

WEDNESDAY, 13 APRIL 1994

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

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Abortion Law

From **Mrs Gamin** (112 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will not move to change legislation regarding abortion and will not allow abortion on demand.

Coral Dredging, Moreton Bay

From **Mr Casey** (6 signatories) praying that the proposed dredging of coral be effectively stopped from around the areas of Green Island and Moreton Bay.

Ban Ban Spring

From **Mrs McCauley** (728 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will legislate to prevent the interference with the flow of water from the Ban Ban Spring.

Land Rezoning, Clontarf

From **Mr Wells** (88 signatories) praying that the proposed ministerial rezoning of Lot 891 on the corner of Frost and Essey Streets, Clontarf be reconsidered and that consideration be given to the sale of this land on the open market.

TAFE Facilities, Redcliffe

From **Mr Hollis** (338 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will ensure that adequate and permanent TAFE facilities are established in the Redcliffe area as a matter of urgency.

Sky-rail, Cairns and Kuranda

From **Mr De Lacy** (120 signatories) praying for a review of the procedure under which the sky-rail proposal between Cairns and Kuranda has been approved or rejection of the development outright.

A similar petition was received from **Mrs Rose** (119 signatories).

Nursing

From **Mr Campbell** (2 152 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will reject plans by the Minister for Health and his department to reduce the nursing profession's ability to administer a high standard of patient care.

Petitions received.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

In accordance with the schedule circulated by the Clerk to members in the Chamber, the following documents were tabled—

Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act—

Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1994, No. 111

District Courts (Venue of Appeals) Act—

District Courts (Venue of Appeals) Regulation 1994, No. 113

Education (General Provisions) Act—

Education (General Provisions) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 125

Gladstone Power Station Agreement Act—

Gladstone Power Station (Long Service Leave) Regulation 1994, No. 114

Gladstone Power Station (Redundancy) Regulation 1994, No. 115

Harbours Act—

Harbours (Revenue Distribution) Regulation 1994, No. 117

Harbours (Thursday Island) Amendment By-law (No. 1) 1994, No. 116

Hospitals Foundations Act—

Hospitals Foundations (Royal Brisbane Hospital Research Foundation) Amendment Rule (No. 1) 1994, No. 126

Industrial Development Act—

Industrial Development (Narangba Industrial Estate—Roads) Regulation 1994, No. 112

Juvenile Justice Act—

Juvenile Justice Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 119

Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act—

Local Government (Planning and Environment) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 118

Nursing Act—

Nursing Amendment By-law (No. 2) 1994, No. 120

Queensland Marine Act—

Queensland Marine (Pleasure Yacht

Equipment) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 122

Queensland Marine (Registration, Survey, Equipment and Load Line) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 121

Transport Infrastructure (Roads) Act—

Transport Infrastructure (Roads) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1994, No. 127

University of Southern Queensland Act—

University of Southern Queensland (Honorary Awards) Statute 1994, No. 124

Water Resources Act—

Water Resources (Shire of Emerald) Regulation 1994, No. 123.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

- (a) Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs (Ms Warner)—

Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody—Progress Report on Queensland Government Implementation to December 1993 (Volumes 1, 2 and 3)

- (b) Minister for Administrative Services (Mr Milliner)—

Government response to Travelsafe Committee on safety and economic implications of permitting standees on urban and non-urban bus services

- (c) Minister for Lands (Mr Smith) —

Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board—Annual Report for 1992-93

Valuers Registration Board of Queensland—Annual Report for 1993

Surveyors Board of Queensland—Annual Report for 1992-93

Rural Lands Protection Act Reform in Queensland—Discussion paper.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Member for Broadwater

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (2.34 p.m.): I table the opinion of the Crown Solicitor as to whether the member for Broadwater has breached the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986. As honourable members would remember, due to the constitutional importance of the point of law involved, I asked the Crown Solicitor for advice which would be tabled.

The Crown Solicitor says that, if the member had made the statement outside the Parliament, he would have committed an offence against

section 6. He also points out that disclosure in Parliament is not one of the specified exemptions. The Crown Solicitor also says that the case is one of statutory construction—that is, it is not just any routine instance of a member using parliamentary privilege to make revelations that would otherwise be defamatory. It was a question of whether those revelations involved a breach of the criminal statute law.

However, the Crown Solicitor says that the Bill of Rights of 1688 protects the member for Broadwater from the prosecution that he would clearly otherwise face. The Crown Solicitor also remarks that, while the member for Broadwater is legally protected, members have a moral obligation to act honourably whilst speaking in the House. I table the opinion.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members have no excuse whatsoever to compete with the demonstrators outside the Parliament today.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

Hon. A. M. WARNER (South Brisbane—Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) (2.36 p.m.), by leave: Today, I tabled the Queensland Government's progress report on the implementation of the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. After nearly four years of investigation, the royal commission handed down a comprehensive report, which covered not only the 99 Aboriginal deaths in custody which occurred between 1980 and 1989 but also the underlying causes of those deaths.

Its original charter had widened in the course of the royal commission, when the commissioner realised that the causes of the unacceptably high level of deaths were not simply related to systematic failure of the criminal justice system. This wider investigation unearthed a series of complex problems, which were the result of 200 years of social disadvantage. Factors such as social alienation, poor health, inadequate education and high unemployment rates were identified as factors in Aboriginal people being imprisoned at a higher rate than non-Aboriginal people.

The 339 recommendations cover the gamut of legislative, legal, social and cultural issues. These findings demand social and cultural changes as well as changes to departmental systems and processes. These problems did not

develop overnight and they cannot be solved overnight.

The Queensland report is only the second report on the progress of implementation to be released by a State or Territory. The Commonwealth Government released its progress report on the implementation earlier this year, and Western Australia released its report late last year. The Queensland report demonstrates that the Government has embarked on a wide-ranging program of reform. It contains a summary, including a report from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Overview Committee, a report on the State Government's policies and programs, which also addressed the underlying issues described in the royal commissioner's report, and a detailed report on action that we have taken in Queensland in direct response to the recommendations.

The 339 recommendations of the royal commission include 55 which are the responsibility of either the Commonwealth Government or of other State and Territory Governments. Of the 284 recommendations applicable to Queensland, there are 253 which we have implemented, partly implemented or which have no set time frame for completion and cover continuing action on the part of the Government. Action on the remaining 25 recommendations is imminent and is awaiting the outcomes of other actions, including the review of the State's Coroners Act. The Queensland Government did not support recommendation 58, which deals with the appeals mechanisms against expulsion from licensed premises. This matter has already been covered by our anti-discrimination legislation and, therefore, further action is superfluous. We also rejected as inappropriate recommendation 273, which called for the appointment of community inspectors for licensed premises.

