off period of seven days. This allows people to change their minds at no cost to themselves. I think that all members would agree that this is a sensible provision for such a major investment decision.

People contemplating moving to a retirement village should be aware that a register of such villages is held at the registrar's office in the Department of Consumer Affairs. That is located in the State Law Building here in Brisbane on the corner of Ann and George Streets, and copies are available for public information. Like any industry, different villages can offer different contractual arrangements, a range of services and financial aspects that all need to be considered by prospective residents.

I would suggest that people looking to buy in a retirement village should firstly visit a number of these villages before making a decision. It is inevitable that some residents who buy into retirement villages can become unable to totally care for themselves as the years go by. For that reason it is important that prospective residents ensure that the village they choose offers ongoing care. This may be in the form of hostel or serviced apartment accommodation. It is also important to check out the extent of any nursing care that may be available.

The financial arrangements for entering a retirement village also need to be checked carefully. Such arrangements obviously can vary from village to village, so it is imperative that all aspects of the financial arrangements are fully disclosed and understood by potential residents.

Of particular importance, of course, are capital gain and deferred management fee arrangements that may apply. Some schemes allow for part of the capital gain to be retained by the residents. Most schemes do charge a deferred management fee, and these charges can affect the capacity of the resident to find alternative accommodation, should the need arise.

Time expired.

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh) (12.42 p.m.): I am pleased to join the Estimates debate on Consumer Affairs. Like all members of Parliament, many problems come into my electorate office which are referred to Consumer Affairs. At the outset I should like to express my appreciation of the Gold Coast office in Southport. This office invariably gives careful and attentive service to both myself and my constituents in regard to problems and difficulties. Not all consumer problems can be solved, but my constituents find that their

matters are investigated, followed up where possible, and that considered advice is given as to whether their problems can in fact be dealt with. I hope that the new Minister is not making plans to close down the Gold Coast office of Consumer Affairs.

Through the Consumer Affairs portfolio, attention is at last being given to the control of nightclub bouncers. This is welcomed, particularly on the Gold Coast. As legislation is before the Parliament, I will not pursue that matter at this stage.

One matter that has recently been brought to my attention concerns real estate agents. I am advised that the Department of Consumer Affairs requires applicants for real estate sales certificates to travel to Brisbane to sit a basic examination. The applicants are previously issued with a questionnaire booklet giving the answers. If the applicant has undergone the REIQ Superstart course, the examination in Brisbane is waived. The necessity to be examined on the basic knowledge is not questioned. However, as the examination takes less than 10 minutes and is basic in the extreme, I ask the Minister why applicants should have to go to Brisbane to complete such a short paper when the answers are provided. Furthermore, many real estate agents are providing education courses that are far more advanced than that of the REIQ. For this reason, I hope that the Minister will give consideration to having this examination done through the local courthouse, or even by post.

I note that the former Minister for Consumer Affairs has made many statements warning people of the get-rich-quick scams that abound in our society. We constantly hear of old ladies being ripped off by roof repairers, or by fence menders, or by other sorts of con men trying out all sorts of tricks on the unsuspecting public. Chain letters, too, seem to be an unchanging fact of life. The variety of these scams never ceases to amaze me, especially when people are asked to send money to other people of whom they have never even heard. The best I have seen—although I am not quite sure whether this one is not a joke within a joke—is from a Nigerian gentleman purporting to be the financial controller of the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing in Lagos. This Nigerian gentleman says he has so much tender money left over that he has allocated 30 per cent of it to the recipient of his letter, 10 per cent for expenses and the remaining 60 per cent for local officials. He asks people to send him their name and address, their bank account number, their own and their bank's fax and telephone number, together with two blank signed and stamped copies of their letterhead and pro-forma invoices. As I said, it might well be a joke within a joke, but the mind boggles at what could be done with this material if anyone was silly enough to respond.

Most chain letters are much more simple but, nevertheless, they prey on the gullibility and cupidity and even the superstition of the recipients. Almost all require money to be sent with a great get-rich-quick promise if the chain is not broken and dire threats if the chain is broken. Chain letters are not only silly, they are also dangerous and illegal and they should be stamped on wherever they appear. They seem to come forward more often in tough economic times as the originators, who are the only ones to make any money from them, decide it is a good way to rake in a few dollars from the gullible and unsuspecting public.

The availability of pornographic and sexually explicit material from newsagents and booksellers is also the subject of complaint from time to time by constituents. Professor Paul Wilson is Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Studies at Bond University, and he is frequently consulted on matters of criminology. Although I have a lot of time for Professor Wilson, I do not agree with him that there is a link between porn and crime, that is, between criminals viewing sexually explicit material and the crimes they later committed.

Professor Wilson does not believe that pornography should be censored. However, there is certainly material available to adults in this State that should not be read by children. It is supposed to be kept out of easy reach of children. Some newsagents comply, many others do not. There have also been recent specific examples of category one and category two illegal magazines being readily available at some Gold Coast convenience stores. The blame has been placed on the suppliers, but surely the responsibility must rest with the retailer. This is a serious aspect of the Consumer Affairs portfolio to which I would like the new Minister to give more attention.

There is a matter of great concern in my electorate which I bring to the new Minister's attention, that is, mobile home parks or relocatable homes. As a member of the then Minister's committee, I was involved when the original mobile homes legislation came before this House in 1989. That legislation was almost a pilot, and it has been amended and tightened up since then. It was specifically

designed to give security and protection to people who bought relocatable homes but did not own the land on which they stood. I have two such establishments in my electorate.

Burleigh Town Village, at West Burleigh, had problems prior to and long after the legislation was passed. The residents of this park formed themselves into a most effective association, ably led by Mrs Elizabeth Quick, who has recently retired from the executive position. There were ongoing battles, several actions before the Small Claims Tribunal and two Supreme Court actions, one of which resulted in no decision and the other which found in favour of the residents. At long last, five years after the formation of the association, matters have finally been resolved between the residents and the park proprietors. It has been a long and difficult process, during which responsibility for mobile home parks was moved from the portfolio of Justice and Attorney-General to Consumer Affairs.

I congratulate the residents on their unity of purpose. Indeed, the difficulties of past years have welded the residents into a most harmonious and friendly community. They take a tremendous pride in their village. They run an annual garden competition, and their surroundings are a credit to them. I also thank them for their tremendous assistance with the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal. The collection within the village of West Burleigh always produces a very worthwhile result. They recently collected for drought relief, too, for the benefit of Western Queensland communities.

However, the story at the Bungalows at Burleigh Waters is not so happy. Residents have had long drawn-out negotiations with their proprietor's solicitor in respect of how the village was first approved and then advertised and sold, as well as their contracts or leases and rent increases. I note that officers of the Department of Consumer Affairs have tried to act as mediators between the parties, but this has not been successful. Following the amendments to the Mobile Homes Act at the beginning of last year, we were advised that the definition of a mobile home would be set by regulation. I understand that, more than 18 months down the track, this has finally gone to the parliamentary draftsman. Residents would like to know when this will be finalised.

At the Bungalows, a full association of residents has not been as successful as at West Burleigh. However, those residents who are members of the association are deeply concerned at the effect of the difficulties they are having on the health and well-being of some of their associates in the village. Many of these residents are elderly people who have become very worried and stressed. They have now joined with CAMRA—the Caravan and Mobile Home Residents Association—and are taking their problems up through higher channels, including the Criminal Justice Commission and the Ombudsman.

As honourable members would appreciate, it has not, of course, been proper for me to offer legal advice on these matters. However, in all instances, I have referred residents firstly to the Department of Justice, and now to Consumer Affairs with the change of responsibility to that department. Residents have been provided with avenues of dealing with the Government departments that could advise on the application of the Mobile Homes Act. There has been voluminous correspondence between residents and these Government departments, and direct deputations to the departmental officers concerned. Unfortunately, as I have said, matters have not been resolved, and they seem to have reached a stalemate. I ask the new Minister to familiarise himself with all aspects of this particular establishment. It is an unhappy situation that cannot be allowed to continue.

Over the years, I have come to know many of the residents of the Bungalows very well. I feel deep sympathy and concern for them, but am powerless to assist them further. The Bungalows is another community that has also helped considerably with the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal, and I thank them most sincerely for their generosity. Again, I ask the Minister to do all he can to help, and also to chase up the definition of a mobile home by regulation.

When the first legislation went through in 1989, it did so with complete cooperation between the then National Party Government and the then Labor Opposition. I am sure that any moves the Minister makes to give protection or assistance to residents of mobile home parks will receive the very same level of cooperation from the present Opposition.

The protection of consumers is a very important part of the Government process. Obviously, it is not always possible to legislate to protect people against themselves or their own gullibility. Nevertheless, there are plenty of con men and crooks around—the woods are full of them—and the Gold Coast certainly has more than its fair share. Many ordinary, law-abiding citizens, through no fault of their own, are taken for a ride every day. Being taken for a ride covers almost all aspects of

daily living, and of business and commerce. We must continue to provide the necessary systems to ensure that these ordinary, law-abiding citizens are protected as far as possible.

Mr DOLLIN (Maryborough) (12.52 p.m.): It is further evidence of the importance this Government places on the Consumers Affairs portfolio that the new Office of Consumer Affairs has been made the responsibility of the Premier's most senior and most experienced Minister, the Deputy Premier, Mr Tom Burns. From the time that it was first elected in December 1989, the Goss Government has recognised the need to develop quality consumer policies and programs that meet the interests of both traders and customers. In this regard, I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the former Consumer Affairs Minister, the Honourable Glen Milliner, who has moved to the portfolio of Administrative Services. Glen Milliner must feel personally proud that, under his ministerial guidance, Queensland has been a pacesetter in Australia in many areas of consumer administration and is at present coordinating a survey to prepare a national consumer policy agenda for the next three years.

I refer to one case in my electorate of Maryborough to illustrate one of the ways in which an effective consumer machine can act swiftly to protect the community. During the past year, a pensioner in Maryborough was keen to have the tile roof on his house cleaned. A couple of blow-ins posing as painters and roof cleaners called at his door and offered to do the job for $3,200, which they said included a very large pensioner discount. Goodness only knows how much they would have quoted had the poor old battler not been a pensioner. Anyway, that fellow got somewhat suspicious and checked with the local tradesman, who did the whole cleaning job for $450, which was $2,750 less than the quote of the two shysters who tried to rip him off. As soon as the case was brought to my notice, I contacted Glen Milliner, who informed me that there had been a number of similar complaints around south-east Queensland, and the descriptions of the men sounded the same as those given in other cases. The Minister immediately issued a warning to householders through the Maryborough media, and to the best of my knowledge those two blow-ins blew out even faster than they arrived and before they were able to cheat anyone else in the city.

Today, I want to focus my remarks on two particular areas of consumer activity, namely, the Queensland motor vehicle securities register, known as the QMVSR, and the plans in the office to develop a consumer advocacy network. I believe that both those programs are of special significance to provincial and rural Queensland. The motor vehicles security register was established in August 1986 to enable financiers to register their security interests over motor vehicles, motor cycles, trailers, caravans, etc. Through it, motor dealers and the general public can check if a vehicle that is being sold is actually still financially tied up or stolen and can, if they wish, pay for a certificate of clearance as a source of protection against being ripped off. What disturbs me is that, eight years after the service was set up, the great majority of dealers and the general public involved in motor transfers are still not using it. Figures supplied to me show that, of a total of 684 000 vehicle transfers in Queensland over a 12-month period, only 230 000, or 34 per cent, were referred to the QMVSR for inquiries. What is even more disturbing is that in only 102 800 of those transactions—only 15 per cent of total transfers—did the dealer or the private person bother to go that one step further and obtain a certificate.

Too many Queenslanders are obviously unaware of the problems that they face if they take possession of a vehicle that a simple check with the register would show is still financially encumbered. They run the risk of not only losing their money but losing the vehicle as well through repossession. I am pleased to see that the Office of Consumer Affairs realises that the QMVSR is not well enough known and hopes to increase public awareness of it and the need to use it as a means of protection prior to vehicle purchase. I hope that the office will place special emphasis on rural and provincial Queensland in any publicity campaign that it may mount in this regard.

The second aspect of policy on which I wish to concentrate is the plan for a consumer advocacy network so that relevant community groups and individuals will be able to deliver quality consumer services to Queenslanders irrespective of where they live. We all understand the tight financial restraints under which Governments find themselves these days. The objective here is to provide consumer services throughout the State in the most cost-efficient manner possible. In cities such as Maryborough and Bundaberg, this will involve assessing key community groups such as the local Citizens Advice Bureau and the neighbourhood centre, which have similar client bases to the Office of Consumer Affairs.

One person nominated from each of those groups will then undergo specialist training with the Consumers Affairs Office in areas such as consumer protection legislation so that they can then pass on improved advice and information to their clients. The local community groups will also be provided with consumer information kits, Office of Consumer Affairs education material and standard letters to ensure a high level of service for regional consumers.

I am pleased to note that the new Consumer Affairs Office wants its advocacy service to go even further than that to cover specific target areas such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers and those from non-English-speaking backgrounds. If anyone questions the concern of average Queenslanders for consumer matters, he or she need only note that there were more than 500 000 telephone inquiries alone to the office in 1992-93. This number is expected to grow to around 700 000 in the next 12 months. There is now a 24-hour recorded information service so that clients can access the office more readily on a range of general issues.

In the Wide Bay region, Consumer Affairs has trade measurement offices in Maryborough and Bundaberg, and no-one can complain that they are not being kept busy. In 1992-93, weighing and measuring instruments checked numbered 2 095 in Bundaberg and 1 546 in Maryborough. Articles checked for weight, labelling or packaging totalled 4 960 in Bundaberg and 3 934 in Maryborough, while the two offices combined received more than 1 000 inquiries on consumer matters.

I am delighted to participate in this Estimates debate. I feel that the Government can take great credit for the progress it has made in such an important area of community administration. As I said at the outset, it has established a first-class consumer affairs machine that is recognised Australiawide—a quality machine that has now been given the important task of coordinating a survey in the States and Territories to prepare for a national agenda for the next three years. I am pleased to support the new Minister, the Deputy Premier, in moving the Consumer Affairs Estimates for 1993-94.

Sitting suspended from 12.59 to 2.30 p.m.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel) (2.30 p.m.): I commence today by commending the staff and the officers who look after consumer affairs in Rockhampton.

Mrs Bird: Hear, hear!

Mr LESTER: I think it should be “hear, hear” too, because Glen Dever, who is the gentleman in charge there, and his assistants deal with a number of programs and complaints. Those people have to deal with literally hundreds of complaints from around Rockhampton. I must say that I have been totally impressed with the way that they have performed their duties on all occasions. They have always been courteous. They have always followed up. Consumer affairs complaints are not always the easiest things in the world to follow up, as members of Parliament would know. These complaints are quite often extraordinarily messy and the officers have to try and chase up people who do not want to be chased up. It is never easy. So I thought that in this place I should give credit where it is due. It is very good for a member of Parliament to be able to refer matters to the officers in Rockhampton and district and know that they will be dealt with. That, too, is very important.

A number of different issues have arisen recently in Rockhampton. I had one case referred to me about a camera that somebody had bought two years ago and that had broken down. There are disputes in relation to the quality of goods sold. Of course, there is a problem of people being billed for advertisements in magazines in various parts of the world that they did not order at any time. There are a lot of these hooligans around the place sending people threatening mail about those advertisements, which worries those people until it is explained to them that they do not have to pay those bills and that they can ignore them. I usually ask those people to send the letter to me and I send it on to the Consumer Affairs Office as a record. There still seems to be the habitual problem of unqualified people going around painting roofs, trying to repair houses and so on. They seem to be con people of the highest order. They seem to home in on the people who can least afford it. From the floor of this Chamber, I advise people to get a reputable tradesperson who is a member of that trade’s association. Then, if anything goes wrong, one can take action through the various bodies that represent those organisations. I cannot emphasise this point strongly enough. I think that all the members of Parliament in Rockhampton and district have issued warnings to the public to have nothing whatsoever to do with these characters who go door to door saying, “Look, your roof needs painting.” More often than not these people paint the roof with a substance

that does not last, anyway, or if they do repairs, those repairs are pretty terrible. It is best to stick to reputable tradespeople. One can usually get a fair deal by getting three or four quotes and working it out from there.

Mr McElligott: They should ask to see their Gold Card.

Mr LESTER: Yes, fair enough. That is a good point. It is my view that business people in general in Rockhampton and on the Capricorn Coast are quite competitive and do their utmost to give the people of the area a fair deal. I have a little story to tell. Before I went on my overseas study trip, I decided to purchase some film. Why would I want to do that? I always think it is a good idea to take photographs of where one has been with a camera that shows the date on the photograph so that there can be no question about what one has been doing. I think it would be a good idea if other honourable members did that, too. In that way, if there are any investigations in the future, it is pretty hard to dispute the photographic record. When I give my report, honourable members will see dated photographs and other records of where I have been.

A Government member: Everything?

Mr LESTER: Yes, just about everything. As a matter of real interest, I purchased some Kodak film from the local Kodak place—Julie Grainger in Yeppoon. There was a deal going, approximately $24 for four lots of 36 exposure films.

Mr Stoneman: I bought some myself the other day.

Mr LESTER: Good on you. I checked the price overseas and for just one little box of 24 exposures——

A Government member: Colour?

Mr LESTER: Yes, it was colour. The price in London was £3.80, which is roughly $10. If one compares that with Australia, and if one compares that with Brisbane one will find that the price is about the same—in fact, it is better. So, we do not need to go tearing around the place trying to buy things from other than the local people if they are trying to give you a fair go. We should try to shop locally whenever we can. It is up to the businesses, of course, to be competitive to ensure that we do so. It is my view that businesses in Yeppoon and Rockhampton are trying to do this.

I compliment the Chamber of Commerce in Yeppoon. They recently ran a competition. Honourable members all know that Coles do a good job providing computers for schools. The business people in Yeppoon contributed approximately $100 and they ran their own sales dockets competition for computers. This meant that dockets from businesses around Yeppoon counted for the prize. The local children were the winners. Of course, this kept people shopping locally in Yeppoon. It stopped the entourage of people travelling to Rockhampton to shop at Woolworths, Coles or somewhere else. So I congratulate the Yeppoon Chamber of Commerce. They are a pretty innovative crowd. I hope that the Minister will not forget them when he brings down the report about the railway closures. I know that that is off the subject, but the people in my area are very keen to get a good deal in that regard.

Mr Pearce: Can you tell us who did the work in your electorate while you were away?

Mr LESTER: There is no problem about that. I have received a number of complaints from the people of Fitzroy saying that they are not being well represented. However, we will not go into that. I also have umpteen letters about Mr Braddy. I was quite surprised to find all of those letters when I got home. They are all about break-ins in the Wandal area. I have a copy of a letter from Mr Pearce in which he says that the problem has nothing to do with him.

Mr Nuttall: Table the letters.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Ms Power): Order! The member for Keppel will return to the Estimates.

Mr LESTER: I am very sorry, but I was horrifically provoked. I had to tell Mr Pearce the truth on this occasion and I will show him the letter later.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Keppel will either return to the Estimates or to his seat.

Mr LESTER: In Amsterdam, London, Brussels or wherever else one visits, it costs $40 for a piece of steak. The honourable member should try it himself one day; he might learn something.

Ms Spence interjected.

Mr LESTER: No, I was not going to pay that. They can go to blazes. Fish costs roughly $12. We do not do too badly in Australia. Overseas, it cost me $100 to stay in a pub that in Australia would cost $25. A motel room that would cost $60 in Australia would cost roughly $200 overseas. Fuel is approximately three times as dear. The return trip from Harrow to London by train, which is about the same distance as Brisbane to Redcliffe, costs about $13. Everything costs a lot more

overseas. The consumers of Australia are not being too badly done by. No doubt the recession and competition has had quite a bit to do with it.

Time expired.

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (2.40 p.m.): Protecting consumers plays a very important part in our society. One aspect that I wish to raise is the concern about international con men who are fleecing hundreds of thousands of dollars from unsuspecting individuals in Queensland and other States in Australia through overseas loan schemes. I raised on 24 November in this Chamber, and brought to the notice of honourable members and the people of Queensland, the overseas loan scam advance fee, that is, the up-front fee fraud. I warned the trusting citizens and legitimate businessmen of this State about the activities of con men who fleece thousands of dollars from unsuspecting citizens. In that speech, I outlined examples such as the supposed Bundaberg-based finance broker, Arnold Neal of Financial Services; Victorian con man Raymond Goldring; and the international con man, Anthony Twohill, who is based in Singapore. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been collected, in up-front fees, from people throughout Queensland to obtain supposed cheap overseas loans, but no funds are forthcoming. Although Mr Neal has been operating since 1991, to my knowledge no client has obtained cheap overseas loans.

Since November 1992, Mr Neal has exerted pressure to stop me raising my concerns regarding his activities. One of his business associates, Douglas Mayne, of the Queensland Cattle Company, which has properties at St Albans and Pony Hill, also joined in the process of exerting pressure on me. On 25 November, he sent me a letter under the heading "Finance Services, Oakwood Park, Cummins Street, North Bundaberg." This operation is not registered in Queensland. The letter states—

> "In regards to your comments made in State Parliament on the 24th of November 1992 I require from you a full retraction and a public apology."

I refused. He then had one of his other business constituents send letters not only to me but also to the Honourable the Premier, Wayne Goss, to exert pressure on me to not raise this issue again.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been taken from Queenslanders, and nothing has been done to protect them, although warnings were given back in 1992. The *Courier-Mail* published this article by James Woods headed "Brisbane loans scam costs victims $1m."—

> "Recession-struck Australian companies have been stung for more than $1 million by two Brisbane men promoting cheap multi-million dollar offshore loans.
>
> A prominent Brisbane property developer is one of 10 city and Gold Coast victims to have paid a total of $600,000 for $110.6 million in foreign loans which did not eventuate."

This situation is occurring again and again. One problem is that, if people want to raise this issue, they are not allowed to name the organisations. These articles show that in Queensland there were 10 formal police complaints and fees amounting to $600,000 were paid, but no-one can be named. In South Australia, six formal police complaints were made and $142,000 in fees was taken. In Western Australia, one formal police complaint was made and $90,000 was taken. In New Zealand, four formal police complaints were made and $92,000 in fees paid was taken. Those amounts were all taken by con men, yet nothing was done. However, that is just the tip of the iceberg. When we talk about protection of consumers, that area of financial brokerage is one that we really should get into. People who are acting as financial brokers and are offering these schemes seem to be able to do this with impunity.

The *Sunday Mail* of 4 July 1993 published this article headed "Businesses ripped off in loans scam"—

> "Police yesterday warned of an elaborate international con trick that had already cost hard pressed business people in Brisbane and the Gold Coast more than $600,000.
>
> The sting had been worked Australiawide and in New Zealand, netting conmen more than $1million.
>
> Two men based, in Brisbane, with an associate in America, are under investigation.
>
> The conmen offered cheap multi-million dollar offshore loans with a too-good-to-be-true way of painlessly repaying, and in some cases an immediate 'fall-out' profit to boot.
>
> The hook is in their demand for big, up-front fees."

The bottom line is that every offer of a self-liquidating loan is a con. Although this is

occurring, the legislation does not protect the people. For example, when people are operating in different States, there is a jurisdictional problem. If there is an indication that these people are acting improperly or illegally, the problem is where the fraud took place. It is very difficult to prove because the fraud is perpetrated by paperwork.

The other aspect of it is that, often, people get through all the paperwork, yet it all comes back to somebody defaulting or not providing the loans overseas. How does one take action in that case? In all situations, I am told that the problem in being able to follow the crimes through is showing intent to defraud. These con men say, "We did not intend to defraud anyone. We have done our best. The money just did not come through." These people have been operating since 1991 and no money has come through. I think it is important that I record that fact in this place.

Only last week, I received a call from a solicitor in Gunnedah who asked me whether I knew anything about Arnold Neal from Financial Services. One of the solicitor's clients had been stung. So Arnold Neal is operating not only under the name of Financial Services but also under the name of Sun Hut Pty Ltd**.** The solicitor asked me whether it was true that that company had $30m deposited in a Bundaberg bank. First of all, the money was supposed to be in Westpac, yet it has no money from those organisations. Then the money was supposed to be in Metway. Not one dollar has come out of these schemes, and this fraud has been going on for years. This is not a case of whether a consumer should receive a refund for a small item. Millions of dollars have been taken. One of Arnold Neal's business associates in Victoria, Raymond Goldring, was fined $11,000, and he had to refund his clients' money. Financial brokers are registered in that State.

Other people who should be investigated are Skygrams Pty Ltd, which involves M. Costello and R. Wilson. They are operating with Twohill out of Singapore. Twohill has also been operating with Arnold Neal. People such as Chris Frier and Joe Rossi from Josab Pty Ltd and Australia Atlantic Acceptance are pulling the same kind of scam. At least two of their clients who have lost their money have committed suicide. That has occurred because we do not have the right legislative protection in place. I know that we can say again and again, "Please do not get caught". As it is now, no-one can expose those people until they are in gaol. They can continue to operate, and they are continuing to operate year in and year out, without protection being given to people. We need to ensure that we overcome the problems of jurisdiction in terms of protecting the consumer so that, when this illegal action occurs, we can take action.

We also have to overcome that problem with intent to defraud because these people, by their record, have shown that they are not able to provide any funds, and it is costing Queenslanders millions of dollars. It shows that, in some way, we do need protective legislation. The Australian Securities Commission has not been able to operate efficiently and effectively in this area, and we must have some guidelines and some new laws to ensure that we can give that protection to people. These con men must be stopped. There are many graziers who will now lose their properties. They have no chance of survival. We have to ensure that these con men are eradicated not only in Queensland but throughout Australia.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (2.50 p.m.): In this brief contribution, I wish to bring to the attention of the Minister and the Committee the difficulties which are currently being experienced by members of the travel industry. Members in this place would be aware that practitioners within the travel industry are currently doing it very hard because of what can be described generally as hard economic circumstances. Travel dollars are very scarce and are becoming even scarcer as would-be travellers continue to postpone both domestic and international travel plans. The dollars that are available are being eagerly sought by a most competitive group of travel agents. Thus, profit margins are very much under pressure and many travel agencies, particularly the smaller ones, are struggling to stay afloat.

Members may be aware that I have many travel agents operating within my electorate. Several of them have recently approached me and have asked me to put some views to the Minister and to the Parliament for consideration. As I have said, the travel industry, especially the travel agents, are marginally profitable at the best of times, let alone during the current difficult economic times. They contend that their principals do not provide them, in their opinion, with reasonable margins. Their expenses keep on going up, but things such as airfares, from which they may be able to earn commissions, continue to fall. Travel agents believe that they are not being treated even-handedly.

The press, as members in this place

would be aware, have a field day when a travel agent goes out of business, but the agents ask, "What about the many other businesses which fall by the wayside, often with considerable human, financial and emotional cost?" They believe that their small area of the total travel/tourism industry is totally overregulated out of proportion to its contribution to either the industry or the economy. They believe that this is not just from State Government requirements but from other various requirements, including auditing requirements, compensation funds, the IATAA requirements, as well as other relevant industry bodies.

It was interesting to note that, whilst many licences were surrendered recently as a result of the difficult economic circumstances I have mentioned, many more were given out. The industry contends that whilst the Government is happy to take the people's money for licensing, it does not make too much of a contribution towards counselling the players it licenses about profitability. There are no regulations or even guidelines about, for example, the number of travel agents who may set up in any given areas. They claim that there are regulations for butchers, milk vendors and newsagents, but in this area this type of concern seems to be fairly scarce.

As I have stated, the industry, like all industries, finds itself in recession times. It does not welcome any added imposts, particularly through compensation funds contribution. The contributions collectively, they claim, do not potentially cover the worst case agent failure pay out figure. In all other industries, they contend that it is really up to the consumer to be aware, as well as self-regulating bodies—for example, the legal profession. They ask the question: why are we different?

As members would be aware, the Travel Agents Act makes licensing conditional on the prospective travel agent satisfying certain financial criteria, this criteria being overseen and enforced by the members of the Travel Compensation Fund Board.

For the information of honourable members, I wish to instance briefly the experience of one agent in my electorate. Back in September 1992, she was advised that of all her dealings were financially in order and acceptable to the board. She paid $150 to cover the compensation fund contribution requirement plus the Government licence fee of $365. Nothing financially or structurally changed over a short period after those requirements were met. However, shortly afterwards, she had an additional levy placed upon her.

This levy was the result of a revised formula for the calculation of the levy now in ratio to business turnover of 0.03 per cent of that turnover. Part of this additional cost could have seen this person fork out anything up to another $259. So members within this place may say, "So what? That $259 does not really mean all that much to many people." But I can assure members that, if agents are operating at the margin on a very thin budget—and many of them are—they can really end up in trouble when a lot of these little bills come in which they simply cannot pay for.

All of these costs and regulations are placed on the industry, obviously, with a view to protecting the consumer from shonky operators. One of my constituents who has made representations to me wrote to the previous Minister and gave her views as to why shonks get through the net. The reasons that she stated were several, but the main one was that there were too many people these days who retire early; that is, there are too many superannuation and redundancy recipients and semi-retirees who enter the industry for the wrong reason. It is a hobby or an in-between job for them until something better comes along. In fact, it is contended by long-term professionals within the industry that this industry has short-term glamorous appeal and that is why people are attracted to it.

According to my constituent, there is little in the way of criteria required for business premises. The question that needs to be asked is: when does a travel agency have to look like a travel agency? Apparently, a travel agency can be run from a car, a spare room or a garage in a house, as an annex to a restaurant, a real estate office, newsagent or garage. It is suggested by my constituent who operates in this field that this section of the Act should be reviewed and redefined.

I wish to place on record, on behalf of this and other constituents who wrote to the previous Minister for consideration, that he did afford their representations. They particularly appreciated a response from Mr Milliner, the previous Minister. That response stated—

> "I appreciate your comments that there are some agents who pose greater risks and I will be having discussions with my interstate ministerial colleagues to review the operation of the Travel Compensation Fund to ensure that there is a more efficient method of detecting these agents so that the collapse of such

agents has minimal impact on the viable members of your industry."

That constituent was very grateful that Mr Milliner did give that indication of wanting to review this whole issue of travel agency competency. There is clearly a very strong case to protect consumers and to, therefore, put imposts on people within the industry to capture the shonks or to cover the risk associated with the operation of the shonks. But there are also many other people—including these constituents, whose views I have been representing during this contribution—who would very much appreciate the new Minister taking a very close look at the area of risk that exists in their industry, with a view to coming up with a solution which will see the burden more equitably spread in terms of covering the risk. I commend their views to the Minister, and I would be very interested in hearing his response to them.

Mrs ROSE (Currumbin) (2.58 p.m.): The Department of Consumer Affairs plays an important role in protecting the rights of consumers in Queensland. One of its jobs is to deal with complaints from consumers. But under this Government the department has also taken a hands-on approach to consume awareness campaigning.

The department's policy of raising community awareness is designed to help people avoid being tricked into wasting money on illegal and bogus products, ventures and schemes. To that end, I would like to congratulate the former Minister on maintaining the momentum of this campaign. Because of its tourism base, a large transient population and massive retail industry, the Gold Coast is a prime hunting ground for those contemplating fraud. To date, the information campaign waged by the Department of Consumer Affairs on the Gold Coast has been successful in thwarting many of these criminals. Unfortunately, they are still around and still likely to prey on those most likely to trust them—the elderly and the disadvantaged. There are number of issues that the department will continue to target in its campaign to rid the Gold Coast of such criminal activity and, in doing so, protect the rights of consumers.

In particular, the Gold Coast region appears to be the home for a number of producers of so-called "business directories". The proprietors are known as "blowers" and they target businesses for unsolicited advertising. The former Minister for Consumer Affairs, Glen Milliner, made a number of public statements warning about blowers, and I congratulate him on doing so. I know that the new Minister, Deputy Premier Tom Burns, will also be active in warning people about the activities of these unscrupulous operators.

Blowers specialise in invoice fraud. They can cost business across the State millions of dollars each year. They work on the basis that if they send an invoice to a company, it has a chance of slipping through internal checks and being paid, regardless of whether or not any legitimate advertising has been provided in return. There are numerous cases on record of such invoices being detected just before being paid. Consumer Affairs receives many complaints about unsolicited entries in business directories or magazines. Sometimes, the producers of those publications print only a small number—sometimes only a handful—to send to their victims. Yet they often claim that the publications are distributed nationally or internationally, and they send a bill to a company or small business for payment, when in fact no advertising was authorised. Small businesses are a popular target, because there is often no single employee designated for checking or authorising particular tasks such as advertising. The answer is not to pay invoices for advertising in directories or magazines before checking their authenticity. Nobody should pay for unauthorised advertising.

The department is also sensitive to particular seasonal pressures placed on consumers. The biggest single problem for many people over the Christmas period is financial overcommitment. Some people simply spend too much. It is important that the department continues to play an active role in advising consumers of the pitfalls of utilising credit when Christmas spending exhausts the financial reserves, as it does every year to many thousands of families. It is only in the new year, when the bills start rolling in, that people go into financial shock. Some financial counsellors say that it is not unusual for some people to be paying off last year's Christmas bills many months later.

There is no doubt that credit can be a vicious cycle, and it is the responsibility of the Department of Consumer Affairs, in protecting the interests of consumers, to make them aware of the dangers that exist. Statistics demonstrate that the average Australian owes around $1,000 in credit card debt. The message that the department will continue to push is in the form of a few simple rules. The department will encourage those who must use a credit card for Christmas shopping to try to use only one. Many people find it easier to

dismiss the growing debt if it is divided up among a series of cards, but people are less likely to overuse credit if they see it mounting up on one card. Christmas shoppers should be warned to beware of "buy now, pay later" offers. Some traders will defer billing for holiday purchases until February or March in the next year.

In its information campaign, the Department of Consumer Affairs will continue to remind people that alternatives exist to using credit cards. Of course, lay-bys are the best alternative, as they attract no interest charges. However, they are legally binding agreements, and the conditions are set by the trader. The price of the good should always be fixed over the period of the lay-by. The potential dangers of credit is just one of the many pitfalls that consumers face, particularly in retail centres such as the Gold Coast and Brisbane. It is estimated that 15 to 25-year-olds spend $4 billion every year on consumer items. At least 34 per cent of that age group have at least one form of credit.

As I have said, in the 1993-94 period, the Department of Consumer Affairs will continue to be an active public awareness campaigner on matters of consumer rights and consumer protection. The Department of Consumer Affairs has an excellent track record in this regard. For instance, it has developed a range of new brochures and education programs for consumers, traders, students and special needs groups. This was carried out in the 1992-93 period.

In the 1993-94 period, the Department of Consumer Affairs will investigate the decentralisation of its services. It will also look to the establishment of consumer advocacy networks to provide more detailed and effective representation for consumers in Queensland. The uniformity of consumer legislation from State to State and between the States and the Commonwealth is extremely important. Consumer transactions are not limited by State borders. Without uniform consumer legislation, the potential exists for those with ill intent to exploit anomalies and loopholes between State and Commonwealth legislation and threaten the rights of consumers. The potential for this lies in areas such as conditions and warranties in consumer transactions, manufacturer's liability and consumer credit. Consequently, these areas have been concentrated on up to this point.

I understand that, in the coming year, one of the most significant priorities of the Queensland Department of Consumer Affairs will be to work cooperatively with other States and the Commonwealth on the issue of uniformity in consumer affairs regulation and legislation. Within the next year, the Minister will take part in another meeting of the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs—or the MCCA—which is convened by the Commonwealth. This body comprises Consumer Affairs Ministers from the Commonwealth, the States and Territories and New Zealand. The MCCA's objective is to develop a uniform approach to consumer affairs on matters of national interest. I understand that the MCCA is moving closer to a real resolution of the existing anomalies in consumer affairs legislation between the States and the Commonwealth by proposing a national consumer affairs agenda. In this way, the Queensland Government is working cooperatively with other authorities to ensure that existing loopholes in consumer protection are closed through a uniform approach.

The Queensland Government, through the Department of Consumer Affairs, is working hard to increase consumer protection. It has had the foresight to touch upon the issue of more effective consumer advocacy, and the commonsense to work cooperatively with the Commonwealth, other States and Territories and New Zealand to ensure that our consumers are protected in the majority of their transactions.

Consumers in Queensland are also conscious about purchasing Australian-made products. They understand the importance of purchasing goods that are produced and manufactured in Australia. I want to congratulate the Federal Government on heeding those concerns and implementing a system of labelling to ensure that consumers will never be fooled into purchasing a product on the fraudulent grounds that it is Australian made. That is an important step forward for consumer affairs and for the Australian-made campaign.

I am informed that the complaints handled on the Gold Coast over the broad range of fair trading issues is usually dealt with by the Office of Consumer Affairs. The Gold Coast area is served by a Consumer Affairs office based at Southport. During 1992-93, a total of almost 1 250 complaints were lodged at the Southport office by consumers on a range of issues. It also handled 14 500 telephone inquiries from consumers and 2 800 phone inquiries from traders.

Time expired.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (3.07 p.m.): Recently, we have seen a reshuffle in Cabinet.

When a Cabinet reshuffle occurs, portfolios change. In one of the previous Cabinet reshuffles, the Attorney-General shunted out of his jurisdiction the Classification of Publications Act and the Classification of Films Act. Obviously, Mr Wells did not want those Acts to be under his care. However, these two Acts are now administered by the Department of Consumer Affairs, which is now part of Mr Burns' portfolio. The Committee will recall that the Labor Government introduced those two pieces of legislation in 1991, but they became operative only in November 1992. It took a fair while for that legislation to come into operation. Therefore, it is of interest to consider the outcome of the policy decision as it applies to the Classification of Publications Act.

When the Bill was introduced, the then Minister for Justice said—

> "No pornographic material will now be sold in Queensland."

I emphasise that the then Minister for Justice said—

> "No pornographic material will now be sold in Queensland."

That is similar to the "no child will live in poverty" statement.

Honourable members can do their own market research—and I have done a bit—but last month the *Gold Coast Bulletin* reported that illegal magazines——

Mr Burns interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: I do my market research by listening to what I am told by people who come into my office. Last month, the *Gold Coast Bulletin* reported that illegal magazines with explicit and highly embarrassing photos were available at Gold Coast convenience stores. It seems that a *Gold Coast Bulletin* reporter bought restricted Category One magazines from convenience stores. According to the Classification of Publications Act, the maximum penalty for that offence is $3,000 or three months' imprisonment. That *Gold Coast Bulletin* reporter stated that the three stores visited stocked Category One—and I will name them—*Mayfair* and *Risque* magazines; two stores kept Category Two *Gallery* magazines; and one store carried a Category Two magazine titled *Fox*, which I presume has nothing to do with the Leader of the House.

The names of the magazines are irrelevant, but a major community concern is the convenience stores involved. They are well-patronised and well-known stores and are frequented by minors for items ranging from iceblocks and oranges to bread and milk. They are an important part of the retail industry. The two stores named by the *Gold Coast Bulletin* reporter were the Night Owl and 7–Eleven stores, both of which, it would be fair to say, are categorised as family stores. It should be noted that, following the *Gold Coast Bulletin* story about the sale of the magazines, the management of both the Night Owl and 7–Eleven stores immediately withdrew them from sale. It seems that the policy of management of both stores was that no Category One material should be sold, but the ultimate decision lay with the franchisee. It seemed, too, that Category One and Category Two magazines are available at some convenience stores throughout the State. The question must be asked: is this Labor Government ensuring that the laws it introduced are applied and policed? Secondly, are the Goss Labor Government censorship laws as strict as it would endeavour to have us all believe?

The initial part of the question is addressed first. There is in existence a publication/films classification office and it has an officer. The composition of this office is not known. The annual report does not detail this information, nor do the Budget papers. In other words, we are debating the Estimates yet we do not even see that Estimate in a line in the Budget papers. According to the annual report—

> "The officer has developed a code of conduct with retail, wholesalers and sellers which has set in place a formal requirement for the interchange of information that will assist in compliance with the legislation."

The publications tribunal, which is to be constituted under the Classification of Publications Regulation 1992 for the purpose of hearing appeals lodged under section 37 of the Classification of Publications Act—according to the annual report—has not yet been established, but it seems that some progress has been made towards this end. That is ridiculous. The Government has not even established what it said it would do under that process. It was a big show at the time. This Labor Government made statements like, "No pornographic material will be sold in Queensland." It has not set up the wherewithal—the mechanism—to implement that policy. Shame on it. The way that this is being handled is typical of this Government. It is outrageous. It is, indeed, a sorry admission, and it is unfortunate that the department is dragging the chain with respect to the establishment of the tribunal.

Of passing interest only is the fact that, according to the 1991-92 annual report, the function of the Literature Board of Review—although it had no members, it was still alive—was to examine and review literature with the object of preventing the distribution in Queensland of objectionable literature. May it now rest in peace. It cannot be denied that while it was in operation it did a sterling job.

An appropriate answer to the first part of the question that I raised would be that the code of conduct is not working, as evidenced by availability of the objectionable Category One and Two magazines from well patronised and known convenience stores. That is a fact that the Labor Party will have to accept. Equally, as it was a *Gold Coast Bulletin* journalist who drew the attention of the Minister to the banned magazines, then it is fair to say that the laws are not being adequately policed. The Government has laws there that it is not interested in policing.

I turn to the second part of the question: are the Goss Labor Government censorship laws strict enough? When the Classification of Publications Bill was debated in 1991 the Opposition argued that it was not strong enough. It seems that it was correct. Towards the end of last month, a District Court jury acquitted a sex shop owner on charges of selling and exposing for sale without lawful justification or excuse obscene materials that tended to corrupt morals. The acquittal was achieved despite the fact that, under the Classification of Publication Acts, the sale of the obscene magazines is illegal. To be quite accurate, the charge was laid in August 1992, prior to the commencement of the Classification of Publications Act. The defendant argued that 600 magazines, which were imported from Europe and America, that had been seized had been passed by the Federal Government. It is said that they could be obtained by mail and, in some cases, at newsagents. That was his defence, "You can buy it interstate, you can buy it at other newsagents. Therefore, I should not be found guilty of selling this material in Queensland." That is not a defence, we know, but it was used. I believe it is probably a fact that that this material can can be obtained interstate. The defendant used that as a defence.