Action across the Government has been monitored and coordinated by an interdepartmental committee chaired by the director-general of my department, and includes representatives of the Departments of Justice and Attorney-General; Education; Employment, Vocational Education and Industrial Relations; Health; Lands; Tourism, Sport and Racing; Treasury; the Queensland Police Service; and the Corrective Services Commission.

Community monitoring has occurred throughout this reform process and will continue through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Overview Committee. Advice on appropriate amendments to legislation is provided to the Attorney-General by the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Group. These two groups represent a

major reform in themselves. This is the first time that the Queensland Government has entered into such a relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This Government has undertaken wider-ranging reforms to custodial and police practices, to departmental procedures and systems and to legislation.

Further, in the 1992-93 Budget, we have allocated \$10.5m over three years for the following initiatives: diversion from custody; alternative community governing structures; community justice development; strategies to meet critical emerging issues; prisoner and family support; and cross-Government cultural awareness training. Reforms have begun, and further reforms are under way. The process of responding to the royal commission will continue. It does not end with the implementation of those recommendations.

I understand that Aboriginal people may feel that more could have been done. The overview committee's report shows that they are critical of the process of implementation. It also shows, however, that the overview committee recognises the Government commitment and endorses our reform agenda. A statement has been released today by the overview committee, which I seek leave to table.

Leave granted.

Ms WARNER: In that statement, the overview committee commends the progress report, which represents the initiatives and the achievements of the Government. It says, in part—

"A disappointing feature of the past year . . . has been the widespread displays of racism against our homeless people who are powerless to defend themselves . . . All Queenslanders must be prepared to support the implementation of the royal commission recommendations in the spirit of equality and fair play."

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Trade Delegations to Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Southern China and Papua New Guinea

Hon P. J. ELDER (Capalaba—Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development) (2.41 p.m.), by leave: I wish to report to the Parliament on the recent visit by an all-party parliamentary delegation to Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Shenzhen in southern China and the Faces of Papua New Guinea business mission. The parliamentary trade delegation was taken over the period 5 to 17 March 1994. Other members of the delegation were the honourable members for Caboolture,

Everton, Mount Gravatt, Aspley, Broadwater and Maroochydore.

Parliamentary delegations have for the past four years been an integral part of Queensland's trade and investment development program, and this is the fourth such delegation to visit our major trading partners in the Asia-Pacific region since 1991. The destinations chosen for this visit are all important to the State's future efforts to develop closer trading ties with the dynamic north Asia region. Two of the countries visited, Japan and Korea, are respectively Queensland's largest and second-largest export destinations, whilst Hong Kong and southern China are at the hub of the rapid growth that is currently occurring in the People's Republic of China.

The aim of the delegation was to promote Queensland's economic and trade interests at the most senior levels of Government and industry and to create an enhanced awareness of the competitive international environment in which Queensland industry must operate.

As an important adjunct to the visit, I was able to advance a number of specific commercial investment projects that are currently under discussion for Queensland. These included the multimedia project planned for the Gold Coast, proposed investments in the food processing and dimension stone industries and the Gladstone light metals project involving the establishment of the light metal automotive parts manufacturing facility.

In all locations visited, whether it be the Kansai International Airport and Rinku New Town in Japan, the new integrated road, rail and port facilities associated with Hong Kong's new international airport development at Chek Lap Kok or the massive housing and commercial developments under way in Korea and Shenzhen, the delegation was impressed by the sheer size and dynamism associated with the economies of north Asia. This rapid economic growth creates opportunities for Queensland firms right across-the-board— infrastructure development, in the supply of consultancy and engineering services, in the supply of raw materials and energy, and in fresh and processed foods, as well as a range of niche manufacturing opportunities.

The delegation's visit confirmed to me the correctness of the Government's decision to focus resources on helping Queensland firms tap into the burgeoning growth occurring in the neighbouring Asia-Pacific region, which also has similar time zones and is relatively close. I take this opportunity to thank on behalf of the delegation Nigel Brown from TIDD and the staff of our overseas offices and trade secretariats for their assistance in making this a successful trip.

At this point, I would also like to report to the Parliament on my recent visit to Papua New Guinea. PNG also lies in this very important region and is Queensland's closest overseas neighbour. It is Queensland's eleventh largest export market for value-added goods and a significant market for services. State exports to PNG now total \$265m or 31 per cent of Australia's exports to that market. At the invitation of the PNG Government and the Faces of PNG business mission, I took the opportunity to develop and enhance the relationship that currently exists between PNG and Queensland at both a Government and private sector level. Other members of that delegation included John Budd, MLA, Ray Hollis, MLA, and Lorraine Bird, MLA.

Papua New Guinea presents a challenge for Government and the private sector—a challenge to understand the diverse nature of business and political culture in our nearest overseas neighbour. One thing is certain: Papua New Guinea business is united in its pursuit of development and progress, and the scope for opportunities for Queensland business is not limited to the large-scale projects. The establishment of small and medium enterprises which provide the full range of services, training and skills will be imperative.

When the Goss Government took office four and a half years ago, the relationship that Queensland had with PNG was not as strong as it should have been. As I have mentioned, it is our closest neighbour and an important trading partner. We have sought to rectify this position by taking positive and pro-active steps to develop our relationship with PNG, namely, the memorandum of understanding which exists between our two territories and the establishment of the Papua New Guinea/Oceania secretariat.

Queensland's trading partners are very important to the long-term prosperity of our economy. Even if members opposite do not, this Government takes the relationship with PNG very seriously and will continue to cultivate it. I table the reports for the information of the House.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (2.47 p.m.), by leave: Yesterday in this House, the member for Hervey Bay accused me of travelling the State taking with me a one-man crime wave. I find that statement offensive, and it is of course completely untrue. Queensland is gripped by a crime wave under the policies enunciated by Mr Nunn and this Labor Government. That is particularly so in Mr Nunn's own electorate. One need look only at the

newspaper clippings from the past few weeks to see evidence of the crime wave—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I suggest to the member for Indooroopilly that he is not allowed to debate the issue. He can outline only the way in which he has been misrepresented.

Mr BEANLAND: Mr Speaker, I am in the process of saying that the statement by the member for Hervey Bay was offensive to me and completely untrue. I have committed no offences, but I do make the point that, under this Government, crime has risen by 100 per cent.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr D. Barbagallo; Mr D. Atkins

Mr BORBIDGE: In directing a question to the Honourable the Premier, I refer him to the unprecedented behaviour of a senior member of his staff involving himself in and conducting an interview at the Cooktown Police Station on 13 November last year of a ranger who had legally seized his brother's motor vehicle. I also refer to a statement by the ranger that the Premier's then private secretary had been overbearing and sarcastic and that "he questioned me at length" concerning the seizure of the vehicle carrying guns, drugs and a chainsaw. I ask the Premier: on whose authority did his private secretary undertake this interview? Is this acceptable behaviour, or is this just more bad luck?