That is not an auspicious start to the use of new legislation. A clear analogy can be drawn between the Classification of Publications Act and the discredited amendments to the prostitution laws. As the Committee knows, the prostitution laws introduced by the Goss Labor Government are a farce and the standing joke from one end of Queensland to the other. We will probably hear something about that in the next Estimates that are to be debated. The honourable member for Brisbane Central can certainly confirm that claim. I am fearful the same thing will be said about the classification of publications laws.

Whether the Goss Labor Government likes it or not, a test has been applied. The result has not been a good one for the community. For the information of the Committee, I point out that the new laws are already being branded a farce. This accusation comes from a Gold Coast sub-agency owner, who said that "nobody knew a damned thing" about whether they were stocking legal or illegal magazines because there was no advisory system. He went on to say that the laws were so complex that no-one knew what was right or wrong.

The new Minister, Mr Burns, would do well to direct his attention to this problem. The Minister cannot run away from it. "Mr Fixit" is what he is called, and he has to fix the problem. That is all there is to it. The Cabinet gives him every department that is in a mess; he makes a bigger mess of it, then he walks away from it.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: That is exactly what happens. There is plenty of evidence of that. The Minister cannot run away from this one. There is a problem, and it is no good his saying, "It can be solved, it is going to be solved. "

Mr Burns: Did you get sold a bad book?

Mr FITZGERALD: The Minister has to do something about this problem.

Earlier this year, the Queensland Labor Government moved to amend the Classification of Films Act to provide for a new MA—mature audience—category that allows entry to films for anyone aged 15 or older. However, those younger than 15 can be admitted if they are accompanied by a parent or guardian. It was an initiative of the Prime Minister and taken up by the council of Australian Governments. The film industry has been highly critical of the new rating system for several reasons, including that it was not consulted. It maintained that there were practical difficulties in enforcing the law. This included determining whether a person was a parent or a guardian. It is a bit hard to determine that. There is no doubt that the community in general supports this new rating.

Censorship is a complex and difficult area. Recently, there has been a barrage of calls for more legislation to regulate pornographic computer games and videos. At the end of last month, a Senate committee, established to devise a new classification scheme for saucy and violent computer games, released its recommendations for banning sexually explicit computer games. The copiers had not had time to cool down before there was a new form of virtual reality pornography on the market here in Queensland. It was a dreaded mail order kit. Pro-family groups feared that children might get access to that material, and were outraged. These are major concerns, and that is why I am raising them in this Estimates debate. There are many other things I would like to say in the debate, but time precludes me from doing so. I ask the Minister to give his attention to the issues I have raised.

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs) (3.17 p.m.), in reply: In responding to this Estimates debate, I thank all honourable members for their outstanding contributions to the debate on the provision of services to protect the interests of consumers in Queensland. The level of the debate was outstandingly high. Anyone reading *Hansard*——

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BURNS: Of course it was. Everybody made a contribution. I have no arguments about the honourable member's contribution. If he puts up a case, we will have a listen to it. Firstly, the people reading *Hansard* will appreciate two things: they will understand the diversity in this portfolio ranging from fair trading issues to the consumer advocacy network, get-rich-quick schemes, mobile homes, retirement villages, and censorship—just to name a few.

Mr Santoro: Travel agencies.

Mr BURNS: Travel agencies, yes. Secondly, they will observe the absence of criticism of the way in which the office has conducted its affairs over the past 12 months. They will also notice an absence of criticism of Glen Milliner and the work he did during the four years that he was the responsible Minister. The department is well focused, and its programs are designed to meet general consumer needs. It is clear that members opposite accept the valuable role played by departmental officers. People from the Gold Coast, people from Keppel and people from many other electorates have given them a pat on the back for the work that they have done. One honourable member mentioned that the Consumer Affairs Office is responsible for 89 Acts. He said that it should have its own director-general. Well, it has. Of course, as Consumer Affairs has only 328 employees and the new department has about 4 500 permanent employees, about 83 000 volunteers and about 2 000 auxiliaries, the new director-general faces a substantial task. He has shown his skills previously and he will be an important asset to this new department. I welcome him to it.

The honourable member spoke about the Auctioneers and Agents Fidelity Guarantee Fund and said that it had dropped to $60m. It should be remembered that under the previous Government, there was consistent criticism by the Auditor-General that it was being allowed to build up and was not being used. That was in the Auditor-General's reports. I remember it and, if the honourable member is honest, he will admit that he remembers it.

The previous Government recognised that in 1988. Members of that Government were the ones who started the process of taking money from the fund, firstly, to fund a program under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement and, secondly, to set up the Rental Bond Authority. Those projects have continued. It is true to say I was one that kept asking for more money for housing from that fund, which allowed us to provide 80 per cent of the money for community groups in areas all over the State, and to do something to address the specific problems of people with disabilities. I do not back away from that. I think it was a good scheme that made good use of that money. As I said, prior to 1989, Treasury had been carrying on negotiations about that scheme with the Department of Justice. Mike Ahern was involved in the scheme at the time. The Government has continued the process, which has been a good one.

Another concern raised by the honourable member was the foreshadowed changes within the Office of Consumer Affairs which will result from a program evaluation presently being undertaken. I give the honourable member an assurance that we are not talking about reducing numbers. Any restructuring which takes place will be organisational changes largely associated with reporting lines. With a tight budget we have to get the best value for money. Everybody does that. We ask our officers to do that. They are a very professional staff, and I expect that

they will deliver on the requests that I make of them.

As to Gordon Nuttall, the member for Sandgate—everyone would want to build a retirement village at Sandgate overlooking the bay, especially me, being an old fisherman. His comments about the future management of retirement villages were important. The protection of the elderly is particularly important in the last stage of their lives when they buy into those schemes. There was a very bad case about retirement homes in my electorate, and I think people are still being prosecuted. For rural communities that are looking for people who want to live in those areas, the retirement village concept is very good. We have to review the Act. I foreshadow some amendments. We will continue to provide consumer protection and a legislative framework that ensure protection of residential interests. I thank the honourable member for his contribution.

Judy Gamin made a point about the Gold Coast office. I thank her for her support of that office. It is nice to hear that it is doing a good job. With respect to the requirement for a real estate salesperson to attend exams in Brisbane—I will direct the office to examine a more effective way of providing that service. The drafting of a definition of "mobile homes" is with Parliamentary Counsel and will be progressed as quickly as possible, subject to there being certainty as to the definition.

My mate Bob Dollin from Maryborough spoke about the Queensland Motor Vehicle Security Register. The office will be undertaking a significant education and marketing program to ensure that consumers, especially the young ones who are buying their first car, are aware of the need to check the title of the vehicle through the register. About 98 per cent of private consumers who make an inquiry of QMVSR obtain a certificate, and this is good.

Vince Lester spoke about how he bought his films here and how they were dearer overseas. He should have mentioned that it would be the State and Federal Governments that should get the credit for keeping prices down. As to itinerant house painters—the honourable member might be interested to know that the office has specifically targeted those people. We put a lot of time and effort into investigating fraudulent door-to-door house painting activities. My predecessor in this portfolio, Glen Milliner, appeared on the Channel 7 program *Australia's Most Wanted* about a particular shonk in those areas. The office is aware that shonks are targeting the elderly, and it is making a concerted effort to track down those persons and take whatever action is possible under the law.

Mr Stoneman: Flog them.

Mr BURNS: I am not too sure about flogging them. Clem Campbell spoke about a very important issue. Many of the problems about which he spoke fall outside the scope of State Government action. I notice that the honourable member is nodding in acceptance of that. If he believes that the Australian Securities Commission is not operating effectively—and there are a lot of people who would agree with him—perhaps he would like to take it up with the Federal Attorney-General, who has responsibility in these areas. I share the honourable member's concern about finance brokers and agree that action is needed. They prey on the gullible and throw them a life raft when they are really in trouble. The office is currently looking at finance brokers legislation in Victoria and elsewhere and considering whether a code of conduct for finance brokers would be a feasible alternative to licensing.

The honourable member for Merthyr raised the issue of the Travel Agents Act, which was introduced by the previous Government only following representations from travel agents themselves. I recognise that the legislation and the fund need to be reformed. At the last meeting of the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs, initiatives were put in place to rationalise the operations of the Travel Agents Compensation Fund. It is to be hoped that, in the next 12 months, the legislation and the fund will operate in a more satisfactory way. I take on board the honourable member's concerns and criticisms and will ensure that, in the current review of the operations of the fund and the legislation, they are kept in mind by the office during its investigations.

As to the contribution by the member for Currumbin, Merri Rose—tele fraud or invoice fraud is a problem that has been growing and continues to grow. I point out that quality assurance is one of the most effective ways of preventing that fraud. As Minister for Administrative Services, I supported quality assurance. The evidence today convinces me that I was right. While legislation is an important tool in assisting consumers, just as important is spreading the word. We must educate people. I hope to introduce the template of consumer credit legislation for Australia into the Queensland Parliament in the August 1994 session. I thank the honourable member for her submission and her continued work for consumers.

As to the contribution of the member for Lockyer—the problem with the pornography issue is simply that some people in the retail industry are buying from shonky wholesalers who call at their doors. In the next couple of weeks, I should be able to make a ministerial statement to the effect that genuine, bona fide distributors will receive approved distributor status. As a result, people would be crazy to buy from a retailer who does not have approved distributor status. The people who are selling to corner stores and garages are not legitimate distributors. The large distributors are keen to have some sort of approval basis put in place. People can phone David Canavan, the officer in charge of this section. We will be publicising that number. The authorised supplier system will be on line by the end of this month.

It is all in the minds of people themselves as to whether or not something is pornographic. It is a matter of one's set of standards. Because many people write to my office about this, there is no time for the fellow who looks after those matters to do any work, because he is continually responding to someone who sees pornography in every book and every thing. One person raised with me a number of women's books that are sold over the counter and even displayed in the Parliamentary Library. The men's books were removed, but the women's books are on display over there. I have received letters in my electorate office—and they have nothing to do with me as a Minister—complaining about the *Women's Weekly*. I do not know how we conduct the test.

Mr FitzGerald: *Dolly* is certainly obscene to some parents. You should read *Dolly* magazine.

Mr BURNS: To be quite honest, I am not into women's magazines. I am into fishing magazines, and I have never seen anything pornographic in a fishing magazine in my life. I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate and commend the Estimates to the Committee.

Minister for Corrective Services

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Rockhampton—Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (3.28 p.m.): I lay upon the table of this Assembly an erratum to the Queensland Corrective Services Commission annual report for the year ended 30 June 1993.

It is my pleasure to introduce the Estimates of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission. A sum of $140.19m has been allocated to the commission from the Consolidated Fund. The Queensland Corrective Services Commission is approaching the end of its first five years of operation as a statutory authority headed by a community-based board. Today, I believe it is timely to look back five or six years, remember the condition our prison and probation and parole systems were in and reflect on the enormous changes and gains which have been evident since that time.

During the last four years, this Government has maintained a clear course which is aimed directly at providing Queensland with an efficient and effective system of corrections. To do this we have had to look at the defined immediate needs and the long-term probabilities and implement strategies which will fulfil all of these requirements. I believe this is being done. We can demonstrate the success of this approach through achievements to date, and we can highlight indicators which point to the fact that our long-term strategies are on track.

The public has every right to demand that the services provided by agencies in the criminal justice system are adequate and cost effective. The Queensland Corrective Services Commission has demonstrated its ability to do this. This has not resulted in a diminution of service quality, but rather it has ensured that better use has been made of available funds, areas of waste and neglect have been identified, and the available funds have been channelled into areas of greatest need.

The Queensland Corrective Services Commission has demonstrated strong and effective fiscal management. The commission's system of financial reporting is now a model for the rest of the public sector. While Queensland taxpayers may applaud this result, the success of the commission's service delivery is probably better measured by the fact that, in the past five years, the reimprisonment rate of offenders has fallen by almost 20 per cent. Figures published by the Australian Institute of Criminology clearly show the return rate of prisoners to correctional centres in this State has fallen from a national average of about 60 per cent to just 46.2 per cent.

This massive reduction in the re-imprisonment rate means that Corrective Services is playing a very significant role in crime prevention. Without this reduction, many more victims would have been created and there would have been substantial additional costs for agencies such as the police and the courts. The commission has also been able to

make substantial savings by using more appropriate placement options for offenders.

The imprisonment rate in secure custody, as distinct from the re-imprisonment rate, has been reduced by the introduction of innovative and highly successful schemes such as the Work Outreach Program. Establishing and maintaining a secure environment for inmates and custodial staff alike is an essential prerequisite for any system of corrections.

Construction work completed during the past year has included staff facilities at Borallon Correctional Centre, extra industries capacity at Sir David Longland Correctional Centre and extensions to the Training and Development Centre. 1992-93 also saw a review of requirements for physical security upgrades and perimeter security upgrades completed at a number of correctional centres.

The Corrective Services Commission has been allocated some $15m in 1993-94 for its capital works programs. The commission's major current program is the redevelopment of the Townsville Correctional Centre, where an estimated $6m will be spent this financial year as part of a $9m three-year refurbishment program. The project involves the partial redevelopment of the centre into a new village concept of offender management, with the re-establishment of the recycling centre and a number of other prison industries and the demolition of the State's last remaining unsewered cells. The remaining $3.2m cost of this redevelopment is set down for next financial year. The emphasis on upgraded security at correctional centres will continue, with a further $4.2m allocated for the completion of perimeter fencing upgrades at Townsville and Wacol Correctional Centres.

The Corrective Services budget also allocates an extra $1m toward the expansion of the Work Outreach Camps. The WORC scheme was introduced in 1991 after the successful utilisation of a team of 130 prisoners in the huge clean-up following the 1990 Charleville floods. The camps involve volunteer groups of offenders assisting in forestry, national parks, local authority and other public infrastructure work in country areas.

During the last two years, the WORC scheme has proven to be a viable alternative to custodial detention for most offenders, simultaneously easing the pressure on secure centre populations and providing meaningful work for low security risk inmates. The scheme was expanded during the year with the opening of two new camps at Winton and Clermont and the relocation of the WORC scheme headquarters from Dutton Park to Wacol.

The extra $1m allocation in this year's Budget will enable the establishment of additional WORC camps in the Cape York Peninsula/Gulf of Carpentaria region and western Queensland. It is proposed to attach these camps to the northern correctional centres. The new works include the provision and upgrading of mobile buildings and camp facilities such as kitchens, sleeping units and ablution blocks and the provision of a permanent staging camp. A number of offenders accommodated within these camps are expected to be Aborigines—a policy in keeping with the recommendations of the Aboriginal deaths in custody report.

Other capital works totalling $4.7m this financial year will include: $2.85m for an expanded minor works program; $500,000 toward the updating of fire services at correctional centres; $200,000 for the completion of the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre; $598,000 for sewage connection works at Wacol; $270,000 for the relocation of the Brisbane Womens' Prison administration; and $248,000 for the trial of new security equipment at the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre.

The Queensland Corrective Services Commission's Offenders Program provides a wide range of correction options within which offenders can correct their behaviour whilst subject to an appropriate degree of control, which minimises their risk to the public. As at 30 June, 2 068 offenders were in secure custody, 238 low-risk offenders were on the WORC scheme and 16 362 offenders were supervised under various forms of community sentencing options.

Amongst the program highlights of the past year were the following: the number of escapes and deaths in custody fell by 20 per cent and 40 per cent respectively; the notorious 109-year-old Boggo Road goal was officially closed——

An honourable member: For good?

Mr BRADDY: For good. New rules enabling uniform commission—wide sentence management were adopted; the highly successful WORC scheme was expanded; and new standards of health and medical services for all offenders in custody were developed and implemented and annual medicals were introduced for all long-term inmates.

Plans for 1993-94 include finalisation of the development of case management; an anticipated reduction in the number of ATSI prisoners as a proportion of the total secure custody population; enhanced staff training in areas of security and safety of inmates; utilisation of the new Penalties and Sentences Act to make more use of non-custodial options; further expansion of the WORC scheme; and efforts to further reduce the number of escapes, deaths in custody and assaults by inmates on other inmates.

In recent years, and particularly last financial year, the number of offenders under community supervision has risen considerably. We have seen a 160 per cent increase in the number of offenders under community corrections orders since the pre-commission days. The commission has ensured adequate funding for this area of its operation with a 231 per cent increase in funds during the same period. This expenditure does not include more than $1.5m spent on contracted community hostels last financial year. In addition to this massive increase in expenditure, there has also been a 175 per cent increase in community corrections staff during the life of the commission.

From a public point of view, the activities of correctional centres claim the most attention. However, when one considers that there are around 6 000 offenders passing through correctional centres each year compared with an annual caseload of more than 20 000 offenders under community supervision, the importance of community corrections in the system must be recognised.

A comprehensive internal review of community corrections is at present under way. The report of the review committee has been finalised and distributed throughout the commission and among significant stakeholders. Responses to this report are due in later this month and the commission board will then decide on any changes which may be made to this arm of the commission's operation. It is worth noting that a preliminary assessment of the impact of the new Penalties and Sentences legislation indicates a reduction in the number of short-term offenders coming into the system. This apparent trend will be closely monitored over the coming year so that an accurate assessment on the impact of this legislation can be gauged.

Community involvement in the delivery of corrective services is a hallmark of the change process now under way. The aim of the commission's Stakeholders Program is to increase community awareness of, and participation in, correctional activities. Members of the public become involved through membership of corrections boards or through membership of one of a number of specific interest groups and non-Government agencies. Examples of this involvement include the official visitors scheme, community advisory boards at all centres, community corrections boards which decide offenders' release under community supervision, contract management of centres by private organisations and companies, and program delivery by community agencies.

Achievements during the past year included the establishment of a number of community advisory committees throughout the State. The role of the committees is to enable greater community input into the running of correctional centres. All correctional centres, with the exception of Sir David Longland, now have a community advisory committee, as do all corrections regions. In addition, all correctional services contracted to non-Government agencies were audited during the last year.

The commission believes that it can reduce service duplication by utilising existing community services, thereby reducing the cost to the taxpayer. Further expansion of this initiative will be examined during the coming year with a view not only to reducing the cost, but also to improving the quality of programs.

Deferred community interaction proposals which are now planned for this financial year include the implementation of a Statewide system to inform the judiciary of non-custodial sentencing options and plans to introduce a pilot system for victim/offender reconciliation. Other plans include the development of regular information exchanges with the judiciary; the encouraging of greater community agency participation in the delivery of correctional services; and the engagement of other agencies in a joint approach to crime.

In terms of human resources, the commission's aim of recruiting, developing and supporting high-quality staff continues. Highlights of the last year include the continued development of the Performance Planning and Review System and implementation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan; the provision of an average of 4.5 days training per staff member; the completion and opening of new extensions to the commission's training and development centre; and the finalisation of the TAFE Associate Diploma in Business (Justice Administration), with more than 400

students currently enrolled in the pilot scheme. The associate diploma is providing a secure basis for a work force able to deal with an increasingly sophisticated and technologically complex correctional environment.

I am also pleased to note that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff now comprise 4.36 per cent of total commission staff—a result which outstrips most other areas of Government employment. A successful workshop jointly funded by the commission and the Department of Employment, Education and Training was held in May to examine issues relating to the employment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the commission.

Staff training objectives for 1993-94 include an increase in training provision to an average of five days per staff member; accredited post-secondary education to be undertaken by 30 per cent of all staff; a continued increase in the employment of ATSI staff toward the target proportion of at least 10 per cent of total staff; performance planning and review to be implemented throughout the commission; targeted reductions in the number of reportable workplace injuries and illnesses and assaults on staff; and further development of information exchange systems between staff.

The goal of the commission's Industries Program is to offset the cost of corrections whilst at the same time ensuring that all employed inmates are able to make an economic contribution to the commission and society. The scope of activities undertaken within the commission's facilities range from farm production and bakeries to slate tile manufacturing and sawmilling.

A significant effort has been made to increase the revenue from prison industries, and industries revenue has doubled in value since the commission was established. Among the highlights of 1992-93 were the following: the combined external and internal revenue from the commission's farms and other industries amounted to $8.3m; a business operations strategic plan setting out revenue, employment and sales objectives for the period 1993—97 was developed; and a quality assurance system is being formulated at Brisbane Womens' Prison and the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre, with accreditation due at all centres by next March.

Industries Program goals for this year include projected revenue of $9.5m from commission farms and other industries; further possibilities for public—private joint ventures; the expansion of quality assurance to all centres with Government contracts; and cost/benefit analysis and evaluation criteria for all new industry proposals.

The administration of Corrective Services is a challenging job at the best of times. Among other things, the Kennedy Commission review, which led to the establishment of the Corrective Services Commission, found poor prison management, overcrowding, poor officer training, disjointed training, a tired, demoralised and inefficient administration and chronic underfunding. I believe the measures outlined in the commission's annual report and the budget comprehensively show that all of these issues have been and are still being addressed. The present PSMC review into Corrective Services, which was instigated at the request of my predecessor, is due to report by the end of this year.

On a personal note, in the coming year I hope to see continued progress on the implementation of the Kennedy reforms and any recommended changes that arise from the current PSMC review; a continued reduction in the rate of recidivism within the corrections system; closer cooperation with police and Corrective Services staff on issues of security, police watch-houses and other areas of mutual involvement; and a further reduction in the current over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within correctional centres and continued progress toward achieving greater numbers of ATSI custodial and community corrections staff.

It is important to acknowledge that no correctional system will be universally accepted by everyone. Depending on which side of the fence one sits, a prison system especially and, to a lesser extent, community corrections will be perceived to be either too soft or too harsh, ineffective or overzealous. This Government is determined to take all these views into consideration, and come up with a system of corrections which is secure, fair, and accountable.

Success in corrections goes largely unnoticed while failures tend to be spectacular and headline grabbing. Any failure is disappointing but, in the area of corrections, is inevitable. Attention must be given to minimising those failures by focusing on the problem areas and providing the necessary support. Under this budget, the delivery of Corrective Services in Queensland will be improved. There will be no dramatic change. However, there will be careful, positive progress. I would like to think this progress will be made with the encouragement, support,

and constructive criticism of all members. In his summation of the many changes he saw necessary, Jim Kennedy said—

> "The process of review has been dynamic. It is not finished yet. It may never be."

Jim Kennedy is right, and the challenge of correctional review and reform never really ends.

Time expired.

Mr COOPER (Crows Nest) (3.44 p.m.): Five years ago, as Corrective Services Minister, I initiated that trailblazing Kennedy Commission of Review into Corrective Services and, as a result, the Corrective Services Commission was created. I had hoped and intended at that time that it would be the beginning of a new era. Certainly, I ensured the foundations were solid, that the proper structure was put in place and that a proper relationship was established between the Minister and the commission. It was intended then that a major review be undertaken after five years to honestly assess the successes and any possible failures. This year, 1993, was to be the year of that major review yet, despite talk about a Public Sector Management Commission review, the results of which may not be released, the Government refuses to commit itself to a serious, meaningful and public inquiry. The reasons, of course, are patently obvious. Serious underfunding, woefully inept ministerial performance and meddling by everybody from the Premier down have resulted in a chaotic administration driven by fierce jealousies and fractured by competing egos.

Frankly, the Government, if not the commission, has lost the plot. There is no real philosophy, no guiding policy—not even a pretence of a vision. Figures compiled by the Australian Institute of Criminology released only last week are a shocking exposure of a system in crisis. In the year to June 1992, Queensland had the highest escape rate of dangerous prisoners and the second highest overall escape rate in the nation. In that year, there were 55 escapes, including 15 by so-called high-security prisoners. I note in the report that was tabled this morning that escapes this year total 44. Figures also reveal that Queensland spent only $36.78 per person a year on Corrective Services. That is below the national average of $42.26 per person. For the 1993-94 financial year, the Government is allocating even less than it spent in 1992-93. So the State's per capita spending is worsening dramatically, especially given the surge in population by interstate migration of an estimated 1 000 a week in recent times.

The sheer incompetence and the utterly breathtaking collapse of any coherent management strategy and practice were revealed in July 1991 when eight dangerous prisoners escaped from the Moreton Correctional Centre. That break-out led to a major review by a three-member team—Detective Superintendent Ken Morris of the Queensland Police Service, Stephen Lonie of the accountancy and management consultancy firm KPMG Peat Marwick, and Mr Trevor Carlyon, a senior Corrective Services Commission officer. That report was kept a deep, dark secret and, from the Government's point of view, understandably so. I have asked the new Minister in writing for an official copy, but his response so far has been a deafening silence. If he refuses, he will be guilty of being an active and deliberate player in this scandalous cover-up and will be inextricably linked to the monumental failures of the past.

The report is a very long and a very detailed document running for more than 120 pages. It chronicles a disaster just waiting to happen. It reveals a system desperately strapped for cash and abandoned, bereft of leadership by this Government, and a system which, for want of any other term, has a management by crisis mentality as it lurches alternatively from panic to paralysis. Petty jealousies, disastrous morale, frantic buck passing, the avoidance at any cost of responsibility and therefore blame, abysmal lack of professionalism, total moral bankruptcy and a desperate siege mentality were revealed—all of this only some two and a half years after I established the Corrective Services Commission. I use the present tense deliberately as the principal management team of July 1991 is still in place. Of course, the then Minister is not there, but nobody ever really noticed when he was supposed to be there.

It gets even worse. On pages 99 and 100 of the report, under the heading "Other Issues", the authors wrote—

> "During the course of the inquiry, the inspection team was subjected to requests to prepare interim reports from the Ministers and Chief Executive Officers of both the Queensland Corrective Services Commission and the Queensland Police Service as well as the Office of the Premier. The latter of the two also requesting access to transcripts of evidence.

> The inspection team members from the two Government organisations were placed under pressure to comply with the demands from their respective Ministers and Chief Executive Officers. It was also evident that it was unclear who the prevailing Minister was.
>
> The undue interference in the process of the inquiry had the effect of—
>
> delaying the inquiry process;
>
> placing the inspection team under undue pressure to comply with the various requests that was to impact on the process of the inquiry;
>
> and potentially pre-empt decisions regarding the careers of senior Queensland Corrective Service Commission employees.
>
> The inspection team places on record its opinion that this interference affected its capacity to deal with a complex issue that should not be allowed to occur in the future."

So virtually everybody, including the Premier, interfered. It was a shameless perversion of the proper inquiry process.

Why did the Premier's Office want transcripts of evidence? Because buck passing, blame allocation and political damage control had a far higher priority than simply and honestly determining the reasons for the escape fiasco. Recognising that his then Minister for Corrective Services was not up to the task, the Premier felt the urgent public relations need to say that heads would roll. As the inquiry reports stated, this had the potential of pre-empting decisions affecting the careers of senior commissioned officers but, for that eminent lawyer, political damage control was far more important than the presumption of innocence or the need to let the inquiry run its proper course.

Only last weekend, we learned more about this desperate cover-up. Mr Terry Stedman, the then member of the commission board representing custodial corrections, admitted that the board did everything it could to keep a lid on the inquiry report. Mr Stedman was quoted as saying that he had personally told the board that the Moreton gaol "would not keep in chooks." Mr Stedman also admitted that commission executives had ignored warnings by prison general managers that the reshuffle of prisoners could create security problems. After the escape, board members realised the potential embarrassment and stood aside four senior staff. In his words, "I think it was just a bloody embarrassing thing."

No doubt, this sort of blatantly political meddling still happens, which is why I doubt a serious independent review of the whole structure will ever be undertaken. I can only wonder whether the inquiry into the recent Wacol gaol riot is being subjected to the same sort of interference. Given past evidence, and on the balance of probabilities, it is. The report reveals that this mass escape was the result of chronic Government underfunding. On page 106 it states—

> "In early May 1991, Mr Millican was advised by the Director-General that his budget plan was not acceptable and that his Custodial Corrections Directorate must manage within an operating budget of $89 million. Mr Millican and his Custodial Corrections Directorate then developed the Woodford Correctional Centre closure plan which included the redeployment of the Moreton Correctional Centre for south-east Queensland."

Mr Millican was at that time the Director of Custodial Corrections. Put simply, the Government would not give the Corrective Services Commission enough money to do the job.

The commission reluctantly, and then desperately, thrashed about seeking a solution and found no option other than to quickly close the Woodford gaol to meet the reduced budget. High-risk prisoners were then rushed into the Moreton gaol, which could not handle them. The report stated that the final time frame of the moves at the Wacol and Sir David Longland Correctional Centres was only two weeks. That is shameful and inexcusable.

The report identified seven major deficiencies at the time of the escape at Moreton gaol, including ineffective camera surveillance systems, a lack of any operational training for custodial officers transferred to Moreton and a lack of any activities to occupy prisoners' time. It revealed that there were outstanding maintenance works in the area of the escape. Even building materials and tools, which could be used as weapons by escaping prisoners, were left lying around in the prison compound.

The administration responsible for this foul-up is still there. On page 4 of the report the following point is made—

> "The total management team under the Director-General are all in some form responsible for the failure of the planning process."

Frankly, Basil Fawlty would have managed his hotel better. This report makes the PSMC interim report into the Ambulance Service look like a whitewash. Honourable members should not forget that that led to the sacking of the Ambulance Commissioner and the dumping of the Bureau of Emergency Services Director by this Minister in his previous portfolio.

Importantly, has the Government learned anything from this grim experience? Mr Milliner lost his job after the wild riots at the Wacol gaol not just because he was incompetent but because he foolishly allowed himself to be seen as incompetent. If incompetence was a reason for dismissal, this secret report would have resulted in Mr Milliner's departure shortly after July 1991. Only the suppression of the report saved Mr Milliner at that time.

All of these leaks and admissions about this whole episode made an urgent and public inquiry necessary. I am aware that the CJC has no statutory authority to undertake such an inquiry but, if this Minister and this Government had the slightest commitment to accountability, they would invite the CJC to find out the facts about this disgraceful episode and report back to this Parliament. I challenge the Minister to cleanse the stables because, if he does not, there is only one alternative. Undoubtedly, he will refuse this call and, equally undoubtedly, he will keep prisoners behind bars in the same way that he has kept prostitutes off the streets.

The Budget Papers provide an insight into this Government's view of the priority of an effective and efficient corrective services system. In 1992-93, a total of 1 607 staff were employed by the commission. It is estimated that in 1993-94, there will be 1 521—a fall of 86. Alarmingly, the number of employees actually dealing with prisoners will fall from 1 448 to an estimated 1 350—a fall of 98. I noticed in the report tabled this morning that the actual fall is about 274, or 14.6 per cent. Not surprisingly, the so-called corporate support area—the pen pushers—will increase from 142 to 154. In 1989-90, there were only 118 administrators. In 1990-91, administration funding comprised 18 per cent of the total budget. In 1993-94, it will swallow a whopping 38.2 per cent of the total budget.

This Government is building a bureaucracy instead of managing and properly staffing gaols and managing prisoners. This is again shown by fact that the Offenders Program, which has the objective of providing a suitable correctional environment in which the assessed needs of offenders can be met and in which offenders can correct their offending behaviour while under custodial supervision, has suffered a cut in 1993-94 of $537 000 compared with 1992-93.

In March this year, there were 10 126 probationers and parolees, compared with 5 816 when I was Minister in 1988. I challenge the Minister to prove that this huge growth in these numbers has been matched by a corresponding growth in the number of officers available for their supervision. Even the Corrective Services Commission itself admits that each parole officer has to supervise 67 parolees. The officers themselves claim that the real figure is closer to 100 cases per parole officer. They are overworked, overstressed and overlooked.

The new Minister came to the job only recently. He has been keen to portray himself as a tough, no nonsense, hands-on administrator. Only time will tell, but we are already seeing some example of this macho management style. About 30 seconds into the portfolio, Mr Braddy announced that he had been provided by the Police Service with information showing that 32 armed robberies had been committed in the past three years by prisoners on some form of early release. The Minister said that there would be a prompt inquiry. He added that he would be discussing the matter with the Community Corrections Board, which makes decisions about early release, and that he would be making sure that the board had observed fully the ministerial guidelines when considering applications for early release. The board president, former judge Mr Bill Carter, QC, did not take too kindly to that public ministerial reflection on the board's integrity and capacity, especially given the fact that the Minister had not even bothered to speak to him. Common courtesy, it seems, comes a poor second to the Minister's need to appear to be tough and assertive.

Once again, I have put pen to paper regarding that particular issue and, again, I have had the response of deafening silence. I asked the Minister whether, during his term as Police Minister, prior to becoming both Police and Corrective Services Minister, he had conveyed to his colleague and predecessor in the Corrective Services portfolio Police Service concerns about these 32 robberies. I asked him, if he did not, to tell me why he did not. I also invited him to express in writing his full and unqualified confidence in a Community Corrections Board, and I asked him whether he was considering amendments to the board's ministerial guidelines. That was some three weeks ago. As yet, there is still no reply.

As community dismay and disgust grows with the well-founded belief that early release has made a mockery of the concept of having the penalty fit the crime, the Government has alternately tried to ignore the concerns or blame somebody else. The Corrective Services Act 1988, which I introduced as Minister, contains the very important section 139. When this Government introduced amending legislation in 1990, it very sensibly left section 139 intact. That section allows for the preparation of ministerial guidelines for the operation of community corrections boards. The current guidelines were prepared by former Minister, Mr Milliner, after the 1990 amendments became law. They provide the Community Corrections Board and the six regional corrections boards with the Government's views on how applications by prisoners for early release should be treated.

While the recommendations of a prisoner's trial judge on the subject of early release are important considerations for the boards, they are also bound by the ministerial guidelines when considering early release applications. The options are refusal, extended leave of absence, home detention or parole, and the last three options provide for varying degrees of regulation and supervision. Therefore, if the Government does not want prisoners convicted of serious crimes to be released early, all it takes is the will to amend these guidelines. If, in the future, some thug on early release holds up a bank, or some sex maniac on early release rapes and murders, I would hope that the Minister does not resort to the shabby tactic of saying that person was released because his trial judge recommended it, after serving a fraction of the nominal sentence.

There are many more things that I would like to say. I enjoy very much being the Opposition spokesman for this portfolio. I have had a lot to do with it, and I will be taking a keen interest in it. A question was asked in the House this morning regarding the reopening of Boggo Road and also Woodford gaol. I would like the Minister to comment on that again, because that rumour is rife. I would not like to see Boggo Road reopened. It was a specific recommendation of Kennedy that the Minister should not even contemplate reopening that Black Hole. All of those things are in the past. The Minister should not revert to the former system—to the dim, Dark Ages. We have come a long way. Unfortunately, the Government has lost its way in these last few years. It is a question of getting this ship back on course. The Government should stop trying to fool people, itself, the commission and everyone else, including the media. No-one will buy it. They can see that the system has gone off the rails. It is time that we got it back on the rails.

Time expired.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate) (3.58 p.m.): I want to say a few words before I start on my prepared speech on the Estimates for the Corrective Services portfolio. The Minister stated in his introduction that one of the problems in this portfolio is that the media is very quick to grab the bad news stories. I want to focus on a couple of good news stories. The annual report for the Corrective Services Department that was tabled in this Chamber this morning contains a section on the Western Outreach Camps Scheme that has been established throughout the State. I want to focus on that scheme. The innovative Western Outreach Camps Scheme has been given an additional $1m boost in this year's budget. It is an initiative that has been widely and warmly embraced in several parts of western Queensland. Earlier this year, together with some of my colleagues on this side of the Chamber, I visited some of those camps. I will comment further on that visit later in my contribution.

There is always a lot of debate about whether prisoners get it too easy or whether the prison system is too harsh. The Western Outreach Camps Scheme will cost about $4.2m this financial year. I believe that it provides benefits for everyone involved. The WORC Scheme—which is an acronym for the Western Outreach Camps Scheme—is a mobile prison concept involving inmates who would normally be held in secure custody being involved in rewarding community projects and being accommodated in the communities in which they work. Charleville is a well-known example of such a community. It is the western headquarters of the scheme. As members would be aware, in April 1990 the Charleville region was devastated by floods following years of drought, uncertainty and heartbreak for rural dwellers and townspeople. The WORC Scheme was developed as a result of the Charleville flood relief project, in which over 130 prisoners were employed in emergency relief work followed by restoration work over eight months throughout 1990. The exceptional support of the local community proved that placing offenders in the community can be successful and should become a permanent part of corrective services in this State.

The success of the Charleville experience spawned the concept of mobile work camps in

other remote rural areas. Inmates eligible for participation are selected on their security classification and their willingness to address their offending behaviour. They work on community projects, usually under the direction of local authorities or Government agencies such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service or the State Forestry Service, and are on stand-by to respond at short notice to natural disasters. Discussions with Forestry and National Parks have indicated that there is a willingness to involve inmates in remote area development programs. Some abandoned forestry camps have been identified and are currently being used as Western Outreach Camps. It is intended to develop those two directions under the WORC Scheme and, in addition, to pursue other ideas such as beach cleaning as an optional involvement for the scheme along the coastal strip.

The main objectives of the scheme are: to provide supervised and meaningful work programs and recreational opportunities for selected low and open-security offenders as an alternative to imprisonment; to establish mobile work teams to assist rural areas and remote townships of rural Queensland with community work; to enable suitable offenders from more remote localities to participate in a scheme that locates them closer to their homes; to encourage and enable community involvement in the supervision of offenders, and to promote reintegration of offenders into the community; to provide supplementary emergency response teams to assist organisations such as Forestry and State Emergency Services in cases of emergency resulting from fire and other natural disasters; and to provide the means and the opportunity for offenders to maintain links with their families and other support structures while on the scheme.

The commission is highly regarded in the Charleville area as a result of its flood restoration efforts. Commission staff are located in the west and service an area extending west and south from Toowoomba to the borders and north as far as Clermont. The establishment of a permanent presence at Charleville and elsewhere is in line with this Government's commitment to decentralisation and regionalisation. The economy of Charleville and other small townships benefits through the presence of these teams, with spending on food, equipment and other essential provisions. Apart from Charleville, there are camps at Injune, St George, Mitchell, Clermont, Blackall, Yuleba and Winton. Camps are also proposed for other sites closer to Brisbane. A staging and administrative area for the program is presently located at Wacol in Brisbane.

Each month, the WORC Scheme is carrying out community work worth more than $140,000. There are now about 200 inmates on the program. This mobile prison concept is a leader in the corrections field, both in Australia and overseas, with corrections representatives from other States and countries regularly examining the concept and visiting the camps. Before an inmate camp is established in any shire, the communities are consulted and shire council approval is received. The camps are usually accepted once local residents understand the concept and the operations. The camps are carrying out more than 13 000 hours' work each month, which represents a large amount of restitution to the community by these offenders.

The commission, of course, is very careful about the selection process for the WORC Scheme. The selection process has been refined and tightened, and is constantly under review. For example, in a recent month, some 43 prisoners who were interviewed for the scheme were rejected as being unsuitable to participate. More than 50 people are employed to operate the WORC Scheme, including 34 supervisory staff. Almost 100 groups regularly benefit from the scheme, including schools, churches, sporting groups and other community organisations. The program operates on a decentralised basis. Camps vary in size from 10 residents to 35 residents and are semi-autonomous centres for reception and induction as well as local work. A camp of even a dozen inmates is a considerable boost to smaller towns, not only in terms of the greater economic activity but also in terms of access to some services and skills that may be in short supply in some rural areas.

The camps are generally supported by the public because they give offenders an opportunity to pay a form of restitution to the community. More and more members of the public understand that it is a waste of their taxes to keep low-risk offenders in gaols. The scheme has benefits not only to the communities involved but also to the taxpayer. It costs the Queensland Corrective Services Commission about $51 per day or $18,600 per year to keep one inmate on the scheme. That compares very favourably with $100 per day or $36,500 per year to keep an inmate in a medium-security facility. In addition to those figures, it is equally important to assess the direct economic impact that the camps have

on local business. In the last financial year, $950,000 was paid out in local purchases of food, fuel and other products.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, earlier this year I had the opportunity with the then Corrective Services Minister, Glen Milliner, and some of my parliamentary colleagues to visit the work camps and witness the good work being carried out. In particular, the work that impressed me was that being carried out at Mitchell, where a new hospital has been built and the old hospital has been converted into a home for the aged. The old hospital was a wooden building. The prisoners have been established in that home and they have carried out a lot of maintenance, landscaping and gardening work in the area. The elderly residents of the home told us that they are appreciative of the company provided by the prisoners. The elderly residents also feel safer in that, if there are any disasters, people are on hand to assist.

I thank the former Minister for Corrective Services for the opportunity to visit those work camps. The Western Outreach Camps Scheme has proven itself to have lasting positive benefits to the community and the offender, and I am sure that most members look forward to its future expansion.

Time expired.

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh) (4.38 p.m.): Although I am pleased to join the debate on the Estimates for Corrective Services, now that we have a different Minister, I have found reports over the past three weeks to be quite extraordinary. Up until three weeks ago, we had one Minister saying that there is nothing wrong with our prison system: inside our gaols, we do not have riots, we have only "incidents"; and, outside our gaols, there is nothing wrong, either, because parole and early-release schemes are just great. Then almost overnight, we have another Minister saying how happy he is to accept the challenge of sorting out Queensland's gaols, and how he is going to make them better places and generally improve the systems that the first Minister said did not need improving. Then we have the Premier saying that we must take a tougher line on prisoners. He is quoted as saying—

> "Some prisoners have been allowed out on too long a leash, and we are going to reel that in."

The question that must be asked, of course, is: why did it take the Premier so long to find out that we have an inadequate prison system that is inadequately administered? It did not all happen overnight.

I want to talk about watch-houses. The crime rate is soaring. Criminals are arrested and held in watch-houses awaiting a court hearing, on remand for a further hearing or after sentence. They can be held in watch-houses until Corrective Services provides gaol accommodation. There have been some appalling examples of prisoners held far too long in watch-houses. Watch-house conditions and the length of time that prisoners are kept in watch-houses cause concern. The police are the ones who cop the flak, but the responsibility rests with Corrective Services and not with the police.

The Southport Watch-house is frequently overcrowded. When this occurs, conditions can be pretty frightful. A Gold Coast volunteer group has been formed, manned by various people who work in the welfare field. They have been given some training, and they roster themselves for an afternoon or early evening visit to the watch-house each day in order to be of assistance to prisoners. Weekends, of course, present the most problems. One Sunday night a few weeks ago, I met up with the leader of these volunteers. She was chasing around to get some extra mattresses for the Southport Watch-house. There were so many people being held there that they were three or four mattresses short. Some prisoners were going to be forced to spend a cold night on a bare cement floor. The Salvation Army unlocked its furniture store and mattresses were supplied. Here we are, almost into the twenty-first century, yet we are talking about the sort of nineteenth century prison conditions described by Dickens.

Just a month ago, four New South Wales tourists were arrested in Surfers Paradise and were detained in a paddy-wagon for hours until there was room for them in a cell, which was fouled with vomit and urine. About 20 men were held in this paddy-wagon for five or six hours. Whether or not any of them deserved to be arrested is beside the point. The conditions in which they were held is certainly open to question. During a week in September, when the Southport Watch-house was closed for much needed renovations, remand prisoners were held in the cells at Coolangatta. It is the responsibility of the Corrective Services Commission to house prisoners in adequate conditions. It is quite wrong to hold prisoners in watch-houses for long periods when they should be transferred immediately to Wacol. If Wacol is inadequate, then Woodford should be reopened.

Corrective Services has the attitude that many prisoners should not be in gaol, anyway,

but should be rehabilitated outside the prison system. This is a laudable aim, but often impractical. There are proposals to ban remissions for good behaviour and, instead, to release prisoners on parole only, which means they would remain under the supervision of parole officers while adjusting to life outside gaol. Again, this is a very laudable aim, but cannot possibly work while there are insufficient parole officers. They cannot deal with the workload they already have without that workload being increasing to an impossible level.

There are many major problems in our gaols, including violence, drug taking and alleged gang control, sex attacks, bashings, murders and escapes. There are many crimes committed by escapees from Corrective Services centres. In a report from Link-up, a group associated with Boystown, there is a claim that up to 80 per cent of young male prisoners were raped in the State's gaols. This claim is supported by some psychologists within the Corrective Services Commission.

Prisons are unpleasant places occupied by unpleasant people. They are not supposed to be come-and-go, home-away-from-home establishments. The community does expect that those in charge of prisons will ensure the inmates remain and keep those places in reasonable order and condition. Despite cries from the civil libertarians, prison authorities must be given greater powers to prevent drug smuggling into gaols. Drug addicts commit crimes, they are arrested and imprisoned, and yet they have just as free access to drugs in prison as they had outside.

After the recent Wacol riots a cell-by-cell search was finally carried out, despite a great deal of reluctance on the part of the Minister as advised by his department. Not just syringes, drugs and money were found, but prisoners had also been enjoying the use of a mobile phone. The Minister should understand that the Queensland prison system should not have the freedom of a household or a motel—come and go as you will and also enjoy the amenities of easier communication.

Queensland's prison population is increasing, despite the concerted effort by authorities to put criminals back into the community to rehabilitate them. Victims of crime are outraged at some of the early release schemes. Victims are frequently treated as if they were seeking revenge, when all they are seeking is justice. They are virtually excluded from court proceedings. When an offender pleads guilty or is convicted, many circumstances and options are put before the sentencing judge in the hope of lessening the sentence. No-one speaks for the victim or about the suffering undergone by the victim. That suffering often endures well after the offender is sentenced. Then the victim finds that the prisoner has been released back into the community after serving only a fraction of the sentence that was imposed. All the rights and privileges are for the criminals, very little are for the victims.

The major problem for society is that although emphasis is now on rehabilitation and sentencing criminals to community service instead of gaol, our prison population is still high and rising, and many released prisoners reoffend. The new Minister is on record as saying that some prisoners who are obviously dangerous have been given unsupervised leave of absence on parole, work release, home detention or rehabilitation schemes. He says that sloppy work and lack of security have entered the prison administration. These problems are not new. They did not happen overnight. These complaints have been made over a long period. How could they only have been picked up in the transition from one Minister to the next?

On a more positive note, there are offences in our community that require punishment but do not require a gaol term. I believe that community service programs or a fine option instead of imprisonment can be beneficial to minor offenders. The Burleigh Heads Office of Community Corrections administers the Community Services program from Hooker Boulevard at Broadbeach to the New South Wales border. Although this office is terribly understaffed—and I point this out to the Minister—John Griffiths, the area manager, and his hard-working assistants are doing as well as can be expected when one considers their workload and the material they have to work with. Community service programs are set up for those offenders who have been ordered by the courts to perform such service or as an option instead of paying a fine.

In August, the Burleigh Heads Community Corrections Office ran an excellent workshop for training on-site supervisors. These people came from a wide range of charities and other organisations, schools, sporting clubs, retirement villages and the like that participate in the program which is aimed at giving law breakers useful community service to perform instead of wasting time in prison for offences for which a gaol term is not appropriate. No fees are involved in hiring the community service workers, but all tools and

equipment must be supplied. The workers discharge their fines at the rate of about $6 an hour. Community service is normally performed on weekends so as not to interfere with regular employment. Community Corrections officers visit each project regularly to check on records and attendance cards and deal with any problems. There is provision for offenders who breach their community service orders to be further dealt with by the courts. Work performed can range from gardening and clearing to indoor administrative tasks. As well as keeping minor offenders out of prison, voluntary organisations are assisted in performing their vital community work. I was able to join in for some of this workshop. It was a pleasure to hand out certificates to those who attended. However, I again point out to the Minister that the staffing level is totally inadequate. Much more could be achieved if the staffing is brought up to a level that could meet both the existing and potential workload.

Finally, although it does not come within the Minister's responsibility, I also welcome the new Juvenile Community Service program for young offenders aged 13 to 16 years. I hope that this will become an effective way of dealing with juveniles when prison is not appropriate but some penalty must be paid for offences. Law breakers can be handled in a way that can be of mutual benefit to the community and to the young offenders. In conclusion, perhaps the removal of graffiti, which is a big problem on the Gold Coast, would be an appropriate community service penalty for offenders, young or old, if they can be identified.

Mr NUNN (Hervey Bay) (4.18 p.m.): The allocation in this year's Corrective Services budget for health and medical services of $1.481 million must be welcomed by all. Prison health care has improved dramatically in recent years, and while subjects such as AIDS attract a great deal of media attention—and so they should—there are other developments in prison health care which are not so high profile but just as important. The fact is that a large percentage of people being received into custody in Queensland and in other States and throughout the world come from disadvantaged backgrounds. In large part, these are young people who have been denied a loving, secure and caring home environment and they are the targets.

Along with other members of the Minister's committee, I was able to visit the Outreach work camp at Mitchell, which is housed in an old hospital. Those people, who lived alongside the elderly in that place at Mitchell, admitted to us that what had put them in a correctional institution in the first place was the fact that in their formative years they had never known a family. They said that the reason that they were rehabilitating so well was that they now had a family—they had some people to whom they could relate and they were extremely happy that it was working out well.The elderly people confirmed this by saying that they treated each other as a family. In the past, all too often they found themselves mixing with the wrong company. From there they gravitated to vandalism, petty crime and then more serious offences. It is a familiar story—the denial of positive influences and guidance and the inevitable cycle of offending and reoffending.

Lack of basic hygiene and adequate health care are among the symptoms of neglected youth. Tragically for many, prison life offers the first opportunity to learn about personal hygiene and to receive proper health care. Corrective Services Commission officers have first-hand knowledge of the lack of good health practices among prisoners. Many prisoners go into the system unskilled in the basic requirements of day-to-day living. Some of them do not even know about cleaning their teeth. Of course, some of this neglect is closely related to alcohol and drug abuse, petrol and glue sniffing and street living. These are maladies of our time. But, in Queensland today, prisoners have a real opportunity to become healthy members of the community—if they so desire. In other words, we give them every chance. If they do not take it up, it is not our fault, but we do the best we can. In the Queensland system, all inmates receive three plain but nutritious meals a day. No-one goes short of food, and the diet is planned by professionals. Everyone has access to sport and recreation activities, and everyone has an opportunity for a good night's sleep. Smokers have to buy their cigarettes from their own funds. The old tobacco rations are a thing of the past.

Queensland's correctional system has been undergoing unprecedented reform under the control of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission. As recently as five years ago, some practices in Queensland prisons had changed little since the nineteenth century. It was only during the 1980s that dietary punishments were abolished and an underground block of cells known as the Black Hole was taken out of use at the now closed Brisbane Correctional Centre, known to most as Boggo Road.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr NUNN: I point out to members opposite that they made no attempt to close the Black Hole. I hesitate to say that this was demonstrative of a cruel streak in their nature. The best that I can say about them is that they simply did not care. They were kinder to animals than they were to humans.

The Queensland Government and the commission see imprisonment as a punishment in itself. Offenders are sent to gaol as a punishment. They are not sent there for punishment. If they are to be punished again whilst they are in prison, it is for some offence that they commit inside prison. But they are being sent there as a punishment, and that should be the end of it—if they behave. It is hard for members opposite to grasp that philosophy. After all, they were the people who punished the wives of SEQEB workers. They also punished the children of SEQEB workers. Harsh punishment and penalties are part of their philosophy, and they only apply it selectively to people who offend them. Whether or not those people offend the rest of the community does not matter.

On any one day there are about 2 000 people in this State's secure correctional institutions and farms, but as many as 16 000 are under some sort of community supervision. This Government has a commitment to greater use of community service for offenders when it is appropriate. The savings free taxpayers' dollars for greater investment in hospitals, health care and other essentials in the wider community.

The Queensland Corrective Services Commission came about after an exhaustive inquiry into prisons conducted in 1988 by prominent Brisbane businessman Jim Kennedy. Mr Kennedy found the former run-down system had to be dragged into the late twentieth century and that the need for reform was urgent. It is probably not his fault that it look so long for that to happen. It is a shame that it did take that long. Now, belatedly, all sections of the community and all sections of this Parliament recognise that that need for reform existed and was urgent. I believe that praise should be given to anybody who played a part in Kennedy's reform processes. We must remember that the current system evolved from Kennedy's process. Kennedy was asked to do a job, and he did a job. Members may argue occasionally about the way the job was done, but one can only work within the available funds and the parameters that are allowed by society. Members opposite talk about the service being underfunded. Let me ask them: from where do they want us to take the money? Do they want us to take it from hospitals, schools or any of the other programs that are in place? Of course they do not! They whinge for the sake of whingeing. Since I travelled overseas recently, I have reached the conclusion that Australians are the greatest whingers on earth. They live in the best country on earth, but they whinge more than anybody else on earth.

Mr Pearce interjected.

Mr NUNN: The Liberal Party would not have a policy. The Liberal Party, with the FFF credit rating, borrows everything that it can from the National Party. But I must say that, at one time, members of the Liberal Party were extremely generous. They did a trial amalgamation by sending two of their people, namely, Lane and Austin, over to amalgamate with the Nationals, and they could not get them back. They would not come back.

Mr FitzGerald: What does this have to do with the Estimates?

Mr NUNN: They became firmly entrenched in the Corrective Services Commission. During his inquiry, Mr Kennedy called for public submissions. Health services within the prisons were one of the most frequent areas of complaint. Informed people—that is, those who know a little about that of which they speak—argued that health care was inadequate and of very poor quality. At that time, each of the State's correctional centres operated an infirmary. Some centres had registered nursing sisters on staff, supported by correctional officer medical orderlies, while others had only medical orderlies. There was no formal training or accreditation process for those orderlies. General practitioner and specialist health services were provided through the State Department of Health. A 20-bed infirmary at the old Boggo Road gaol was poorly designed and ill equipped to serve an institution that sometimes housed more than 650 inmates. Prisoners requiring specialist medical treatment were transferred under escort to regional hospitals. This was an expensive process.

Early in its life, the fledgling Corrective Services Commission saw health care as such an important issue that it appointed a Director of Health and Medical Services, Dr Bryan Todd. He came to the organisation with a long and distinguished career in medicine to back him up. He knew what he was talking about and has done a good job in this area. Steps were taken early to protect staff and prisoners and to assist generally in the control of AIDS and Hepatitis B.

Time expired.

Mr CONNOR (Nerang) (4.28 p.m.): This morning, after the annual report of the Corrective Services Commission was tabled in the House, I flicked through it. I was going to speak initially on another subject. But I turned to page 83 and noticed that there were 20 escapes from Numinbah prison. There were 44 in the State altogether. So, effectively, almost half of the escapes in Queensland occurred in my electorate. Over the past 12 months or so, people on the Gold Coast have been wondering what was going on and why there were so many armed robberies and other crimes on the Gold Coast. Now we learn that 20 escapes occurred at Numinbah at the back of the Gold Coast. I have been able to track down about nine of those escapes. Three of the escapees were involved in armed robberies while they were out. Then they decided to go back to the prison.

I refer to an article in the *Hinterland Sun* on 22 April 1993. This was a story about a couple of prison officers from the Numinbah prison who wanted to relate what the Numinbah prison was like. The article headed "Prison of fear Numinbah claimed 'out of control' " states—

> "Prison officers at Numinbah Correctional Centre say they fear for their lives as conditions in the prison have become 'out of control'.
>
> And they say they fear for the safety of local residents as prisoners are leaving the compound undetected at night and committing robberies."

The article further states—

> "The officers say discipline is non existent. Prisoners are doing as they please, coming and going as they please."

And further—

> "Our hands are tied. We have no control because there is no discipline."

I remind the Minister that 18 months ago the management of Numinbah prison changed. Mr Brad Lingard is presently running the prison. I had words with Mr Lingard in relation to his policy of allowing prisoners to roam freely around the coast, in plain clothes, driving a prison bus. I happened to have seen that bus outside a financial institution in Nerang just prior to that institution being robbed. That was all pooh-poohed and it was said that those sorts of things do not happen. The only problem was that, shortly afterwards, three prisoners were charged with armed robbery of the TAB. Shortly before that, on the Gold Coast, a prisoner involved in a breaking and entering offence was caught by a resident and that resident was stabbed. All of these things are happening on the Gold Coast. We find in the annual report that almost half the escapes for the State are occurring at the only prison in the hinterland of the Gold Coast—Numinbah prison. I place on record my total dissatisfaction with the way that prison is being run. It is in my electorate. I am very surprised that I, the local community and the media were unaware of just how many escapes were occurring. The commission has done a very good job of hushing that up.

I turn to the issue of the media over the last couple of weeks in relation to corrective services. The senior management of the Corrective Services Commission might be interested to know that neither the Opposition nor any of the people that I am aware of are leaking this stuff to the press. It is not coming from our side. All of this, as far as I can see, is coming from the Government side. One has to ask what the agenda is—for instance, all of the information about the great escape is almost two years out of date. The Opposition is not doing anything along that line. The Opposition is not running the agenda on this. All this stuff is being dumped on the media.

The Opposition also finds that, within days of people going to the PSMC inquiry, their information ended up in the media. Those people going there are not leaking it, so we have to ask whether the PSMC is leaking it. Is someone whom the PSMC is informing leaking it? I can assure honourable members that it is not coming from the Opposition side. The senior management of Corrective Services might be interested to know that. We must then ask what is the Government's agenda in this regard.

It is most timely that we should be discussing the prison Estimates today following the full-scale riot by the Aboriginal community in Brisbane yesterday. It is also appropriate that, in question time today, the Minister for Corrective Services, Mr Braddy, refused to rule out the reopening of Boggo Road prison. I hope to hear more from the Minister on that in his reply. It is also appropriate when one considers that the PSMC is currently doing a five-year review of the Corrective Services Commission to determine its future. It is also appropriate on the basis that, in the last week or two, in the media, a great deal of controversy has occurred in relation to the alleged cover-up of the report of the so-called great escape from Moreton prison in July 1991.

According to the report that escape was a result of the management decision to close Woodford prison. How do all of these issues come together? What do they all have in common? It is really quite simple. Woodford prison should never have been closed. The Opposition argued at the time that the system could not withstand the closure of Woodford prison. That prison provided flexibility and additional cell spaces to keep the system on an even keel. We now find that consideration is being given to reopening the Woodford prison. At least one of the other private prisons in Queensland has been approached in relation to the running of Woodford prison.

So we have the closure of Woodford prison. We have the deaths in custody that have reached epidemic proportions. We have the Arthur Gorrie Remand and Reception Centre full. We have the watch-houses overflowing—allegedly 135 prisoners are currently held in police lock-ups—and we have the Minister refusing to rule out the reopening of Boggo Road prison.

This is the quandary in which Mr Braddy finds himself. He has the courts effectively closing down at the end of this month for about two months. As a result, very few remand prisoners will be able to be sentenced and therefore putting even more pressure on the prison system, especially the Arthur Gorrie Remand and Reception Centre. There will be a huge overflow of prisoners needing to be housed in the south-east corner. The Government will decide to reopen Woodford, but it wants to reopen it as a privatised prison which will mean that it will have to go through the tendering process and therefore it will be a number of months before this can be achieved. How can the Government deal with the watch-houses being full and the courts effectively closing down at the same time? Some alternative must be put in place. So we hear these rumours of Boggo Road being considered to house these prisoners.

In relation to the Woodford reopening, I ask: has the public sector union boss, Laurie Gillespie, been told that Woodford is going to be privatised? I remind honourable members that, two years ago when Woodford was being closed, it was flatly denied by the then Minister that it was purely a ploy to privatise the prison. Now honourable members will see, just as the Opposition predicted, that the Government will privatise Woodford prison.

To sum up—Woodford should never have been closed in the first place. It led to the great escape, as determined by the independent inspector's report. It reduced the capacity of the prison system to be able to clear the police watch-houses to a reasonable level and forced many prisoners, who were totally unsuitable, to mix with hardened criminals. It forced many young offenders to be housed at the Sir David Longland maximum security prison and, as we saw a few months ago, a young prisoner, when informed of his transfer, was so terrified at the thought of being raped and assaulted at the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre that he committed suicide at the Arthur Gorrie Remand and Reception Centre. At least five deaths have occurred in the last 12 months at the Arthur Gorrie Remand and Reception Centre. I remind the Government backbenchers that the Liberal Party was not in favour of the privatising of the remand and reception centre. It did not believe that a maximum security institution dealing with remand and reception prisoners should be privatised. That is something the Labor Government did on its own.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba) (4.39 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in this debate today. Before I start on my formal speech, I would like to congratulate the previous Minister, Mr Glen Milliner, on the way he ran Corrective Services while he was there and the way in which I, and many other Government backbenchers, were able to visit a number of correctional centres. I was appreciative of being given that opportunity because it allowed me to gain much knowledge of the prison system. I know that the new Minister, Mr Braddy, will bring to this portfolio the enthusiasm and energy that he brings to all his portfolios. I know that he will attack it with zest. I congratulate the staff of the Corrective Services Commission. I think that they do an enormous job. They come under a lot of pressure, not only because of the type of work that they do, but also from the prisoners whom they look after and also from the community, the press and all sorts of other people. I think that they do a marvellous job. I think that the Director-General, Keith Hamburger, deserves to be congratulated, along with Mr Macionis and Ian Stewart, the Assistant Deputy Director-General, who has been most helpful to me.

As most people in the community would realise, crime and punishment is a sensitive issue. Two hundred years ago, this country was nothing more than a far-flung British penal settlement where hangings, floggings, misery and degradation were the order of the day. We have come a long way since then, but the process of reform is still ongoing. No longer is a prison seen as a storehouse for

society's misfits. It is now seen as one part of a corrective system committed to rehabilitation, public safety and protection. Enlightened administrations worldwide see prison as the sanction of last resort—a form of discipline reserved for habitual and violent offenders. The taking away of somebody's liberty alone is a penalty for crime. As Mr Nunn said earlier, offenders are sent to gaol as a punishment, not to be punished.

Corrections is more than administration of the prison system. There are only slightly more than 2 000 people in prison throughout Queensland on any one day, but in a year, around 10 times that number are placed under supervision in the community. Where appropriate, this Government supports community corrections options for non-violent offenders, not only for economic reasons but also because of social considerations. Crime and social breakdown are closely linked. If we put more community resources into addressing social breakdown, we can expect a decrease in crime. Imprisonment is inappropriate in many cases. Addressing a person's offending behaviour in the community is often more effective than doing so in a hostile, unnatural prison environment.

Community corrections encompasses a number of approaches to justice administration. Offenders may have the opportunity to perform unpaid community service for disadvantaged individuals or non-profit organisations as an alternative to paying a fine. Also, they get the opportunity to support their families, both financially and emotionally. I think that most thinking people realise that the family unit is the cornerstone of our society, and should be protected at all times. Offenders may also be sentenced directly by a court to undertake community service when the offence is too serious for a fine and not serious enough for imprisonment.

A common belief in the community is that correctional institutions are full of murderers, rapists and other violent offenders who should be locked away for a long time. In reality, this is not the case. More than half of the people in Queensland's gaols are there for non-violent offences. It can cost the taxpayer as much as $60,000 a year to keep a prisoner in gaol under maximum security conditions, and the average figure for a high-security institution is $43,000. That is a huge drain on the public purse that could instead be directed to, for example, education and health care, if we lived in a crime-free society. Even prison farm and low-security accommodation for offenders costs the Government around $12,000 to $14,000 a year per offender. These figures that I have quoted represent a drain on the Corrective Services budget alone. On top of this, we must add the tremendous cost of welfare payments to the families who are left at home and the social impact brought about by the breakdown of family life.

When I was secretary of the Builders Labourers Federation, I became involved in an organisation called KIDS—Kids In Dire Straits. It was an organisation that supported the family of the offender who was in gaol. It was established to keep the family unit together and, particularly, to assist and bring home children who may leave home for all sorts of reasons. In most cases, the fathers in those families were not there to provide discipline.

Since the Kennedy commission of review in 1988 and the subsequent establishment of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission to oversee unprecedented reform, this State has lowered its imprisonment rate significantly. Prisons can no longer be regarded as places of human storage. They must offer the opportunity to correct offending behaviour by providing appropriate offender programs. They also must provide meaningful employment for inmates, teach work skills and engender a work ethic. Establishing industries can help achieve these goals, while at the same time help to reduce the high cost of running the corrective services system. When we compare the cost of incarceration with that of community corrections, we find that the economic benefits are significant. At present, it costs on average around $1,000 per offender a year for supervision in the community. These figures include not only the cost of managing offenders on community service and fine option orders but also those on parole, release to work, home detention and leave of absence from prison on special programs.

The benefits of community supervision are numerous and include the development of positive attitudes through offenders working with the needy in the community. They also develop self-esteem through their direct repayment to society, while at the same time gaining new work skills. This, in turn, enhances their job opportunities and helps them maintain the family unit.

A major objective of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission is to get community involvement in corrections. Gone are the days when Governments alone could be effective in managing offenders. In pre-commission days, the public had little

information about or involvement in the operation of community correction programs. The traditional role of the corrections officer as a caseworker providing individual service to his or her client has gone. Community correctional officers are professional case managers whose role includes liaison with the local community and its formal organisations and voluntary groups to initiate and develop community-based resources and programs.

There is renewed community interest in helping to deal with problems at a local level. Evidence from overseas shows that involvement with local people in the management of offenders has a positive benefit for the offenders and the community. Direct involvement of community members will help to increase public understanding of corrections, it will bring corrections closer to the mainstream of community activity and it will strengthen support for correctional effort. Some officers attached to the community corrections side of the Corrective Services Commission are members of organisations such as Victims of Crime, the Prisoner Advocacy and Support Group, the Prison Transport Group and the Association for Care and Resettlement of Offenders. The commission supports some of these organisations by way of grants and physical contributions. For example, it provided a grant for the Prison Transport Group to buy a minibus to assist families of prisoners to make visits to correctional centres.

Time expired.

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (4.48 p.m.): In speaking to the Estimates for the Corrective Services Commission, at the outset I would like to pay tribute to the management and staff of the Lotus Glen Correctional Centre, which is located in my electorate. It was established when the National Party was in Government. I was part of its establishment, and I am proud of it. I am proud of the institution, the way it is managed and the benefits that it has brought to my community. I would like to place that on record. I am also pleased that, in the recent Budget, provision was made for extra accommodation on the prison farm. That accommodation is long overdue, and I am pleased to see that that has finally been recognised.

I would also like to speak for a few moments about the industries that have been established at that correctional centre. They are generally non-competitive with local industry. I say "generally" because there are, from time to time, some conflicts between local industry and those industries of the correctional institution. I would say to Mr Hamburger that we should be very careful about instituting industries in those correctional institutions which are unfairly competitive with local industry. However, I would like to say something about Brian Borserio and the work that he has done under a contract with Corrective Services in Queensland—and with the Lotus Glen prison in particular—in developing a slate tile operation at that prison. It is non-competitive with local industry. In fact, it is local industry. It provides worthwhile work for the people within the prison. It provides a cash flow to the prison, and it has developed a quarry in my electorate and turned it into a worthwhile industrial resource.

The debate on these Estimates is taking place during a period of escapes, riots, overcrowding, deaths in custody, violence and so on in Queensland's correctional institutions. I ask the members of this Parliament: what is new? Why suddenly is there this great focus? I can recall the time when my parliamentary colleague the honourable member for Crows Nest, Mr Cooper, was the Minister for corrections in this State and we had the odd riot. When Labor members were in Opposition, they had a totally different view of difficulties in corrections. I recall it well. I saw the drama that came from this side of the Parliament every time somebody looked like getting out. For goodness sake, let us take the somewhat more pragmatic view that, yes, we will have some difficulties in prisons from time to time.

If we have a close and pragmatic look at the client group, most reasonably minded people would discover that they are probably an accumulation of the most unlovely people in our community. That is why they are there. Not that I would ever suggest that any of them are guilty of anything; they just happen to be there. Nonetheless, they are an accumulation of unlovely people. From time to time, there are people in those correctional institutions who have nothing to lose and have a vested interest in creating violence and disruption. We have to keep these things in balance.

Let us not get too excited when there is a problem in a prison; let us just fix it. That is all we need to do. We need to take a more disciplined approach when there is a problem in a prison and, I believe, a slightly more disciplined approach within the prison system itself so that we resolve some of these issues before they happen.

I have chosen this afternoon, as the Minister said in his opening remarks, to revisit

the Kennedy report five years down the track. I note that the date on my executive summary is September 1988, which makes it just over five years of age. All of the things that I have heard said in this debate so far have been a resounding and fairly unqualified endorsement of the Kennedy report and, I might say, of my parliamentary colleague who, firstly, instituted the report and, secondly, put the report into action. Kennedy said in his report—and I have just re-read it; it is interesting reading—that the three new prisons which were being constructed at that time were both well designed and, of course, long overdue.

We recognised that. That is why it was done. But no Labor member recognises that this happened some 12 or 18 months prior to their coming to Government and prior to their sudden conversion to the views of Kennedy and the updating of our correctional institutions. However, I must say that four years down the track—and those opposite have been in Government now for four years—there are some unfulfilled recommendations from the Kennedy report. We should revisit some of those, just briefly, to remind the Minister that all things have not been fulfilled. The expectations have been left hanging.

Recommendation 11 was for the construction of a secure, purpose-built hospital at Wacol for use by Correctional Services. I understand that a wing in the PA Hospital is being used. It is supposed to be secure. I understand that it was sitting idle for six months because the Government could not organise its manning. It was a dreadful waste of time and money. It would not be an unreasonable expectation for this Government to move ahead with some of the other recommendations, including the hospital at Wacol, to ensure security not only for the people in the community at large but also for those people who have to work in these institutions. They should be professional people who are trained to deal with the client group, so that they understand what they are dealing with and do not walk into an uppercut with their eyes closed.

Recommendation 12 was for a new women's prison at Wacol. I am glad to see that there are some ladies in the Chamber this afternoon. It is important that we understand that Kennedy did not make that recommendation lightly. For those of us who have not visited the women's prison at Boggo Road——

Mrs Bird: We have all been there.

Mr GILMORE: I am pleased that the honourable member has been there. I think she will endorse my comments that that prison is not an appropriate place for the incarceration of anybody, particularly women. It should not be there. It was poorly designed and poorly placed. Kennedy quite rightly said that it should be shifted. This Government has done nothing in that area to carry out the recommendations of the Kennedy review.

I would like to speak about recommendation 21. He has said that remission is a flawed concept that should be reviewed. Nothing has been done. Four years down the track we still have one-third remission on sentence.

Mr Connor: At the 1989 election, it was a Labor Party promise.

Mr GILMORE: The Labor Party policy at the 1989 election has not been fulfilled. We still have one-third remission on sentence. I will tell honourable members why it was put there in the first place. The principle was wrong. Back in 1986, 1984, or whenever it was, it was implemented simply to keep people out of gaol. It was entirely wrong in concept. The Minister's Government has recognised that; Kennedy recognised that; we recognised that; and yet absolutely nothing has been done. We have to get down to the business of the management of people who offend against the community without throwing out a third of their sentences before they even put on the handcuffs. It is a lunacy. Until the Minister's Government comes to grips with that, he will have failed one of the major recommendations of the Kennedy report.

Recommendation 40 was for a special care unit. That is a euphemistic way of saying "somewhere to stick the dirty 30" or however many there are. Kennedy recognised that within any prison system there will be a group of intractable people, even in the normal, run-of-the-mill prison, who will be disruptive and violent. Most of them show no remorse whatsoever. They are not disciplined. They are in no way inclined towards rehabilitation.

Mr Cooper: They are often given the key.

Mr GILMORE: As the honourable member said, they are often given the key. There was an attempt—and, I might say, an abortive attempt—at Moreton to put together an section for intractables. Of course, the next night they all got out—much to everybody's surprise. I visited it about four days before they all escaped. The last thing I said to the long forgotten manager of that poor place was, "For God's sake wind this place up as tight as a rubber band, because it will leak." It

was obvious. It leaked and half of them escaped. But we still do not have a centre for intractables. We simply must develop one.

The Minister cannot start blaming his staff if he does not give them the tools of the trade. If he does not give them the opportunity to pull out of the system those disruptive people who cannot be controlled, if he does not give them that tool of trade to calm down the system, he should not blame them when things go wrong. It is entirely unfair and quite improper to do so. Kennedy recognised that. I believe the Minister recognised that, but the money has simply not been set aside to fulfil that expectation and obligation.

Time expired.

Mrs BIRD (Whitsunday) (4.58 p.m.): Firstly, I would like to welcome the new Minister to the portfolio. I am certain that if he performs as well in this portfolio as he has in his previous portfolios, he will be source of pride to all of us. Further, I congratulate Glen Milliner on his time in this portfolio. I believe that Glen Milliner was a good Minister. However, four years in this portfolio—and I am sure the Opposition will agree—is far too long for any Minister.

Perhaps those opposite will agree with that assertion when they consider that, from February 1986 to December 1989, the Opposition had seven Ministers in the portfolio. Geoffrey Muntz lasted nine months; Donald Neal lasted 12 months; Bill Gunn lasted eight months; the long-termer Russell Cooper lasted 13 months; Paul Clauson lasted seven months; Craig Sherrin lasted one month; and, finally, Ian Henderson lasted three months. It is important that we realise that the portfolio is not a good one. It is a no-win portfolio. Anyone who can spend any amount of time in that portfolio deserves to be commended.

During this debate, I have listened very carefully to the contributions by Opposition members. Much reference has been made to how much better things were under the management of the National and Liberal Parties when in they were in Government, and how much better things would be under their future management. Members opposite also referred to tools being given to prisoners to facilitate escapes. In that regard, I am reminded of an article that appeared in the Mackay *Daily Mercury* in 1986, when Geoff Muntz was the Minister for Corrective Services. The article referred to a study that was about to be undertaken by a committee because of a recent spate of escapes. The article states—

> "On Sunday, inmates smashed their cells and screamed obscenities—the day after convicted robbers Peter John Matthews, 29, and Colin Glenn Stark, 20, walked out of their cells, possibly with the use of a key."

In those days, prisoners were not given the tools to escape and they were not allowed to climb over the walls. Instead, they were actually given the keys! The article continues—

> "Their escape prompted a call by the State Labor Opposition for a full public inquiry.
>
> . . .
>
> The Acting Comptroller-General of Prisons, Alex Lobban . . . said . . . an investigation of the escape was continuing and no conclusions had been reached as to how Matthews and Stark had managed to break free."

Things are no worse today than they were in 1986, under the management of the former Government.

In light of the death in custody of an Aboriginal man on the weekend, it is very important for us to consider the actions taken by the Corrective Services Commission in relation to the imprisonment of Aboriginal and Islander people. In 1988, about 20 per cent of all inmates were of Aboriginal and Islander descent, whereas their representation in the mainstream community was about 2 per cent. Under the Corrective Services Commission, some success has been achieved. The imprisonment rate for Aboriginal and Islander people has fluctuated, but there is still a long way to go. The over-representation is much more apparent in north Queensland, which has a considerably higher indigenous population than do other parts of the State.

In fewer than five years since the commission's inception, a great deal has been accomplished in Aboriginal and Islander correctional initiatives. Among the achievements to date are: Aboriginal and Islander representation on the commission board, even though a temporary vacancy exists at present; Aboriginal and Islander representation on community corrections boards; Aboriginal and Islander people being appointed as official visitors to correctional centres; a formal commitment to allow Aboriginal and Islander inmates to maintain their cultural groups within correctional centres; and the establishment of an educational and cultural heritage program for inmates. The commission also created senior positions for

people with a responsibility for recruiting Aboriginal and Islander staff and developing community involvement in offender programs. Other initiatives include: the encouragement of community groups interested in providing services to Aboriginal and Islander offenders; training for correctional staff in Aboriginal and Islander issues; and the setting up of clinics operated by the Aboriginal and Islander Health Service.

During the time that the commission has operated, it has earned for itself an enviable reputation for its commitment to reform in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corrections. A good example of that reform process occurred at a remote far-north Queensland Aboriginal community, which is now in the crime prevention and offender rehabilitation business. That commission initiative saw the appointment in April this year of Mr Gordon Gertz as community development officer at Kowanyama on the Gulf coast of Cape York. His presence as an Aboriginal officer working among the community is in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Mr Gertz, who has trained as a counsellor, is a former member of the North Queensland Community Corrections Board. He has also managed Rose Colless Haven, an alcohol rehabilitation centre on the Atherton Tableland.

Last year, the Kowanyama Aboriginal Community Council, which administers the locality of about 1 000 people, agreed to enter into a contract with the commission to address correctional issues. Offenders placed under supervision include those sentenced by a court to a community-based order and former prisoners released under supervision on parole, home detention or work release. The commission has a caseload of 75 offenders at Kowanyama, managed from Mareeba. As well, on any day, 15 community residents are in gaol. Since April last year, there has also been an average of three prisoners on conditional release at the Wathanin Outstation near Aurukun, about 180 kilometres north-west of Kowanyama. Kowanyama was one of the communities approved by the commission board for inclusion in an initiative that would allow Aboriginal people to manage their offenders and consider appropriate prevention programs for their people.

The commission is a community-based public sector organisation serving the community in the essential area of justice administration, and it greatly values community input. A commission presence among Aboriginal communities is a logical extension of this. It is in line with the commission's policy of ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a greater say in corrections, especially within their own communities. Offenders who meet the selection criteria are supervised by their peers in their own town or district, with a minimum of social disruption and significant savings to the taxpayer. In addition, the community works towards lowering the rate of offending in a culturally meaningful way. The Kowanyama project is being funded by the commission and the Kowanyama council. The success of the project will ensure that other such projects proceed in the future.

The fact is that the commission receives the final product of the functioning of an imperfect world—the human failures of society. It is a tragedy that the young and disadvantaged groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are so highly represented among those failures. The Kowanyama project is part of the commission's philosophy not to see itself as an organisation that serves as a storehouse for criminals, but one that can initiate change and assist society to overcome some of its problems. That is exactly the approach that is required.

I commend the Queensland Corrective Services Commission for having the vision and determination to tackle Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues head on. The spending in this year's budget aimed at reducing the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody must be welcomed by all fair-minded people.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (5.07 p.m.): I rise to participate in the debate on the Estimates for Corrective Services. I refer the Minister to a question that was asked in this Chamber this morning by the Deputy Leader of the Coalition. That question related to the rumours about the re-opening of part of the old Boggo Road gaol; in particular, Block H. That was the specific wording of the question. The Minister responded by saying that a review of the Corrective Services Commission is currently under way. He said that that review was undertaken initially by the Public Sector Management Commission. He said also that one of the matters to be examined during the review is the immediate, short-term, medium-term and long-term need for correctional centres in this State. From my recollection, he ended his answer by stating—

> "Several options are being canvassed. These options will all be considered, after which a decision will be

made by the Government on my recommendation."

That is my recollection of the answer that the Minister gave to the Deputy Leader of the Coalition. If there is some conjecture on this side of the Chamber as to the future of Block H and Boggo Road, the Minister has done nothing in his answer to that question to allay any fears that some members of the Opposition may hold. The Minister had an opportunity to do so in his answer. Perhaps I am trying to say that the Minister does not listen to the question. The question was very clear.

Mr Braddy: You don't listen to the answers.

Mr FITZGERALD: Would the Minister like to see a transcript of the answer?

Mr T. B. Sullivan: Table it.

Mr FITZGERALD: The honourable member should read *Hansard* tomorrow, and he will be able to see it for himself. That is my clear recollection of the answer that the Minister gave. He did not answer the question. The Minister should read *Hansard* tomorrow and have a look at his answer.

The question was specific and to the point. It referred to Woodford prison and to Block H at Boggo Road. The Minister said, "All options are being canvassed." He did not take the opportunity to squash the suggestion that Block H would be reopened. I believe that Boggo Road should have been bulldozed to the ground. When the National Party left office, that action was on the agenda. However, this Government kept Boggo Road open for as long as possible. This Government still has not dealt with the problem.

I turn now to a major correctional services problem that is of concern to the whole community. I refer to the high number of Aboriginal people who are in prison. The annual report shows what those figures are. They are stark figures. They stand out. I do not know what the solution is, but we have to be aware of the problem. I think that all fair-minded people should try to address the problem of why such a high proportion of Aboriginal people compared with non-Aboriginal people are in prison in Queensland.

Very importantly, they stand out in a particular age group. Page 79 of the annual report shows that of the 18-year-old males—and it is males that are the major problem—nearly half as many 18-year-old Aboriginal lads are in gaol as non-ATSIC people. In other words, that is people other than Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. There are 18 Aborigines compared with 39 non-ATSIC people. When we come to the 19-year-olds, over half as many Aboriginal lads are in gaol as non-ATSIC people. There are 34 compared with 67. In the 20 to 24 age group, there is just a fraction over a third as many Aboriginal young men in prison as non-ATSIC young men. When we move to the 25 to 29-year-old group, it is somewhere between a third and a quarter. When we move up to the 30 to 34-year-olds, it is one-fifth. Then, when we move up up to the 35 to 39 group, it is still one-fifth. After that the ratio of Aboriginal men to non-ATSIC men in prison drops dramatically. They are very stark figures.

We know where they are imprisoned. It is quite natural that they are in Lotus Glen, which is the prison in the far north, and also in Townsville. At Lotus Glen, nearly half the inmates are either Torres Strait Islanders or Aborigines. Because they come from that part of the country, it is only natural that they be sent to those prisons. There is a high percentage of them in Townsville. The rest, of course, are scattered throughout the rest of Queensland.

I think these figures should be highlighted because there is always a lot of discussion about discrimination against black people. I do not believe that those figures indicate discrimination against black people. Statistics show that we have not very many women in prison in Queensland. We have 79 women in prison in Queensland out of a total prison population, as at 30 June 1993, of 2 068.

Mrs Edmond: That proves the point.

Mr FITZGERALD: It proves there is discrimination against men. If the honourable member is going to use the same logic——

Mrs Edmond: It proves women are better behaved. They are much nicer people.

Mr FITZGERALD: The honourable member believes that that proves that women are better behaved, so therefore the Aboriginal people are not better behaved and are not better than white people. About half our population is female, so a disproportionately low percentage are in prison. I know that has something to do with difference between males and females. Males tend to have some hormonal problems, or some other problems that make them commit crimes. I believe it must be in the genes or in the hormones. There must be something there, because women generally do not commit those serious crimes—it is a fact of life—or else they do not get convicted of them.

There is some factor at work; I acknowledge that. Males go to prison. Either they are discriminated against or else the women are the very well-behaved half of our community. I notice the member is nodding her head vigorously in agreement with that. That phenomenon of the ratio of male to female prisoners is probably worldwide. Unfortunately, we do note that more and more women are committing more serious crimes, like assault and armed robbery. Women are moving into the male domain.

I draw the attention of the Chamber to the fact that we are now seeing a very high percentage of young Aboriginal people being imprisoned. On the other side of the coin, I would like to pay tribute to Don Davidson, who really showed deep concern for Aboriginal people in custody. He was, I think, a tribal leader of the Brisbane Aboriginal community. Don passed away during the last 12 months. I would just like to place on record what a great fellow I thought Don was. I know that he would take support from wherever he could get it. He was a likeable type of fellow. He had a major health problem, and was required to use a dialysis machine regularly. He loved his people very, very much. He worked very, very hard for them. Anybody who went through the Gwandalan Correctional Centre at Trinity Lane at South Brisbane would have seen the respect that the officers and the prisoners showed to Don Davidson. It was certainly very pleasant to behold. It was a great display of respect for an old man who was not very well.

He took a lot of pride in running that place. He set it up as a hostel. I think he had communicated with the commission to make sure that he spent some time with some of the offenders before they went out into the real world again. They would serve part of their custodial sentence at Trinity Lane. Yes, he did have some failures—but not very many. It was a very testing time, particularly if one of the inmates had an alcohol problem. Without any escort, they would have to pass five hotels on the way to a job and pass another five hotels on the way home. On a hot day, that would be enough to tempt anyone who had an elbow that had been used to being well-greased in the past. Therefore, I pay tribute to Don for what he did.

The other issue that I wanted to raise was the large number of people that are serving their correctional dues under the sphere of community corrections. We have 16 418 persons who have completed sentences or are on parole out in the community and we have just over 2 068 people in prison as at 30 June. That gives members some idea of the number of people who are either on parole, on probation, serving fine option orders or doing community service who are not placed in prison. I think we have got to the stage where I do not know how many more offenders we could have out in the community compared with those who are in prison. All of us want to see the numbers in prison cut down——

Time expired.

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Rockhampton—Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (5.18 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their participation in the debate, which, as debates in this place go, I believe was reasonably good humoured.