Mr W. K. GOSS: It seems as though we are to face another onslaught from the Inspector Clouseau and Miss Marple of the Queensland Parliament.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Southport!

Mr W. K. GOSS: I repeat what I said yesterday, that is, I accept that Mr Atkins and Mr Barbagallo have been honest in their account of this matter, that they have committed no offence or wrongdoing and that the matter is the subject of an investigation by the Criminal Justice Commission, initiated by the Opposition. That Criminal Justice Commission investigation will receive the full support and cooperation of the Government and my office. I have directed not only that full support be given but also that all questions be answered and that all documents be provided. That is all that I can do, it is all that I should properly do and it is all that I will do. I will wait until we receive the Criminal Justice Commission report and then we will be in a better position to judge whether there has been wrongdoing or not in this matter.

When one puts to one side the colour, exotica and confusion associated with this incident, I think it is clear to any impartial observer that no evidence has been produced by Inspector Clouseau and Miss Marple of any offence or any wrongdoing.

Mr Borbidge: Who are you protecting?

Mr W. K. GOSS: To answer the interjection, nobody is being protected here. The persons who were apprehended by the ranger are the subject of charges or have been the subject of charges that are before the court, and there is a Criminal Justice Commission investigation in respect of which there is absolute and 100 per cent cooperation from the Government.

The smear tactics which are the standard and only response—the only option—of this so-called Leader of the Opposition were demonstrated yesterday. After months of smear and allegation suggesting that people such as Mr Atkins were up north doing something wrong, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition came into this Chamber and said, "I can prove that Mr Atkins wasn't there." What does the Leader of the Opposition have to say about that? He is a joke, and his tactics are a joke. I am going to wait for the report of the Criminal Justice Commission.

Register of Pecuniary Interests

Mr BORBIDGE: I refer the Minister for Minerals and Energy to his statement last night on the *7.30 Report* that he had declared income received from his longstanding directorship of a credit union. I ask: is it not a fact that in his entry in the register of pecuniary interests no such disclosure of income has been made? As he is in contempt of a resolution of the House, what action does he propose to take? I table the relevant documentation.

Mr McGRADY: I want to make it perfectly clear that I am a member and a director of the Queensland Country Credit Union. I declared that in my entry in the register of pecuniary interests. Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition examined that register this morning and saw that declaration. The question was: what substantial interest do I earn? I answered, "Nil". I have a document here which I will table, signed by the chief executive officer, which states, "Moneys earned in the 1993-94 year—less than \$2,000." I do not consider that to be substantial income.

PRIVILEGE

Minister for Minerals and Energy

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise on a matter of privilege. It is my understanding that Ministers in the Government have to declare any gift over a certain amount of money. That amount is considerably less than \$2,000.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It is not a matter of privilege.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, with respect, I am suggesting that the Minister—

A Government member interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: He is not on his feet. The member should sit and cop it. Mr Speaker, I am suggesting that the Minister is in breach of a resolution of this House. I ask you to determine whether there has been a breach of privilege by a Minister who accepts \$2,000 and does not declare it in his entry in the register of pecuniary interests.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will give a ruling in the House at a later date.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Queensland Nickel Joint Venture

Mr PITT: I refer the Treasurer to criticism of the State Government by the Leader of the Opposition last year after the Canadian metals group Inco decided to pull out of negotiations about the future control of a Queensland Nickel joint venture near Townsville. I ask: can the Treasurer inform the House whether the State Government's continued participation in the joint venture has been successful or whether the criticism by the Leader of the Opposition is justified?

Mr De LACY: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am pleased to answer it because I think it is a good story and all members of the House—

Mr Borbidge: \$2,000 doesn't matter.

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

Mr De LACY: Mr "12 per cent".

Mr Borbidge: Tell us about your debts.

Mr De LACY: The Leader of the Opposition should tell honourable members about his 12 per cent rating. He is the most unpopular leader—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that the Treasurer answer the question and I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition cease interjecting because I have warned him.

Mr De LACY: Four and a half years ago,

when we attained Government in this State, we inherited a 12 and a half per cent share of a nickel project in north Queensland.

Mr Hamill: That's a bigger share than he's got in the opinion polls.

Mr De LACY: That is right. That is higher than the Opposition Leader's rating in the opinion polls.

This Government inherited 12 and a half per cent of this nickel project that was run by Alan Bond. The project was mortgaged to the eyeballs and its ore supply was fast running out. No sooner had we taken over than it went into receivership. That was not a very good position for any Government to find itself in.

Over the last three or four years, this Government has negotiated arrangements to put that project back on an even keel. I might say that, as usual, the Opposition has criticised everything this Government did, every step of the way. However, now, four and a half years later, the project in north Queensland is financially sound and it is run and controlled by an Australian company. It has a secure, long-term ore supply. It has developed its technology so that it is now producing high-grade ore which is attracting a premium on the London metals exchange. It has also developed a cobalt process, and that is an exciting process with great potential for the future.

In regard to that project, there are now approximately 45 million preference shares and ordinary shares, and yesterday those shares were selling on the stock exchange for \$1.59 each. On top of that, this Government has a 20 per cent direct participating interest in the joint venture which is worth, I might say, substantially more than our shareholding—in fact, at least half as much again. If honourable members would like to do the financial exercise, they will see that our holding in that project is a very substantial holding indeed.

This Government has turned around something that was a potential disaster. This Government set itself objectives to put this project back on an even keel, to ensure that it had a long-term, viable future creating economic benefits and jobs for the people of Queensland. We have achieved those objectives. In addition, we have protected the taxpayers of Queensland, and we have done that in the very best kind of way.

I suppose there is only one other question that could be asked about this, and that is: what is the future of the Government's equity holding in this project? I think the short answer is that we have achieved our objectives, that we do not see that we ought to be an equity participant in the

long term, but in the short term we would not do anything which would create any instability for the project.

Political Correctness in Education

Mr PITT: In directing a question to the Minister for Education, I refer to a report in today's *Townsville Bulletin*, in which a school principal has commented on the existence in the past of political correctness in education, and I ask: in respect of the issue of political correctness, what is the current situation and what changes have occurred?

Mr COMBEN: I have seen the report in today's *Townsville Bulletin* headed "Moratorium on political correctness in schools" in which John Driscoll, the principal of the Thuringowa State High School and one of the senior researchers on the Wiltshire curriculum review panel, made a number of comments about political correctness, such as—

"In the past the education system had been distracted by the issues of political correctness and social justice."