I certainly thank Government members not only for their support in the debate but also for their support for the Corrective Services Commission and my predecessor. As the member for Whitsunday said, Glen Milliner served four years in this portfolio. I think that is almost worth a medal in terms of time and heroism. If at the end he smiled when he was relieved of the burden, I think all of us would understand him, including members opposite as well as those members on this side who worked with him. He deserves thanks. He is a humane man who did his best to make sure that the system that we were trying to put together would work as well as possible.

It is an interesting time, of course. We came to Government not long after the Corrective Services Commission came into being. The Opposition are to be congratulated—the member for Crows Nest is to be congratulated—for having instigated the Kennedy report and the setting up of the commission. Mind you, they are also to be condemned because it was almost at the end of 32 years in Government that they did it. It was one hell of a mess before they finally got around to starting to do something about it. The member for Crows Nest has received the accolades because he set up the Kennedy review and report and then he was able to walk away from it before all the actual implementation took place.

Of course, in the early years of the implementation, numerous problems surfaced with the setting up of the new correctional centres, the money that had to be expended, and the various changes that took place. It was, indeed, a very difficult period. I think the figures in relation to high security prisoner escapes demonstrate that. It was in the very early days of the new centres and the changes that were occurring that the figures that were cited in the *Courier-Mail* about

Queensland's poor record took place. In 1991-92, 15 high security prisoners escaped in Queensland. That was the highest escape figure in the country. However, in 1992-93—the next year—there were only four.

When the Australian Institute of Criminology next publishes its figures, it will be interesting to see how they compare with others throughout Australia. So far this financial year—with a third of the year gone—only one high-security prisoner has escaped. If things were running at the same pace as in 1991-92, one would expect that, by now, five prisoners would have escaped. It is clear that things have improved remarkably in relation to the security of high-security prisoners. It is also clear that the worst times were during those early years when this Government and the commission, in its early days, were putting right the dreadful mess that had accumulated during the previous 32 years. That dreadful mess cannot be forgiven by the fact that, in its last year in office, the National Party Government finally and reluctantly started to do something about it. That was because of the enormous number of escapes and problems that were surfacing.

Mr Cooper: Not reluctantly.

Mr BRADDY: It was reluctantly in this sense: the National Party had been in Government for 32 years, and it did something about this only in its final year. That is reluctance. After 32 years in Government, only in its dying days and months did the former National Party Government do something about the dreadful mess that it had allowed to accumulate over the previous 31 years.

Mr Cooper: I wasn't there for that long.

Mr BRADDY: No, but the honourable member's Government was there. It was there for 32 years, and only in the last 12 months did it do something about this.

Members spoke about too many administrators. When this Government came to office in 1990, there were 176 pen-pushers in Corrective Services—about which the member for Crows Nest spoke. There are now 154. We have fewer people in that category than we inherited from the Government of the member for Crows Nest.

As to the early release of prisoners—clearly, some problems have been experienced with this. Those problems were being considered at the time of this review, and they will certainly be considered at my insistence. But, overall, less than 6 per cent of offenders are convicted of offences whilst on parole—not the inflated figure about which the member for Nerang and others speak.

Mr Cooper: They're your figures.

Mr BRADDY: These are the figures supplied to me by the Corrective Services Commission. The figures that I read out in my introductory remarks show that, in the past couple of years, Queensland's rate of recidivism has improved dramatically. That is very significant. I was asked about that list of 32 people. I received that list a matter of days prior to becoming Minister for Corrective Services. Shortly after becoming Minister, I handed that list to the Director-General of Corrective Services and requested a case study of each of those 32 people who, the police say, committed armed robberies over a period of three or more years whilst they were still technically prisoners in the Queensland system. I have not yet received that case study. When I do, I will be discussing it with the head of the Queensland Community Corrections Board and others. Many of those people will not pertain to him or his board. Mr Cooper should not believe everything that he reads in the newspaper. If he read in the newspaper that I had not approached Bill Carter, that was wrong. I approached him personally, eyeball to eyeball, mouth to mouth, and said that when I had received certain information that I wished to receive I would speak to him. He agreed that that would be fine. I will take great delight in reminding him of the time and place we had that conversation.

Mr Cooper: I got a letter from him and he wasn't very happy.

Mr BRADDY: It is his business as to whether he is happy. He should be reminded about that conversation. I will so remind him, and I will talk about it when I have received the material that I wish to receive, and not before.

The issue of where we are going with the abolition of remission was mentioned by the member for Tablelands who, I thought, made by far the best speech of those Opposition members who spoke during this debate. From time to time, the honourable member attempts to make this less of a partisan debate, as has happened in New South Wales, where the Labor Party Opposition has said that this is too serious an issue for the community to be scoring cheap political points—as have the members for Crows Nest and Nerang, who do not have that attitude. I congratulate the member for Tablelands, who, it appears, is better able to understand that there ought to be more of a bipartisan

approach to this very serious matter. I assure him that this Government is considering whether the issue of remission should be continued. This was addressed by people discussing the Kennedy report. It is certainly a matter that bears consideration.

Similarly, as to the issue of a specific prison or portion of a prison for intractables, as recommended in the Kennedy report—I believe that this is a very important issue that must be revisited during this review. I will be making sure that that serious matter is considered very carefully. In relation to watch-houses, which were also mentioned by Opposition members, I remind them that, in 1989, over 130 prisoners were in watch-houses in south-east Queensland awaiting transfer to prison. The Corrective Services Commission has progressively reduced that number. This year, the number varies between 30 and 70—for which the Government has received condemnation from the Opposition and elsewhere. But this number is much lower than it was in 1989 under the stewardship of the previous Government. Similarly, community corrections growth has been criticised. The funding for this has increased by 230 per cent, whereas the number of offenders has increased by 160 per cent. The staff has increased by 175 per cent under our stewardship, whereas the number of offenders has increased by 160 per cent. There has been quadruple growth in the funding of community corrections. Partisanship should not come into this. We should be more particular in relation to this debate.

As to Woodford and Boggo Road—the prison at Woodford was put into mothballs, indicating clearly that it has the potential to be reopened at the appropriate time. I do not know whether this will occur now, in the coming decade or at all. But it is an option. The existing buildings at Boggo Road, other than the women's prison, are not suited for a correctional centre and certainly will not be used. I want to assure the member for Lockyer that the existing buildings at Boggo Road are not suited for a prison, and that is not part of any option that we will be considering.

Time expired.

Minister for Lands

Hon. G. N. SMITH (Townsville— Minister for Lands) (5.28 p.m.): Firstly, I would like to notify honourable members of some minor amendments to the version of the 1992-93 annual report of the Department of Lands, which I tabled for the convenience of members on 15 October 1993. In honouring my commitment to provide members with adequate time for familiarisation with the report prior to the Estimates debate, I requested the preparation of a special print run. That was done, and some minor typographic errors occurred in that version. But those minor errors have no impact on the outcomes of the report. Copies of the amended report have been lodged in the Parliamentary Library and will be available from any Land Service centre.

The Consolidated Revenue Fund allocation to the Department of Lands for 1993-94 is $110,619,000. This consists of three allocations: land courts and tribunals, $4,467,000; land sustainability, $7,666,000; and land management—the greater proportion—$98,486,000.

The past year has followed a period of substantial structural and business change. The focus of the department's land management is now on the delivery of results through powerful, modern, computer systems—in terms of both quality and timely service to our clients. To achieve this outcome, information technology-based systems are proposed to be used for three major electronic data-processing systems. They are the automated titles system, the integrated valuations and sales system and the tenure administration system. Those systems are amongst some of the largest and most sophisticated systems in any department in this Government.

The automated titles system was designed to combine all land title information into a single title register for all tenures to replace a cumbersome paper-based register. The Treasury has provided $7m funding over a period of five years for its development, implementation and data capture. The automatic tenure system will provide a streamlined title service to the public through self-searching electronic access to records and will eliminate duplication of recording and endorsement processes. It is intended that the system be operational across the State by next year.

The Integrated Valuations and Sales System—IVAS—will replace the existing 25-year-old valuation database. The sum of $12m has been provided over four years for technical development. It will help to reduce the current 15-month delay from the date of valuation is made to the date it becomes effective by nine months. That is, valuations will be only six months old when they are

applied. That will more accurately reflect market prices in the valuation. It is expected to be fully implemented throughout the State by late 1994 and will be used to produce the 1995 annual valuation.

Finally, the Tenure Administration System—TAS—is a computerised database for recording leases, processing lease applications and changes, and producing lease and deed of grant documents. About 90 per cent of leases have been entered into the system with completion expected by late this year. Access to TAS by the regional staff has been progressively implemented since 18 October 1993.

Other computer-based projects have been developed to provide a comprehensive State land information system. The Queensland Land Information System—QLIS—has put in place the mechanism to provide cooperation between the various agencies that contribute to land information. The major achievement of QLIS for 1992-1993 was the Queensland Land Information Directory—QLID—a directory on floppy disc which replaced paper-based searches.

Also, $1.7m has been allocated as a new initiative to fund new efficiency measures in the Titles Office. The titles function is of particular interest since its service has been substantially affected with about a 12 per cent increase in demand over the previous year. The increased demand calls for both efficiency measures and quick response systems to service the market. Not only has there been a growth in the number of normal transactions due to the recovery in business, but there is also a considerable amount of activity brought about by people refinancing their properties. That, of course, adds to the load.

An electronic communications network has been installed to connect all regions, districts and the Lands Department corporate headquarters to ensure that business operations are responsive to client needs, irrespective of the location of the client. The network is designed to deliver regional access to all those systems generally located at Lands corporate headquarters in the Lands Centre in Woolloongabba.

I now refer to legislative review. In accordance with the recommendations of the Wolfe report, EARC and the PSMC review, the department has developed a program for the review of all legislation within the portfolio. This legislation proved to be effectively outdated—particularly the Land Act 1962, because it did not reflect the current needs in land practices by Government, industry and the community. The review is being undertaken to eliminate unnecessary or unproductive legislation; to integrate like provisions; and to clarify the legislation through modern expression.

Some of the existing legislation was inappropriate in the business environment of the 1990s and the review has led to the repeal of 77 unnecessary or outdated minor acts. The review of the Land Act, one of the major acts of the portfolio, is expected to be completed in 1994. Consultation with industry, community and related Government departments is playing a crucial role in the development of new concepts to be embodied in the new Act. Similarly, the Valuation of Land Act 1944 is under review and is expected to be completed in 1994.

I now turn to changes to land policy and administration. In December last year, I introduced legislative amendments to replace permits to destroy trees with the more appropriate permits for tree clearing. In September, this legislation was proclaimed, and this completes the change that was begun in 1991. This new arrangement makes allowance for routine maintenance without the need for a permit, yet it increases penalties substantially for unauthorised tree clearing. There has been some publicity associated with that initiative. I think that, by and large, it has been well received in the community.

This year also saw a new system for Crown leasehold rents which began on 1 July. The 1990 Wolfe report found that the Crown was not receiving a fair return on its land assets and recommended that the unimproved capital value be used for the calculation of all leasehold rents.

The previous system was inequitable, since it set some rents for non-grazing businesses at 3 per cent of UCV—unimproved capital value—while those for grazing industries were based on a net rate system, which was a charge per head on the number of stock carried.

The net rate system had many shortcomings, including inconsistent rentals within and between districts with actual rentals varying from 0.1 per cent to 8 per cent of the UCV. Its 10-year rental review period was totally unable to respond to fluctuating market conditions to the extent that escalating inflation during the 1970s was not matched by increased rentals. An equitable rental system has now been struck with a balance between the lessee's ability to pay and a fair return to the Crown. The new system is also responsive to both upturns and downward trends in the market place which impact on property values.

Rather than unilaterally implementing the recommendations of the Wolfe report, the Government recognised the effects of the low commodity prices and drought, and introduced concessional rents for particular categories. Rental percentage rates for grazing and agriculture were set at 2 per cent, with a concessional rate of 1.1 per cent of UCV until the rural economy improves and the drought breaks. The Wolfe recommendation was 3 per cent, so the implementation of that was only a little over 30 per cent of what was proposed.

To ease the burden further, I introduced a rent deferral scheme which linked leasehold rents to eligibility for the Federal Rural Adjustment Scheme. This assistance amounts to one-year deferral of rents or freeholding instalments for all lessees who qualify for the RAS and brings Queensland into alignment with the national approach to assist those producers assessed as having long-term viability. This system provides additional assistance while the existing hardship provisions under the auspices of the Department of Lands still remain in place.

Other lease categories included 6 per cent for commercial-industrial, 5 per cent for tourism with a concession of 4 per cent for mainland resorts and 3 per cent for island resort. Sporting and recreation clubs with gaming and liquor licences were set at 5 per cent with a concession to 3 per cent, increasing annually to 5 per cent. Clubs with a liquor licence and no gaming licence will pay 3 per cent, and those without a licence, 1 per cent. There will be further concessions to recognise the community services component obligation of some organisations. I will deal with that at a later date.

With regard to last year's initiative for control of noxious weeds—the program received about $300,000 in 1992-93 with additional funding of $600,000 for each of the next two years. Weed control teams throughout the State are using those funds to control the spread of declared weeds, particularly the honey locust tree, tobacco weed and any declared weed on Government lands. The department has also submitted an additional 16 species and six genera for declaration to prohibit their introduction. Progress is being made by the department's research stations at Sherwood, Inglewood and Charters Towers towards the control of pest weeds, with notable success regarding rubber vine. An extensive search identified a rust disease which affects rubber vine without causing any damage to native plants and crops. The release of particular insects to control lantana and parthenium has been approved and new chemicals have also been registered for the control of mesquite, prickly acacia, honey locust tree and bedhara bush.

For the first time since the 1970s, migratory locust plagues occurred, causing considerable damage to crops and pastures in central Queensland. The department, through its Land Protection Branch, assists with locusts when the locust infestation presents a direct and major threat by migration to other cropping areas. In fact, the department took immediate action to coordinate ground and aerial control of spraying to contain the damage. In the Bauhinia Downs area, 62 swarms were sprayed in February 1993, while another five swarms were sprayed in Arcadia Valley. Land-holders also played a significant role in preventing further damage by spraying hopper bands after hatchings on their own properties, while staff of the Duaringa Shire sprayed bands on roadsides and reserves. It had been my first association with locust plagues. I think, for anyone who has the opportunity of seeing them, it is fairly enlightening. They are so thick that they rise up almost as a solid wall in front of people as they walk along the ground. For those people who had not previously been exposed to it, it is quite a memorable experience.

In the case of pest animals, the State has set its priorities to complement national strategies which have been widened to include those which impact on land degradation rather than only those which affect agricultural industries. To expand the department's pest animal control capability, an additional two zoologists have been appointed to the Robert Wicks research station at Inglewood. External funds of approximately $400,000 have been obtained for research, often in the form of collaborative projects. Research was also undertaken to breed a Spanish flea, believe it or not, adapted for arid conditions to be used to spread myxomatosis among rabbits in south-western Queensland.

The State's stock route network is managed for the primary use of travelling stock, and the current drought conditions have increased the pressure on just about all the major stock routes. A strategic plan for stock routes has been developed in consultation with local authorities, drovers, grazing industry representatives, interested Government departments and environmentalists. To that extent, a computer database for water facilities and stock use on stock routes is also being established.

In late 1991, the department established the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land Interests program to manage its responsibilities regarding the administration of the Aboriginal Land Act 1991 and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991. This responsibility is shared with the Departments of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, Environment and Heritage, Minerals and Energy and the land tribunals to provide a whole-of-Government approach. An Aboriginal land claims tribunal has been established with a full-time chairperson and 18 deputy chairpersons or part-time members. During the 1992-93 period, the tribunal received applications for 15 areas of claimable land, or about 0.93 per cent of the State. The first claim was heard on 23 August. The department's role is to identify and gazette land available for claim by indigenous people, administer the land claims and associated pre-claim information, and issue titles following the recommendations made to me by the tribunal.

I might just say that that program is, I think, working rather well. There was some hesitancy from the indigenous groups to lodge those claims in the first instance. I guess it is always easier to come after rather than to come before. I think that the people concerned are now gathering confidence in the system and people other than indigenous people are realising that the format of the courts is one where everyone receives a fair hearing. There have been problems, which I will address right now. One or two rather small shires, which have limited financial resources, have complained about the high cost of receiving the transcript of the hearings. I have moved to address that. With that problem addressed, there are no major impediments to the successful operation of the court in the coming year.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego) (5.45 p.m.): Queenslanders have had four years and two Ministers to help them judge Labor's land policies. What they see now is a shambles. They see a network of new laws, retrospectively changed in the way they can use land they thought was privately owned. They see savage increases in the costs the Government imposes on them for the use of their own land. For the rural producers, those costs bear no relationship to the land's ability to produce an income during a period of prolonged drought and adverse trading conditions. For the user of industrial or commercial land, Crown rents and land taxes are crippling at a time of deep economic recession.

The people of Queensland are also aware that Labor has a plan to alienate huge tracts of land for the benefit of one group of people, and to take that land out of the productive system. They also see that the land titles program is in a shambles. It is some 30 000 documents behind and quite a few are lost. Staff morale is low and, quite frankly, it is affecting the viability of this State. Lawyers are ringing up about these documents, and they just cannot get them through. Something has to be done, and I think Government resources should be allocated to that area very quickly.

Land is the basic building block of any private enterprise economy. Every endeavour we make relies in some way on the use of land. What Parliaments of Queensland and Australia do with the land laws will still have effects a century from now. Land policy is too important for any political party to use as part of some sort of social engineering agenda. Unfortunately, this Labor Party stands condemned for doing just that. In the past three years, it has used changes to all sorts of laws to advance Labor's social agenda. With primary producers on their knees, Labor imposed new revenue measures to break their backs. It imposed green laws to make it even harder to make a living on the land. At least it pandered to the green vote in the cities. Now, the Labor Party is getting set to redistribute the agricultural and grazing land of this nation away from production.

A proper land policy is all about allocating and managing land for the needs of every part of our society. We must set aside land for agriculture and grazing, for people to live on, for parks in which people can relax, for roads, railways, ports, airports, mines, factories and the offices of companies that produce the wealth that society needs. To do that, we must have a clear idea of which particular blocks of land would best be suited for those purposes, and very clear ideas of how to allocate that land. There must be a plan, and society has to make that plan and agree with it through its elected representatives in Parliament and on local councils. Parliament has to be the final arbitrator of land allocation and land use questions. I am sure that we all agree on that—the right of society as a whole to make the important decisions about land. The trouble arises when we actually get down to doing that. The coalition has very basic philosophical differences with the Labor Party on land matters. For the sake of Queenslanders, I am glad that we are poles apart on this point. The coalition is always ready to make the point that private ownership and security in that private ownership of land

are basic to its policies. All members on this side of the Chamber agree on that. But the same cannot be said for the Labor Party.

Landowners were horrified to hear one Labor view put in 1990 by a new member, who we all hope has woken up since then. He said—

> "I contend—as did old time socialists—that, by and large, freeholding of land is just as immoral a proposition as the proposition that the very air that we breathe should be owned and possessed by a favoured few. The freeholding of Crown land by the Crown is an immoral act."

What a disgrace to a party that claims to run a modern economy!

I am glad to say that that sort of rubbish would go nowhere in the coalition. The coalition parties take a totally opposite view. We believe that freehold, in particular, and even very long and very secure leases, are the first and most important requirement for investment confidence. We believe that people with that kind of tenure have a real interest in long-term planning for the productive use of land. They also have a real interest in preserving the productive capacity of the land. To me, freehold title has always meant a great deal, as I am sure it has to a great many others. It has always had the connotations of stability and security. It has always brought with it a guaranteed right to use and enjoy private land without too many restrictions. There have always been zoning restrictions, and that is fair enough. They have always been up front. When we bought land, we knew what we could do with it.

In the brave new world of Labor and Wayne Goss, freehold title takes on a whole new meaning. Now, a person simply has the use of his land until the Government decides that it is somebody else's turn. That must be part of the openness, honesty, accountability, natural justice, due process and a fair go for all! When those who know best make up their minds, the Government makes an offer to buy that we just cannot refuse. If we do, it takes the land anyway. It is George Quaid this time. Who will be next? Only in the most extreme circumstances should any Government contemplate the compulsory acquisition of private property. Even then, it should take only as much of the land as it needs for a clearly legitimate public purpose. Finally, the price paid to the private owner being dispossessed should reflect some long-term value of that land to the owner. People buy land with the intention of developing it in some way, or even waiting for values to rise over time. They should be paid a reasonable price. If the Goss Government gets away with this land grab, every piece of freehold in Queensland will be up for grabs. It will make the Mabo nightmare seem like a fairly pleasant daydream.

Labor's history in Government is one of imposing more and more restrictions on the rights of individuals to use and enjoy private land. It is a history of imposing unregistered interests affecting property ownership. A great number of unregistered interests have a profound effect on the way we manage land which we have always thought of as private property. Those unregistered interests will grow as long as we have government by pressure groups. That is what we will have while Labor occupies the Treasury benches here and in Canberra. What those unregistered interests represent is a retrospective change to the law. They have the effect of bringing about a decline in the value of property to its owners, and placing unreasonable conditions on the current use of that land. The way we can use or deal with our land is changed after we have acquired that land.

I go back to what I said about Government by pressure groups. The largest group of unregistered interests stems from the massive growth of pressure groups in the country, and the willingness of Governments to intrude more and more into our lives. Labor has given us new laws in Queensland which allow bureaucrats to decide whether parts of our holdings should be nature refuges, or to impose vegetation protection orders. It sounds great, because none of us want the koalas, the kangaroos, the hairy-nosed wombats or the yellow-bellied gliders to die out. We should always provide for the native animals and plants of this country. But at whose cost? As a society we want to make provision for them. But, increasingly, individuals are required to bear the cost. That is not acceptable. If society wants to do something for the common purpose, then the whole of society should bear the real cost. The ability to declare nature refuges and suchlike on private land without compensation, as happens under new Queensland law, imposes real cost burdens on landowners. Surely it is not too much to ask that a society which effectively takes that land out of production should have to pay for the right to do that.

Parliament recently passed legislation putting severe restrictions on what land-holders can do in the vicinity of watercourses. Typically for Labor, that law went too far. A bureaucrat using the letter of the law can rule

out essential property management practices such as placing culverts on a property access road. I heard of a case recently in the Burnett area where a forester effectively stopped the extension of electricity to a group of acreage properties because he would not allow the felling of just a handful of trees.

Those people opposite give bureaucrats the power to make decisions with terrible impact on particular people. The greatest single threat to proper land management and land allocation comes from Labor's handling of the Mabo decision. I noticed today that the Minister did not even mention the word "Mabo". He really should have because, quite frankly, the security of land and land tenure and the effects of Mabo should be one of the biggest issues and concerns for land management.

We all know that the High Court has brought down a majority finding in favour of some sort of native title, which it said may exist over some land in Australia. The court excluded certain classes of land from native title on the basis that they have been alienated by lawful acts of the State. It also left the former native title up in the air, and I believe there will be a debate for a long time about what form it should take. It could be said that no lawyer will be living in poverty by the year 2000.

The debates which have followed the High Court decision have been divisive. They have been unnecessarily divisive. I blame people such as Paul Keating and the Premier, Wayne Goss. One of the first things the Premier did in Government was to make it clear that his administration would not vigorously prosecute the State's argument in the Mabo case, and that it would not appeal implications of the Mabo decision. The plaintiff generally wins when the respondents run dead. That is what happened. When the judgment came down, both the Prime Minister and the Premier jumped on the Mabo band-wagon early and built up quite unreal expectations among Aboriginal and Islander people.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: Are you saying the High Court judges can't do their job? That's a pretty damning condemnation.

Mr HOBBS: The honourable member knows exactly what I said. The Premier made it quite clear that he was not going to pursue the issue. He did not follow the thing through. He just knew that he wanted it to go that way. That was done for cynical political reasons that had nothing to do with the real interests of the nation or even the Aboriginal or Islander people. It took a long time for the Premier to face the real implications of Mabo. Even then, he was happy to settle for the publicity value of the Weipa bauxite project. He has agreed to toe the Labor line on all of the rest, and the Queensland economy will suffer the consequences. The Premier's publicity machine would like us all to forget that there is only one Labor Party with one set of basic policies. However, Labor's big boss in Canberra is Paul Keating and its little boss in Queensland is Wayne Goss. Unfortunately for us all, the big boss has now put the little boss back into his place. The little boss has agreed to go along with a plan which pleases Labor's Left, but places the whole land system in great jeopardy.

The greatest danger of Labor's Mabo sell-out to the Left is that a huge proportion of the productive land of this nation will be taken out of production permanently. That will happen permanently because the Federal Government will provide the money for land to be purchased by Aboriginal groups. That land will then be converted to inalienable Aboriginal tenure. It will not happen in Labor's heartland in the big cities. It will happen in the north and in the west where our great livestock industries are based. The Northern Territory Government has already sounded the warning that, under the Labor plan, about 95 per cent of the Northern Territory will end up as Aboriginal land. The same process is under way in north Queensland and the Labor plan will just accelerate that.

Of course, people such as Noel Pearson are smiling. They will be laughing because they got a far better deal than any court could have given them. If the claims were fought in the court, there would not be a lot of land at the end of the day. It would have been free because the taxpayer would have footed the Bill for the claimants right through the process. But this way is better for the Aboriginal people looking for land. This way they will get more land—a lot more land. They do not have to wait for years for court cases and it still costs them absolutely nothing. They just decide what land they want and they buy it with money provided by the taxpayers of Australia.

Honourable members will no doubt recall the Prime Minister's appearance on the ABC's *7.30 Report* on the night he was selling his supposed great victory. When he was asked about the extent of the land acquisition funding that he would hand out, the Prime Minister was coy, to say the least. But he did admit that it was more than the hundreds of millions of dollars suggested. It is no longer

any secret that the fund will be around $1,000m. That will buy a great deal of land.

I challenge the Minister now to deny that activists such as Ross Rolfe in his department have been running around already identifying lands to be bought by Aboriginal groups with funding provided by ATSIC. I also challenge the Minister to table a listing of the Queensland land parcels which have passed into Aboriginal hands during the last three years. Labor imposed inefficiencies have just about crippled his department. I have no doubt at all that he could lay his lands on those figures if he wanted to.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr HOBBS: As I mentioned before the dinner adjournment, already most of the land north of Cooktown is out of the productive system as it is dedicated as either Aboriginal land or national park. Either way, that land is no longer managed. It is a time bomb waiting to go off. Exotic disease could spread quickly through our livestock industries and devastate our rural economy, which is still a major contributor to taxes, employment and foreign currency earnings.

The Labor plan to win votes out of the Mabo judgment should be put to a referendum of all the Australian people. It is just not good enough that policy with monumental effects for every Australian now and in the future is made by Paul Keating and Wayne Goss with the help of a few cronies. That group includes the loony Left of the Labor Party, a handful of non-representative Aboriginal activists, a few academics and the taxpayer-funded Aboriginal legal aid lawyers. There is no consensus across Australia that a couple of per cent of the population should be taxpayer funded to lock up huge tracts of land and close those areas to productive development. I can guarantee that there is no consensus on that, and I challenge the Labor Party to chance its hand at a referendum. I challenge it to let every Australian have a say. Is it so bad in a democracy to let people have a say?

I have no doubt that Labor's thought police will brand me as a racist for insisting that ordinary Australians have a say in a massive change to our land-holding system. No doubt, it is no longer politically correct to trust the people who send us here. So be it. I will take my chances. People are running all over the place talking about the legalities of Mabo and the Labor plan to validate titles. "Private land is safe", they say. "Very little will be claimable", they say. Very few recognise that the legalities do not matter a damn. Keating and Goss have decided that Mabo is an issue in the Aboriginal reconciliation process. Labor has made it part of its social engineering agenda.

Whatever else we might think of Keating, only a fool would underestimate his willingness to fight hard for what he wants. Labor's little boss has found that out already. Labor's big boss has the weapons, in the Australian Constitution. Under the foreign affairs head of power, he already has international agreements that allow him to legislate for land rights. There is also the power inserted by referendum giving the Commonwealth the power to make laws for a particular race. To top it off, there is the constitutional supremacy of Commonwealth over State law. If Paul Keating decides to, he can take over land law in Australia. He will do that if the States do not stand up to him and make it too expensive politically. That is Wayne Goss' duty. But I do not think that he will do so; he has been whipped by the big boss once too often.

That is a frightening prospect for anyone who believes—as I do and as the National Party does—in the private ownership of property. I make it clear now that the National Party has basic positions on Mabo and other native title issues from which it will not retreat. We will always insist that any negotiating process is dealt with under laws available to all Australians and by existing courts within Australia. We are not interested in special tribunals operating with lesser rules than the courts and with lesser standards of evidence. We certainly will not accept that our land laws will be subject to the values imposed by overseas bodies dominated by people with interests different from those of Australians.

In relation to any land claim process, the National Party will also insist that financial assistance for legal representation be available to every party to a claim. It is just not good enough that a landowner could have to spend a fortune fighting off claims for land to which he has already been given valid title.

In relation to the Rural Lands Protection Board—serious concerns have been raised with me in a number of areas, particularly the dingo barrier fence. Funding for that project has generally been decreasing. It is fortunate that the weather has been favourable to the maintenance of the fence. However, if the season breaks—and we are all hopeful that that will occur—much more money will have to be dedicated to that project to keep the fence maintained. I understand that two staff who coordinate that project are about to be put off. I think that the Minister should reconsider that

decision very carefully. Concern exists about the relations between property owners along the dingo barrier fence. It is very important that we keep all the people along the fence on-side to ensure that gates are not left open, etc. The fence is a valuable asset to the community across-the-board. We really must do everything we can to keep it that way.

Recently, the 1080 campaign has been cancelled. However, the Minister claimed that there was no disruption to the availability of 1080. That is incorrect. I have here documentation that was distributed to all local authority and departmental officers directing them in the following terms—

> "Officers have no authority to provide land holders with any 1080 impregnated bait material until further notice."

Recently, the Minister claimed on radio that there were no disruptions to the 1080 program. Obviously, the Minister was not telling the truth. I hope that he realises that that program is of vital importance.

I turn now to the weed control teams. I understand that they have been operating effectively, and that is very pleasing. That initiative was suggested initially by the Opposition.

Time expired.

Mr VAUGHAN (Nudgee) (7.36 p.m.): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate on the Estimates of the Department of Lands. The management of the land in this State and our nation is vitally important. As the motto of a well-known real estate company on the Gold Coast goes: "The best investment on this earth is earth", because no more earth is being produced.

Unfortunately, although this country has been settled for only just over 200 years, the management of the land in the past has left a lot to be desired. In many instances, we do not appear to have learned a great deal from the mistakes that have been made in the past. In fact, as we are all aware, there are areas of this State in which the land has become so degraded through use and abuse that it is virtually beyond redemption. However, under the Land Use Program, the department is setting about managing the State's land within a land planning framework to ensure its most appropriate and sustainable use for economic development, public purposes and environmental conservation. Under the program, policy options for land management are researched and developed, and services are provided for the reservation, leasing and sale of State land for agricultural, grazing, residential, commercial and industrial development and also the acquisition of freehold and leasehold land for public purposes. The program also provides services for the opening and closing of roads, the maintenance of a strategic information base of all Government land, the gazettal of land available for claim by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the processing of land claims to be presented to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land tribunals. An amount of $12.6m has been allocated to fund the program this financial year.

As the 1992-93 annual report which was distributed to members several weeks ago points out, the program makes a contribution to the good of the environment through its efforts to minimise the impact of pests, plants and animals. In this regard, an amount of $14.35m has been allocated in the budget to cover maintenance of the dingo barrier fence and the control of noxious weeds, wild dogs, rabbits and feral pigs. This includes $600,000 for the preventative control of declared and other noxious plants through the establishment of weed control teams.

A potential biological control agent for rubber vine—a rubber vine rust discovered during an extensive search of Madagascar—has been released in north Queensland on Delta Downs Station, which I had the pleasure of visiting with the Minister in May this year. About 30 per cent of Delta Downs, which covers an area of 383 000 hectares, is infested with rubber vine, which has only moved into the area since the war by moving down the river system from the Charters Towers area. The infestation stands out along the banks of rivers and streams, where the rubber vines are climbing all over other vegetation. It has also moved out over the floodplains and is so thick that, if cattle manage to penetrate it, in many cases they become trapped.

The release of the rust is linked to an integrated control management strategy which incorporates a threat abatement program to address the expected impact of rubber vine on natural resources. Under the program, extensive testing has also been undertaken to develop a method of controlling lantana and parthenium. As a result, two insects to control lantana and two insects to control parthenium have been approved for release. After extensive trials, new chemicals have also been registered for controlling mesquite, prickly acacia, honey locust tree and badhara bush.

Last April, together with the Minister, I inspected a mesquite infestation on Comongin, a property just outside Quilpie. Unfortunately, mesquite was introduced for its perceived benefits as a coloniser of unstable arid areas, as a food and shelter tree for livestock and as a garden ornamental. However, the cost of the damage it causes far outweighs its benefits. The methods that have been adopted to attack mesquite are effective, but it is extremely hardy, and eradication of this pest is a long way off.

As a result of visits to my home town of Richmond in the past, I am aware of the problems that prickly acacia is causing in that area of the State. This pest is also extremely hardy and difficult to destroy. Unfortunately, in the past, these pests have apparently been allowed to spread virtually unchecked to the extent that in many areas they were taking over the land. While the Government certainly has a responsibility to look after the land, so does the land-holder. In this regard, I believe that in the past the attitude has been to rely on the Government too much. I must say that it concerns me when I hear land-holders ask what incentives the Government will give them to look after their land.

The dingo barrier fence plays an important role in preventing the ingress of dingoes and wild dogs into the major sheep areas of south-west Queensland. It links with the New South Wales fence on the border at Moombidary, runs north to near Windorah, east to Adavale, north east to Tambo, then south east and east to Jandowae, covering a distance of 2 500 kilometres. The fence is patrolled weekly and there is an ongoing maintenance program which involved renewal or restructuring of 135 kilometres of fence last financial year.

Last April I had the opportunity of inspecting part of the fence from Augathella to Morven with the Minister and Jerry Stanley, the manager of the fence. I also saw at first hand a maintenance gang at work. I must say that I was very impressed by the competence of the four men in the gang who are required to work in fairly difficult terrain, often under harsh conditions. For anyone who is interested, there is a photo of the fence on page 17 of the annual report.

Under the program, action is being taken against known populations of rabbits by using myxomatosis inoculation, low concentration pesticides and fumigation of warrens. A Spanish flea has been adapted for arid conditions.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr VAUGHAN: I said, "Spanish flea has been adapted for arid conditions." It has been successfully bred and will be used to spread myxomatosis amongst rabbits in south-western Queensland.

I note in a recent press report that a human medication, Warfarin, used to prevent blood clots, is being tested by the department as a possible weapon against feral pigs, which are also a problem.

The effects of the drought are also exacerbating the kangaroo problem in many areas. Those properties that have been fortunate enough to receive reasonable rainfalls are attracting large populations of kangaroos which seem to be drawn as if by a magnet to any area where green shoots are starting to appear following rain.

Last July, together with the Premier's northern and rural task force, I participated in a briefing, at the Charleville district office of the Department of Environment and Heritage, on the kangaroo problem. I also had my first taste of kangaroo meat which, if I had not known what it was, did not appear to have any particular taste. I have since tried it again in South Australia where it is on every restaurant's menu, and it is quite palatable. There is no doubt that, provided an overseas market can be built up, kangaroo farming in the south west must become a reality not only because it presents one way of controlling the kangaroo population but also because the nature of the country lends itself to this form of use.

As I stated at the outset, because of use and abuse over more than a hundred years, many areas of this State have become so degraded that they are no longer suitable for the grazing of sheep and cattle. In this regard, and because sustainable land use is increasingly important to all of us, the mulga region, which covers an area of some 19 million hectares, has recently been the subject of a comprehensive study of the inter-dependence of the environment, pastoral production, and the economy of the region.

Although the current drought has had, and is still having, a severe impact on the mulga region, unfortunately because of climatic and economic factors and extremely bad management, or in some cases a complete lack of management, a large area of the region is severely degraded. It is estimated that more than one-third of the region which produces 15 per cent of the State's gross value of livestock products—approximately $127 million per annum—is

severely affected. This is costing the State some $52 million in lost production.

According to the records that are available, when this area was first settled it was covered in the main by open forest grassland. Even today there are some areas where open forest grassland still exists because they have been properly managed. In December last year, with the Minister, I travelled by road from Quilpie to Charleville and was able to personally see examples of properties where there was still open forest grassland. Along the road there were striking examples of good and bad management of properties. On one side of a fence dividing properties, there is grass with trees scattered over the landscape and on the other side of the fence there is thick mulga and turkey bush. The comparison is significant. Unfortunately, because of regular overstocking through ignorance, greed or desperation, on a large number of properties the open forest grassland has gradually disappeared, to be replaced with mulga and turkey bush, with the result that on some properties stock live mostly on mulga and not grass. Even mulga properties have been further degraded as a result of bad management practices when properties have been stocked with cattle and sheep incorrectly. Add the effects of drought and the impact of kangaroos to this situation and the result is disastrous.

This is arid land, and a large area of it has been badly treated for a very long time. However, I am pleased to say that there is now a realisation that this very fragile region has to be carefully managed with due regard being given to climatic cycles which occur over the area. As a result of the study which I mentioned earlier, action is now being taken to achieve sustainable land use in the region by giving consideration to the production potential of the land with respect to climate, carrying capacities, water management, protection of biodiversity, and the management of kangaroos and feral animals. Notwithstanding the damage that has been done to this region over the last century or so, provided sustainable land use and land management practices are developed and complied with, there is every possibility that the degradation that has occurred can be halted and in many cases reversed. Although there will be people opposed to the management plans that will be put in place, they must be made to see that it is in their interest and the interest of the State as a whole that the mistakes of the past cannot be repeated.

Unfortunately, it is a fact that when the seasons are good there is a tendency to forget what it is like when they are bad. We all know that in this country we get a run of good years and then every so often we get a drought such as we are experiencing at present. I sincerely hope that when the current drought is over—it would be one of the worst we have experienced—we do not forget what it was like and in future manage the land accordingly.

Because of a number of factors, for example the price of wool, degradation of the country and the drought, some properties are too small to be viable and property build-up is necessary to achieve sustainable land use and economies of size and to allow flexibility in management. According to the records, this is history repeating itself. Until the mid 1960s the subdivision of leases and closer settlement were common. However, because of a gradual decline in the productivity of the region, together with drought and low wool prices in the 1960s and 1970s, the amalgamation of smaller leases took place. Although some areas may be beyond redemption, this could probably be the last opportunity we will have to save this area of the State. If we do not get it right this time we may not get another chance. It is estimated that as many as 200 of the 1 200 land-holders in the area are considered not to have a viable future.

Another matter that has contributed to degradation of the land is the past uncontrolled use of artesian water through a network of bore drains. In country which has a median rainfall ranging from 400 millimetres in the east to less than 200 millimetres in the west and in which extended droughts are common, use of water in this manner is very inefficient and has limited the stock and pasture management options because stock and pests have uncontrolled access to water. This has also been a contributing factor to the kangaroo and feral animal problem. Although since the 1940s it has been a requirement that new bores be fitted with control valves to assist in eliminating waste, and although since 1954 all new bores have been required to have piped distribution systems, unfortunately in the mulga region the flow from the great artesian basin has diminished to such an extent that nearly 20 per cent of bores have ceased flowing.

As a further example of the problem that is developing, in the early 1900s the flow from the Great Artesian Basin was 600 megalitres a day. Today, it is around 260 megalitres a day, and over the next 30 years it is anticipated to

fall to some 160 megalitres a day. Furthermore, 95 per cent of the water from artesian bores is lost through evaporation and seepage in summer. It is also estimated that over 100 000 tonnes of salt are deposited annually around bore drains. Although some land–holders consider bore drains are the most suitable water distribution for their properties, the deterioration of the Great Artesian Basin cannot be ignored because of the importance of this form of water supply to western areas. Even though the cost of controlling the bores and replacing the bore drains with pipelines is estimated at $62m, it will have to be done.

Our land is one of our best assets. It provides us with the three basics of life: food, clothing and shelter. Provided we look after it, it will continue to provide us with these necessities of life. That is why land degradation, which has been allowed to occur in certain areas, must be halted and appropriate land management programs put in place with a view to returning those areas to their original condition.

Time expired.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (7.51 p.m.): Some years ago, a disastrous decision was made, the effects of which are only now coming home to roost. I refer to the decision to transfer the Titles Office from the Justice Department to the Department of Lands. Today, and as a result of this decision, the Queensland Titles Office is in a state of almost total collapse. It has almost completely ceased functioning, and the integrity of the Queensland Title Register is under serious and sustained assault. I have been told that, as at Wednesday, 21 October, the Brisbane register had over 40 000 unregistered dealings. That is a huge number when one realises that it receives only 9 000 per week. I see the Minister smiling. In his reply, I invite him to tell us precisely how many transactions are outstanding. It is taking up to three weeks to obtain a simple and straightforward photocopy of a title. Only 18 months ago, this simple task was being accomplished in four hours.

Of course, the inefficient and lengthy delays experienced with the registration of titles mean that, in turn, developers experience lengthy delays in obtaining new titles. The extra interest costs that result from this are simply passed on to the final customer—often young home buyers and small businesses. Eighteen months ago, these delays were in the order of seven days. Today, they can stretch out to two months. Many of the staff have taken sick leave for stress-related problems.

To get this in perspective, we need to compare this with the performance of other Australian Titles Offices. In Sydney, a straightforward title search takes five minutes, and registration normally occurs within 24 hours. There is no backlog awaiting processing. In Melbourne, a title search takes 24 hours, and a new dealing lodged with the registrar is searchable within 24 hours of lodgement.

How did this catastrophe happen here in Queensland? The wags in the Titles Office explain that if one employed consultants with a brief to wreck the Titles Office, they could not have done a better job. The first step was to put in charge management which had no understanding of the significance of the integrity of the Titles Register. This management then proceeded to put in more junior managers who also had no understanding of the ramifications of a failure to maintain the register. They even appointed a Registrar of Titles—who has now retired—who had never worked in a titles office and had no formal legal or financial qualifications. The senior titling officers were sidetracked into non-jobs.

This unknowing management then set about changing the priorities of the department into all sorts of side adventures, such as mindless regionalisation. This required diversion of resources from the maintenance of the register. It also provoked the resignation of many of the older, highly experienced, senior Titles Office personnel, and they took with them their knowledge and experience gathered over many, many years of hard and loyal work for that department. The management was aided and abetted by a PSMC, which also had no comprehension of what it was playing with, and a Government which seems to believe that it can regionalise anything, and the more the better. Naturally, that Government saw to it that the most senior public servants were yes-men in their own stead, and so made sure that no other voices were heard.

This brings us to today. We have a network of regional Titles Offices, established at enormous expense, most of which have almost nothing to do. In an attempt to window-dress the figures a little, one—the Maryborough office—actually had a member walking from solicitors' office to solicitors' office asking if they had any searches or documents to lodge. People from that very same office started driving from Maryborough to

Bundaberg and then set about canvassing for work. I do not know whether these practices are still occurring, but I believe that people from that office are now driving to Kingaroy on a regular basis and, when there, canvassing the local solicitors, trying to divert the work they would have sent to Brisbane by mail. In the case of the Beenleigh office, there is so little to do that it is nicknamed Noyea Park, which is a retirement home!

I am told that to keep these regional centres partly operational, work is being sent to them from the Brisbane office with, at times, few security provisions being made. Most of these branch titles offices are costing a fortune, and all they are is a substitute for the mail service or, more importantly these days, a fax service. All they do is send requests and documents to Brisbane and receive them back from Brisbane. They are duplicating the mail service or the services provided by private enterprise. Previously in this place, I have spoken about this very problem. And they do it for free! It is a strange priority for a Labor Government to want to subsidise solicitors and other property purchasers who can afford to pay for that service. These branches have no necessary part of the maintenance and operation of the Title Register. They cannot. It is not possible.

In a further effort to justify their existence, the management decreed that the working maps would be transferred to the regional offices. Almost all the users of these maps screamed in protest. As usual, they were ignored. Nearly all requests for access to these maps came, and continue to come, from the Brisbane area. The management also ignored this. Now, the vast majority of users have no direct access to the working maps and have to put up with a slow and uncertain process of getting the regional office concerned to photocopy a portion of the working map and fax it back to Brisbane. In the case of the few users who can visit a regional office to look at one of these maps, they are unable to use it effectively as much of the other material which they must access is held in Brisbane and copies have to be sent out from Brisbane for it to make sense. The merry-go-round is indeed very confusing.

Perhaps this massive misallocation of resources would make sense if the users were located near the regional offices, but they are not. The last time accurate figures were produced by the Titles Office, over two-thirds of all documents taken into the southern registry office—including those lodged at the regional offices—were actually lodged by the banks and financial institutions in Brisbane. Since that time, the banks and finance companies have moved to close the one or two regional security centres that they did operate and, instead, intend to lodge all their documents in Brisbane. It is likely that as much as 90 per cent of the transactions in the southern registry will be conducted at the Brisbane office. Needless to say, the banks are in the business of making money and not squandering taxpayers' dollars, as the Titles Office is keen to do.

The management also set about duplicating search and registration delivery services already provided by private enterprise. They made sure that it would be successful—and I use the word "successful" advisedly—by charging a little less than the cost of providing the service. For example, in Queensland, the Titles Office will receive an order for a search, perform the search, fax back the results and charge the cost to an account they maintain for their clients for $8. In New South Wales, the comparable service costs $24. No private organisation is providing such a service for less than $18. Australia Post charges more just to send a fax, let alone receive it, do a search and operate an account as well. Australia Post does not provide accounts, either.

And so it has continued, with a central register that is seriously undermined and grinding to a halt for want of resources whilst ambitious empire builders divert vast resources to unneeded and unwanted regional office empires. This Government runs around closing things that are really useful and wanted by the country people, such as railway lines and magistrates courts, and at the same time spends millions on opening mini Titles Offices all over the place. Frankly, the average resident of regional Queensland could not care less whether he or she has a local Titles Office. They are indeed truly strange priorities!

For a long period, the statistics provided by the Lands Department about the performance standards of Titles Offices were demonstrably wrong. Their users had protested about this over and over again and, as usual, have been ignored. More recently, the administration was forced to admit that the figures they provided did not correctly represent what was going on. What this Government and administration have totally overlooked is that the integrity of the Title Register is fundamental to the operation of our whole financial system. Nearly all lending is done on the basis of real estate security. A lender will not lend unless he is satisfied that he can obtain title to the property offered as

security if the borrower defaults. This is so fundamental to the sound functioning of a nation's and a State's economy that it is one of the early World Bank/UNDP aid projects which is offered to developing countries. Only with a secure system of land titling can the financial system work properly.

Mr Hobbs: It has just fallen right back.

Mr SANTORO: I take that interjection. It is almost in a state of total collapse. The only solution available to title owners is to go about it US style, which is to take out costly insurance to cover this deficiency of the Titles Office. Frankly, the events of the last few years have put the integrity of the Queensland system at grave risk. It is a system that has been built up diligently over so many years, with so much hard work by so many loyal public servants.

I am not aware of any study being made on the question of priority of registration with respect to widely separated regional offices, especially when computer and telephone faults prevent communication. I am told that a batch of documents was erroneously forwarded to corporate headquarters at Woolloongabba and unfortunately was shredded. This is certainly one way to get rid of the backlog. How are the unfortunate owners to be compensated?

He who lodges first gets priority in registration. I have been told of a computer failure in Rockhampton a while ago that meant that documents lodged in Rockhampton received a priority more than three days later than documents lodged in Bundaberg. Luckily, on this occasion, the documents lodged in Bundaberg did not include any caveats over land affected by the Rockhampton delays, and the dealings frozen in Rockhampton did not include any time-critical documents. But who knows what will happen in the future?

Time-critical things have been lodged in Townsville and, because they were not attended to for days, they lapsed. Withdrawal and re-entry of caveats were important in those cases. There are now legal actions on foot over them. The Townsville registry will not allow larger users to lodge over the counter. They insist on the documents being left with them. It then takes them one to two weeks to look at them and give them a dealing number. This means that any one could lodge another document over the land during that one to two weeks and the one already in the Townsville registry would lose priority. At best, it would lead to a Supreme Court action and could cause people to lose their homes, and financial institutions to lose their security.

The Real Property Act requires that documents be lodged in the Office of the Registrar, and provides specifically for the subsidiary registers maintained in Rockhampton and Townsville. Notwithstanding this, documents are accepted by the Lands people at offices all over the place. It is only a matter of time before a challenge will arise over when and who delivered a document and to what office.

The unregistered dealings system has evolved into a kind of defacto register for "anything any one ever wanted to record about someone's land". Of course, the big problem is what happens if some of this information is wrong. Often, quite important decisions are made on the basis of that information. As far as we can find out, it is an all care and no responsibility system. Recently, a senior Brisbane officer proposed to let the banks and finance companies lodge their documents without examination to see if they were correct. Fortunately, wiser heads found out what was going on and were able to prevent it happening before any damage was done.

What all this boils down to is that the integrity of the register is under serious threat. That threat is coming from this Government and the administration it has in place. I have been told that the Government has recently appointed a new head who has an enormous amount of experience and who wants to go about the business of cleaning up the system. All the people who have contacted me have seen that appointment in a favourable light and they are looking forward to some good things coming from the activities of that person. That is the first glimpse of good management that those people have seen for a long, long time.

It is absurd to create mini titles offices all over the place. It is absurd to set them up for no purpose other than to duplicate the mail and private enterprise provided services. It is doubly absurd to do so below cost or for free. It is beyond belief for a Government that is trying to behave responsibly to be extending subsidies to people who are not in need of these subsidies. It is tragic that no-one in the Government or the administration seems to have any understanding of the consequences of their actions. If they succeed in damaging the integrity of the register, they will cause damage to the whole of the Queensland and the Australian financial system of such dimensions as to defy belief. At least the

Justice Department had the good sense not to fiddle with the register and its integrity. Not so the Lands administration to date.

It is very late in the day. To save the day, the time has come to stop diverting resources from the maintenance and operation of the register. The time has come to stop the idiocy of regionalising things which just cannot be regionalised. The time has come to start operating the Titles Office as a Titles Office, not some sort of career-enhancement facility for ambitious young public servants. The time has come for the Minister, together with his new head, to take control and take the system by the throat and shake it out so that there is no longer a backlog of 40 000 unregistered situations, and so that no longer will people telephone to yell and scream at the poor people on the front desks who cannot cope because the policy of the administration is all wrong. For the sake of the Queensland economy, and the sanity and financial wellbeing of many people who depend on the operations of the Titles Office, I urge the Minister to take some action and to take it quickly.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave) (8.05 p.m.): I take great pleasure in joining in this debate on the Estimates for the Department of Lands. Tonight, I will deal with two particular programs. One relates to land tribunals and the other relates to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land interests program. I will deal with the latter one first.

This program was established in late 1991 to manage the responsibilities of the Department of Lands in relation to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Acts. It shares this responsibility with the Departments of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, Environment and Heritage, Minerals and Energy, and the Land Tribunal. The business activities of the program are concerned with the identification and gazettal of land—making it available for claim by indigenous people; administering the land claims and associated pre-claim information; and issuance of titles following recommendations to the Minister for Lands by the tribunal.

The need for definitive tenure histories to be prepared to establish the presence or otherwise of native title interests has now been addressed by the establishment in July 1993 of a Tenure History Unit within the program.

A comparison of the 1992-93 appropriation for this program with the 1993-94 figures reveals that the total budgetary allocation for 1992-93 of $1,466,000 has risen to $1,700,298. The increase in funding is largely a reflection of the introduction of the new Tenure History Unit within the program.

Since the enactment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Acts, about 37 265 hectares of vacant Crown land and about 2 359 000 hectares of national park land have been gazetted as claimable. Twenty-two Cook Shire islands amounting to 265 hectares have been gazetted. A total of 15 land claims have been received and forwarded to the Aboriginal Land Claims Tribunal since the legislation was introduced.

One land claim association has been incorporated to allow the claimant group to access funding to assist with preparation of their land claim. An interim database has been established to assist in the management of land claims and expressions of interest from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander claimants. About 130 expressions of interest have been received from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and individuals identifying areas of land, presently unavailable for claim, over which they indicate an interest.

Since the introduction of the legislation, five land titles have been issued over transferable land. Further transferable lands, over which titles will be issued, are presently being identified. Surveys have commenced in preparation for provision of titling documentation

On 3 June 1993, the High Court ruled that a traditional native title existed in the Murray Islands and raised the possibility of its existence throughout Australia. The common law recognition of native title is of particular significance to dealings in land. Concern arises because certain dealings may extinguish native title or grants over land. Where native title may continue to exist, it might be invalidated based on the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. Therefore, all dealings in land must consider the possible existence of native title.

As a result, various departments and agencies that deal in land or resources have requested the Department of Lands to provide detailed tenure information. In July 1993, following approval from Treasury, the Department of Lands proceeded to establish a new Tenure History Unit responsible for undertaking tenure investigations over various areas of Queensland in relation to the existence or otherwise of native title. The 11 staff appointed to this program from 1991 have been joined by 11 new officers

appointed to the Tenure History Unit. One of those officers is stationed in Cairns.

The program anticipates a major impact from the Commonwealth and State legislation resulting from the High Court native title decision. Already, the Tenure History Unit has been established to respond to the need to investigate where native title continues to exist. The establishment of a database to manage the business resulting from both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Acts, and to reflect any new departmental responsibilities resulting from native title legislation is planned and has been funded for partial development in 1993-94. There has been a total allocation of $160,000 shared equally between the program and the Land Tribunal. This project will commence once native title issues are clarified. It is anticipated that completion will occur in the period 1994-95.

The Aboriginal Land Tribunal has a full-time chairperson and 18 part-time members. The full-time chairperson, Mr Graeme Neate, was appointed from January 1992. The Governor in Council appointed the part-time members for a term of two years from 19 February 1993. The four deputy chairpersons—all distinguished people—are Miss Stephanie Forgie, a deputy president of the Commonwealth's Administrative Appeals Tribunal; Mr Stephen Keim, a barrister in private practice who has a long involvement in civil liberties in Queensland and who is President of the Queensland Council of Civil Liberties and President of the Legal Aid Commission; Mr Clive Wall, a barrister in private practice based in Townsville who has had extensive involvement in hearing and preparing indigenous land claims in Papua New Guinea and who is a consultant to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission; and Ms Carmel MacDonald, a principal lecturer in law in the faculty of law at the Queensland University of Technology and who is a lecturer in charge of land law which includes an examination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land claims.

These deputy chairpersons have also been commissioned to the Land Court of Queensland. The other 14 part-time members are Mr Terry O'Shane, Mr Ronnie Ngallametta, Mr Jim Wharton, Mr Bob Anderson, Mr Sonny Martin, Mr Neville Bonner AO, Mr Graham Dillon, Mr Eric Rosendale, Mr Warren McLachlan, Mr John Stewart, Mr Gary Ward, Mr Ron Wright, Dr Geoff McDonald and Ms Beverley Perel. Six members were drawn from industry, commerce, public administration and industrial relations, and eight members were drawn from the Aboriginal community itself. Applications have been made by groups of Aboriginal people to 15 areas of claimable land, with a total land area of 1 599 647.82 hectares. That represents approximately 0.93 per cent of the State of Queensland. That land comprises 4 490.22 hectares of vacant Crown land, 7 140 hectares of Aboriginal reserves and a total area of 1 588 017.60 hectares in the form of national parks.

The first land claims to be heard by the land tribunal commenced in Cooktown on 23 August and continued to 2 September. Claims are to areas of available Crown land totalling approximately 39 000 hectares. The tribunal hearing the claim comprised Mr Graeme Neate, the chairperson, Mr Neville Bonner AO and Mr Ronald Wright—all members of that land tribunal. The parties to some or all of the land claim proceedings were the claimants, the Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Organisation, the Cook Shire Council and the Director of National Parks and Wildlife.

The Simpson Desert National Park claim is to be heard by the Aboriginal Land Tribunal commencing on 8 December this year at Birdsville, and is expected to run for approximately two weeks. A comparison of the 1992 appropriation for land tribunal operations with the 1993-94 figures reveals a total budget allocation this year of $742,244 compared to $680,000 in the previous financial year. The increase in budgetary allocation relates to anticipated high levels of land claim hearings.

The Government's commitment to equity of access to Government services and decision making led it to regionalisation of the Department of Lands. The choice of sites for the Department of Lands was based on ease of client access, local community interests, projected population, local growth rates, expected development, economic activity, cost of service delivery and location of officers of other departments. The regions are Western, with the regional centre at Roma; Darling Downs based in Toowoomba; South Coast with Beenleigh as its headquarters; Brisbane, of course, with Brisbane being the major base; Sunshine Coast at Caboolture; Wide Bay with the major centre of Maryborough; Central Queensland, with its headquarters located at Rockhampton; Mackay, with the city of Mackay being the base; the Northern region based in Townsville; and the Far North region based in Cairns. Approximately two-thirds of departmental staff, that is, in excess of 920, work in offices outside corporate headquarters in Woolloongabba. Most services provided by the six departmental programs, such as land

information, land boundaries, land use, land titles, land valuations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests can be accessed through the network of 34 offices in 10 regions. Smaller offices having fewer than two members provide a limited range of services.

The emphasis has been placed on regionalising the delivery of service to provide improved client access to service; greater community involvement in decision making through clients' direct access to departmental officers who make decisions at the local level; an increased awareness of local issues, community concerns and economic conditions of each region; and a desire to improve delivery times for client inquiries. A limited number of corporate services are available only from the corporate headquarters in Brisbane, such as policy development, information technology and legal service. It is more effective and cost efficient to provide these services centrally and in a coordinated manner. The departmental policy manual is available throughout the State in hard copy electronic form. Clients may purchase copies of any policy for familiarisation purposes prior to lodging any applications. An electronic communications system connects all regions, most districts and corporate headquarters in Brisbane, and allows clients to electronically access information on their properties from outside their regions. For example, a client in the Mackay office can access details of a lease located in the Western region.

One of the department's district offices, the Blackall office, has been appointed as part of the Queensland Government agency pilot program. This project is investigating the application of a single outlet in a centre for a range of Government services rather than each department supporting its own service facility. The department's Blackall office handles transactions from various other Governments and agencies including Transport, Justice, Public Trustee and Registrar-General. About 2 400 transactions have been handled since its inception in July 1992, the majority of them being received by the other departments. The advantage to the community is that the client can access the department locally. The client can access the department's information through the departmental policy manual or the appropriate information system, make an application and have a decision made—all in the local office. This eliminates the problems associated with lack of knowledge of the relevant departmental policy or a lack of first-hand knowledge of the local conditions by the decision maker.

The department's data communication system will eventually provide access for all regions and most districts to the major information systems, such as the automated title system, the integrated valuations and sales system and the tenure administration system. This will save both the department and the client considerable time in such areas as title searching, valuation inquiries and applications for review of lease conditions. The client will benefit from the provision of an up-to-date, locally accessible information source.

The department's consultation process has been implemented in the regions and the districts. It provides a mechanism for the department to listen to the clients and to collect information for use in decision making for policies, procedures and legislation. It has helped to develop two-way communication between the client and the department. Regions are developing their own local advisory groups to address issues specific to their regions.

The presence of departmental officers on the spot provides the opportunity for staff to add practical value to departmental initiatives. For example, staff monitor the impact of the drought on local lessees in the area most affected to assess eligibility for the department's hardship provisions for pastoral leasehold rents. Government assistance has been extended to link it to eligibility for the Federal Rural Adjustment Scheme, known as RAS. This assistance brings Queensland into line with the national approach to assist those producers assessed as having long-term viability.

The grievance mechanism for rental valuations has changed to assist the lessee. Rental valuations are now completed by a valuer located within the region and related grievances or disputes raised by the lessees are now resolved by the designated valuer in the appropriate region. This eliminates the expense and inconvenience to the lessee of hearing such disputes in the head office in Brisbane.

Similarly, clients can take advantage of the regionalised decision making relating to land use applications for road closures, subdivisions and amalgamation, review of lease conditions, renewal of leases and conversions to freehold. The decision is made in the local office and the client can raise concerns with the decision maker rather than being required to travel to head office for a hearing.

A number of regions have introduced client self-service procedures for accredited clients to conduct their own map and plan searches. Whilst there have been some moderating influences on the demand for client services, there was considerable growth in the creation of residential land parcels with attendant increases in demand for related title services. Title lodgments reached a record high over the year and continue to grow. For 1992–93, transactions of ownership in the titling program range from 406 214 for Brisbane to 31 132 in Rockhampton and 60 627 for Townsville. These figures show the concentration of business in the original title registries before regionalisation. The other regional centres dealt with a volume of about 10 000 transactions for Cairns to 154 for Beenleigh. There has been some restraint in the general demand for client services, such are the generally tight economic conditions and impacts of drought and poor market conditions for some rural industries. There has been a greater collaboration and coordination between Government agencies at a regional level. This has been both internal, for example cooperative efforts of staff training, and external, for example planning and service delivery.

Mr STONEMAN (Burdekin) (8.20 p.m.): I rise in this Estimates debate tonight to express some concerns about the direction in which the administration of Lands and the philosophy of the Government is taking Lands. Land is our major resource—leaving aside our youth and our personal reflections. The land is that from which all riches spring. Whilst I approve of the form of the Minister for Lands, I am concerned about the mission statement. That gives rise to the concerns that I wish to express tonight. The mission statement reads—

> "To manage the State's land fairly and effectively and to provide highly professional land services which help clients satisfy their needs."

In my view, as someone who has lived all of his life on the land and, before coming to this Chamber, was totally dependent on the land for my livelihood and for the support of my family, I have a fairly clear understanding of what that is all about. I believe that the word "manage" is totally and absolutely wrong. It is not the business of the Government to manage the land. That responsibility belongs to the lessees.

In my view—and I am dedicated to this view—this mission statement should be to administer the State's land resources fairly and effectively, and so on. It should not say "manage". Where are the managers in the Lands Department? Where are the managers in the Government? They are not on the land now, but some of the various Ministers over the years may have been. I am not suggesting that within the Lands Department there are not people with practical knowledge.

It is not for bureaucracies and Governments—it is certainly not for this Government—to manage per se. It has no business in management because it has no knowledge of management of the land. That is a hard-won knowledge that only experienced people have. I have said this for many years and I believe in it. In my time in Queensland, which goes back 35 years, I have always, except in recent times, lived on leasehold or pastoral leasehold land. The practices that have developed over the years need some readjustment. They need assessment and readjustment via an understanding and a recognition of the processes that are involved in trying to work the land from those who produce from it—that is, the farmers, the graziers and the various other people who work the land for whatever reason. Largely, we are talking in this departmental sense about the grazing lands. Sheep and cattle take up the vast majority of the land in this State. That is the area that I am particularly interested in.

I am aware of a number of other land tenures—housing land, land related to industrial uses, and so on. But those tenures are generally not as emotive as, for example, land which holds starving stock, land that is overgrazed—land which we would be concerned to see returned to a more natural state. That is where the true custodians of land management in this State come in. They are the people who have their livelihoods at stake. Their wits are the only means by which they can sustain their own families, make a living and, hopefully, improve that standard. That is way they sustain their families: by the use of the land. They are the real custodians of the land, not the department.

This whole report is based on a false premise. It is based on a premise rammed down the department's neck by the philosophy of the Government. I acknowledge that the department has no real say at the end of the day. It has to do the will of its master. That is the way it should be and that is what our democratic processes are all about.

In reflecting on these comments, I would not like the Minister or his officers to think that

I am aiming at them. I am aiming at a very poorly based philosophy of this Government and one that goes back and could be applied to components of our Governments over the years. We have probably all been wrong. We have a situation in which the pressure on the land comes from the economy generally, the seasons and the markets. Unfortunately, increasingly it comes from the taxes, the rates, the rents—the constraints placed on the land-holders by the Government. The constraint in the broader taxation structure means that people do not have the incentive to subdivide and to better utilise their land resource. They do not receive that taxation incentive.

I am sure the member for Warrego, Mr Hobbs, would be aware of the glee with which the former Federal Treasurer and Minister for Primary Industries spoke in making a speech about making the depreciation on windmills more realistic, and other items of use on the land. They would be depreciated over the term of their full life—for 40, 50 or 60 years. That is no incentive for a person to make a very questionable economic investment on land. They should have incentive to make better use of the land, so as not to put pressure on the land, creating dust bowls in the corner of big paddocks and marginalising the use of the land in total. They are the things that place greater pressure on the land resources, not the management practices of the graziers.

I do not believe that all graziers are perfect in their management—no-one is—but they are into survival. The land is a resource which they rent and lease from this Government, and have rented from the Governments throughout the history of Queensland. It all comes back to the point that it is the capacity of that block of land to sustain the investment that that lessee has and the way in which he can support his family, educate them, and so on. The real constraints come via the imposition of Government control. To say that the mission statement, as this report says, is to manage the State land is patently ridiculous. It cannot be.

The pressure of lease conditions relates back to the manner in which the Government at the State, the Federal and the local level overgrazes the clients. That is where the problem of land management commences. That is when the droughts commence early. I know that Governments cannot in total be responsible for all of those problems associated with high interest and high market commodities—people buying at the wrong time. There will always be people buying at the wrong time. Who is to know what the market will be like tomorrow? In any case, if there are not people out in the marketplace buying consistently, there is no market and therefore there is no value. Consequently, there will be no rateable value, and the process goes on.

It is absolutely vital that there be a process where there is an incentive to invest, and to invest in land that, at best in many instances, is quite marginal by world terms. We are in the driest continent on Earth. Much of the land in Queensland that comes under the administration of this department—in fact, a large proportion of it—is marginal by any standard on Earth. It is remarkable that the economy of this nation has been able to be built on such a flimsy base. That speaks volumes for the graziers and the pastoralists over the years. With all their warts and all of their mistakes, they have been able to eke out a living to sustain the riches of the country.

The wretched Wolfe report—and I say "wretched" because it was not based on any sound experience or understanding—came to bear at the worst time in the history of the pastoral areas of this State. It was unbelievably insensitive and inept in every way, shape and form. At the end of the day, it has no relationship with the capacity of the leaseholder. It has no capacity in real terms to recognise the trials and tribulations of the economy. It is based on a percentage of the sales that happen to be applying at that time. There is always a lag time. Unfortunately, the lag time—between the time when markets and values decrease and when they increase again—is increasingly being dictated by the capacity of the grazier in particular to get up enough steam for the next time that a problem occurs.

The agenda in this State is changing dramatically. Without any doubt, this Government has no knowledge of the land. It is most unfortunate that not one Government member has any understanding of the land or has worked on the land. I suppose that is because people on the land know the reality of the traditional agenda of the Labor Party in this State. As a result, they are not prepared to throw in their lot with a philosophy that will impose constraints on them. That is why no graziers are members of the Labor Party. If this Government had a rounded-out philosophy relating to land management, I am sure that plenty of people from the pastoral industry would be prepared to join the Labor ranks.

This Government has no feeling for the land, and it has no feeling for the battler. Members opposite make constant reference to the battler. I inform the Minister that this State and this nation were founded on the little battlers who worked hard, who had high aspirations and who went through trials and tribulations that most of us could not contemplate. Those people started with a few acres. They then sold that land and were able to move on to larger plots. A great thing about the Queensland land structure is that it has provided incentives for people to do a quantum leap and move into a larger operation from which they are better able to sustain their families.

Mr Bennett: What about all the freeholding under the National Party? Tell us about that.

Mr STONEMAN: I will take that interjection. The honourable member for Gladstone should not talk about subjects of which he knows nothing. The freeholding——

Mr Bennett: Tell us about the freeholding under the National Party.

Mr STONEMAN: I intend to answer the honourable member. The freeholding under the National Party was a recognition of the fact that the old 28-year lease was not good enough. In the sixties, that 28-year lease was extended to 30 years in certain circumstances. Subsequently, it was recognised that, in order to buy and improve, a leaseholder needed a longer period than 30 years. I believe that, in lease terms, a flat 50 years is about the right time span, because a father/son cycle operates. A lease term of 50 years provides an incentive whereby a person is able to buy land, work it and say, "I will have something for my sons or daughters."

The National Party recognised that in many circumstances the continuing improvement of the land could not be sustained under the leasehold system that had served this State well for many generations and that it was necessary to provide a better term of tenure over the larger areas of the State.

Mr Bennett: No patronage involved at all!

Mr STONEMAN: If the clownish member opposite would only understand that and listen to speeches such as mine—because I can talk about the sweat of the land on my hands—he might gain a better understanding of this topic. I am not attacking the department; I am attacking the philosophy of this Government. The department will always have to do the bidding of its master. That is the way it will always be.

This State's productivity depends on the confidence of the land-holder—those people who hold 80 per cent of the land under lease terms. It is a commitment and investment that follows on for generations. Unless people are able to make that commitment, this State cannot prosper. I would like to refer to many topics—for instance, this Government's ambivalence over Mabo and the inequities of the leases up and down the coast. However, I do not have time. I merely reiterate that the Government should not be managing the State's land; it should be administering it. The department has no expertise and no role to manage this State's land, but it does have a responsibility through the Minister, and that is where it should stay.

Time expired.

Mr ROBERTSON (Sunnybank) (8.35 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the Estimates for the Department of Lands. Prior to concentrating on the main topic of my speech, I want to make a few comments regarding the contribution by the member for Burdekin. I find it amazing that he constructed a 15-minute speech around a misquote of the mission statement of the Department of Lands. He quoted the first sentence of the mission statement, and then tried to redefine the department's mission as being to manage land. Frankly, that is a load of nonsense. For the benefit of the member for Burdekin, I will read into *Hansard* the complete mission statement. It is—

> "To manage the State's land fairly and effectively and to provide highly professional land services which help clients satisfy their needs.
>
> The Department implements its mission through the following land business activities:
>
> Land Use
>
> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Interests
>
> Land Boundaries
>
> Land Titles
>
> Land Valuation
>
> Land Information."

Where is the reference to "land management"? Where is the management imposed from above about which the member for Burdekin spoke for 15 minutes? Frankly, to construct a 15-minute speech around that and to not mention the budget once in his speech is a de facto endorsement by the member of

the direction of this Government with respect to its handling of the Lands portfolio.

I want to concentrate on the Land Information Program. It is responsible for providing integrated land information products and services to meet the needs of clients and coordinate land information systems between State Government departments. To ensure that this responsibility is met, four strategies are pursued under the program. The first strategy is for the Department of Lands, as the lead agency, to coordinate the development of the Queensland Land Information System, thereby improving community access to land information held by all departments. The second strategy is to develop links between existing information systems within the department in order to provide integrated land information products for clients. Thirdly, the program aims to increase client satisfaction by providing cost-efficient maps produced by the department. Finally, as the lead agency, the program aims to advance Government-wide objectives and accept the primary role in the development of cartographic expertise and services.

The vision for the future of the program is that the department is to be seen as the expert in land information management, with the Queensland Land Information System delivering a quality product and service with easy access by all. Importantly, the program recognises the role of community consultation through, firstly, the Land Information Consultative Committee. That committee consists of representatives from academia, local government, professional organisations and the Queensland tourist industry, and it provides input on departmental policy and direction related to land information. Secondly, community consultation is provided through local advisory groups. These regionally based local community groups are formed as required to provide input to the department on specific issues related to land information—a responsible form of management, one would think.

The Land Information Program undertakes a variety of important and essential activities. These include responsibility for ensuring that the departmental responsibilities related to the Queensland Land Information Systems are achieved. During 1992-93, the Queensland Land Information System concept paper was produced to give direction to and understanding of the initiative to make all Government land information available, accessible and useable. Contrary to the uncoordinated, individual agency information technology initiatives in the area of land information during the past decade, the Queensland Land Information System initiative has established a whole-of-Government perspective and put in place mechanisms to ensure cross-agency cooperation and shared development.

During the past year, the Department of Lands has finalised coordination arrangements for the land administration and natural resource themes of the QLIS. The other three themes are not so well advanced, but will be firmed up over the next 12 months. It is not inconceivable that, in the very near future, clients will be able to go to one outlet and obtain land information which covers multiple departments, rather than having to go to each individual Government department office.

The QLIS initiative is directed towards linking existing land information systems and databases into a distributed land information network. This means, for example, that a client can link natural resource information from the Department of Primary Industries with land administration data from the Department of Lands. This will enable information from a number of sources to be integrated to produce composite land information products to service the needs of clients. For example, maps can be produced for clients showing land properties overlaid with agricultural conditions. The release of the Queensland Land Information Directory also represents one of major products of the Queensland Land Information System.

Unlike paper-based inventories or reports, QLID is a computerised directory which enables users to filter their search based on one or many specified criteria. For example, the user may require only data after a certain date, or data from a particular supplier.

QLID also enables a user to search for the availability of data over the whole State, or only over a specified geographic area, for example a town or local authority. This particular feature advances QLID well beyond all previous inventories or published catalogues, saving users considerable run-around time and effort.

The Queensland Land Information Directory was launched in June and is now available for purchase. I am informed that QLID sales and feedback have, to date, been very favourable. The Queensland Land Information System provides the necessary mechanisms for easy community-wide access to land information held by the Government through service outlets located throughout the

State. The Land Information Program is also responsible for ensuring that the Basic Land Information Network is implemented within the Department of Lands.

The Basic Land Information Network, or BLIN as it is known, consists of a network of existing and proposed departmental databases. In addition, BLIN will facilitate the removal of duplicated data and processes, which in turn will improve the accuracy and currency of data. BLIN will also allow for the automation of existing manual processes.

Initial user requirements for BLIN have been defined in the form of broad level statements of functionality which input from all regions and other business areas. These statements will support the technical feasibility study. An economic feasibility study is in progress to balance potential benefits with indicative development costs. BLIN links databases within the Department of Lands, while QLIS links databases across various departments. Therefore, BLIN is acting as a prototype for QLIS, demonstrating the linking of existing databases across a range of computers.

Work commenced on these prototypes during the year, which will assist in the development of specifications for the BLIN environment. An integral component of the BLIN project is the validation of common pieces of information which will enable the networking of databases. A project named BLINkey has established a mechanism to check the integrity of common pieces of information in all databases. This activity has to be completed to facilitate the successful implementation of BLIN in 1994.

The BLINkey project has developed the software and procedures for the cross-checking of information held in the department’s databases and is establishing a Master List of Lot on Plan which will apply to all Government databases. As a result of the successful implementation of the BLIN concepts, clients will benefit from the regionalised delivery of more accurate and up-to-date land information, an efficient service and more cost-effective generation of maps and other products.

The Department of Lands, as the mapping authority for Queensland, produces a wide range of products, including paper and digital maps, cadastral, tourist and recreational and topographic maps, aerial photography and satellite imagery. As a result, it provides a base level of mapping covering the whole State.

A major mapping requirement of the Department of Lands is the production and maintenance of maps that show administrative details of land. These maps are used by many varied clients for a range of land transactions through the regional offices of the department. Technology is being integrated into the department's mapping process, producing many benefits to the community. Computer production provides a significantly improved service, in terms of faster production, and the delivery of a more cost-effective map tailored to meet the particular needs of the department's clients.

During the past year, 296 cadastral maps, 12 topographic maps and 15 tourist and recreation products were produced, revised or reprinted at a total cost of approximately $1.690m. The maps showing administrative details were maintained at a cost of $2.4m.

The production of cadastral maps has now been regionalised, and the conversion to computer produced mapping for other products is well advanced. Computer produced image based topographic maps, a new development over the past two years, is now being fully implemented, and will reduce the cost of producing topographic mapping by up to 75 per cent. This means what used to be a $40,000 map has been reduced in cost to about $10,000 and the overall time to produce the map has been reduced by 66 per cent. Therefore, what used to take 12 weeks to produce has been reduced now to four weeks.

The first of the department's tourist and recreational maps to be fully generated by computer—that was the map of Fraser Island—has been completed. The techniques employed during this process have resulted in significant savings over traditional approaches. It is expected that future revisions of this map will attract savings in the order of $10,000 in reprographics and labour costs.

During the past year, 177 customised products were produced, including 27 maps that were completed for the Brisbane City Council ward redistribution. These products were undertaken on a full cost recovery basis.

Recently, the department released the *Atlas of Queensland, “Reef, Range and Red Dust”*. This atlas depicts the State in an historical, geographical and human aspect. The atlas has been through a major update and revision by Government departments. The atlas was launched by the Premier at the RNA Show in August this year. Fifteen thousand copies of the atlas were produced,

and a marketing strategy is being implemented targeting the corporate and educational sectors. At at 18 October this year, 660 copies of the atlas had already been sold.

Aerial photography and satellite imagery is an essential tool in monitoring the State's growth and development. It provides an integral component for mapping, especially our new image based topographic maps. Aerial photography is used for a variety of applications, including environmental impact studies, farm management and Landcare programs, geological or mineral exploration, and recreation. This program maintains a comprehensive aerial photography library, which is available as a product to clients at the department's Land Service Centres.

The program is also responsible for ensuring that the role designated by Cabinet to the department as Lead Agency in Cartography is fulfilled. The existing stock of aerial photography is a valuable historical record of the State. It is important that this photography be preserved, to enable the comparison of the current situation with the past to be undertaken, assisting in modelling growth patterns, disaster patterns, etc.

Lands has developed a 5-year program in consultation with other Government departments and the State Archivist to preserve the State's existing aerial film resource and a plan to preserve all future aerial films. The Land Information Program provides coordinated policy advice to Government and technical advice and services are provided to other Government agencies where necessary. This will assist in achieving consistency in standards and practices across Government.

A coordinating committee has been convened, with the initial membership drawn from the Australian Institute of Cartographers, and those Government departments are able to contribute to the objectives of the lead agency. Other cartographic entities from the private and academic sectors are also encouraged to participate.

The major activities planned in 1993-94 include building on the foundations laid down over the past 12 months. This includes further development of the QLIS program by further expenditure of $1.006m. Activity will revolve around finalising the Government's position, policy and standards framework in which QLIS will work. This will lead to the ability to link databases during 1994-95, with the benefits and reality of QLIS being realised.

The basic land information network, with expenditure of $0.284m, includes work revolving around detailed planning necessary to implement the BLIN program, which I spoke about before, by December 1994. The planning will involve the assessment of technical solutions available, and funding options and policy issues required by the department. BLINkey will also be further developed, with an injection of funds of some $0.800m.

Mapping will also continue, with a $4.326m budget this year to continue the production of cadastral, topographic and tourist recreation maps. This year, the Budget allocation for the Department of Lands and these programs that I have spoken about tonight comes to around $11.531m. The difference in expenditure between 1992-93 and 1993-94 relates to the relocation of 31 regional staff to the Land Boundaries Program, reflecting priorities in work activities in regions. Having outlined the current activities of Land Information Program, it is clear that it is a dynamic program.

Time expired.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (8.50 p.m.): In rising to speak in this debate, I particularly wish to direct my remarks to three areas of major concern: firstly, the building units area; secondly, the Titles Office; and thirdly, valuations. Firstly, I shall say a few words about the Building Units and Group Titles Act. I have been particularly disappointed about this, because all we have seen over the past three or four years under this Minister and this Government is a growing conflict between unit owners, bodies corporate, the managers, the referee, and the department. We are talking about people's homes. In many cases, the only home they own is their unit. Some of them are in an elderly stage of life and looking forward to a peaceful existence in retirement. Instead of that, they are confronted with one major problem after another. This problem can be described only as a growing conflict. Often, the Government wants to opt out of its responsibilities in this regard and leave the various matters to the courts to decide. I believe that this is not an option in practice and should not be an option which the Minister could consider as reasonable. Unfortunately, that seems to be the case.

The Minister would have to recognise that the Building Units and Group Titles Act needs a major overhaul. I know that the Act itself is not working. I know also that many people in the Government understand this. It is one of

the most public-oriented Acts. In other words, it is an Act that is referred to by the public on a regular basis. In parts, it is a difficult and complicated Act to understand. Under this Act, the role of the referee has broken down. It is not functioning as I believed that it would—and certainly did function in its early stages. I want to make it clear that the fault is not with the referee. It is the fault of the legislation under which the referee has to perform his duties. Perhaps we should have one piece of legislation for larger groups of units or larger bodies corporate and another piece of legislation for smaller blocks of units. In the past, I have spoken about this matter and said that, because of the complexities involved with larger blocks of units and bodies corporate, one might need to break up the legislation. No matter how this is handled, one thing is for sure—the current system is breaking down, and the situation is getting worse day by day.

The demand for living in units has never been higher. Unfortunately, many people do not know what they are letting themselves in for—whether they are retired people, students who are renting, or even those with families. Owing to their choice of lifestyle, many people prefer unit living instead of a detached house. This growth in unit living has placed on the legislation added pressures with which it was not designed to cope. Yet under this Government all we have seen are committees that have been set up to advise the Minister and to prepare various proposals and amendments that should be made to the legislation. But that simply has not occurred. In fact, I still have a copy of that famous—for good or bad—piece of draft legislation known as the Administration Bill, which the Minister pulled out of the hat some time ago but, I understand, failed to get through the Cabinet. We have heard nothing about that for well over 12 months. I do not know whether there was good or bad in that Bill. But certainly, I presume that the Minister was trying to solve some of the current problems. As I said, nothing further has been heard about that, and the whole situation has been left in abeyance. In other words, unit owners and those involved in the industry have been left to drift along. So often with this Goss Labor Government, when difficult matters arise—as the Minister would appreciate—things are left to drift along. Regardless of whether a person's life savings might have been invested in a unit or that person depends upon the industry for employment, the situation has been allowed to drift along.

I have a list of these cases. The Minister would appreciate that unit living is very much in vogue in my electorate. I receive a large number of complaints not only from within my electorate but from right across the State. People say, "The member for Indooroopilly has a lot of these problems in his electorate. We will have a chat to him about it." Or they write to me about it or believe that somehow this comes within my responsibility as the Opposition spokesman on Justice and Attorney-General matters. Of course, members know that that is not the case. Perhaps we should consider returning some of these things to the Justice Department, where they were in the good old days, when I am sure things worked better than they do under the Lands Department.

Many large blocks of home units are getting old. As time goes on, the problems with them become more frequent. One of the problems, particularly with larger groups of units, is that there are often absentee body corporate members. In some cases, the majority of the body corporate comprises absentee unit owners. On top of that, the majority of units are rented. In other words, the majority of owners are also absentee. They are not prepared to undertake the necessary maintenance on those unit blocks. This is a growing issue that has been taken up with the Minister's department and the referee. I can understand how this problem gets more difficult for all concerned, because the legislation is not designed to cope with those situations.

Time after time I hear about problems with a retaining wall that is starting to fall down, or rainwater that is developing into pools of water in driveways, car parking areas and even in some garages—as occurred in one particular case that I have before me. That accumulated water creates a lake. In this particular case the owner lived there, but the majority of body corporate members did not, because the units were tenanted. That unit block is perhaps 20 years old, and problems are developing. Many absentee owners are not prepared to undertake the necessary maintenance on those buildings. Even though some work is done and engineering certificates are obtained, claims have been made that they are not properly acquired. All types of allegations are made. Retaining walls that become unsafe are monitored for movement. As I said, some work is done but other work is not carried out, and the real issue is not resolved. This situation is allowed to drift on and on. I am finding this occurring more and more. Many unit blocks in my

electorate are getting on in years, and for that reason similar problems are occurring regularly. The maintenance work that needs to be undertaken is not done.

Members would have heard about the famous case—and I say "famous" because I know that Mr Wright has written to the Minister, to me and to a range of other people on many occasions. I think he has even taken up this issue with the Criminal Justice Commission. I refer to Mr Dennis Wright of Sunshine Beach, who has been very vigorous in his complaints. He believes that he has failed to obtain justice. In good faith, he became the manager of a small block of units on the Sunshine Coast. He put his life savings into it. Now he feels that he has been badly wronged. Certainly, he has not received justice. He has lost his life savings.

Mr Hobbs: They've left him high and dry.

Mr BEANLAND: The Minister has more than left him high and dry. Mr Wright spent something like $120,000 trying to get justice. He lost another $800,000. Yet he cannot even get a reasonable hearing from the Minister or his department.

Mr Gilmore: The Minister has quite deliberately walked away from Dennis Wright. He has turned his back on natural justice.