He said also that further emphasis on quality learning is needed. I asked officers of my department why that article appeared and what was going on. They immediately showed me the front page of a newsletter from the Thuringowa State High School dated April 1994. When Mr Driscoll went back to his school for the first time after a year away working on the Wiltshire report, he made a number of comments about maximum learning in a disciplined environment. He said—

"The Wiltshire Report advocates this stance also when it states:

...

We believe it is now time for a renewed emphasis on what is closest to the students themselves—classroom teaching and learning.

At Thuringowa, therefore, I can promise you an emphasis on quality teaching and learning with a moratorium being placed on 'political correctness' and its associated policy writing and rhetoric which the Premier has quite rightly called new yuppydom.

This curriculum emphasis will take place in harmony with our set of traditional values: discipline, pride, responsibility, loyalty, decency, integrity, common courtesy and a fair go! These values are also in harmony with those expressed in the Wiltshire Report ..."

When one of my staff phoned Mr Driscoll to ask what he was talking about, he said that, over the

past 10 years, there has been too much interest in political correctness and that those days are now in the past.

With the Wiltshire report, we are concentrating on the associated issues in education that will play an important role in the future. The time has come to get on with the main game, which is teaching students the basics. I say to Mr Driscoll, "Thank you for the compliments to the Premier and the department."

Mr Lingard: He's nominated for Thuringowa.

Mr COMBEN: I certainly have no indication whatsoever of any political leanings of Mr Driscoll. He is a good departmental officer who worked hard for a year on the Wiltshire report.

Mr Lingard: Another ALP supporter.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Beaudesert!

Mr COMBEN: That is a shameful accusation for the honourable member to make. Mr Driscoll is a senior principal. He is saying that we have got it right; that we need to follow Wiltshire in his directions, and we will do that.

Mr Lingard: He's supported the ALP all his life.

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

Mr COMBEN: The days of political correctness, when the honourable member sat on this side of the House, are gone. We are about the business of teaching students to learn.

Mr D. Barbagallo; Mr D. Atkins

Mrs SHELDON: I direct a question to the Premier. In reference to the alleged visit of his staff to the Starcke Holdings property in which they spent about—

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs SHELDON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will begin my question again. In reference to the alleged visit of the Premier's staff to the Starcke Holdings property, at which they spent about 15 minutes at a total cost of more than \$2,200 to the Queensland taxpayer, I ask: does the Premier believe that the cost of this inspection, which worked out at \$148 a minute, was warranted considering that he never travelled to the site and that all information they could have obtained on the inspection could have been discovered through one phone call to the owner of Starcke Holdings?

Mr De Lacy interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: The Treasurer is again interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr W. K. GOSS: Before coming in here, the Deputy Leader of the Coalition publicly raised a number of issues in relation to this matter. That will probably be dealt with in another place.

Mrs Sheldon: Is that a threat?

Mr W. K. GOSS: No. I will not be taking the matter anywhere, but I know some people who will be. In Miss Marple fashion, the Deputy Leader of the Coalition has got out her calculator to work out that it cost \$140 a minute for that visit. The purpose of the trip—which I think the member has described as a holiday—was not just to visit Starcke and see what was there and available in terms of a visit but also, more importantly, to look at the issue of access for me and an accompanying party.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Clayfield.

Mr W. K. GOSS: In that sense, it was only necessary to spend a short time at the homestead—the 15 minutes to which the honourable member refers. There was also time spent in another section of the property looking for the airstrip. In addition to that, it takes an hour to an hour and a half to travel from Cooktown to the station and back. There were several hours involved in that part of the trip. Beyond that, one still has to get from Cooktown to Cairns.

Members of the Opposition make much of the fact that this was some sort of holiday or junket. The facts are that Barbagallo and Atkins spent the Friday, the Saturday and the Sunday morning on that particular trip. I think members of Parliament should understand that, in terms of the hours and days that we have to work, sometimes my staff and, I think, many Ministers' staff also have to work seven days a week. They spent the Saturday and Sunday at least of their own time on that particular visit. In terms of travelling to that part of Queensland—

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The honourable member would understand this if she travelled outside Caloundra once in a while. In respect of that part of Queensland, it effectively took a day to get from Brisbane to Cairns and then to Cooktown. Most of Saturday was spent getting to Starcke and back to Cairns that night. First thing the next morning, on the Sunday, they returned to Brisbane. There was no holiday or

junket in that. It is simply that the property is a long way away. If the member calms down and tries to put to one side some of the smears and confusion that have been raised in relation to that incident, she will understand that.

For the member's benefit, I repeat that it was her side of the House that requested and got a Criminal Justice Commission investigation. That is the subject of full cooperation from the Government and my office. The Criminal Justice Commission has all the powers in the world to compel answers to questions and to obtain all relevant documents. As I said yesterday, the documents will indicate that the particular trip was arranged before the incident in question involving the ranger. Those people went up there, attended to their business expeditiously and came straight back.

Mr D. Barbagallo; Mr D. Atkins

Mrs SHELDON: In directing a question to the Minister for Lands, I refer to his ministerial statement on 11 November last advising the House that his department had decided to proceed with the acquisition of the Starcke property near Cape Melville, and I ask: as the Minister had ministerial responsibility for this matter, was he aware that two of the Premier's senior staff allegedly and without permission of the owner were inspecting the property on a trip allegedly planned prior to the Minister's decision to proceed with the acquisition? I table the relevant documents.

Mr W. K. Goss: You don't get permission from the Minister for Lands to travel around the State.

Mrs SHELDON: I did ask my question of the Minister for Lands, not the Premier.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am trying to conduct question time, not the ability of members on both sides of this Chamber to interject on each other.

Mr SMITH: Some remarkable questions have been asked in this House from time to time. I believe that this question would be worse than most of them. Surely to heavens the honourable member does not expect the Premier's office to ask me about a trip to be undertaken by its staff. I make the point that my primary interest in the Starcke acquisition was firstly to determine whether certain lands which were covered by a permit to occupy ought to be included in the parcel before any dealings commenced. That was the principal interest that I had at that time. The visit of the Premier's staff to the Starcke property had no impact whatsoever on the responsibilities and actions of the Lands Department.

Native Title

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I ask the Premier: is he aware of claims made by the Leader of the Opposition earlier this week at a UGA conference in relation to native title and other issues? Are these claims accurate?

Mr W. K. GOSS: The Leader of the Opposition starred spectacularly at the UGA conference at Roma on Monday of this week when he thought that, in front of a friendly audience, he could engage in his traditional scaremongering on a range of issues and be well received for it. However, the farmers just would not cop it and did not believe it. I note from reports from people who were there that Mr Borbidge, the Leader of the Opposition, was introduced in somewhat half-hearted terms. I understand that there was reference to doubts on the part of the President of the UGA about the capacity of a hotelier from the Gold Coast to represent the interests of country people.