Mr BEANLAND: He has certainly done all that, because it is too hard. The Government is not interested in natural justice. The Minister will claim that this is outside the legislation and that Mr Wright can take some action in a court of law. He has taken some action and failed. The point is that we are talking about an industry in which we are dealing with people's homes, livelihoods and lifestyles. In the case of Mr Wright, in good faith he went in there and was badly misled and let down, particularly by the Minister and this Government. That happened during the term of this Government. It is no use blaming somebody else.

We have had a string of these cases on the Gold Coast, where the situation is, of course, dramatically worse. Weekly, we hear of more cases. There have been a number of court cases—I understand there are some more cases currently in court—involving bodies corporate and the unit owners and managements. Quite often on the Gold Coast, the case exists where the bodies corporate are taking on the unit managers over management rights. That is creating its own particular problems. It is not good enough for the Minister to say that these people have recourse to the law. I believe that in each case these matters ought to be spelt out far more clearly within what has become a very complicated piece of legislation.

It is certainly not beyond the wit of the Minister or the Government to produce loads of legislation. They claim as a great credit that last year they produced the more legislation than any other Parliament in this nation. They claim credit for that in the Budget documents. Let us get down to this particular piece of legislation, because it affects people in more ways than does most other legislation. The uncertainty that surrounds it has resulted in these court cases because the position of the people involved is not clear. This leads me to discuss the battle of proxies and the way in which proxies are used by one side against another side. This is done in the battles to acquire management rights, to see whether the management remains within the operations, or whether the body corporate receives sufficient votes at the annual meeting to sack the management. These are real events. These are everyday events in which people's livelihoods are involved. In many cases, elderly people have gone to live in a unit in their retirement only to find that they are in the middle of what is an almighty brawl. It can be described in no other way. The Minister and the Government have clearly walked away from the problem.

I referred earlier to the Titles Office and argued for a return to the good old days. There is no point in the Government trying to pretend that there are not enormous delays occurring within the Brisbane Titles Office. Not only are delays occurring but also errors are starting to crop up within the Titles Office. It is interesting to note that this is not the case right around the State. However, in Brisbane it is particularly bad—delays of two and three months are the norm. It seems that every time Parliament sits, I get telephone calls from constituents and other people complaining and wanting something done in relation to their deeds that have been left lying around the Titles Office for two, three and sometimes over 12 months. In fact, recently a solicitor told me that the Titles Office wanted him to give them a certificate because they stapled a will. Some of the new staff recently appointed are not aware of the fact that attachments cannot be stapled to wills. Someone in the Titles Office put a staple in a will. It was not someone from the solicitor's office who did it. It happened in the Titles Office, and the staff admitted it. They wanted the solicitor to give them a certificate stating that there were no attachments to the will. I am sure that honourable members are aware that the Titles

Office considers that a no-no, as it should. One cannot put staples into wills.

Mr Hobbs: They are 33 000 documents behind.

Mr BEANLAND: I do not doubt that they are 33 000 documents behind. That is a shameful record for the Minister. Many of my constituents are having to put up with this day in and day out. It is simply not good enough. It does not matter whether we consider subdivisions or transactions right across-the-board, there are continual problems in relation to the Titles Office. This was an area that not so long ago functioned efficiently and effectively. It was not too many weeks ago, after hounding the office for some time, that I received a deed. I do not blame the staff for this—morale is very low there because of the way in which the Minister has changed the office. The staff who have been trained there have left and the new staff who have been moved in have been given no training. In fact, that is why many of the problems are occurring. Even when we got this deed from the Titles Office it contained a gross error and the whole thing had to go back for another round. Thank goodness I managed to contact one of the senior officers, who processed the deed smartly. The process had already taken several months by that stage. Just when we thought that at long last we had the deed, a major error occurred, and round it went again. That is not abnormal; I have heard of it happening on many occasions.

In conclusion, I refer to annual valuations. I could not speak to these Estimates without mentioning annual valuations. I appeal to the Minister to get to the stage at which people are advised individually of changes in their valuations. I accept that that could be too costly. The Minister should change annual valuations to three-yearly valuations or some other timetable under which people can be advised of changes. The Government has a duty and a responsibility, as all Governments do, to advise people of changes in their valuations. It is simply not good enough to say that they can look in the daily newspaper.

Time expired.

Mr DOLLIN (Maryborough) (9.08 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to address the Estimates of the Department of Lands. The Lands Department has the responsibility to produce both statutory and client valuations in an even-handed manner that reflects to all citizens of our State an honest value of their land.

A major function of the Land Valuation Program is to administer the Valuation of Land Act as amended in 1944. The purpose of this Act was to make better provisions for determining the value of land for rating and taxing purposes. The initial Act stipulated that all land in Queensland should be valued on a five to eight-year cycle. However, the Government of the day, in its wisdom, decided in 1985 that valuations made on an annual basis would produce a more even increase in valuation rates and charges and get away from the large increases that occurred when a revaluation was made after a long period, especially in coastal areas where prices increased thousands of per cent in a matter of a few years.

In 1990, the present Government commissioned the Wolfe report, which made recommendations encompassing a wide range of complex land management issues, including valuations of land. Due to this report, the Valuation of Land Act was amended to provide, with a few exceptions, that the valuations which had previously been used for the basis of rating and taxing should be also used as a basis for Crown land rentals as from 30 June 1993.

In 1992-93, the unimproved capital valuations in the State amounted to approximately $72 billion. This valuation was used as the basis to generate $1 billion in revenue to State and local governments. Another valuable function performed by the valuation program is to provide advice for the State Government, local authorities and other statutory bodies on matters associated with asset management or the acquisition, purchase, sale or rental of land.

The director-general is charged with ensuring that valuations are made in an independent, impartial manner, without fear or favour, affection or ill will. The whole intent of the Act is that the director-general carries out his responsibilities without the interference of any person or body. This is a far cry from what was the go under the previous Government, when it depended on one's political alignment and who one knew in the Government as to the value one got.

I know a chap in Maryborough, a pretty good friend of Joh's, who, on the eve of the National Party defeat in 1989, got almost half an island for a little more than a song. There were plenty of others who got similar bargains at around the same time. Honourable members would not have to go too far from this room to find some of them. Today, we have a Government that plays it straight down the line.

This year, we will see the production of the annual valuations for 131 local authorities. All valuations will have a date of valuation as at 30 June 1993 and will be effective from 30 June 1994. These valuations are arrived at by referring to sales of properties that occur up to the date of valuation by taking the average between the highest and lowest purchase prices paid up to the date it becomes effective. This method provides a value that is more closely representative of the market price at that time.

Valuations will be available to the public at regional offices. In my electorate, that will be at the Wide Bay/Burnett regional office in Kent Street, Maryborough. Advice of the new valuations will commence with 131 local authority valuations being placed on display from 15 November 1993. There will be no charge associated with the display of the valuations. The displays will occur from January to March. Brisbane City will be available from 14 February 1994. Approximately 1.1 million valuations will be released during this time covering 131 local authorities, including the new Cooloola Shire, which is a combination of the of the former Gympie City and Widgee Shire Councils.

Valuations play a very important role in our community as they have much to do with taxes and charges that are levied, for example, the assessment of general rates by local authorities, the assessment of land tax by the Office of State Revenue, as well as the assessment of Crown land rental by the Department of Lands and the Department of Business, Industry and Regional Development. These valuations will also be utilised by Government departments and instrumentalities as well as local authorities for the sale and purchase of land or improvements.

A discussion paper on the proposed new Valuation of Land Act was released on 9 March this year and asked for public input. About 100 replies have been received from a cross-section of the community, including primary industry bodies and representatives from local government as well as local interest groups and Government departments. Where necessary, face-to-face discussions were held with those people to ensure that all aspects of their submissions were clarified. All comments have been considered, and work is continuing on the preparation of the Bill. Authority to prepare the Bill will be sought about the middle of next year, and will be used as a basis for the annual valuations in January 1995. These valuations will be effective from 30 June 1995.

An amount of $27.129m will be spent during 1993-94 on the provision of valuations. This year, valuations will be provided to Government trading enterprises as part of the national performance monitoring process where the performances of enterprise will be judged against the value of the assets they control.

The development of the integrated valuation and sales system will be ongoing and will replace the existing database, which is over 25 years old and has been identified as having many shortcomings due, to some extent, to the changes in Government policies and reviews. The existing database cannot hold the valuation data required to be used as a basis for the determination of Crown land rentals as required by the Wolfe report, nor can it handle the increased workload resulting from the move to annual valuations since 1985 and the demand from clients for a quicker and more sophisticated service in valuation and sales. There is also a need to integrate the valuation and sales information, which is available with other information held within the department to satisfy the ever-increasing demand from the community for meaningful information.

I refer now to the Integrated Valuation and Sales System—IVAS. In 1993-94, approximately $8.5m is to be spent on the purchase of the hardware and software for the programming of the new system for data collection, training and staff and the implementation of the system in all 23 regional offices of the Department of Lands. A further $600,000 will be expended on the salaries of department staff attached to that development as user representatives. This system will be progressively introduced between April and October 1994 and will be ready for use to produce the 1995 annual valuations. This new system will reduce significantly the present 15-month timelag from the time the valuation is made to the date it becomes effective for the purpose of revenue costing. This will allow more up-to-date and equitable valuation. At present, this time is being reduced from 15 months to 12 months. With the introduction of IVAS, this period will be reduced further to six months.

This system will provide greatly increased property information and it will be more flexible in retrieving information from other Government departments through direct linkage to their databases. In turn, it will provide asset valuations to other Government departments that require this information through the same linkage from database to database. This is all part of the asset

management policy. The system will also assume the responsibility for the redevelopment of the computer system for the Office of State Revenue in connection with the collection of land tax. So it will catch up with people; they will not be able to dodge it as easily.

The expenditure for 1992-93 for the valuation program of the Department of Lands amounted to $27.544m. This expenditure was used for the preparation of 1.1 million statutory valuations and approximately 700 client valuations. In addition, expenditure on the IVAS system in 1992-93 amounted to $1.427m. This world-class development is considered to be the largest Ingress Unix Computer Development in the world. It has been staffed by 40 contracted programmers and associated management staff. This year, rapid progress has been made to ensure that the system that is to be introduced progressively from April next year provides clients with the best possible valuation and sales information available.

Approximately $12m has been allocated for the technical development of the Integrated Valuation and Sales System—IVAS. This system is intended to be fully implemented throughout Queensland by late 1995 and, as I said earlier, will be used in producing the 1995 annual valuations. Built into the system is a mechanism for producing annual valuations for Government owned enterprises—GOEs—and Government trading enterprises—GTEs.

The land valuation programs outlook for 1993-94 is: valuations to be provided for all local authorities as a basis for revenue gathering purposes; the Valuation of Land Act to be rewritten; the provision of valuations for asset purposes for Government trading enterprises, Government owned enterprises, Government departments, and the disposal of surplus Government land under the Government land management system; the completion of the technical development of the integrated valuation system; the completion of the documentation of the land valuation procedure document; the continued professional development of valuers within and across Government as part of the lead agency in valuations; the provision of advice to the valuation profession through closer links with the Australian Institute of Valuers and Land Economists; and the provision of an independent valuation service to other Government agencies. I have much pleasure in supporting the Lands Estimates for 1993-94.

Mr SLACK (Burnett) (9.16 p.m.): I listened with some interest to the contribution made by the member for Sunnybank. I must agree that the Land Information Program is very worth while, and I support the program as it is outlined in the annual report produced by the Minister and his department. However, it is interesting to note that, within the Budget papers, there is a cut of 19.8 per cent in the funding for that program. Although I compliment the member for Sunnybank on his support for that program, I am sure that he should not be supporting a Government that downgrades the funding of that program to the extent of 19.8 per cent. Being the Opposition spokesperson for Environment and Heritage, I can appreciate how valuable that program is in respect to mapping, land planning and such matters relating to the management of properties and the protection of those properties against degradation.

It is interesting to note that not only has there been a 19.8 per cent downgrading of that program this year by $2.859m from $14.38m to $11.531m, but also the budget Estimate was $15.722m and the actual amount spent was $14.380m, which is a drop of 8.5 per cent. So if one adds last year's depreciation of 8.5 per cent to this year's depreciation of 19.8 per cent, one can see what the Government thinks of that program. So I am surprised that the member for Sunnybank was so supportive of his Government in respect of that program.

Incidentally, the budget figures also indicate a dwindling of the amount allocated to the Land Use Program, which relates to the environment. Last year, it was down 27.6 per cent; this year, down 11.4 per cent. That in itself tells the story about the rhetoric that the Government uses in its commitment to the environment and what it does in practice. Those figures speak for themselves.

It is not that long ago that I visited the Sunmap centre that produces the cadastral maps and the aerial photographs. I walked into that building and I could feel the electricity in the atmosphere. It was unreal. Morale was at an extremely low ebb because so many officers were to leave that building the next day because this Government had seen fit to relieve them of their positions.

Mr Hobbs: Scandalous.

Mr SLACK: The honourable member for Warrego says that that is scandalous when the Government claims to be committed to the environment and programs that will enhance the environment. For argument's sake, some of the responsibilities of the Land

Information Program are the Cape York Peninsula land use study, vegetation mapping with satellite data, cadastral mapping, aerial photography, remote sensing and, as the member for Sunnybank said correctly, the atlas of Queensland. In a nutshell, that is what this Government thinks about planning for the environment in the area of the Minister's responsibility.

Much has been made of the desperate position that many land-holders face with respect to drought, low commodity prices and increasing land rents. In my electorate in recent times, I have had quite a few people come to me with instances of dramatically increasing rents. I may have made representations on some of them. I forget now; it was a while ago. There seems to be some area of dispute between the Minister and the Cattlemen's Union, for argument's sake, in respect of this aspect of rents.

Mr Smith: Not the Cattlemen's Union—one person!

Mr SLACK: I would assume that the President of the Cattlemen's Union, Kerry Martin, speaks for the Cattlemen's Union. He speaks in figures of an increase in revenue from rents of 75 per cent, which the Minister disputes. Whether the Minister disputes it or not, there are obviously major rent increases in many areas that concern the land-holders involved. I will give the Minister a few instances. A canefarmer came to me not so long ago. I took him and the TV cameras out with me. For half an acre of the land on which he grows cane—and it is part of his cane property; it is on a corner of a sealed road—he was paying $100. His latest rent assessment was $430. I rang the canegrowers association and I ascertained what he would make from that block of land. The expected return on a five-year average gross return, as supplied to me by the canegrowers association in Bundaberg, was $440.40 per year—that is gross return—with a net return of $168.62 to the farmer. Yet, this Government has put his rent up for that block of land to $430.

Mr Vaughan: What is the area of the land?

Mr SLACK: I take the interjection from the member.

Mr Vaughan: My daughter pays $6 a week for 1.6 acres down at Nudgee for just a horse. What are you growling about?

Mr SLACK: I take the member's interjection. This man is growing cane on it.

Mr Vaughan: Absolutely crazy—$6 a week for 1.6 acres at Nudgee for a horse; and you're growling!

Mr SLACK: I rang the Lands Department and asked, "What is going on here? This is ridiculous." It said, "We have to value that land for its highest and best use. Then we apply a renting procedure of 3 per cent, or whatever."

Mr Vaughan: You're unreal. Get with the real world!

Mr SLACK: I am living in the real world. The honourable member is the one who is not living in the real world. Why produce cane—something that contributes to the economy—when there are rent increases of that nature? It is not saleable. He cannot go out and sell it. It is leasehold land; it is not freehold land.

Mrs Bird: Nobody would buy it. It is too small.

Mr SLACK: He has had it for years. He cannot go out and sell it. So he is stuck with that land on the corner for which he is expected to pay rent of $430. I use the example of Crown land rental—GHPL; 1 300 acres. The Minister said that it is revenue neutral. It went up from $120 to $1,980—an increase of 1 650 per cent. The gentleman has appealed; I think he would appeal. The member for Bundaberg, Clement Campbell, should be aware of the example of the Bundaberg Bowls Club. Its rent increased by $400 a year. It is now $2,000 per financial year. The club has had the lease since 1905. What will happen? This Government will force the club to sell it. That is what it amounts to. The club will be forced to sell it.

It is no wonder that land-holders out there are very apprehensive about this Government's policy. There is much uncertainty about their future tenure as far as leasehold tenure is concerned; what rents they are likely to be paying; how secure that leasehold land will be when renewing leases; what sort of terms would be involved if the club wants to freehold it, if it can freehold it; and what the situation will be in respect of freehold land as far as requirements as to what the club may do with that freehold land, such as the clearing of it. Certainly, as far as leasehold land is concerned at the moment, that apprehension is reflected in the fact that we see now many land-holders, if they can afford it, out there clearing tracts of land to beat the Government's restrictions that may be enforced in respect of clearing land.

To date, the officers of the Department of Lands in various areas throughout the State have been very good in their understanding of

some of the problems. I will not stand up here and knock individuals in the Lands Department, but I will say that morale is very low. That has been reflected in conversations with individual officers from the Lands Department itself.

The honourable member for Maryborough, Mr Dollin, spoke of land valuations and made some accusations about the former Government as far as who people knew and what political party they belonged to. That accusation against the officers involved who may have determined that valuation was very vile and uncalled for. They had a set procedure. The valuation officers come out and value a property. They issue valuation notices. Those notices were the subject of an appeal and all of those sorts of things. I chaired one of the objection committees. About 300 people jumped up and down about it. There was a set procedure. There is no provision for political interference. If those members opposite are going to suggest there was political interference, they are also making allegations about the integrity of the officers involved. I would not believe that would be their intention, but that is what it amounts to.

There is no doubt that, in relation to land valuations, there is a feeling within the community, particularly with the land-holders in rural areas, that the Government may look at changing to an unimproved site valuation for rural land-holders. I would like an assurance from the Minister that that would never be the intention of this Government. It would be grossly unfair to even consider it. While it may have some application in the urban situation, there is no way in the world it would have application in the rural situation. I am pleased to see the Minister nodding in agreement. If it were to be applied, he would appreciate that for those people in the future who may wish to freehold some land, the clearing undertaken would be added to the unimproved value. If that were the case, the Government would be taking money from them that it was not entitled to, because in the first instance it had leased that land in an unimproved state.

I would like to refer to a statement that the Minister made—and to compliment him on that statement—in respect to the land tribunals. He referred to the cost incurred by little shires in providing input into the setting up the Aboriginal or Islander land tribunals. I refer to the case of the Cook Shire. I get some solace—and I am sure that the Cook Shire people will get some solace from this fact—that the Minister is looking at the transcript charge of $6.50 per page. If I understand him correctly, he was indicating a commitment that he may waive that $6.50 per page for the transcripts of the hearings. As the Minister would appreciate, that runs into a lot of money for representatives from the little shires such as the Cook Shire. Those people have been to see me as, no doubt, they have been to see the Minister. They indicated to me that the cost to that particular shire, as far as their representation is concerned in attending and being part of the land tribunal procedure, will be in excess of $50,000 this year. While these initiatives of the Government may sound good, at the end of the day there is a cost to other people who did not previously have to meet those costs. In the cases of small shires, eventually the ratepayers have to pick up the costs involved. This should not be the intention of the Minister. I was pleased to hear him say that he will be looking at that and meeting the requirements. I would ask the Minister to comment on that situation in his reply.

There is no doubt that considerable unhappiness exists in the Lands Department. Reductions in staff have occurred. The remaining staff have been told that they have to produce more and perform better with fewer resources. They are finding that task virtually impossible. There is no doubt that, throughout the regions of the State, huge delays are being encountered by people seeking to have land-related matters attended to.

Mr NUNN (Hervey Bay) (9.30 p.m.): It has been a hard day, and having to listen to the selective amnesia being pushed upon us by the previous speaker made it even harder.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr NUNN: I will tell the honourable member about the immorality of the administration of Lands under the previous Government. There has been a lot of talk in this Parliament about ministerial rezonings a la Russ Hinze. However, a greater wrong was perpetrated on the people of Queensland. If honourable members give me a couple of hours, I will talk about it. I refer to the practice of ministerial valuations of freehold Crown land in Queensland. I could talk for a long time about practices such as that if members opposite want me to.

Mr Hobbs: I bet the block of land you live on is freeholded.

Mr NUNN: I bet it is, too, and I bet that I paid full dump for it, which is quite different from the yarn that the honourable member's fellow graziers told us about the advantageous terms that he obtained when

he freeholded his block. I paid full dump; the member did not.

The Land Titles Program, as part of the Department of Lands, has always been a contentious area, providing as it does for high volumes of title registration and information services to a wide range of clients throughout the State.

Mr Hobbs: You're an absolute disgrace.

Mr NUNN: I know, and I am a beautiful disgrace. Because the community relies on a speedy response in the registration of land titles, the sector is endeavouring to meet the demand. Since 1991, the registers of freehold, Crown leasehold, foreign ownership, housing authority leasehold and Crown reserves have been integrated. The automated titling system—ATS—is designed to streamline and modernise the production of land conveyancing and title information in Queensland.

Mr Hobbs: Who wrote this speech?

Mr NUNN: I will tell the member who did not write it: the fellows who told us the yarn about his freeholding. Those fellows did not write it and the member did not write it, but I did. Both clients and staff should gain greater satisfaction from this innovation, and service and productivity should be improved.

There are many challenges to be faced over the coming years, not the least of which is automation of the register and the substantial capture of data within the register by December 1995, at the same time being able to service clients with an acceptable standard of service during a period of considerable growth and demand. The Government and the department are addressing those challenges by fine-tuning the process and redistributing resources so that we can reduce existing backlogs to supplement system design, as well as the development and capture of information by the use of expert knowledge. We will also accommodate operational changes necessary in a computerised environment. Both clients and staff will need to be educated so that efficient land conveyancing operations can be achieved.

Mr Hobbs: Do you know that they are 33 000 documents behind?

Mr NUNN: I certainly do, and I will address that issue in a moment. The following figures will give some idea of the demands placed on the department and its officers. In 1992-93, there was a 10.7 per cent increase in the number of dealing lodgements, which increased to 555 468, while there were 2 154 737 requests for register searches, which represented an increase of 13.3 per cent. The revenue raised from those activities was $67,125,000.

Mr Hobbs: How much more than last year?

Mr NUNN: It was significantly more. Our performance standard in 1992-93 was up and down. There were no successful court actions attributable to errors or mistakes by the department. However, service times have not aligned with past standards resulting from increased demand and limitations imposed by a paper-based register environment. Backlogs of work in progress have remained high in the Brisbane registry, while those in Rockhampton and Townsville have fluctuated between acceptable and high. Average daily dealing registrations and supply of information services have averaged at previous boom time maximum levels. The department has been exceedingly busy.

The Estimates and projections for 1993-94 are interesting and, in some ways, are very exciting. Dealing lodgements and requests for register information are expected to increase by at least 10 per cent. The revenue from that is estimated at $74,734,000, which is up from $67,125,700 in the previous year. We will revert to standards more in keeping with past performance for paper-based register services, and that should help to start to clear the backlog. That will be a progressive process. We should reduce the backlogs of work in progress in all areas. Average dealing registrations and supply of information services will be considerably above current levels. I think it is fair to say that, in the regions, staff are coping pretty well with the increased demand for their services. However, it is also fair to say that, in Brisbane, staff members are feeling some pain, but that pain will go away next April or May when the automated titling system is introduced.

We live in an age in which the use of technology is important, and land management must embrace technology if it is to keep pace. A contract between the Minister for Lands and Technology-One Pty Ltd for design and development of software for an automated titles system was signed on 7 August 1992. That was a contract for $1.7m. As well, software development is progressing to schedule and within budget. Tenders for supply and installation of hardware have been evaluated, and a contract is imminent, with hardware to be installed in December this year. Tenders for data capture were called in October/November 1993, and the capture of

data from paper titles is to commence in the first quarter of 1994. The register will be substantially captured on computer by the end of 1995. The ATS will be operational in April 1994. Any essential modifications identified for operational efficiency are to be remedied by the end of June 1994, with progressive implementation across all regions during the rest of 1994. ATS will enable clients to access captured information electronically, that is, by computer. It will also eliminate duplication of recording and endorsement processes necessary in paper-based operation and will allow immediate access to and updating of the register by staff as titles are captured.

There will be a thorough investigation and analysis of processes to identify alternatives that do not diminish integrity or that will no longer exist with ATS. These changes are to be initiated prior to ATS. The elimination of identified non-essential activities that will permit staff retraining and reallocation to other client services include: self-service searching and photocopying of some records by assessed and accredited clients, which will give faster access to register information; the elimination of some photocopying services, which will provide an improved service that is cheaper for clients; and the discontinuance of some data entry, which will free up some staff resources. These initiatives mean that there will be less double handling, and the mundane work of the officers will be eliminated.

In the area of operations in the Brisbane region, short-term remedial action will include the targeted use of overtime, the examination and registration services being provided by regionally based and managed teams, and additional staff resources being provided from other areas of the department.

In the central and northern regions, short-term remedial actions include limited use of overtime, examination and registration by teams processing dealings based on degree of complexity and the reallocation of staff from within the region. Until ATS is implemented, registries at Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville will remain repositories for the register. They will perform registration functions and they will supply register information.

Other regions and districts provide agency services. Their functions are necessarily restricted to the acceptance of service requests from local clients, the pre-lodgement and examination and receipt of dealings, transmission to a registry for further processing and the delivery of products to clients when requirements are fulfilled. This is all part of a step-by-step plan to make the dealings and the processing of dealings and, therefore, the registering of title a much quicker process.

All honourable members have heard of the common form. This common lodgement form, which is Form 100, was amended in January 1993 in keeping with issues identified during a review by major clients, users of information and departmental representatives. Photocopies of Form 100, which replaces six forms previously utilised by three Government departments and most local authorities, are currently being distributed by Lands to relevant departments and councils. Form 100 data will be capable of electronic transfer to compatible systems after ATS is implemented.

Phase 2, which is due for implementation in early 1994, provides for an extensive review of all forms used for transactions with land of every tenure and is nearing completion. The result will be single forms incorporating all those forms with similar purposes for any tenure and rationalisation of the information required to be supplied by clients. The new forms are to be introduced with or prior to ATS in April 1994. At this stage, the whole process will start to speed up. That is the intention of the officers of the Department of Lands.

Phase 3 is where things start to get exciting. It is futuristic and will explore the feasibility/acceptability of electronic data transfer in register operations, document imaging, optical character recognition and the possibilities for national uniformity of requirements.

I think it is worth noting here, too, that administrative advices—that is, those notices that have to be attached to the register and are the bane of many people who have had to do searches—are worth mentioning here. The existence of administrative advices is revealed at every title search. It is a very important part of the title program, and I am pleased to say that that will be enhanced when ATS comes on line.

All in all, what will happen is that we will go from what we have now, where in the regions it takes a full week to register a title, to, when ATS is first implemented, it being able to be done on the spot in those places that have the facilities. It will mean that a clerk from Hervey Bay will be able to go up to Maryborough at 10 o'clock in the morning with a bundle of dealings and will be back by lunchtime with them completed. He will have in his hand a piece of paper for each dealing

that will signify that the title has been registered. After that, of course, when we look at the total implementation of Phase 3, the intention is that solicitors and the like will not have to leave their offices. If they have a compatible computer and they will be able to register titles. All they will have to do is bring it up on the computer and the deal can be done there and then.

In western Queensland, of course, where the facilities are not available and the dealings are not done in great numbers, these facilities will not be available, but the process will still be quicker.

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (9.45 p.m): It is with some pleasure that I rise to speak to these Lands Estimates following that pathetic little kindergarten recitation of departmental dogma by the member for Hervey Bay. I take the opportunity to pay some compliments to the staff of the Minister's department in the two areas with which I deal, both the Cairns office and the Atherton office. We have in the Cairns Office Mr Ian Anderson, who is the local Commissioner for Lands. He has never failed to be courteous and efficient in his dealings with my office, whether I make the phone call or my secretary makes the phone call. Similarly, I must commend Mr Kevin Allen, who is the second-in-charge, and the whole staff. They are all courteous and helpful. In respect of the Atherton office, Adele Smout and her staff are similarly very courteous indeed and helpful wherever it is possible.

I am pleased to be able to inscribe that in the record of the Parliament. There is very little else that I can say that is complimentary of the Minister's department, and that is an awful shame, other than to say that the staff in far-north Queensland have somehow maintained morale in almost impossible circumstances.

The member for Burnett said earlier that morale in the department was non-existent and I was constrained to say that I thought morale was a word that was not in the lexicon of the Department of Lands. However, on reflection I thought it reasonable to say that, yes, these people have maintained morale in almost impossible circumstances.

I attended the Cairns office recently with a constituent from Ravenshoe. I took him to the Cairns office, where we sat down to go through a freedom of information application. I was astonished at the quality of the offices. They are extraordinary offices in the centre of Cairns in the most modern building in the place—air-conditioned, etc. That is the only facility that is offered to those people by the Minister's department. They are understaffed— enormously understaffed. A few moments ago my colleague from Warrego mentioned that the Minister's department is 33 000 documents behind in its dealings. I would not be surprised if they are 33 000 documents behind in the Cairns office alone.

When the Minister's Government decided to go to regionalisation of the Lands Department, I am quite sure that they were innocent of what it was that they were doing. I suppose we should say, "Father, forgive them, for they knew not what they did." They simply arrived with a semi-trailer full of documents out of the Brisbane office, dumped them on the footpath and said, "Go to it, ladies and gentlemen. There is no extra staff, but you are going to fix it." That has merely created enormous aggravation for the people of my electorate and the other electorates in far-north Queensland who have to deal on a regular basis with the Lands Department. It does not matter whether it is land dealings for a pump site or for a bore site on a road or whether it is for the issue of a land title. When requiring assistance for any of these issues, the initial indication one gets from the Lands Department is, "It will take two years." That is the first thing they say—two years. If one says, "For goodness sake, can we not massage this just a little harder?" they say, "If we do, somebody else is going to take two years and a month because we are going to have to take his file off the top of the pile."

It is absolutely unacceptable in this day and age that a Government that pretends to be providing a first-quality service to the people of Queensland is 33 000 documents behind—two years behind—in its dealings.

I deal regularly with the Lands Department. I am sorry to have to tell the Minister these things, but he is in charge of a disaster. The Minister is a nice chap, I have to give him that, but nice chaps do not survive too well when there are disasters about the place.

There are a number of issues that I would like to address in respect of the Lands Department and my dealings with it. I think it is important that the Parliament knows and that the people of Queensland finally have it all revealed to them why they have some problems getting their titles dealt with. I recently had a case in which a constituent came to me and said, "I have to have a pump site. I have got riparian rights. I have an orchard that is dying due to drought and I want to put in a pump."

I made an application for a pump site and was told "two years". The answer given to my subsequent inquiries to the Lands Department was, "Two years, and there is not a thing we can do about it." So, by devious means, I managed to get that fellow a pump in the river. I filled out his pump site application. I said, "The first thing you must do is fill out an application for a pump site. I won't deal with you if you don't." We did that in my office and posted it from my office. I then went to the other statutory authorities that had responsibility in this area and said, "Lord Nelson had one blind eye. He put his telescope up to it and said, 'I can't see'." Beauty! "What I want you to do is issue the appropriate licences that are no longer subject to the requirement that the Lands Department has previously issued a pump licence—a 10 foot by 10 foot square of land on the bank of a creek." They recognised that they simply could not justify holding up the application for two years. I thank God that sometimes we have public servants with common sense. They said, "Okay. We can't put up with the time wastage in the Lands Department because they are simply understaffed and overworked. We are therefore prepared to do the things that we are required to do."

That person has now been irrigating his orchard for 12 months. He still does not have a pump site. He said, "But I might be prosecuted for all this." I said, "Hey, if you have a problem with the Lands Department, you come and see me, because I know what the problems are, and I will go to Geoff Smith, the Minister. He is a hell of a nice chap. He is not going to prosecute you, because you had to survive." That is the name of the game. That is the game that we are playing in this business. Governments have to stop buggerising people around and get on with the business of letting private enterprise survive. The Minister is in charge of a department that is doing its absolute utmost to stop enterprise in this State from getting on with the job. Titles issue in this State is so slow that it is now affecting the economy of this State. One land developer whom I know personally has 130 titles on which he cannot settle because they are tied up in the Lands Department. That is an enormously stupid situation.

Mr Ardill: Is his name Quaid?

Mr GILMORE: Interestingly enough, it is not. But let me tell the honourable member that, if it was George Quaid, I would stand up and defend him just as much as I would defend the honourable member in the same circumstances. The honourable member has no idea about the constraints of private industry in this State. All he does is laugh and say, "Oh, it must be George Quaid, so therefore it does not matter." Of course it matters. It matters that this Government is holding up the business of enterprise in this State simply because it is incompetent in the issue of titles. It is the Minister's responsibility to issue titles as required, when required and on time so that enterprise can get on with its business.

I notice that the Minister for Small Business is in the Chamber. On many occasions, he has spoken about the necessity for Government to get the hell out of the road of private enterprise. This Minister should have breakfast with him tomorrow morning and find out a little bit about the business of private enterprise and getting out of its road.

Mr Elder: He is very supportive of my colleague the Minister for Lands. He has taken the Lands Department by the throat——

Mr GILMORE: He has got it by the throat and he has strangled it and left it lying, gasping and blue, on the floor.

Honourable members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Committee will come to order.

Mr GILMORE: I was provoked. It is important that the Minister also knows about the recent spate of valuations and changed valuations in Crown rentals in this State. An enormous number of valuations were issued by his department, presumably after undertaking inspections and so on. People who received those valuations owned Crown land that was under some kind of tenure—a special lease or whatever. Those people were coming to me on a daily basis and saying, "For goodness' sake, I cannot believe that this valuation has trebled and that my category has gone from Rural or Remote Agriculture"—or whatever it is—"to Rural Residential."

Mr Smith: Are you talking about valuations or rentals?

Mr GILMORE: I am talking about valuations for rental purposes. I want the Minister to listen to this. It is pretty sneaky stuff. From looking at the instrument of title of those people, I discovered that many of the new categories were in total contradiction of the rights and privileges under the instrument of lease. People had a block of land with no legal access, which was used entirely for agriculture—way in the backblocks and a long way from anywhere—and suddenly it had become Rural Residential. The category had

changed enormously. Therefore, the valuation had trebled, and the rental had gone from the 1.5 per cent to 2 per cent category to 3 per cent.

I went back to the department and said, "I suspect there is a little problem with this." I was told, "No, no, no. There can't be any problem with it. We have done it all. It is okay." I suggested that we have a quick look at the instrument of lease. What does it say? It states, "This is for agricultural purposes only. You may not build a house on it." Yet it is classified as Rural Residential. "Oh, well, that is a bit of a mistake." Cases such as that turned up by the dozen.

What I suspect—and the Minister can correct me if I am wrong, but I do not think I am—is that, because the Minister's staff were unable to take any other reasonable course, having been given the task of revaluing every single Crown leasehold in this State for rental purposes, they simply went through the whole book of leases and gave them whatever appeared to be a good idea at the time. Half of them would never have understood the changes and, therefore, would not have complained. Some of the valuations would have been correct, and the other ones had to be dealt with on a personal basis.

Mr Smith: Let me deal with this at the moment. For the whole of the State there have been a total of 200 applications where people believed that their rental category was incorrect—200 in the whole State.

Mr GILMORE: I am glad that that is on the record of the Parliament, because it is absolutely wrong. A large number went through my office—not 200, but a large number. I would bet that they were never recorded. I just had them fixed. Let me tell the Minister about another one. One fellow did a subdivision of land in the Atherton Shire and it was zoned as Rural B, that is, for intensive agriculture, orchards, etc. He had his orchard, the fellow to whom he sold his block had an orchard, his son had an orchard, and so it went through as Rural Residential. It has taken me three months to have the Lands Department finally set the matter right and accept that yes, they were Rural B under the Atherton Town Plan; that they were Rural B in practice, and they were just made Rural Residential simply because it was the easy thing to do at the time, because they had no other option. They simply could not fulfil the Minister's expectations by going out into the field and investigating each one of those blocks on its merits. When some of the people objected, the department dealt with the objections and got away with it. That is great! I am prepared to bet that there are large numbers of Crown leaseholders in this State whose properties are valued improperly, in the wrong category, and those people are paying rent of which the Minister is not deserving. I am prepared to bet that that is the case. Many people simply do not look carefully at these things and, therefore, do not understand why their properties have been so rated and why their rents are so high.

Another matter that I would like to raise briefly—because I am running out of time—is the provision of titles to Crown subdivisions. I have spoken previously to the Minister about this, and I have mentioned it in the Parliament. When the development section of the Minister's department goes about the business of Crown subdivisions, it must provide title to those blocks of land at auction. It is entirely unfair that people bid at auction and buy those lands——

Time expired.

Mr SZCZERBANIK (Albert) (10.05 p.m.): I rise tonight to speak on the Estimates for the Lands Department. I remember the forty-sixth Parliament when I was on the committee with the Honourable Bill Eaton who was the Minister for Lands at that time. Bill inherited a department that was sadly lacking in technology and that did not have any real systems in place to deal with what the honourable member has been talking about here lately. In the old days, land searches and title searches were done by an officer pulling out pieces of paper from the files on the shelf, photocopying them and giving them to the clients. The clients would come into the Titles Office from an office that had computers and they would expect the process to be instantaneous. However, when they walked around the back, they found that the officers had a quill and a pad, and that is how the department was left by the previous National Party Government. This Government has had to spend a lot of money upgrading the technology within the department. It is doing it as quickly as finances allow. It is doing it as quickly as it can.

I was on the committee under the former Government and we were doing the regionalisation—putting the work out into the region. My regional manager, Graeme Rush in Beenleigh, is doing a fine job within that area. He has the fastest-growing area in the world where subdivisions are springing up daily. Those officers are coping fairly well with the tide of subdivisions and titles going through that office. The local developers are receiving

good service at Beenleigh. I used to have my office in Graeme's building. The solicitors are coming in from places such as Cleveland, Beaudesert, Mount Gravatt and the surrounding suburbs of the Gold Coast to get their titles and searches done in the Beenleigh office. They are quite satisfied with the service they receive.

Tonight I also refer to the acquisition of lands by the Administrative Services Department and the Lands Department. I notice that in their 1992-93 annual report they detail the acquisitions of schools and colleges in this State. In the 1991-92 financial year they purchased land valued at $11.55m and in the 1992-93 financial year that figure is just under $17m. The department is out there buying up a lot of properties for school sites. That relates to the State's economy at the moment and the number of people coming here.

I was listening to the ABC at 12 o'clock today. Coopers and Lybrand has just prepared a report on population growth in Australia and it has produced a figure indicating that Brisbane has overtaken Sydney as the most rapidly growing city in Australia. The final question that was posed to the gentleman on the radio today was, "If you were going to set up a shop somewhere in the State, where would you do it?" His reply was, "Between Beenleigh and Nerang." That area takes in my whole electorate. That is the amount of growth that is going on down there.

Land is one of those emotive issues, and National Party members seem to think it is their God-given right to own it. I am despondent about the direction in which the former Yugoslavia is heading at the moment, and the infighting between the ethnic groups about land.

Mr Gilmore: That is pretty relevant stuff!

Mr SZCZERBANIK: It is to the people who live there and those who see the news bulletins every night about different ethnic groups shooting at each other. Years ago these people used to be neighbours and now they are shooting at each other. That is the emotive issue of land tenure and land ownership that the National Party members seem to generate in this Chamber. If they had their way, they would take a gun out into the bush and try that sort of approach out there as well.

Returning to the Lands Department, I refer to the Land Boundaries program within the department. The Land Boundaries program is responsible for the surveying activities of the department and for the collection and management of information about the State's land surface features and land boundaries. Fundamental responsibilities of the program include the Queensland digital cadastral database; the topographic data collection, the place names database; and the State's geodetic control network. These information elements are recognised as essential information for the Queensland Land Information Systems.

The program maintains consultative links with the surveying profession through active participation of some staff members in the activities of the Queensland Division of the Institute of Surveyors and in the operations of the Surveyors Board of Queensland of which the program director is a member. Consultative links with the private sector and users of the program's products are maintained through the department's Land Services Consultative Committee. Frequent informal meetings are also held with private consultants and with representatives of local authorities and other Government departments.

In accordance with a Public Sector Management Commission recommendation endorsed by Cabinet that the Department of Lands be designated as the lead agency in surveying, a surveying lead agency forum has been established which now has representation from seven departments. The role of the forum is to provide a whole-of-Government perspective and give coordinated advice to Government on the development and implementation of policies for monitoring, coordinating and managing Government surveying resources.

I turn now to some of those programs that underpin the land boundaries area. One of those is the digital cadastral database. The digital cadastral database is a computer record of the property boundaries and related descriptive information on Queensland land parcels. It is also a continuous computer map of the whole State. It provides a framework to which all land will be attached. The record of land parcels was determined by electronically tracing the property boundaries network from the best available cadastral maps. These maps vary in scale from 1:2 500 in more densely populated urban areas to 1:250 000 in remote rural regions of the State.

Some of the achievements in 1992-93 include the processes of checking the digital cadastral database against original source maps for the correctness of tenurial information and for geographical accuracy. That was completed in a further 51 local

authorities. With the process known as validation having been completed, the areas have been placed in continuous update mode. There has also been the electronic supply of updated information through the department's electronic bulletin board. It is being maintained by the two local government authorities. The benefits of the digital cadastral database are that it provides a computerised map reference to a number of Government strategic databases as well as being a primary information service. The basic land information network will provide the means to link departmental textual databases to the geographical database system.

The revenue raised through licence fees, extraction fees and an annual licence fee for the ongoing use of this information amounted to $675,000 in the last financial year. It is estimated that in this financial year the Government will receive another $700,000 from that. The other projects in the land boundaries area include the document imaging of survey plans. That provides a solution to the problems of the inevitable deterioration of survey plans through age and constant handling, and the need for rapid access to these plans from regional centres through a document management system.

The problem, as I have said before, is that we are providing the technology for our staff out there to do the job better, to do the job more efficiently and to do the job in any part in Queensland. If a client has a fax machine, that person can get the information at one or two days' notice, I believe.

As a Government, we are doing those things and providing that information. An achievement in this area in the 1992-93 year is the implementation of a capture plan. 150 000 southern registered freehold plans and 9 500 Crown land plans were captured onto that system. The operating and maintenance costs to provide that information in the 1993-94 financial year are just under $130,000.