Mr Cooper: You're making this up as you go along.

Mr W. K. GOSS: As I understand it, the president did go on to say that he thought the Leader of the Opposition had proved himself an effective politician.

Mr Cooper: Dream on.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Read on? Yes I will.

Mr Cooper: You're dreaming.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Read on, dream on—this is not a dream because Mr Bonthron went on to say that he still believes that the Liberal Party, however, does not have the rural sector's best interests at heart. I presume, therefore, that Mr Bonthron will be very relieved to hear that under the new brighter, whiter, tighter coalition agreement, the National Party leader will be delivering the campaign policy speech for the Liberal Party next year.

Mrs Sheldon: Good try; it's still a waste of time.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I see, "Good try." Does the honourable member mean that I am wrong? Of course, I am wrong. It appears that they are going to have two policy statements. It appears that we are going to have a policy statement from the National Party and a separate one from the Liberal Party under the new brighter, whiter, tighter coalition. I wonder—

Mrs McCauley: I rise to a point of order. I was at that meeting and Mr Bonthron certainly did not say that about the Liberal Party.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Smith interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Lockyer under Standing Order 123A. I warn the member for Crows Nest under Standing Order 123A. I am not going allow question time to degenerate into a joke.

Mr FITZGERALD: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the fact that the Minister for Lands interjected while you were on your feet.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Notwithstanding, my warning of the member for Lockyer under Standing Order 123A stands. I did not hear the Minister interjecting because I was too busy listening to the screaming of the honourable member for Lockyer. I call the Premier.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition was embarrassed and reacted to the interjection of the Minister for Lands because the Minister was referring to Mr Blight, which was, of course, the subject of the question that I have been asked, namely, that the Leader of the Opposition went on with some of his scaremongering about large tracts of land being converted to native title. Did he scare the graziers? No, he did not. Mr Blight of the National Farmers Federation got up and said that he was wrong. Honourable members opposite should not claim that he did not say it, because he not only said it there but also on ABC television that night. I will not go through the whole of the Leader of the Opposition's speech, but there was another occasion during which, in this wonderful, ham-actor, indignant fashion of his, he railed against the closure of the DPI offices at Jandowae, Wandoan, Mitchell and Injune. Apart from Jandowae, which I gather is colloquially described as the Bob Sparks branch of the DPI, he was then embarrassed—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I think that the Premier has been outside hallucinating. I did not make the particular reference that he just claimed that I made.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am advised that not only did he make the reference but also that when Mr Bonthron called for questions from the audience, the first person to get up said that he wanted to make a comment and not ask a question, and that was to say that he had just driven past the Mitchell office of the DPI and it was up and running. In typical slippery fashion, oozing oil from every pore, the Leader of the Opposition oiled his way around the comment by saying that Mitchell was on the review list for closure. He said, "Oh, no. Well, if it has not been closed it is on the review list for closure." There is no review list. The Leader of the Opposition is a

fraud and what is pleasing is that graziers and farmers recognised it.

Environmental Performance of Mining Companies

Mr LIVINGSTONE: My question is directed to the Minister for Minerals and Energy. There has been speculation in the media about the letter from the Director-General of the Department of Minerals and Energy to the Office of Cabinet supposedly containing critical information about the environmental performance of some of the major mining companies. I ask: has any action been taken in regard to the matters mentioned in the letter?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question because it allows me to clarify one very important point, which is that the Director-General of the Department of Minerals and Energy was appointed to that position on 15 October 1990. By the time he settled in and visited a number of mines around the State, and taking into account the Christmas break, the letter in question written to the Office of Cabinet was dated 28 March 1991. That letter is a realistic summary of the state of affairs at that time. In that respect, it is a damning indictment of the policies, or rather the lack of policies, of the previous Government and certainly evidence of their total disregard of the environment.

That letter probed into sores that have been allowed to fester untreated for decades because of the complete lack of interest of the previous Government in its environmental responsibilities. The letter totally vindicates the actions of the Goss Government in producing an environmental management policy for the mining industry that directly addresses the issues it raised. Since the letter was written, we as a Government have introduced a policy that is a leader in this country. It was adopted in direct response to the types of matters raised in that letter. The strong emphasis placed by this Government on responsible management of the mining industry is unequivocal. I am not going to stand here today and try to pretend that everything in this industry is perfect; it most certainly is not. We have inherited a legacy of problems from many years in the past, as has been stated in this letter. I want to assure this House today that the process that we put in place to address these problems is working and that the situation will continue to get better as the months and the years go by.

I am a supporter of the mining industry and I make no secret of that fact. It provides thousands and thousands of jobs for Queenslanders and

many millions of dollars to the State's economy. This Government and myself as the Minister believe firmly in balanced development—sustainable responsible management. That is what that letter is all about.

Mr D. Barbagallo; Mr D. Atkins

Mr SLACK: In asking a question of the Attorney-General, I refer to the confiscation in Cape Melville National Park by ex-ranger Pat Shears of a vehicle belonging to Paul Barbagallo. I ask: did a meeting take place between the Attorney-General and the Crown Solicitor to discuss the legal technicalities of laying charges against Pat Shears, and what was the outcome of the meeting?

Mr WELLS: Part one, no; part two, not applicable.

Taxi Industry Deregulation

Mr BEATTIE: In directing a question to the Minister for Transport, I refer to the Opposition's support for taxi industry deregulation as expressed in *Business Queensland* on 4 April 1994 by the member for Nerang, and I ask: what impact has taxi deregulation had overseas, and what implications does that experience hold for Queensland.

Mr HAMILL: I think many members—

Mr CONNOR: I rise to a point of order. I find that offensive—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr HAMILL: I have not half started on the member for Nerang. I believe that honourable members would think that all the dope pedlars are outside the gates of Parliament. However, I was proved wrong when I saw the article in *Business Queensland* because there is one dope in this place who has been peddling a whole lot of nonsense.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to withdraw that remark. That is unparliamentary.

Mr HAMILL: I apologise. The member is not a pedlar, and he is not a dope. The member for Nerang has been spreading untruths.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to withdraw that remark unequivocally.

Mr HAMILL: I will withdraw it unequivocally.

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to a point of order. There is a format by which to address members of this House in the form of Standing Orders.

Mr HAMILL: The honourable member for Nerang was castigating the Queensland

Government for its failure to fall in line with the views of Professor Allan Fels from the Trade Practices Commission, and I think also failing to fall in line—

Mr CONNOR: I rise to a point of order.