A further $250,000 has been provided as part of land titles efficiency measures and service enhancement initiatives. These funds are being provided to purchase computers to allow clients in Brisbane more effective access to copies of the survey plans. The benefit of this is that it will provide a permanent and stable archival of every cadastral survey plan in this State. It overcomes the problems of the deterioration of the original plans, as I said, owing to ageing and constant handling. It also avoids the expense of restoration. As I said, it provides rapid access to all the cadastral survey plans from anywhere in Queensland, including regional centres, and it also reduces the storage space required for cadastral survey plans.

Another aspect of the Land Boundaries Program that I would like to talk about is the geodetic network, which is a series of accurately determined survey controlled stations throughout the State which provide an accurate reference framework for subsequent measurement. The use of the network ranges from the determination of a position for new land developments to supporting national and international surveys concerned with continental drift, crustal movement and tidal facility observations. The network facilitates the integration of many land-related databases, and ensures the positional relationship of information from different survey points. Because of the rapidly rising level of technology that exists, we can set up a positioning station anywhere in Australia and know where we are. I have read in some magazines lately that Sony or Sanyo has a global positioning station that people can carry around in their pockets and virtually find out where they are at any point in time. That is the sort of technology that is out there, and the movements that these systems can detect in the earth are just mind boggling. Surveyors tell me that, years ago, they used to have a 100-metre tape and a theodolite.

Mr Stephan: What are they? What are they used for?

Mr SZCZERBANIK: They are those things that they look through. I am not a surveyor. However, that is the technology. I notice when I am driving along the street that surveyors are standing out there with their little posts and their laser-guided survey equipment. As I say, that technology is becoming available, but the cost of it is getting prohibitive. I just do not know where we are going. Are we going to limit the number of people who are out there doing these sorts of things because of the technology that they require?

I must say that this network is working. During 1992-93, one of its achievements was that it contributed to national projects and initiatives coordinated by the Australian Land Information Group, which is concerned with the development of a uniform national common reference network and the monitoring of the greenhouse effect. People living on the Gold Coast fear that if the predicted greenhouse effects occur, some of those estates along the water——

Time expired.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (10.15 p.m.): The member for Albert made the comment that he did not know where we were going with technology. After listening to him, it was quite obvious that he did not know what he was talking about and that his script was prepared for him. It is just a pity that the member for Albert and the member for Hervey Bay did not have a long, hard read before they tried to deliver their speeches in the Chamber. It is a problem that Government members seem to have.

The member for Nudgee made a couple of comments in his speech, one of which was that landowners are asking what incentive the Government can give them to look after their land. I point out to the member that, owing to the very difficult problems that they are experiencing currently because of the lack of returns available to them, landowners need incentives in the same way as other business owners needs incentives.

Mr Vaughan: What about using a bit of initiative? Everybody says, "What incentive will you give me to look after my land?" You shouldn't need incentives.

Mr STEPHAN: I agree with the member. We should not need incentives. However, the Government is not doing anything to make it profitable for those businesses to exist. The Government is not doing anything. It is not giving incentives to them. However, it is giving incentives to every group in the city. It is giving incentives to its own little pockets of support, but not to the areas upon which this country relies, and which this country has been living off for years and years. Government members are not prepared to accept that. It is a pity that they do not leave the city and go out into the country to see what goes on.

Mrs Edmond interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Mount Coot-tha!

Mr STEPHAN: If I had done that this morning, I would have been named and told to sit down. I am not too worried about the interjections that are coming from Government members, but I do not know about the different attitude displayed by the Chair when members on the Opposition side of the Chamber interject, as they did this morning——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Chamber will come to order. The member for Gympie will continue to give his speech.

Mr Vaughan: And stop inciting us.

Mr STEPHAN: I am not too sure if the member is being incited or getting excited. He has run off the track a little bit.

I would like to talk about a couple of matters, and one of those is the requirement to freehold mining homestead leases. At the outset, I would like to thank very much Bill Albrecht, who works in the mining section of the department. He does not have very many staff, but I would like to thank them for their work. He is certainly a fellow upon whom one can rely and to whom one can relate. One can be assured that, if it is possible for him to assist, he will do so. Likewise, I have been in regular contact with the departmental officers in both the Gympie office and the Maryborough office. Again, their assistance is very much appreciated by me and by members of my office.

I would like to pursue this issue of freeholding miners' homestead leases. I point out that one of the greatest disappointments is that the Government has seen fit to say to the owners of those leases—which, in the case of the MHLs, are fully paid-up leases; the Government has been paid for them, but it has not taken that final step of freeholding—that unless they are prepared to freehold their land by the end of 1993, then it will charge them a second time. This is what is called double dipping. The Government has been paid for the land. It has been paid for a 30-year lease. They are fully paid up, and now the Government is turning around and saying that people will have to pay again. This is the type of thing that I want to point out to the member for Nudgee, Mr Vaughan.

Mr Vaughan: What you are saying is that, if you rent a house, after a period you own it.

Mr STEPHAN: It is a fully paid up lease. Apparently, the honourable member does not understand the lease arrangements. It is a lease that is paid up by agreement over 30 equal payments every year for 30 years. It is a fully paid up lease. It is not as though it has not been agreed to. The price has been set and agreed to for the purchase.

Mr Vaughan: Under your Government.

Mr STEPHAN: It was in place long before the previous Government came into power. It goes back to the thirties, and even back to the turn of the century. That arrangement has been agreed to over many years. The last of the MHLs in that area were issued back in the 1940s.

Mr Beattie: During the war.

Mr STEPHAN: It was after the war, but around that time. It was the Labor

Government that did it, but that is not the point, which is that it was a fully paid up lease. The agreement was that it has been paid for over 30 years. What more do those honourable members opposite want? Now they are turning around and saying that, because it is still a fully paid up lease, because it is an MHL, if it is not freehold, it will be turned around and leased a second time. I say that that is wrong and immoral. That is why I am opposed to that aspect of what the Government is trying to do. In much the same way as the MHPLs, the residential and business areas have never had a valuation placed on them for freeholding purposes. However, the MHLs have, so the whole lot cannot be put in the one basket. It cannot be said that they will all be treated in the same way if they are not freehold at the end of 1993.

Is it any wonder that the local people get upset? Is it any wonder that they come into my office and complain bitterly about the fact that it is their piece of land, which has been paid for over that 30-year period, but now they are expected to pay for it again? Violence in the streets can very easily occur under these circumstances. I am not underestimating the feelings out there.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr STEPHAN: I am not inciting riots. These are the people who come into my office and make these comments. I do not incite them; I do not stir them up.

Mr Vaughan: How much a year were they paying?

Mr STEPHAN: They are not paying anything a year because it is a fully paid up lease.

Mr Vaughan: What were they paying?

Mr STEPHAN: They were paying the value of the land over a period of 30 years.

Mr Vaughan: How much per year were they paying?

Mr STEPHAN: They were paying for the value of the land over a period of 30 years. It varied. Back in the 1940s and the 1920s it was worth about ten pounds. It might have been worth a bit more; it might have been a bit less. It was calculated according to the value of the land at the time. At the present time, the MHPLs can be freeholded over a 30-year period. It is the same process. People sit on the land and then spread the valuation over 30 years. In this instance, it is not the same process, because the value has been agreed. I was responsible for bringing in that piece of legislation. I urged for that it be brought in. I urged that the valuation be set on the 1980 VG valuation. That is the valuation that the MHPLs are working on at the moment. Cash can be paid for them for a 51.24 per cent reduction in price, or it can be paid out over 30 years. The honourable member is shaking his head, but these are the options that are available.

Mr Vaughan: And then they can go and flog it off.

Mr STEPHAN: It is their land. What does the honourable member mean? If he buys a piece of land, would he then say that it belongs to the Government after 30 years, or would he say that he owned it?

Mr Vaughan: The point is: what are they paying for it?

Mr STEPHAN: They are the paying the valuation. I fail to understand the ignorance of land dealings of some members of this Government. The honourable member thinks that because it is a piece of leasehold land they can go and flog it off. It is their land because they bought it. Surely, that is plain enough. If we buy a car or anything else, it is ours because we bought it. Surely, if we buy a piece of land, we can do with it what we like. I dare say that I have spent enough time on that. But I would like to think that the Minister would be able to see a bit of commonsense in what he is doing here. I know that the department is trying to convince those leaseholders who have not made applications at the present time to make the application to freehold. But I believe there are about 2 500 to 3 000 applications still to be made. There is a long way to go in this period of the next six or eight weeks.

I turn to another area, which is also possibly a bit controversial. I refer to noxious weeds. The Government has been trying to get noxious weeds cleared from Crown land and also from private property. As is usually the case, if any landowners have not been doing the right thing and cleaning up noxious weeds, the council notifies them three times. After that, it comes in and sprays and charges the landowner.

Mr Beattie: There is nothing wrong with that.

Mr STEPHAN: There is nothing wrong with that except that sometimes it takes a while to sink in, and some people take a while to take those steps to spray their land. Mr Ken Hayward, who owns land in my electorate, is obviously trying to use his influence. Whatever he is trying to do, I am not too sure, but a couple of days ago it was stated in the

Gympie Times that the Minister owns a piece of land in Gympie. He has failed to clear groundsel from his property. The council has had to take the step of notifying him and of then moving in and doing the work itself.

If it is good enough for everybody else to have to clean up their land, it is good enough for the Minister to clean up his land. I do not see any reason why there should be preferential treatment given to him. Surely the Minister knows the rules in this country. Surely he does not need to be notified by the council.

Mr Elder: Is he cleaning it up?

Mr STEPHAN: He is not cleaning it up; the council is cleaning it up.

Mr Elder: That's what councils do, you galah. If you do not clean it up, they clean it up for you.

Mr STEPHAN: After about three or four days on the coast, is this the way the member operates? Does he do it that way? There are noxious weeds on his property. He will not clear it. The council has to notify him three times, and then it will have to take the necessary action.

Mr Elder: That is what they do, you galah.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Minister for Industry.

Mr STEPHAN: What a ridiculous attitude. I thought that the Minister would at least know a bit more about what goes on in this State than that.

I turn now to another area of concern, that is, Rainbow Beach, which is a rapidly growing and developing area. People have been complaining about the fact that they are running out of land for building purposes. The local council has made its representations to the Lands Department over this problem. It was told that there were no plans afoot to develop more Crown land at Rainbow Beach for sale to the general public, and that further land sales may be a long way off. It was a pity to see that report in the local newspaper.

The other thing going against development there is the fact that a Mabo-style land claim has been made over vacant Crown land between Woodgate and Bribie Island. That presents a double problem: firstly, that there is a Mabo land claim and, secondly, that the Minister has decided that at this stage no more land will be developed at Rainbow Beach. People want to move in and build in that beautiful part of the State. Unless they are encouraged by the Government, that will not happen. I urge the Minister to give second thoughts to releasing land in that area as quickly as possible. As I pointed out, the development of the area of facilities such as schools will not proceed unless support is given by the Government.

Time expired.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (10.30 p.m.): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to participate in the Estimates for the Department of Lands. I want to make particular reference to the fact that, in recent times, this department——

Mr T. B. Sullivan: It's a vital department.

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed it is. In recent times, the department has gone through a number of significant changes.

Mr Hobbs: Uproar.

Mr BEATTIE: If I were the honourable member I would listen because, if he does, he might learn something. I make that comment bearing in mind the contribution that he made earlier. The department has made a number of advances in information technology. I recall my dim, dark days as an articled clerk when I had to do searches on all sorts of leaseholds. It really was an archaic system. In this financial year, the ATS—the automated titling system—is to be introduced. At present, the system is paper based, and it is nowhere near as efficient as it ought to be. I congratulate the Minister on moving to an automated system. It will mean that, when inquiries are made, searches will be much easier, much more accessible to people and much quicker. That will include not only Torrens title but also leasehold. In Queensland, there are 1.1 million freehold properties and 45 000 leaseholds. In that context, one can understand the importance of an automated titling system.

Only last week, I was approached by the family of a former constituent named Mrs Alma Emblem. That family was concerned about delays in the transfer of a title. As a result of some inquiries and with the help of the Minister, I was able to ascertain the status of that matter. Those sorts of short-term delays will not occur under the new system. I believe that everyone should applaud the introduction of the automated titling system.

Mr Bennett: It's a move into the twentieth century.

Mr BEATTIE: It is indeed a move into the twentieth century. There will obviously be a period in which old titles, where there have been no transfers for the last 30 or 40 years, will have to be transferred across to the new

system. Nevertheless, the automated system has come a long way.

The other piece of information technology that I believe is important is the IVAS—that is, the integrated valuation and sales system—which records all valuations of land in Queensland. The current system under which we operate—as the honourable member for Kurwongbah would be aware—is 27 years old.

Mrs Woodgate: I would?

Mr BEATTIE: The honourable member was at the opening. The new system, which contains all the valuation information on a computer system, was never available previously. It will speed up the process. As a former articled clerk who used to wade through the old systems, I am delighted to see this modernisation of the department. I congratulate the Minister on those initiatives.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Has the honourable member learned anything yet? I can see that his eyes are brighter so he is learning something.

Mr Hobbs: There needs to be an enormous amount of resources put into the changeover period. We've got some tremendous delays.

Mr BEATTIE: Of course. The honourable member should not get excited. My time as an articled clerk was under National/Liberal Party and National Governments, and I know what it was like. We have finally reached the stage of introducing some new information technology.

Mr Hobbs: It's going to take time.

Mr BEATTIE: Sure it will take time, but at least something is happening in the information technology area.

I turn to valuations. In recent times, there has been a much better response from the department in that respect. A number of my constituents have raised issues about valuations in Dalrymple Street in Wilston. As a result of my interaction with departmental officers in connection with that matter, I am aware that a much more responsive attitude is being displayed by the department.

It annoys me when local authorities whinge when valuations change. They try to blame the department for increases in rates. One of the early initiatives of this Government was the introduction of differential rating. As all members are aware, differential rating gives to councils a significant discretion that they never had before the Goss Government was elected.

Mr Stephan: They did so.

Mr BEATTIE: We did not have differential rating to anywhere near the extent that we do now, and the honourable member knows it.

Mr Stephan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The honourable member should not come here and tell fibs. I am appalled at his behaviour. I heard his contribution to this debate. Later, I intended to make reference to noxious weeds, but the honourable member is an obnoxious weed.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: He may be a nice guy, but he is an obnoxious interjector. Some local authorities blame the department for increases in rates, which is just not true. The rating system has been professionalised. Since I moved to Wilston 18 months ago, I have been contacted by the department on a number of occasions in its effort to set the appropriate valuation for that area, because land values there have increased significantly. The department is very sensitive to setting the appropriate valuation.

I say to all local authorities, including my friends at the Brisbane City Council, that they have to stop blaming the department for so-called rate increases, because it is not the responsibility of the department. Councils can now apply differential rating. If they want to apply different rates for different uses in different areas, it is entirely a matter for their discretion.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: Some councils, like the Brisbane City Council, take a three-year average, which is a good system.

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed it is. That council has also capped rates for owner occupiers, which is another very good system.

I want to mention a couple of other matters. Recently, the Minister was kind enough to receive a delegation from the Spring Hill Association to discuss future uses for Victoria Park. I place on record my appreciation to the Minister for receiving that delegation. One of the real difficulties faced by members like me, who represent inner-city seats, is the use of parkland. We all know that people are committed to maintaining parkland for park purposes. But there is— and has been for a long time—an enormous need for schools—and I have experienced that with both the Grammar schools and Terrace—to use limited parts of parks such as Victoria Park for school purposes. A great deal of tension was developing between the local residents of Spring Hill, who wanted the land maintained exclusively for park purposes, and the

Grammar schools and Terrace, which wanted to use part of the land for tennis courts or other sporting or recreational purposes. I am happy to say that, with the assistance of the Minister, we were able to reach a satisfactory arrangement. It has been determined that those sections of the park used for tennis courts and other recreational purposes will continue to be available for those uses, but no more land will be allocated for those purposes. In other words, that remaining area of Victoria Park will be protected for park purposes for the local residents and others. The Spring Hill Association is delighted with that outcome. I thank the Minister for his assistance in that matter.

Of course, the department and the Minister have an enormous amount of influence not only on parks such as Victoria Park but also—sometimes perhaps not as direct as some would like—in the use of areas such as Lang Park and Ballymore. Lang Park is no longer in my electorate, but Ballymore is. Ballymore was given to Queensland Rugby Union some years ago as part of an indefinite lease. The Queensland Rugby Union has the right under the lease to construct whatever buildings it chooses, provided that those buildings comply with the usual Brisbane City guidelines and requirements. At present, a degree of tension exists over the construction of floodlights at Ballymore. I am confident that that can be resolved between the local residents and the Queensland Rugby Union. It is not a matter over which the Minister or this Government has any discretion. Some time ago—long before we were in Government—the previous Government gave almost exclusive rights to the Queensland Rugby Union for the use of that land. Since then, it has exercised the entitlements that it has.

In the few minutes remaining to me, I want to make quick reference to two matters. One is the regionalisation of the department. I think that regionalisation has provided additional services to people across the State. The 10 regional offices, the integrated department and the local district offices have resulted in better services and more efficient decision making. I am sure that the Opposition spokesman was only too happy to acknowledge that fact in his contribution to this debate. If he did not do so, I am sure that he will on other occasions.

I am also pleased that, in relation to some leaseholds, particularly tourist leaseholds, the rental is now determined as a percentage of the unimproved capital value. That will apply from 1 July 1993 as part of the Wolfe recommendations. Some friends of mine who acquired the tourist lease on St Bees Island some time ago were concerned about the way in which the lease rent was determined, but they are now happier.

Time expired.

Hon. G. N. SMITH (Townsville— Minister for Lands) (10.40 p.m.), in reply: I find that the responses in Estimate debates can be very interesting because they traverse such a wide area. Very often, the matters that are commented on relate to the actual experiences of the member, and I listen to those experiences with great interest.

It is quite clear to me that a significant number of members opposite still have not really grasped what the Lands Department of today is and what it encompasses. In fact, it is not just the old Land Administration Commission with a few add-ons. It has taken on agencies which were previously departments in their own right, such as the Surveyor–General's Department, which dealt with geographic information, the Valuer-General's Department, the Office of the Registrar–General and the Office of Freehold Titles. All those spheres of land interest have been grouped together to form a more functional, coordinated department. I believe that is working.

Just in very broad terms, the huge difference is the state of those previously independent agencies, which this Government inherited from the former Government. I will start with what was the Surveyor-General's Department, and what is now known as our Land Boundaries Program and our Geographic Information Program. When we inherited those areas, they were in a very good state. They were very much at the cutting edge of technology and really have not featured very much in this debate. The member for Albert, Mr Szczerbanik, did mention them to some extent. The reason that those programs did not feature in the debate is that they are functioning well and it is very rare that a complaint is received or attention is drawn to them.

However, the Land Administration Commission, which was inherited by the now CEO of the department, Mr Bruce Wilson, in the dying days of the old Government, was in a chaotic state. I do not think that any honest member opposite would deny that. It functioned as if it were set back in the Dickens age, and something had to be done about it. Much the same situation existed in the areas of valuation and freehold titles. I will comment on that in some greater detail.

Just picking some of the general themes of the debate, I was rather fascinated by the contribution by Mr Santoro. He knew the words that he was saying but, in fact, he was off-beat with other members opposite. It sounded as though his speech had been prepared by someone and that he was delivering it by remote control. What he said just did not quite fit. I also thought it was quite remarkable that Mr Santoro made allegations that the services of the officers of the department are under-utilised when two other Opposition spokesmen claimed that the workload on the officers was too great. In fact, I think the members who spoke about the high workload were much closer to the mark.

The very important thing about the Lands Department now is that it does have an ability to deliver a wide range of services across those agencies that I mentioned, not just in the major regional centres but right throughout the 34 Land Centres across the State. Again, Mr Santoro was out of step. He said that one cannot regionalise all of these things, that some of them have to be centralised. I think that Mr Santoro would be very disappointed with the response that he would receive if he floated that idea out in the regions, because the Lands Department is one of the success stories of this Government. I can tell him that, from the sort of comments that are made to me at regional Cabinet meetings, the regionalisation of those services is very much appreciated.

I would now like to comment on morale, which was mentioned by a couple of members. There can be no doubt that when one joins four diverse departments together and forms a whole new organisation there are going to be winners and losers, but that process has been well managed. There has been an overall staff reduction from the previous four departments of about 100, I believe, but it has also provided opportunities for people with skills and talents and the will to get on. I can say with absolute certainty that all employees have been treated fairly. Inevitably, though, because of the more predictable lines of promotion that existed under the previous Government, when only seniority counted and qualifications and merit had perhaps not the same emphasis, some people were disappointed. However, under the stewardship of the present senior administration of the department, I believe that has been turned around, and I am happy that that aspect is very much on the rise.

I turn now to some of the comments made by members. First of all, I will deal with the Government speakers. The member for Nudgee spoke at length about the functions of the Rural Lands Protection Board, which has a very important role. As the honourable member mentioned, he is a man who grew up in western Queensland, and he has accompanied me on a number of trips, as have a number of other members of my committee. He is a practical man who understands the magnitude of the problems that we are facing and what the real options available to the Government and to land-holders might be.

The member for Nudgee spoke about the importance of control of pest animals. I do not think anyone would disagree with what he said about that. I believe that more recently, with some effective publicity, the public at large is getting a greater handle on it. As the member said, this Government is certainly committed to properly caring for the land. The Department of Lands is ensuring that sustainable land management practices occur as far as possible across the State.

I might say that the member for Nudgee made a couple of observations which I would like to support. For instance, in some areas, the mulga land would have to be described as more or less a wasteland. Yet it is rather interesting to find that land adjacent to a boundary—which might only be marked by a steel fence—has been quite well-managed and will continue to be productive in the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, because of overgrazing and malpractices, there is no doubt that the area will not sustain the present number of land-holders on a profitable basis.

The member for Mulgrave, Mr Pitt, who is a member of the Rural Task Force, spoke at length about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' Land Interest Program and the Land Tribunal. He demonstrated considerable knowledge of that program. He named the members of the tribunal and outlined the particular qualifications of those members, including the deputy chairperson, and the experience that they could bring to that program. He also talked about the Tenure History Unit which, of course, is now very important because of the implications of Mabo. I will come back to that. That unit does have a very important role to play. It will provide essential information on the determination of the existence of native title. Of course, the honourable member also mentioned what regionalisation has meant in terms of additional staff in the regions.

The member for Sunnybank, Mr Robertson, talked about the developing computerised land information systems. I

would like to take up that point because, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the real reason we are facing some difficulties is that the previous Government did nothing in those three areas that I mentioned. This Government has had to undertake a major computer update. In fact, there was almost a complete absence of computers in those areas. Major new information systems have been introduced and, of course, at long last we are bringing those sections of the department into the twentieth century—albeit in the closing days of the twentieth century. The point that the honourable member made, of course, is that those systems have to be in place to enable us to provide a proper service for our clients.

The member for Maryborough, Mr Dollin, is very experienced in land and forestry matters. He is a very important member of my committee. He spoke about the valuation and sales system. Again, this comes within computerisation and generally will speed up the information that is made available to a whole range of clients. More importantly, eventually—and when I say "eventually" I mean as early as 1995—valuation determinations will not lag some 15 months behind, as they do now; they will take only six months. Therefore, the actual valuations will be more closely related to market forces. That is important.

The member for Hervey Bay, Mr Nunn, discussed the new titles system. He made the point that this improved the ability of clients to search the register from their own offices. If major clients, including legal firms, install the appropriate equipment, they will not have to go to the lands centre to gather that information; they will be able to access it from their own offices through that interconnection.

Mr Szczerbanik spoke about land boundaries and some of the very technical equipment that is used today, particularly the global positioning system. It is whiz-bang stuff. The member indicated his understanding of that. I appreciate that because, as I mentioned before, it is technical and complex. Many people shy away from it because of the difficulty that it presents.

Mr Beattie, the final speaker for the Government, spoke of his own experience with the Titles Office. He has an understanding of what the improvements will mean. He spoke also about two other important areas, including differential rates. There is a tendency for local governments around the State to blame the central Government. Of course, the responsibility of the Government is to establish a single valuation system. If a local government wishes to have some variation, that is the responsibility of that local government, not the central State Government. The final point that the honourable member made dealt with intrusion into parkland. I believe that, over the years, people on the Labor side of politics have seen the erosion of people's land in parks and are determined to ensure that that practice is discontinued.

The shadow spokesman, Mr Hobbs, devoted a great deal of his time to Federal matters. He talked about social engineering. I shall give honourable members one example of social engineering that occurred under the previous Government. In 1981, the then Government introduced legislation that allowed land-holders to freehold extensive property—some of it back to valuations that existed in 1971—with discounts of up to 40 per cent. If that is not social engineering, I would have to express some surprise. Let me take that a bit further. If anyone wishes to pursue that point, I am very happy to take a question on notice and run off the names of some of the National Party luminaries who benefited from that particular scheme.

Mr Hobbs: What's wrong with that? It doesn't make any difference at all.

Mr SMITH: Members on this side would not be surprised, but perhaps the public at large would be surprised by the number of people who held prominent positions in the National Party and were made beneficiaries of that particular action. I will not hammer that issue too much.

I turn now to the Mabo decision. The High Court has recognised native title.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Chamber will come to order. The Minister shall continue his speech.

Mr SMITH: That has been determined. It is not for someone to decide whether or not there should be a referendum. It is a determination of the High Court, and members have to learn to live with it. We have made no secret of the fact that——

Mr Hobbs interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Warrego!

Mr SMITH: As I was saying, we have made no secret of the fact that about 5 per cent of Queensland has been identified as claimable under the existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Acts.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SMITH: To pursue this matter—the honourable member asks the question and I will give him the answer. So far, about 15 claims have been lodged, and the first hearings began in August this year. The finetuning of the Government's Mabo position will not be determined until we actually have the legislation in place. If the honourable member has some idea that he can overturn the High Court's decision, he can forget it.

The honourable member mentioned the backlog in the Titles Office. I acknowledge that backlog, but it is nowhere near the extent that he mentioned. In fact, we have achieved a very considerable reduction, although it has blown out a little because we are moving towards a structure that will allow the operation of the automated title system when it is introduced early next year.

Mr Hobbs: You got rid of all the staff. You know that.

Mr SMITH: The member should forget all that nonsense. He does not know what he is talking about.

Mr Hobbs: I do.

Mr SMITH: I am sorry, but he does not.

Mr De Lacy: Would you say that he is one of the great jokes of this Parliament?

Mr SMITH: I am in a charitable mood tonight, so I shall refrain from making that observation. Mr Santoro spoke about the comparison between Sydney and Melbourne so far as turnaround times in the respective Titles Offices. Sydney and Melbourne are able to turn those documents around so quickly because they acted before Queensland. They put in a computerised system. That is what we are doing now to catch up. That is what the National Party did not do to keep the system up to date. That is what it is all about. Members must understand that.

Mr Hobbs: That's not true, what you're saying.

Mr SMITH: I am afraid that it is. That is the fact. The member for Clayfield made a couple of other observations and spoke about shredding of title documents. That is outrageous. There is nothing to that allegation. I challenge the honourable member to provide any evidence of that inaccurate statement. In fact, it is a disgrace for him to repeat that in this Parliament. But that is something that members have come to expect from the Opposition over the years. As to one technical aspect—title searches in Queensland cost $8 compared to $24 in New South Wales and certainly not less than $18 in other States.

The Opposition spokesman also mentioned the dingo fence. Recently, my committee and I conducted a tour of the dingo fence, which is in excellent condition. Over the last couple of years, new equipment has been purchased. Gerry Stanley, who is the "ramrod" of that organisation, is doing a superb job. I have nothing but admiration for the work that those people are carrying out and for the effort that they put into it. As to dismissals of people in that area—that is absolutely without foundation. I am amazed that the member got that sort of information.

I turn now to rents. Much has been said about the level of rents and the variations in rents. But people do not seem to be prepared to recognise—particularly Opposition spokesmen—the wide disparity that existed under the previous system. When it was converted to unimproved capital value equivalent, it went from 0.1 per cent to 6 per cent. There was a huge difference within districts and between districts. When Mr Hobbs introduced his private member's Bill, I thought that he at least had the good sense to recognise that the old system had gone by the board and that he acknowledged the appropriateness of the UCV system for future valuations. The honourable member seems to be backing away from that. He is in the same category as—I am not going to say the Cattlemen's Union, but I am going to say Mr Kerry Martin of the Cattlemen's Union, who has deliberately distorted the revenue aspect of this and what it might bring in. The member failed to recognise that this Government has taken account of the industry and drought conditions. We have not blindly brought in the Wolfe recommendation of 3 per cent. We introduced it at 1.1 per cent. If the member wants to push me on this matter—and I challenge him to do this—I have some historic information that shows the winners and losers under the old system compared with the new system. I assure him——

Mr Hobbs: You tell us. What is the revenue?

Mr SMITH: Never mind that. The important thing is that it is fair. The people to whom I speak in the industry recognise the fairness.There are a few people like the member who choose to make those wild inaccurate statements. However, when I get around and I meet the serious operators in the industry, I find that those operators recognise that it was long overdue, and that it had to be done.

Time expired.

Progress reported.

LICENSING FEES LEGISLATION (LIQUOR AND TOBACCO PRODUCTS) AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns— Treasurer) (11.01 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Liquor Act 1992 and the Tobacco Products (Licensing) Act 1988."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns— Treasurer) (11.02 p.m.): I move—

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

Licensing fees are imposed by the Tobacco Products (Licensing) Act and the Liquor Act. While assessment procedures seek to ensure accurate determination of the quantum of a fee, occasions may arise where, for various reasons, refunds may be sought. The Acts recognise this likelihood. Each Act allows a refund to be made to a licensee where a fee has been overpaid.

Commercial reality, however, is that licensees rarely bear the ultimate cost of the fees themselves. Rather, the fees are in effect passed on to consumers through increased liquor and tobacco product prices. Members of this Assembly may recall that wholesalers of tobacco products increased their prices two months in advance of the date of effect of the 1992 licence fee increase.

The consumers who ultimately bear the incidence of the licence fees are unable to request a refund of any overpaid fees from either the Government or the licensee. As the existing refund provisions of the Tobacco Products (Licensing) Act and the Liquor Act do not require any consideration of whether or not any reimbursement is to be made to the persons who bore ultimate liability for the fee, a refund is simply a windfall gain to the licensee.

The Licensing Fees Legislation (Liquor and Tobacco Products) Amendment Bill will address this inequity by requiring that refunds of licence fees be allowed only to those licensees who either have not recovered an amount in respect of a fee from another person or who, having recovered an amount from another person, will reimburse those from whom the fees were collected. The licence holder will be given adequate time to make reimbursement. However, where the licence holder is unable to do so, the refunded amount must be repaid, together with interest.

Further, this Bill also has regard to the hopefully remote possibility that one of the challenges occasionally mounted to the capacity of a State or Territory to levy such fees may be upheld at some time by a Court. If that were to happen, a flood of refund applications could be anticipated by those hoping to gain a windfall by having refunded to them fees which they had passed on to consumers. Accordingly, this Bill refers to refunds of fees wrongly exacted as well as to those simply overpaid.

While this Bill addresses potential inequities in the refund provisions of the Tobacco Products (Licensing) Act and the Liquor Act, the refund provisions of other relevant Queensland Acts will be examined to ensure that the person who is justly entitled to the benefit of a refund is the person who receives it. Legislative amendment in particular instances may be required.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Sheldon, adjourned.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Bundamba— Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (11.06 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Liquor Act 1992."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Bundamba— Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (11.07 p.m.): I move—

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

A program of hotel rationalisation commenced in July 1989 and is administered by the liquor licensing division of my

department. The program is aimed at achieving a better spread of hotel facilities to serve the public throughout Queensland and originally contained two measures. The first measure gave licensees the opportunity to make application to relocate their licences to another locality in the State. This measure was deleted from the liquor legislation in 1992 after misuse by entrepreneurs buying and selling liquor licences, which in turn contributed to artificially high values on hotel licences. The second measure, and the one which is the subject of this amendment, deals with the payment of compensation for hotel and tavern licences, or general licences as they are referred to in the 1992 Liquor Act.

When the Liquor Act was passed in 1992, it contained a sunset clause which allowed licensees a further period of three years to take up the Government's offer of compensation. The reason the legislation stipulated a finite period for the program was to encourage licensees to make a decision whether or not to stay in the industry.

I should point out that the payment of compensation for the surrender of a hotel licence is unique to this State. Nowhere else do licensees have the opportunity to negotiate with Government the buying back of a liquor licence.

The liquor industry has had four years to take advantage of the compensation measure available under the rationalisation program. Of the 1 200 general licenses issued in this state, 19 have been surrendered to date and 10 applications are pending. Whilst licensees consider rationalisation a positive step for the industry as a whole, very few are prepared to surrender their licence, preferring to believe that it is the licensee down the road who should get out of the industry. The State has spent almost $2.2m buying out what are essentially failed business operations. The amended legislation will expose non-viable hoteliers to commercial realities.

The amendment before the House will abolish the Government assisted rationalisation program. However, it is not intended that any person who has already lodged an application for compensation will be disadvantaged. In the interests of natural justice, these applications will be dealt with as if the compensation provisions remained in force.

Debate, on motion of Mr Veivers, adjourned.

EGG INDUSTRY (RESTRUCTURING) BILL

Hon. E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (11.10 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act about the Queensland egg industry."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (11.11 p.m.): I move—

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

The Egg Industry (Restructuring) Bill represents the culmination of a process of negotiation between the Queensland Government and the Queensland egg industry over an 18-month period with the goal of modernising the legislative provisions pertaining to the egg industry in this State so that the industry is better placed to meet the competitive challenges of the 1990s and beyond.

The Bill continues the policy I have held to consistently since becoming Minister for Primary Industries in regard to comprehensively reviewing the legislative arrangements for each of Queensland's significant primary industries. This has already been done for the sugar, dairy, grain, and meat and livestock industries and now the egg industry. A similar review is under way in the fishing industry with the horticulture industry to follow during 1994. Other legislation relating to natural resource management and plant and animal health will be reviewed over the next 12 months.

This Bill restructures the marketing arrangements in the Queensland egg industry and simplifies the production control arrangements. At the same time, two outmoded industry Acts are repealed as part of my ongoing program of improving the primary industry statute book. On the marketing side, the Bill will combine the current regionally based egg marketing systems in the interests of having an effective Statewide egg marketing organisation. This restructuring is essential to meet the challenge in the market place from the deregulated but disorganised and disruptive egg industry in the southern States, particularly New South Wales.

The assets and liabilities of the two regional egg marketing boards, along with the egg business related assets of the two producer marketing companies in North Queensland, will be transferred to a company, Australian Quality Egg Farms Ltd, which will be wholly owned by the State's egg producers. We will have a united, Statewide egg marketing body for the first time in Queensland's history. The company's head office will be in Brisbane, with receival depots in Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns. Producers will be entitled to shares in the company in accordance with a share distribution scheme formulated in consultation with the industry and prescribed by regulation.

In New South Wales and more recently in Victoria, the respective State Governments simply pulled the regulatory rug out from under their egg industries. The Queensland Government is adopting a far more responsible approach. The Bill gives the company statutory marketing powers, notably vesting of eggs and the operation of a compulsory marketing scheme, for a five-year period from 1 January 1994 to 31 December 1998. A review is to commence after three years. These statutory powers are very definitely sunsetted, and any extension will require a new Act of Parliament.

The industry is being given a clear signal that it has up to five years to develop a totally commercial approach. At the end of that period, a strong egg industry will not need, and I predict it will not want, regulated marketing of eggs. During that five-year transitional period, the chairperson of the company's board of directors will be a person appointed by the Governor in Council with a clear statutory responsibility to report to the Minister on the affairs and operations of the company. There will also be a Government representative who will closely monitor the company's compliance with legislative requirements. The other directors will be appointed in accordance with the company's articles and will include four elected producers and up to three external directors with commercial expertise.

While it exercises statutory powers, the company will be subject to appropriate accountability standards, including the application of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, the CJC and Ombudsman legislation and the Acts pertaining to judicial review and freedom of information. This is appropriate in the circumstances, and is a further example of the Goss Government's strong commitment to accountability in the exercise of statutory powers.

The Bill also provides that the statutory marketing powers will cease if the company is listed on a stock exchange, or if it amends its articles of association to allow non-producers to become shareholders. This will ensure that no corporate raider will gain statutory marketing powers by taking over the company.

Turning to the production side, the current hen quota arrangements will continue—but only until 31 December 1998. Once again, the Queensland Government is giving a clear signal to producers. The industry has time to put its house in order under regulatory arrangements that are relevant, workable and understandable. The old Hen Quotas Act will be repealed, and provisions that are easier to understand and administer are included in this Bill. A new Queensland Egg Industry Management Authority will administer the quota arrangements. The Authority will have three members: an independent chairperson, a Government nominee and a producer nominee. The producer member will be nominated by the recognised producer representative body, the Queensland Egg Industry Council. When I was the shadow Minister for Primary Industries, I was highly critical of the National Party's habit of censoring industry self-determination by demanding panels of names. I will not be asking for a panel of names. I will respect the industry and let it get on with running its own affairs.

At the end of the five-year transitional period, the quota arrangements will terminate. Compensation will not be payable in regard to the expiry of the legislation at the end of 1998. With the advent of mutual recognition, the Poultry Industry Act, which required egg marketers to be licensed and observe grading standards, is to be repealed. Public health standards will continue to be protected by the provisions of the Food Act and the regulations under that Act.

The Queensland egg industry has built its reputation on consistent quality of product. That situation will continue and be enhanced by the unified marketing facilitated by this Bill. In time, quality Queensland eggs could find a niche, perhaps a big niche, in interstate markets such as Sydney and Newcastle.

The key features of this Bill have been developed in consultation with industry through the Queensland egg industry restructure working party. I compliment the working party on the many hours of hard work devoted to building a restructure package

which had as its genesis a consultant's report I initiated in early 1992, and which was presented to the Government and to industry in July of that year. There have been several producer meetings since then, at which the basic elements of the restructuring package have been discussed with, and endorsed by, the majority of egg producers in this State. In actual fact, only yesterday in Proserpine prior to the State Cabinet meeting, one of the last producers to hold out signified his intent to join it.

By working together with industry, the Goss Labor Government is building a strong primary production sector in Queensland. This Egg Industry (Restructuring) Bill is a prime example of Labor's success in the primary industries portfolio. It is innovative, but balanced; it is a platform for a stable egg industry with a great future. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Perrett, adjourned.

SUGAR INDUSTRY AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (11.13 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Sugar Industry Act 1991."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (11.14 p.m.): I move—

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

It is now two and a half years since the Sugar Industry Act passed through this Parliament. Over those two and a half years, despite one of the most serious droughts in Queensland's history, despite continued distortion in the world market and despite continued relatively low prices for sugar, the Queensland sugar industry has continued to grow. The Sugar Industry Act has been a major factor in enhancing that growth and it has, despite the Opposition's cynicism, brought stability to an industry which was straining against the yoke of decades of Government neglect. The Sugar Industry Act has been a model of the Goss Labor Government's success in primary industries.

This Bill contains three simple amendments to policy. Firstly—and this is the primary reason for bringing this Bill before the House—the differential between the No. 1 Pool and No. 2 Pools is to be reduced gradually to 6 per cent. This change has been well canvassed within industry and in the general community. It arose as part of the negotiations between me as Minister for Primary Industries, the Federal Government and industry in relation to the sugar infrastructure package.

Secondly, and at the request of the Queensland Sugar Corporation, a minor change is made in regard to the guidelines concerning sugar quality. The change allows for the corporation to make standards which will detail the bonus and penalty arrangements agreed to between the corporation and the sugar millers, enabling this key component of the buyer/seller relationship to remain confidential.

Thirdly, a provision is inserted to clarify the extent to which a local award may allow for the gathering of information in regard to a future crushing season. This arose after discussions I had with a local board chairperson. The particular circumstances involved a dispute concerning grouping arrangements in the Mackay area. Honourable members will be aware that a local board award is made in April to govern the forthcoming crushing season, and that information is used to settle that local award. The amendment merely ensures that an award may provide for the gathering of that information for the next crushing season.

The opportunity is also taken in this Bill to adjust some matters relating to sugar quality and to remove some spent transitional provisions, to rectify a number of minor drafting errors and to adjust the Act in accordance with some recent changes to drafting practice, including those arising from amendments to the Acts Interpretation Act.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Perrett, adjourned.

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba— Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (11.20 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Criminal Code."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba— Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (11. 21 p.m.): I move—

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

As honourable members may know, this Government, in the course of honouring a 1989 election commitment, is currently engaged in the most comprehensive review of Queensland's criminal laws since the introduction into this House in 1898 of the Criminal Code Bill. As part of the consultation process undertaken in 1992 and earlier this year in connection with the review of the Criminal Code, a large number of submissions were received from community groups seeking an extension of the criminal law to cover a wide variety of situations collectively known as stalking.

Stalking is a generic term, known to the criminal law in a number of the States of the United States of America, which collectively describes a wide variety of fact situations where one person may follow, contact, put under surveillance, or otherwise harass or intimidate a second person, but stops short of committing an offence against that person or his or her property. In practice, the situation is seen at its most acute upon the disintegration of a personal relationship where the offender—aggrieved perhaps at the severance of the relationship by the victim—refuses to leave the victim alone by engaging in conduct which ensures the victim is reminded of the offender's continuing interest in the victim.

However, there are also a significant number of cases where the victim has been stalked by a total stranger. Workers at women's refuges have been followed or watched by people who may have a continuing interest in another person who has taken sanctuary in a women's refuge. In such cases, it is evident that the stalker and the potential victim are complete strangers with no prior history of a relationship. Clearly, in such cases domestic violence legislation would be ineffective. This was a point common to a large number of submissions received within the Criminal Code review project.

At present, the Criminal Code provides a number of sections which could be invoked in specific circumstances where some form of violence may be anticipated by a victim but in which actual violence is not caused. Such sections are 69, going armed so as to cause fear; 70, forcible entry; 71, forcible detainer; 75, threatening violence; 245, definition of assault; 335, common assault; 308, written threats to murder; and 359, threats. I have included sections 245 and 335 in this list because the definition provided in section 245 includes "attempts or threatens to apply force of any kind". Each of those sections could be invoked in circumstances of threatening violence even though no actual violence is visited upon the potential victim. Of course, there are many other Criminal Code sections which would apply in the event of actual violence—either to the person or to property—taking place.