Mr HAMILL: Cop it sweet! It is here in the article.

Mr CONNOR: That is simply not true. I find it most offensive. It is not true. I ask the Minister to withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Nerang finds the remark untrue and asks the Minister to withdraw. I ask the Minister to withdraw it.

Mr HAMILL: I withdraw any comment that he may have found untrue. However, I will quote from the article—and this is a direct quote from the honourable member for Nerang—

"The current move by the Queensland government towards increased regulation of the taxi industry in Queensland flies in the face of the Trade Practices' position.

While other states are deregulating, the Queensland Labor government has determined to increase regulation by requiring taxi companies to be licensed and accredited and that all drivers be accredited as well."

I ask all honourable members—

Mr CONNOR: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: I am not going to allow the member to debate the matter.

Mr CONNOR: I find that offensive. It appears to be a conclusion that I—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet. I warn the member under Standing Order 124. The member will resume his seat.

Mr HAMILL: I ask members of the House: if we do not have a system of accreditation, or if we do not have a system of licensing, what do we have? We have total deregulation of the taxi industry in Queensland. What do we have from the coalition spokesperson for small business—thousands of small business people in Queensland going to the wall. Deregulation of the taxi industry in Queensland means that, with one fell swoop, the Opposition in this State would wipe out half a billion dollars worth of the investment of those small business people and their businesses.

The ill-informed member for Nerang ought to take note of this Government's clear and constantly restated position on the taxi industry in this State. It has made its position abundantly clear to the taxi industry, and the industry has heard it. The Government does not support deregulation of the taxi industry in Queensland.

The Government's policy involves licensing, accreditation and standards to be maintained. Despite what the member for Nerang may say, this Government is not going to depart from that policy.

Gold Coast Rail Link

Mr BEATTIE: I refer the Minister for Transport to past criticism by Opposition members of the State Government's Gold Coast rail link, and I ask: can he explain the full significance and impact of this project?

Mr Borbidge: Who started it?

Mr HAMILL: Bewilderment seems to abound on the Gold Coast because not only do we have the member for Nerang being misguided as to the Government's policy in relation to the taxi industry but also we have a range of members on the Gold Coast who simply cannot agree on the importance of the Gold Coast rail link.

The member for Southport continues to attack the rail project, saying that it is a joke, that it is unnecessary and that it is undesirable. Yet we heard the interjection earlier by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Surfers Paradise, asking whether it was in place yet, or something to that effect. This is the same person who promised the rail link to the Gold Coast in time for Expo—Expo 1988!

This Government is establishing, or should I say, re-establishing, an important part of transport infrastructure to the Gold Coast and the Gold Coast hinterland. I am pleased to say that this project, which has actually been recognised as one of national significance and worthy of funding by the Commonwealth under the Better Cities Program, is well and truly on track. Despite the disparaging comments of the member for Southport and the member for Keppel from time to time, this Government is going to deliver decent transport infrastructure to one of the major growth areas of this nation.

By approximately the end of 1995, trains will indeed be running to Helensvale and, two years later, on to Robina. That reflects this Government's proper response to the enormous population growth that is taking place in our State, particularly in south-east Queensland. This Government will not be put off by a coalition that cannot agree not just about whether it wants to be one and the same party but cannot even agree upon a strategy of how to deal with the population growth and an appropriate public transport response to that growth in south-east Queensland.

Mabo Claims on Crown Land

Mr CONNOR: I direct a question to the Minister for Lands. The New South Wales Government has recently announced that it has suspended the issuing of a number of land titles in New South Wales as a direct result of Mabo claims on Crown land. One in particular involved land at Ballina, which is part of the Bundjalung claim for land extending through northern New South Wales and into south-east Queensland. I now ask: have the Mabo claims in south-east Queensland affected the Minister's department's ability to issue land titles? If so, in what way? Are there any delays occurring as a result? If so, how long? Will it be necessary, as in New South Wales, to bring in amending legislation?

Mr SMITH: Obviously, there is a responsibility on the department to ensure that native title is not accidentally extinguished. Therefore, it is necessary to make a more detailed examination of properties that have been dealt with. In many instances, the issue is clear, and business can proceed. Certainly, where there have not been recent dealings, sometimes reference to documents that are held in the archives is required, and that takes time.

The member has asked me how long it takes. The answer is that the transactions are carried out as quickly as possible and there is a variation in the time taken, depending upon the complexity of the matter.

Economic Conditions in Queensland

Mr DAVIES: I ask the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development: can he advise of any recent indications of economic conditions in Queensland?

Mr ELDER: Yes, I can. If one looked at last year's December quarter ABS figures, one would see that private investment in this State had increased by 7 per cent. Nationally, that figure was 1.1 per cent. Business investment in Queensland—an area in which we have an interest—had increased by 3.5 per cent. Nationally, that figure had decreased by 4.1 per cent. Queensland was the only State to show positive growth in that area in the December quarter. Exports in Queensland had increased by 6.2 per cent. Nationally, that figure had increased by 4.1 per cent.

Queensland now accounts for almost 20 per cent of Australian exports. Bankruptcies were down 8.8 per cent; nationally, they were down 4.2 per cent. In the March quarter, employment growth was up 3.6 per cent; nationally, it was up 2.4 per cent. The unemployment rate is 9.8 per cent; nationally, it is 10.3 per cent. Retail trade had one of its higher increases—some 5 per

cent higher than a year ago. The national Yellow Pages indicia showed that sales, profitability and employment had all increased in Queensland, and that 77 per cent of businesses were confident about their prospects over the next 12 months. A net increase of 44 per cent of companies had increased sales. A net increase of 37 per cent had increases in profitability, and 50 per cent of companies expected increased sales over the next 12 months. Also, 52 per cent of companies expected to increase their profitability over the next 12 months.

The National Institute of Economic Research and Industry stated that the "Queensland economy will actively strengthen further in the coming months". Bis Shrapnel said that "Queensland and Western Australia are very strong, leading the recovery".

In February, I spoke about that celebrated economic commentator, author of the "Connor files", the member for Nerang. At that time, he predicted that we were in an economic growth cycle. Now he has predicted that job numbers in Queensland, particularly in small business, will be up. It took him a while to get there! Expressed in Basil Fawley terms—he has an honours degree in stating the bleeding obvious. For some time, it has been evident that job growth is up, and that the Queensland economy is growing. All sectors have been improving. It is satisfying that the Opposition spokesman for my portfolio has such confidence in the Queensland economy.

Finally, the best figure to inspire business confidence to date would have to be 12 per cent—that is, the percentage of people who would prefer the Leader of the Opposition as Premier. I rest my case: 12 per cent is by far the best figure to inspire business confidence.

Indemnity Insurance, Justices of the Peace

Mr DAVIES: I ask the Attorney-General: is he aware that the Queensland Justices Association is offering to sell indemnity insurance to justices of the peace? Will the Attorney-General advise the House whether it is necessary for justices of the peace to take out insurance against being sued for the manner in which they perform the functions of their office?

Mr WELLS: The answer to the honourable member's question is: no. The statute already covers justices of the peace and commissioners for declarations for this type of thing. Since the unanimous passage of this statute through this Parliament my department is not aware of any cases that have been brought against justices of the peace or commissioners for declarations. The statute is very wide. It says that "action is not

to be brought against a justice of the peace or commissioner for declarations in respect of anything done or omitted to be done in, or purportedly in, the performance of the functions of office." Members should note the words "or purportedly in". Even if the functions of a justice of the peace are not actually carried out as a matter of law, but are purported to be so, the justice of the peace would be covered. It is very wide.

There are two exceptions: firstly, when the justice of the peace or commissioner for declarations knows that what he is doing is not authorised by law; and, secondly, when the action is done maliciously and without reasonable cause. This puts the Queensland Justices Association, in its endeavours to sell this type of indemnity insurance, in the position of salesmen without a product. I urge honourable members to tell their constituents who are justices of the peace that they do not need to take out this type of indemnity insurance. Unless justices of the peace are planning to do things that they know are not authorised by law, or are proposing to act maliciously or without reasonable cause, they will not need the assistance of the Queensland Justices Association's shonky insurance scheme. I urge justices of the peace, if members of the QJA executive ask them for money for an insurance scheme, to keep their money in their pockets.

Toxic Waste Disposal

Mr GILMORE: In directing a question to the Minister for Minerals and Energy, I refer to revelations made by officers of his department to the Criminal Justice Commission inquiry into toxic waste disposal and environmental impact on mined lands, and I ask: had the Minister's department previously informed him about the serious matters involving environmental pollution raised by his officers before the CJC and, if so, when?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question. A report has been floated around by a person who used to work for the department. From time to time, I have seen that report. As I said in my previous statement, there are obviously a number of problems in the mining industry. Those problems are in the process of being addressed. As I said before, those problems were a legacy which this Government inherited. All I can say to this House today is that those problems are being addressed and they will be resolved.

Toxic Waste Disposal

Mr GILMORE: In directing a second question to the Minister for Minerals and Energy, I refer again to the revelations made by officers of his department to the Criminal Justice Commission inquiry into toxic waste disposal, and I ask: as the Minister was obviously aware—and as he recently informed the House—that his officers were to give evidence to the Criminal Justice Commission, why was it necessary for his officers to be granted whistleblower protection at a CJC inquiry to force his department into action? Is his department telling him all that it should, or is he being kept in the dark?

Mr McGRADY: Again, I thank the member for the question. I do not believe that I am being kept in the dark. As I have said before, officers of my department have given evidence before that inquiry. I think that speaks for itself.

School Rail Passes

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: I ask the Minister for Education: will he inform the House of the processes and the outcomes of the recent negotiations concerning school rail passes?

Mr COMBEN: Mr Speaker, I am not sure whether I have the time to go into all of the processes—

Mr SPEAKER: I am sure the Minister has.

Mr COMBEN:—of the last 40 years about school transport and the changes that were necessary. I think most members, wherever they lived in the State, knew of the inequities and injustices that existed. Children living beside a railway line effectively got free transport. Children living on a bus route had to pay for the distance they travelled. Whether children lived in the country, went to a grammar, Catholic, or State school made a difference. There were huge anomalies.

When I was first given the job of Education Minister, I attended a meeting of the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland. I said that one thing I would like to do would be to follow up on the work done by my predecessor, Mr Braddy, and my colleague, Mr Hamill, in school transport, that is, in rationalising the system and making it fair. Sir William Knox chaired the meeting. As I finished, he looked up at me and said, "Pat, I went into Parliament in 1957 with the same idea. They still haven't done it yet."

I am pleased to be able to say that, after a lot of goodwill from a wide range of people—including people such as Sir William Knox of the AISQ; Rosemary Hume of the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens; Leo Dunn; and others within the Queensland Catholic education system, in particular Allan

Drury—we have reached a compromise position on rail transport. We have divided school transport into its various components, and we will look at them one by one. The first are the suburban rail lines around Brisbane. We have reached a compromise position in which all parties have given something.

The position at which we arrived was not that of the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens, the Queensland Catholic education system, the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, or that of the Independent Parents and Friends Association. All could see that something had to be done for fairness. They walked along the road together, and we have reached a compromise. That compromise is that any school child travelling on rail in Queensland will pay one-third of the adult fare, with a safety net provision. So, however far a student goes, we will not ask whether it is a school of choice, whether it is the nearest school of type, or whether it is a grammar school; we will say, "You are travelling by rail, you will pay one-third. But if your parents are in receipt of the Family Allowance Supplement or if you are in receipt of Austudy, you will travel free." It is a very good compromise.

It is one of those rare instances of people coming from vastly different directions with a lot of the different agendas to eventually say, "For the benefit of the system and the students of that system, let us put it together." We have put it together. It is a great result, and it ends 40 years of discussions.

Wiltshire Report

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: I ask the Minister for Education: with respect to the recent report on curriculum directions in the Queensland education system, what opportunity now exists for community groups and parents to respond to the recommendations of the Wiltshire report?

Mr COMBEN: Those opportunities exist now. Some three weeks ago, the Premier and I released the report. We said then that there would be a three-month period of public discussion on the report. Cabinet has noted the report, and it has been very well received in Queensland in many different ways. It is a report by a panel of three specialists. Once again, I place on record my appreciation and the appreciation of the education system in Queensland to Professor Ken Wiltshire, Associate Professor Marilyn McMeniman and Mr Tom Tolhurst for the great work that they have done. However, it is now up to the public of Queensland.

All education communities—whether they be principals, teachers or parents and whether

they are involved in the private or the public system—must look at that report and say, "We support this. We do not support that." We want that three months of public consultation so that we can hear those views. At the end of that time, a small group of individuals from various departments and an independent person will put those responses together. They will prepare for me a report on the public positions of a variety of groups and individuals. A set of recommendations will be prepared relating to each of the close to 150 recommendations of the Wiltshire report.

I urge all members to ask P & C associations, P & F associations, individuals and anyone they know who is interested in education to have a look at the report. The sales are going well. There are copies in every school. There is a 16-page precis. There is a 4-page explanation. There are a lot of documents around, but let us have that public debate. Let us find the best way ahead for "shaping our futures", as the report is titled.