Notwithstanding those provisions which I have identified, it is clear that the criminal law does not extend protection in most of the variety of circumstances known collectively as stalking. As this Government has taken a principled and consistent stand against the use of violence in our community, it is entirely appropriate that the sort of behaviour which is known as stalking should be made a criminal offence. So seriously does this Government take its responsibilities in this sphere, it is not intended to wait for the overall Criminal Code review project to be introduced to this House before the issue of stalking is addressed. It is this Government's view that it is in the public interest that an offence of stalking be introduced as soon as possible in order to protect, in particular, women and children who live in fear each day of their lives.

Violence committed against people by estranged partners has made our community painfully aware of the fact that some individuals who may be disposed towards violence are not deterred by restraining orders. Therefore, new measures such as that embodied in this Bill must be enacted and utilised without delay.

The essence of the offence contained in this Bill is to be found in the three principal elements proposed: firstly, the offender must engage in a course of conduct consisting of the listed acts on at least two separate occasions; secondly, the offender must intend that the potential victim be aware that the course of conduct is directed at him or her;

and, thirdly, the victim is, in fact, aware that the course of conduct is directed at him or her; and, finally, the course of conduct must cause a reasonable person in the victim's circumstances serious concern that an unlawful act of violence may occur.

The offence has been designed in such a way as to encompass acts of stalking—while directed at the potential victim—which may actually be carried out against another person about whose welfare the victim would be concerned. I will give an example. A man, having separated from a woman, causes the woman serious concern that an act of violence may occur against the children or her parents, or even her new partner. The offence, while directed at the woman, will be capable of ensuring that the offender, in carrying out any act against the person or property of the children, parents or new partner, will be liable for his actions against those third parties, although his actions were designed to actually intimidate the woman.

It is intended by this Bill to ensure the widest possible protection for those who justifiably fear that violence to persons or property may ensue from the activities of the stalker. The Bill also provides for two levels of sentences. For the straightforward offence of stalking, the offender will be liable to a maximum sentence of three years' imprisonment. However, if the offender, in carrying out the stalking conduct, uses or threatens to use unlawful violence, or is in possession of an unlawful offensive weapon, or contravenes any injunction or order imposed by any court, then the maximum sentence which may be imposed rises to five years' imprisonment.

The Government believes that the people of this State are entitled to be able to go about the lawful business of their daily lives without fear that their lives, or those of their children, are going to be disrupted by the unwanted interference of obsessional individuals. The Government believes that the law is entitled to require that in democratic Queensland personal relations should only be entered into by the mutual consent of both parties. The Government believes that the people of Queensland are entitled to feel safe in their own homes.

I commend this Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

LIMITATION OF ACTIONS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba— Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (11.30 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Limitation of Actions Act 1974."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba— Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (11.31 p.m.): I move—

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

The time for bringing actions to recover moneys under an Act is limited either by that Act or the Limitation of Actions Act. The six-year limitation period provided by the Limitation of Actions Act currently applies only where a time period is not specified in the other relevant Act. Further, the six-year period applies regardless of the circumstances giving rise to the refund claim.

It is inequitable that actions arising from the invalidity of an Act are subject to the same limitation period as actions arising from a simple error in calculation. Where a person seeks to challenge the fundamental nature of legislation, it is appropriate to expect such action be taken on a timely basis.

This Bill provides for amendment of the Limitation of Actions Act to limit the period within which actions may be brought to recover moneys paid under an invalid enactment to 12 months from the date of payment. To ensure application of the limitation only to actions arising from the invalidity of an Act, the limitation will not apply to the recovery of moneys that would have been recoverable as an overpayment had the Act been valid.

Where an Act is found to be invalid, it is possible that Act's refund provisions may also fail. Where an amount is held to have been exacted under an invalid statutory provision, a person's right to a refund would not be governed by the existing refund provision. Therefore, to provide for a limitation period in an Act in respect of an action arising from the invalidity of that Act would not achieve the required purpose. For this reason, to the

extent of any inconsistency with another Act, these limitation provisions will prevail over those provided in the other Act.

As a transitional measure, where moneys were paid more than six months prior to the commencement of these provisions, the limitation period will be that which would have applied had the amendments not been effected, or six months from commencement, whichever expires first. The limitation period will be part of Queensland's substantive law. This stipulation will ensure there is no possibility of recovery actions against Queensland respondents being brought in another jurisdiction under cross-vesting legislation, and the statute of limitations of that jurisdiction being applied to perhaps allow an action outside the 12-month limit.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba— Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (11.33 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Freedom of Information Act 1992."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba— Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (11.34 p.m.): I move—

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

The aim of the Bill is threefold—

to clarify the original intent of the Legislature in relation to the Cabinet and Executive Council exemptions in sections 36 and 37;

to make the requirement of notification to interested third parties by the Information Commissioner under section 74 discretionary in certain circumstances rather than mandatory; and

to allow for the partial transfer of access applications to other agencies under section 26.

Amendments to section 36 and 37 have become necessary in the light of the recent decision in Fencray v. Department of the Premier, Economic and Trade Development where the Information Commissioner significantly narrowed the type of documents which may qualify for the Cabinet exemption. That decision further gave a broad ruling about what may amount to "factual matter" so as to constitute an exception to the Cabinet exemption. The reasons behind the amendment are explored in the preamble to the Bill.

The conventions of collective and individual ministerial responsibility are fundamental to democratic Government based on the Westminster system. A purpose of collective ministerial responsibility is to ensure that Cabinet is responsible to Parliament and, through the Parliament, to the electorate. In arriving at the collective position of the Cabinet, it is essential that discussions and deliberations are candid and unrestricted. Part of the convention therefore recognises that Cabinet papers are confidential. Indeed, these principles were most recently confirmed in the High Court case Commonwealth v. Northern Land Council and Anor, decided on 21 April 1993. In a shared judgement, Chief Justice Mason and Justices Brennan, Deane, Dawson, Gaudron and McHugh said—

> "It has never been doubted that it is in the public interest that the deliberations of Cabinet should remain confidential in order that the members of Cabinet may exchange differing views and at the same time maintain the principle of collective responsibility for any decision which may be made. Although Cabinet deliberations are sometimes disclosed in political memoirs and in unofficial reports on Cabinet meetings, the view has generally been taken that collective responsibility could not survive in practical terms if Cabinet deliberations were not kept confidential."

Their Honours of the High Court continued—

> "Despite the pressures which modern society places upon the principle of collective responsibility, it remains an important element in our system of Government. Moreover, the disclosure of the deliberations of the body responsible for the creation of State policy at the highest level, whether under the

> Westminster system or otherwise, is liable to subject the members of that body to criticism of a premature, ill-informed or misdirected nature and to divert the process from its proper course. This mere threat of disclosure is sufficient to impede those deliberations by muting a free and vigorous exchange of views or by encouraging lengthy discourse engaged in with an eye to subsequent public scrutiny."

Their Honours continued—

> "Whilst there is increasing public insistence upon the concept of open Government, we do not think that it has yet been suggested that members of Cabinet would not be severely hampered in the performance of the function expected of them if they had constantly to look over their shoulders at those who would seek to criticise and publicise their participation in discussions in the Cabinet room."

In that case, the justices concluded that—

> "The public interest in avoiding serious damage to the proper working of Government at the highest level must prevail over the interests of a litigant seeking to vindicate private rights."

It was never the intention of the Queensland Legislature to compromise the fundamental convention of collective ministerial responsibility by allowing the accessibility of a significant amount of Cabinet material under the Freedom of Information Act. Yet the effect of the Fencray decision is to have that very result. The true intention of this Legislature was to permit the release of merely technical—not speculative—data which formed the basis of a submission to Cabinet; certainly not expressions of opinion of the sponsoring Minister and like material.

The Fencray decision seriously undermines the convention of collective ministerial responsibility by potentially allowing the release of Cabinet material which may in practice reveal the particular position adopted by a Minister or Ministers. The amendments to the Cabinet exemption seek to clarify the types of documents that will prima facie qualify for the exemption, removing some of the technical restrictions imposed in Fencray.

Secondly, the exception to the Cabinet exemption is significantly narrowed by the amendments. It will only extend to matter that is "merely statistical, scientific or technical" rather than "merely factual or statistical". The new substituted phrase is intended to be more limited and precise.

The second subject matter of the Bill concerns section 74, which currently requires the Information Commissioner to notify all relevant parties that an access application in which they may have an interest may be under review. Such notification is to occur before a review is commenced by the commissioner. Because the obligation is mandatory without exception, serious problems can arise when, for example, the documents for which access is sought relate to child protection case files and matters involving family breakdown and family violence.

Natural justice would subsequently demand notification to any third party about whom highly personal information is contained in a document when it is proposed to release that document. However, it would be premature to notify all interested third parties before a review has commenced in situations when knowledge of the access application would cause undue and possibly unnecessary trauma, for example, to victims of domestic violence and the like.

Finally, the Bill also includes a minor amendment to section 26 so as to allow for the partial transfer of an access application between agencies. Practical experience with the Act has revealed that many freedom of information applications are in terms of a general request which can involve a substantial number of documents. In any one application, it is often appropriate for some, but not all of the documents, to be transferred to another agency. The amendments will allow for partial transfer with the recipient agencies' consent. This last matter therefore is an internal administrative matter which will not affect the rights of applicants.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—Minister for Health) (11.40 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend certain Acts administered by the Minister for Health and to repeal the Inebriates Institutions Act 1896 and the Inebriates Institutions Act Amendment Act 1968."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—Minister for Health) (11.41 p.m.): I move—

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

The purpose of this Bill is to amend some 16 Acts within the Health portfolio and to repeal the Inebriates Institutions Act 1896 and the Inebriates Institutions Act Amendment Act 1968.

As honourable members may recall, in November 1992, as part of my second-reading speech on the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 1992, I signalled that I would be introducing at least one Health Legislation Amendment Bill annually to ensure that the extensive legislative base of my portfolio retains its currency. This is such a Bill.

In terms of machinery amendments, this Bill omits all references in 10 Acts to limitations preventing people 70 years of age or more from holding membership on Government bodies and committees. This amendment is the first step in removing discriminatory provisions from my portfolio's legislation, in accordance with both the substance and the spirit of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991.

Parliamentary Counsel has initiated other machinery amendments to a number of Acts amended by this Bill, in accordance with his charter to maintain the currency of the statute book. Amendments made in this manner include substitution of "regulation" for "Order in Council"; translation of monetary penalties into penalty units; and removal of redundant definitions or provisions now covered by such Acts as the Acts Interpretation Act 1954 and the Statutory Instruments Act 1992.

I will deal with amendments of substance in the order they appear in this Bill. Amendments to the Chiropractors and Osteopaths Act 1979 are to provide a period of grace during which existing companies involved in the practice of chiropractic and osteopathy can continue such practice without penalty. This will give company officers time to—

> arrange changes to the companies' memoranda and articles of association so as to comply with section 4A of the Act; and subsequently apply to the board for approved name status.

Honourable members should note that the period of grace referred to is until 30 June 1994 and has been made retrospective to 18 December 1992, which was the date on which the original corporate practice provisions of this Act commenced. This retrospectivity is essential given that the original corporate practice provisions, which stipulated that a chiropractic and osteopathy company must be registered in Queensland, actually prevented compliance by some existing companies which were incorporated in other States.

As retrospective legislation goes, these amendments are beneficial, giving all parties a fair chance to meet the corporate practice requirements of this Act.

The amendments proposed to the Cremation Act 1913 will remove a redundant area of Government regulation. The Cremation Act was originally enacted in 1913 at a time when society viewed the regulation of cremation as a health issue. The Act provided for a system of licensing of crematoria by local authorities, which involved a process of applications, calling for objections and issuing of licences subject to conditions.

The system was originally designed to ensure safeguards over the siting and establishment of crematoria, particularly in relation to proximity to residential areas. In recent years, however, such matters have become the subject of more comprehensive and sophisticated town planning legislation, and in particular I refer to the Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act 1990. This latter Act also provides jurisdiction over matters relating to the siting and operation of facilities such as crematoria. There is a need, therefore, to ensure consistency and to remove the redundant parallel licensing regime which is presently provided for in the Cremation Act and which is no longer relevant to modern town planning practices.

This Government is committed to the removal of such unnecessary and outmoded forms of regulation, particularly those which place unnecessary additional imposts on the business community and which provide no measurable level of public protection.

In repealing this unnecessary licensing regime, I would make it clear that the rights of current crematoria operators are in no way jeopardised. The establishment and operation of those facilities will now be regulated within the mainstream of town planning legislation.

In short, the amendments to the Cremation Act recognise that matters relating to the siting and establishment of crematoria are town-planning matters and not Health matters.

The Dental Act 1971 is to be amended to provide the Dental Board with a greater discretionary power to register, as a dental specialist, a dentist who has higher qualifications, two years' experience and standing in a dental speciality.

The Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Act 1991 is to be amended to allow a person who has completed a course of training as a dental technician in Queensland or elsewhere to be registered as a dental technician. This amendment will cater for registration of those people who undertake an associate diploma course in this calling in the future.

The first amendment of substance to the Health Act 1937 is to section 48. The proposed amendment reworks this section to create offences for deliberately or recklessly—

putting someone else at risk of infection from a controlled notifiable disease; or

infecting someone else with a controlled notifiable disease.

I am sure members will agree that society needs some mechanism to persuade those infected with a controlled notifiable disease, the most dangerous of which in our times is HIV, to act responsibly in relation to other persons. In saying that, I am not suggesting that the vast majority of persons who have a controlled notifiable disease do not act responsibly. However, there are always those in our society who abrogate their responsibility to others, and the amendment provides both a disincentive to those willing to do so and a means of redress for those affected by such behaviour.

The second substantial amendment proposed for the Health Act redefines "day hospital". This amendment moves away from prescribing in regulation the surgical or medical treatment which can be given at a day hospital, as such a prescriptive approach is impracticable, particularly in light of rapid changes to procedures arising from new technology. The new definition also permits general practitioners to utilise day hospitals, which is essential for provincial centres in the State which might not be serviced by medical specialists.

The amendments to sections 100E and 100I of the Health Act permit the director-general to disclose information in any form, drawn from cancer and perinatal returns respectively, to the appropriate level officer in the Commonwealth. These amendments correct oversights in the original drafting of these sections.

The amendment to section 131Q of the Health Act creates an offence with monetary penalty for breach of a condition which is imposed on a pest control operator's licence. The offence and monetary penalty provided by this amendment allows an appropriate response which was missing previously for breach of a licence condition.

The major amendment to the Health Rights Commission Act 1991 is the insertion of new section 87A. This section allows conciliators to disclose information gained during the conciliation process to their administrative staff. However, such people are then bound by the strict confidentiality provisions which otherwise bind conciliators in this regard.

The major amendment to the Medical Act 1939 is in relation to section 18. The omission of the words "who has general registration" allows the Medical Board of Queensland to consider for registration as a medical specialist medical practitioners who hold general registration or conditional registration.

The amendments proposed to the Mental Health Act 1974 are complex and fall into a number of categories. Firstly, there is the insertion of new sections 73, 73A and 73B relating to the Patients Trust Fund, Amenities Account and Patients Advisory Committee. The purpose of these sections is to provide a clear legislative base for dealing with patients' funds. Secondly, there is the insertion of a new Part 8 and its six major validating provisions. The purpose of these provisions is to address past mistakes in the administration of this Act. I will detail the specific purpose of each of these provisions in the order they appear.

The new section 77 is a provision which retrospectively assigns responsibility for administration of Wacol Rehabilitation Clinic to West Moreton Regional Health Authority. Such responsibility was incorrectly assigned in July 1991 by notification under the Health Services Act 1991. Section 77 also validates administration of the clinic in the period between the incorrect assignment—1 July 1991—and the subsequent correct assignment—6 August 1992—by Order in Council under the Inebriates Institutions Act 1896.

New section 78 is a provision which retrospectively ensures that Barrett Psychiatry Centre and Barrett Adolescent Centre were legally established in the period from actual establishment until 6 August 1992, at which time they were formally established by Order in Council under section 16 (1) of the Act. The section also validates administration of both centres during that period.

New section 79 is a provision which retrospectively assigns responsibility for administration of psychiatric hospitals, security patients hospitals and other places, as listed in the Bill, to the relevant regional health authority in the period 1 July 1991—the date of incorrect assignment of responsibility by notification under the Health Services Act—to 6 August 1992—the date on which responsibility for administration was correctly assigned by Order in Council under section 16 (3) of the Mental Health Act. The provision also validates the administration of such facilities by relevant authorities during that period.

New section 80 is a provision validating withdrawal of maintenance charges from the Patients Trust Fund and application of interest derived from such fund for the benefit of patients in general. The validation covers the period 1 July 1991 to commencement of this section. The need for this section arises from there not being a legislative head of power providing directly for such automatic deductions or interest application.

New section 81 is a provision validating the imposition of maintenance charges on patients in security patients hospitals and other places from 9 September 1989 to commencement of this section. The need for this section arises because although the regulation–making head of power was wide enough for a regulation to be made imposing maintenance charges on patients in security patients hospitals and other places, the regulation made referred only to psychiatric hospitals—Regulation 63 of the Mental Health Services Regulations 1985. This provision will be commenced concurrent with the commencement of an amended Regulation 63.

New section 82 is a provision validating the imposition of maintenance charges on patients in psychiatric hospitals in the period 1 July 1991 to the commencement of the section. The need for this validating provision arises because a definition change inserted into the Mental Health Act by the Health Services Act on 1 July 1991 unintentionally made Regulation 63 ultra vires the Act.

Clause 83 of the Bill introduces a provision amending clause 14 of Schedule 6, which effectively reverses the effect of the definition change which gave rise to new section 82. Although these validating provisions are very complex, I believe that they demonstrate my clear commitment, particularly in the sensitive area of mental health, to ensure that the legislative framework relating to mental health institutions and to patients in such institutions is in good order and meticulously observed.

The major amendment to the Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1979 concerns the definition of “tissue”. Specifically, it is intended that this definition be amended in two respects. Firstly, to clarify that an organ, blood or part of a human foetus, or a substance from an organ, blood or part of a human foetus falls within the definition of “tissue”. This amendment has been included to expel any doubt that a human foetus or human foetal tissue may not be sold or used for commercial purposes. Secondly, the definition is to be amended to clearly specify those substances which are exempt from the definition of “tissue” for the purposes of this Act by listing them within the definition rather than by Order in Council.

Finally, it gives me considerable pleasure to propose to this House the repeal of the Inebriates Institutions Act 1896 and its 1986 amendment Act. The principal Act is archaic and is now redundant.

I commend the Bill to the honourable members of this House.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning) (11.54 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> “That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Mixed Use Development Act 1993.”

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning) (11.55 p.m.): I move—

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

Proposals to redevelop Bretts Wharf and the adjacent lands which are mainly Crown lands under the control of the Port of Brisbane Authority at Hamilton have existed for at least the past 10 years. This project was the nucleus for a major study being commissioned by the former Government several years ago which was subsequently abandoned because the problems of competing land uses and traffic resolution appeared to be too hard to resolve.

It is a matter of record that Bretts has pursued the matter of redeveloping its site tenaciously and, as a consequence, developed a scheme of redevelopment for the area which was considered to be eminently suitable for the area. The company, Bretts Wharves and Stevedoring Co. Pty Limited, approached the Government seeking support for its proposals and, as a consequence of the company's long association with the wharves and the area generally, a deed of agreement was entered into between the company, the State Government and the Port of Brisbane Authority in June 1992. This agreement permitted the company to carry out investigations into available options for a redevelopment of the area and also for it to obtain preliminary approvals to a scheme of redevelopment from the Brisbane City Council. The approval of the council, subject to a number of conditions, has been obtained by the company and includes, amongst other things, works of demolition of the wharves and the construction and ongoing maintenance of a public boardwalk along the whole river frontage of the site.

The development itself comprises a small shopping facility adjoining a quality residential development on a separate adjoining development site. The residential component contains approximately 112 residential units, which are to be provided in the form of accommodation units in three separate towers and some 20 low-level townhouses or villas. A feature of the development is that all of the residential buildings are to be constructed on a landscaped podium, which is to provide support and amenity for the whole development and, at the same time, cover for an integrated underground car park and community facilities to serve the needs of all people who have resort to the area.

Because of the heavy capital costs for the company in removing the wharves and providing the public boardwalk, it is always the intention of the company to implement the development in four separate stages. In order to carry out the staged development, it was proposed to use the Building Units and Group Titles Act with amendments made to it which provided for the staged implementation of these types of development. It will be recalled that because amendments of this type had the potential to affect the interests of a large number of lot owners, the proposed amendment to this Act were withdrawn from the Parliament some 12 months ago so that more detailed work could be carried out on them.

It is the view of the Government that this development should be supported, and on this basis it was determined that the only legislative vehicle available to provide for the staging of the construction program and the introduction of a proper hierarchical management structure was the Mixed Use Development Act with appropriate amendments. This Bill introduces those amendments which are necessary to enable the development to proceed.

The Bill creates an additional Part, namely, Part 12, which is site specific and is designed to have a limited life so that the long-term integrity of the Mixed Use Development Act will be maintained. In addressing certain difficulties which flow from the implementation of subsequent stages of development, a number of minor amendments are proposed for the main body of the Act, which will be beneficial for other users of the provisions of the Act. These provisions relate to machinery matters such as meeting dates and the ability to change these so that proper budgetary sequences can be installed.

The opportunity has also been taken to correct minor typographical errors in both the Mixed Use Development Act and the Integrated Resort Development Act.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (12 midnight): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Government Services in Home Hill

Mr STONEMAN (Burdekin) (12 midnight): Once again, I must raise the issue of essential services that are under threat in the town of Home Hill, which is a substantial community in my electorate. Since the advent of this Government, that town and its people have had to endure a constant barrage of review, revision and service diminution, simply, it would seem, because of its proximity to the somewhat larger centre of Ayr.

During the past four years, the community of Home Hill has seen the closure of the courthouse and its various services; the removal of a number of direct services previously available at the railway station; and the constant threat to the hospital and all that that means to any community. Added to that is the devastation caused by the removal of real community input into fire services, the ambulance and the hospital by way of community-based boards.

Last week, I received a letter from the president of the Home Hill Chamber of Commerce attaching extracts from departmental proposals to further reduce rail and health services. The president said in part—

> "Should these strategies be adopted the effect on Home Hill will be profound. Already Home Hill people and businesses are becoming demoralised because of this Government's constant nibbling at our basic services. The anger and frustration is increasing."

He went on—

> "I am seeking your assistance in forming a plan of attack to stop these draft strategies . . . Home Hill cannot survive if we lose so many family jobs."

This is not just a cry from the heart of the community, it is a cry from the very core of our society—the core that provides the wherewithal that previously confidently produced the wealth of the State with the knowledge that, regardless of commodity price, season and general economic conditions, at least base facilities provided by the taxpayers' dollar would always be there. This is a community that is being nibbled at by a Government as a rat might nibble away at the corner of a bag of grain, allowing the contents to spill out and become useless and non-productive waste.

In the eyes of the bureaucrats, who are being driven by the philosophy of a centralist Government, Home Hill people are "just a few kilometres" from Ayr, so why treat the community as anything other than a suburb of Ayr, which is in turn being treated as a suburb of Townsville. They overlook the impact that such service removal has on community morale. They treat the public service personnel who provide the services to the community as just a series of numbers in a computer print-out. They ignore the upheaval to those who are losing services and to those who are losing jobs. They care little about the impact on the children of those families in the hospitals, the railways and the courthouses, etc., for whom that community is home.

In this case, they also ignore the strategic fact that Home Hill is separated from Ayr by the largest river in the State—a river that is bridged by a narrow construction 1 000 feet longer than the Sydney Harbour Bridge for which there is no alternative crossing. In time of flood or traffic accident on the bridge or similar disaster, the nearest alternative hospital facility is over 100 kilometres away in Bowen. Ayr may as well be on the moon under such circumstances. With literally hundreds of trains and almost 50 000 vehicles per week crossing the bridge, a major stoppage is only a matter of time. What happens then to the heart attack victim, the pregnant mother, the accident victim, the sick child because there is no alternative crossing and a helicopter is at least an hour away—always assuming one is available and the weather reasonable?

Must this debate go on forever, or will the people of Home Hill only be free of this constant pecking away when the Goss Government and its meddling social mechanics are thrown out? Surely reality and compassion must prevail, just as surely as this community and I, as its elected representative, will not simply sit by quietly and let a wonderful community have its soul destroyed.

Townsville Port Authority Board

Mr DAVIES (Mundingburra) (12.05 a.m.): Yesterday, at the regional Cabinet meeting held in Proserpine, the entire board of the Townsville Port Authority was reappointed. Mike Reynolds, a former ALP Mayor of Townsville, was reappointed as chairman. Max Hooper, a former National Party Tourism Minister, was reappointed as deputy chairman. The other members who were reappointed are Don Brown, chief manager, CSR, Burdekin; Toula Cassimatis, a well-known Townsville businesswoman and president of the Greek community; Tony

Mooney, the Mayor of Townsville; Dale Parker, a retired stevedore; and Bill Douglas, manager, Rider Hunt, Townsville. I support the reappointment of the entire board for one basic reason—they have performed.

In the last three years, the Townsville Port Authority has grown at an incredible rate. The $90m upgrade of the port is the largest redevelopment in living memory. Predictably, the member for Burdekin, Mr Stoneman, is critical. To quote him from today's *Townsville Bulletin*—

> "The crony system is alive and well in the Labor Party."

I should not have to tell Mr Stoneman that while Mike Reynolds is in the Labor Party, and has been for a long time, Max Hooper certainly is not, nor has he ever been.

Mr Stoneman interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Burdekin!

Mr DAVIES: Mr Hooper was a National Party Minister. I am not sure whether he is still a member of the National Party. Unlike Mr Stoneman, I am prepared to judge people on merit. Mike Reynolds, as chairman, has done a great job. Max Hooper, as deputy chairman, has also done a good job in his capacity as the loyal and capable deputy. It matters not to me that Mike Reynolds was a Labor mayor, nor that Max Hooper was a National Party Minister in a Bjelke-Petersen Government. Max Hooper also is a former Mayor of Townsville.

The Townsville Port Authority board is exceptionally fortunate to have two former mayors and the current Mayor of Townsville as members. They were also members of the previous board. In fact, the whole board is a quality board. It is well balanced. It has been selected on merit and experience in both public administration and the private sector.

Mr Stoneman and, recently, the member for Indooroopilly, Mr Beanland, have been critical of the fact that Mike Reynolds has been domiciled in Canberra for the last one and a bit years. On 7 October 1993, in his reply to the Transport Estimates debate, the Minister for Transport stated—

> "I know that some honourable members opposite really cannot help themselves when they get an opportunity to make a snide comment. The arch architect of the snide comment would have to be the member for Indooroopilly, who took the opportunity to make some snide comments about the Chairman of the Townsville Port Authority. The Townsville Port Authority has done an outstanding job in its development of the port of Townsville. During the chairmanship of Mike Reynolds, there has been an increase in trade through that port. I place on record my appreciation of the working relationship that I have had with Mike Reynolds in that role. He is a very inexpensive chairman to maintain.
>
> Members of the Liberal Party tried to make some snide comments about the costs involved with Mike Reynolds having to travel to Townsville to undertake his responsibilities as chairman of that port authority. I point out to the honourable members that the chairmanship of the port of Townsville costs only about half of what it did when the Chairman of the Townsville Port Authority came from the Burdekin—when he was a mate of the National Party Government. We might run lean, mean, cost-efficient operations, but I make no apology for calling upon the talent of the best people to do that job."

Mr De Lacy: He is a lot better than Mr Beanland.

Mr DAVIES: Mr Beanland had a few things to say on 7 October in relation to Mike Reynolds—

> "I appreciate that he is on secondment and that at some stage he may return to Townsville."

I have good news for Mr Beanland. He is returning to Townsville. It was announced on Friday that he will be returning to Townsville to resume his work at James Cook University.

Mr Beanland then went on to say—

> "However, that scenario does not augur well for the port authority and is unprofessional."

Time expired.

Bardon Professional Development Centre

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (12.10 a.m.): Tonight, I am going to address the sale of the Bardon Professional Development Centre by this Goss Labor Government and the devastating effect this is going to have on the foothills of Mount Coot-tha, the neighbouring Bardon State School, the wildlife and environment of Mount Coot-tha and the Bardon suburb itself. Some weeks ago, this Government called for tenders for the purchase of the site in Simpsons Road, Bardon. In the course of this occurring,

residents throughout Brisbane have rallied against the Government's decision, recalling the positive contribution that the centre has made to education in this State.

Last week, on 4 November, the Bardon State School P & C held a special meeting to discuss their need to have returned to the school part of portion 704 of that land that is no longer part of the school reserve, but is part of the professional development centre. I should mention that the fence has been relocated some three times to exclude this part of portion 704 that is no longer part of the school reserve. The meeting was chaired by the P & C president, Mrs Judith Carne—a name I am sure is familiar to some members through the Goss Downey & Carne connection.

It was raised at the meeting that a discussion had been held and that the school would be given some $250,000 worth of roadworks within the school grounds for an off-road set down and pick-up area for children. I understand that the president wanted to accept the money. However, the P & C voted overwhelmingly against the proposal and instead wanted the traffic problems in Simpsons Road addressed with a roundabout constructed at the top of the hill just past the school where land would be available, together with some roadworks in Simpsons Road itself. Further, the P & C overwhelmingly decided to press the Government for the retention of that part of portion 704 that is currently part of the professional development centre and its return to the school.

However, it was made clear by the president that the $250,000 bribe offer from the Government was on a one-off, take it or leave it basis. In other words, "Roll over and keep quiet. Do as you are told or, alternatively, the P & C and the children will be treated with contempt." I might mention that the member for Mount Coot-tha failed to attend that special meeting. We find that this is another example of the Government selling out the school children of this State for profit—for the almighty dollar. Some time ago, this Labor Government wrote to the council in relation to this redevelopment. The council replied that it supported the residential development. This was supported by the local alderman, who voted against the wishes of her constituents on this issue. She also sold them out to toe the Labor line. Since then, the deafening silence from this alderman has been quite extraordinary.

A careful check of the Mount Coot-tha development control plan will show that the Bardon Professional Development Centre land has been excluded. A black hole exists where this land is concerned. Development control plans conveniently commence on all sides of the professional development centre, but no plan, no map, includes this site. The Labor council has got into bed with this disgusting Government to deceive the people of Brisbane. Clearly, the people of Bardon and other parts of Brisbane can have no faith in the council's development control plans. The public have heard a lot from Labor about no more ministerial rezonings, but this little caper turns ministerial rezonings into an art form.

For the benefit of country members who may not be aware of the site of the professional development centre, I tell them that it is at the foothills of Mount Coot-tha. It contains significant strands of a variety of trees, and has an abundance of wildlife, with a wildlife corridor along Ithaca Creek. This corridor was established 15 years ago—well before the people ever believed that they would face a Government made up of vandals intent on destroying such a picturesque, valuable, environmental area. So much for the so-called environmental concerns of the Minister for Education!

The member for Mount Coot-tha long ago sold out her constituents, the people of Bardon, whom she pretends to represent not only with her silence on this issue but also with her failure to stand up. Instead, she decided to put Labor first and her electorate last.

To date, there has been a complete lack of community consultation by this Government, which is now intent on bullying the Bardon State School P & C into submission, having successfully forced the Labor city council to toe the line. I challenge the Minister for Education and his Government to place the tenders received on public display for 60 days so that the public can have a say in what is to happen to this land should this Government not see common sense and back off the sale, and retain this significant area of land and the building as an education centre.

Time expired.

Railway Stations, Kurwongbah Electorate

Mrs WOODGATE (Kurwongbah) (12.15 a.m.): Tonight, I would like to voice my appreciation of the major investment that Queensland Rail has made to the safety and comfort of rail commuters in my Kurwongbah electorate. Recently, a $1.3m upgrade has been made to Strathpine, Lawnton and Bald

Hills Railway Stations. Just a few months ago, similar improvements were made to both Bray Park and Petrie Railway Stations. This means that every railway station in my electorate from Petrie to Bald Hills has now taken on a new appearance.

These improvements have been made under Queensland Rail's Operation Facelift program. When the Minister, David Hamill, visited the Strathpine Railway Station on 24 September to officially open the upgraded station, he advised that the railway stations at Lawnton, Bald Hills and Strathpine are used by more than 850 000 00 rail passengers each year. Better lighting has been installed, which greatly improves vision on platform areas, and emergency help phones have been installed. I have been contacted by dozens of women who have telephoned me to express their appreciation that these phones have been installed. In addition, the provision of a public telephone removes that element of danger which existed when women, both young and old, had to walk some distance to a public telephone to call home to arrange to be collected at the station.

For the information of honourable members who do not have the luxury of suburban railway stations in their electorates, I will tell them a little bit about Operation Facelift. It is a multimillion-dollar initiative of Queensland Rail, which will eventually transform 76 stations in Brisbane and major regional areas. Operation Facelift is a customer focus initiative which improves safety and comfort for rail passengers. The whole idea is to attract more people to the convenience of airconditioned, suburban train travel, and so help to keep cars out of the inner city.

In my Kurwongbah electorate, Operation Facelift has now transformed five run down and tired old railway stations into the leading lights of the Brisbane rail network. I am confident that the upgrading will attract more patronage to the suburban system. Rail service is a strong growth corridor in the northern suburbs. As I mentioned previously, this last financial year, 864 000 passenger journeys were undertaken to and from Strathpine, Lawnton and Bald Hills stations. These figures are surely a real indication of the importance of electric rail to the local community. I would like to list some of the improvements to those stations: the construction of new brick and tile station buildings including passenger waiting areas, ticketing facilities, office facilities and toilets; the construction of new passenger shelters; the resurfacing of the platform including the painting of the coping stones on the platform edge to assist with safe boarding of trains; new signage and improved lighting; new seating, new rubbish bins; and the installation of an emergency-help phone and public Telecom phones.

One other improvement which has been of great help to the users of the rail service has been the installation of a ramp for commuters disembarking at Strathpine. The ramp has been sorely needed for many years for the senior citizens, who have found it quite an effort to climb up the steps over the railway line to access the Senior Citizens Centre, which is located adjacent to the Strathpine Railway Station. The senior citizens out my way had been asking the previous Government for quite some time for that. I was in the council at the time. We did our best to make representations, and asked the Government to give consideration to the provision of a ramp, especially for wheelchair users. Mothers with prams and strollers also had difficulty in negotiating the stairs over the railway lines, and always had to depend on the goodwill and availability of a station attendant to assist with carrying the prams up the stairs.

I want to place on record here tonight my thanks to Minister Hamill who, on receiving a request from me to assess the situation, acted quickly in instructing officers of Queensland Rail to take a look at what could be done to rectify a most unsatisfactory situation.

The rest is history. We now have in place a ramp which is readily accessible for people with children in prams or strollers; people in wheelchairs, and the elderly, for whom climbing the stairs over the railway line was akin to climbing Mount Everest. I am most grateful for this recognition of a problem by the Minister and the department, and the prompt action which followed.

At the official opening of the new Strathpine station on 24 September, the representatives of local community groups met with the Minster, and all were unanimous in their praise for the upgrading of the stations. They also expressed their gratitude for the way in which the new timetables had been implemented. Input was sought and acted upon from daily commuters. Sure, there have been hiccups since then and some finetuning but, generally, people were and are acceptable to the rearranging of timetables throughout the Brisbane suburban rail system. It is not an easy job. If we are to work towards keeping cars out of the inner-city area, people

must be wooed back to using public transport, and it is very pleasing to see that Queensland Rail, with the Operation Facelift program, has taken the first steps down this path. Many people will surely be attracted to the convenience of air-conditioned, suburban train travel with user-friendly suburban stations.

Westbrook Youth Centre

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Western Downs) (12.20 a.m.): Tonight, I want to talk about some management changes that are finally taking place at the Westbrook Youth Centre, which is established just west of Toowoomba. It is the responsibility of the the Child Protection Section of the Department of Family Services. It is a place where the very worst of male juveniles are put into detention because of their misdemeanours in the community. It is not a very nice place. It is not very nice people who are placed there. In other cases, people whose lives are very disturbed are placed there.

Probably the most notorious of all of the inmates there at the present time is the chap who is alleged to have murdered Dermott Tiernan, the publican at Murgon, some time ago. That gives members some idea of the sort of person that must be looked after at that place.

Because of my responsibility as shadow Minister for Family Services, earlier this year I was contacted by people who have associations with the Westbrook Youth Centre and also by the member for Toowoomba North, Mr Healy. They were concerned that there had been an increase in violence and disturbances within the centre. Those disturbances included attacks on inmates by other inmates and also attacks by inmates on the staff. That is a pretty serious situation. There have also been attempted break-outs and riots within the various compounds in the Westbrook Youth Centre itself.

I took the trouble to visit the centre and speak to the staff. I was shown the various places where incidents had occurred. I also had the opportunity later on to speak to some of the youth officers privately and also to speak to other people who have an association with the centre. It became very clear to me that the biggest problem in the place was not a lack of resources but the style of management. I could explain it by saying that the youth officers, those people who work at the coalface helping these young fellows rehabilitate themselves, supervising their movements throughout the centre and helping them with their trade training, were of the opinion that they were not getting the right back-up from superior officers.

Members may recall that during the debate on the Estimates of the Department of Family Services, the member for Toowoomba North spoke at length about some of the ridiculous procedures that had been put in place. For example, if there were a disturbance between youths in the centre, the staff members, the youth officers, were under instruction to go to the young fellows and say, "Stop!" They had to say it three times. They were not to interfere or put a hand on the offenders, because that could leave them open to allegations of assault.

They would just say "Stop" three times. If the offenders did not stop, the youth officers had to find a superior, who would come to the scene and keep repeating the same thing. When we think that we are talking about young fellows who have been charged with murder or serious assault, those sorts of managerial instructions were quite ridiculous. On top of that, often when things were finally put in place and the offenders were put in the detention unit at about 9 o'clock at night, those same young blokes would be back out at 7 o'clock the next morning having breakfast and enjoying all of the other privileges that are afforded to all the other inmates of the Westbrook Youth Centre.

I thought so seriously about what I had seen and heard that, on 20 April, I wrote to the Minister and suggested that for the good of the young people who are in detention there and for the good of the quite committed staff—many of them have served there for 15 to 20 years—new management procedures had to be put in place. In particular, the senior staff had to back up the youth officers who were working at the coalface.

It came to my attention just last week or the week before that the divisional head had gone out to Westbrook. Immediately after his inspection of the place, he had transferred both the manager and the deputy manager out of that centre to elsewhere within the department. He also informed the staff that the style of management would be changed to the style that the youth officers themselves had requested. I am pleased to see it happen, but I am a bit suspicious that the Minister, even though she wrote back and said the place was under constant review, had recognised that I had hit upon something that was a real problem. But to give it some sort of respectability, she wanted to ignore my suggestion and left it for six or seven months before she did something about it. It is a pity

that she took so long, but I do acknowledge that changes have been made for the betterment of the centre and for those young people who are serving their detention there.

T. J. Ryan

Mr PALASZCZUK (Inala) (12.25 a.m.): The presence of the statue of T. J. Ryan within the precincts of the Parliament, even if on a temporary basis, brought to my mind what Queensland owes this man. It is even more fitting that the statue graces this place when the Labor Party is about to celebrate the centenary of its caucus next week. In 1909, T. J. Ryan was elected to represent the seat of Barcoo in the Queensland Parliament. He became Premier of Queensland in 1912. His term as Premier, which lasted until 1919, is noted as a period of great reform not only for Queensland but also for Australia.

He championed causes still dear to the hearts of Labor Party members some 72 years later. Ryan fought for industrial democracy. He fought for the rights of individuals to have guaranteed minimum wages. He fought for the rights of workers to work in a safe environment. These issues are still relevant to us today. We continue to battle the conservatives who think that the only way to prosperity is through lower wages and lower standards for the people in this country who work for a living.

Ryan had a great commitment to social justice through law reform. This has been and still is a strong tradition of the Australian Labor Party in ensuring that all Australians share in the wealth of this country. The philosophy of our party is that we are all under one law. No Australian is more equal than another. The task we have faced over many years is to make sure that justice is not dispensed to only those who are able to pay for it.

Ryan was very much ahead of his time in advocating certain changes. He brought about universal suffrage by introducing the vote for women, and fought for the abolition of the death penalty. Ryan advocated the vote for 18-year-olds, which was not implemented until Gough Whitlam became Prime Minister of Australia in 1972.

Thomas Joseph Ryan was born in 1876 in Melbourne. He was the son of an Irish farmer. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Melbourne, and later gained his Bachelor of Laws while still teaching at Rockhampton Grammar School. He was admitted to the Queensland Bar in 1901. During his time as Premier, Ryan successfully appealed to the High Court over the issue of abolishing the Legislative Council in Queensland. Major reforms in labour and industrial relations, as well as a new deal for primary producers, were hallmarks of his administration. It is a little known fact that Ryan played a significant role within the Federal parliamentary Labor Party. Ryan was invited by the Federal Executive of the Australian Labor Party—the first and only time this happened—to run for Federal Parliament.

In 1919, he was elected to the New South Wales Federal seat of West Sydney. In September 1920, he became what was then called the Assistant Leader of the Federal parliamentary Labor Party. In his biography of T. J. Ryan, Denis Murphy pointed out that—

> ". . . by all canons and precedents of Australian colonial and Federal politics, Ryan should have either been on the Supreme Court or High Court bench or under serious consideration as an appointee, not beginning a new political career at the Federal level."

Ryan was a man of genial personality and a man with great legal knowledge. He had been expected by political supporters and opponents alike to become Labor's next Prime Minister.

While in the Federal arena, Ryan was not one to remain silent. With his mastery of the Standing Orders of the Federal Parliament, combined with his superior political and legal knowledge, he was formidable. He was more than a match for Billy Hughes. In constitutional matters, Ryan made his mark. In the area of the power of corporations, Ryan was 50 years ahead of the slow pace of conventional constitutional interpretation.

Then, unfortunately, tragedy struck. Unfortunately for Australia, Ryan's career in Federal Parliament was cut short by his untimely death in 1921 at the age of 45.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 12.29 a.m. (Wednesday).