Whistleblower Protection for Corrective Services Commission Staff

Mr COOPER: In directing a question to the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services, I refer to recent announcements by the Government to introduce whistleblower protection legislation—

Mr Comben: Hear, hear!

Mr COOPER: We will see about that. I refer to the Government's continuing failure to bring the Corrective Services Commission under the purview of the Criminal Justice Commission in order to deal with allegations of corrupt practices in the prison system. I refer also to the continuing allegations by commission staff of widespread corruption, including tampering with prisoners' records. I ask: can the Minister guarantee that the provisions of this Government's so-called whistleblower protection legislation will apply wholly to Corrective Services Commission staff?

Mr BRADY: With respect to the Corrective Services Commission, we have the most unusual—in fact, one could say "unique"—situation of ensuring that the officers of the commission are supervised. That is the only area of Government in which a particular section of the Queensland Police Service is set up to investigate complaints by anybody about the activities of commission staff. That section of the Police Service is titled the Corrective Services Investigation Unit. That unit is not staffed by officers of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission; it is staffed by officers of

the Queensland Police Service. Unlike any other area of the public sector, a unit of the Police Service has been established specifically for that purpose. The officers of that unit are appointed by the Commissioner of Police, and they are responsible to the Commissioner of Police. Recently, the head of that unit was changed. It is certainly appropriate that that should occur from time to time.

So, in the case of the Corrective Services Commission, a specific body of police—who are not controlled by the Director-General of Corrective Services or by the Chairman of the Corrective Services Board—supervise the staff of the commission. Those independent police officers do an excellent job. The public of Queensland has been well served by the police officers who are carrying out that task.

Mr Cooper: Will the staff get whistleblower protection?

Mr BRADY: As to whistleblower protection—that legislation does not come under my ministerial responsibility.

Mr Cooper: You should know.

Mr BRADY: I will have a look at that legislation to see whether it is applicable. I have not seen the details of the legislation. However, under our Government the system is such that people who have complaints—whether they be prisoners, members of staff or members of the public—can come to me, to the Police Commissioner or to any other person—

Mr Cooper: Will they get whistleblower protection like everyone else?

Mr BRADY: The member for Crows Nest would be aware that this Government has announced that it will make the Queensland Corrective Services Commission a unit of the public sector. As to the specifics—I will not give a categorical guarantee at this time, but I will certainly have a look into it. We are making it more and more in line with the requirements for appointments to the public service. I am confident that we will be able to attend to the concerns raised by the member in that regard.

Crime Reporting Information System for Police

Mrs ROSE: I ask the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services: could he advise the House as to the success of the Crime Reporting Information System for Police—CRISP—in the battle against crime?

Mr BRADY: One of the very important improvements that has occurred under this Government is the ability to obtain accurate

information and to obtain it quickly and efficiently. It has been the aim and the achievement of this Government not only to increase police numbers but also to ensure that police have access to computerised information so that they can act accurately and quickly when information is made available to them.

I am pleased to inform the House and the honourable member for Currumbin that the south-east region of the Queensland Police Service—the region that covers her electorate—came on line with the crime reporting information system on 21 March this year. I am pleased to inform honourable members further that the metropolitan north region of the Queensland Police Service will come on line by the end of May this year. Those regions can expect the same success that has been achieved in the metropolitan south region, where CRISP was first trialled.

CRISP provides up-to-the-minute information to police officers on crime via a modified version of the Lancashire crime reporting system. The trials in the metropolitan south region were very successful. For example, during a recent regional crime squad operation in that region, 123 persons were arrested on 939 charges, with restitution of \$600,000 sought in relation to property offences. That information system—expensive as it is—is an integral part of a modern Police Service. It emphasises this Government's agenda to have not only more operational police—although certainly that is what we have achieved—but also to give them information that is accurate, efficient and timely. I expect great results from the south-east region, which is centred around the Gold Coast and the hinterland, similar to those that have been experienced in the metropolitan south region.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for questions with or without notice has now expired.

MATTER OF SPECIAL PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Smuggling, Cape Melville National Park; Mr D. Barbagallo and Mr D. Atkins

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I advise the House that I have received a proposal for a Special Public Importance debate pursuant to the sessional order agreed to by the House on 5 November 1992. The proposal submitted by the honourable Leader of the Opposition is for a debate on the following matter—

"The Government's negligence in failing to adequately address smuggling operations in Cape Melville National Park

and the inappropriate involvement of senior members of the Premier's personal staff in events surrounding the seizure of a vehicle in the park."

I now call on the honourable Leader of the Opposition to speak to that proposal.

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (3.50 p.m.): Yesterday in this place, the Premier and the Environment Minister threw their weight unequivocally behind what the Opposition now, and ever more strongly, suspects is a major and rapidly becoming a whole-of-Government operation to protect Paul Barbagallo and, we now strongly suspect, others. Yesterday, the Premier and the Minister for Environment and Heritage used this House to signal that the Premier has joined that effort. The Premier referred to the fact that a park ranger had knocked off Paul Barbagallo's vehicle—not "seized", "knocked off". Clearly, the Premier is signalling it should not have happened.

According to the Premier, ranger Shears had not seized a vehicle belonging to his then private secretary's brother that was crammed with weapons and contained drugs found on a foxtail palm smuggling track beyond the boundaries of the national park within sight of a stand of those palms. The Premier says that ranger Shears did not seize that vehicle but that he knocked it off. Clearly, with that phrase and with that innuendo—with that smear—the Premier threw his weight behind the whole-of-Government effort to denigrate the work of Pat Shears. Why? I am now convinced that in the fullness of time we will learn the truth.

The Environment Minister got into the tawdry effort by also rewriting a bit of history and, in the course of doing so, contradicted herself, which is always a good sign of panic. Yesterday, the Minister told Parliament that when Mr Shears went into Cape Melville National Park last year, at the commencement of the foxtail palm smuggling season, in the company of two elders from the Hope Vale Aboriginal community—whose people have a land claim over the cape—his role was basically to familiarise those people with their country. This statement amounted to a total rewrite of Mr Shears' terms of employment. In support of the Premier's inference, Mr Shears overstepped his authority when he "knocked off" Mr Barbagallo's vehicle. The Minister, who has previously told this House that, "the ranger acted properly", now seeks to suggest that Mr Shears was in Cape Melville National Park at the height of the foxtail palm smuggling season not to protect the palms, but as a guide for the soon-to-be native owners, and that if he saw anything suspicious in relation to

potential smuggling, he was merely to report it to his superiors in Cairns.

Material tabled in Parliament by the Opposition showing the conditions of Shears' employment show that that assertion made by the Minister is simply and plainly wrong—and I invite the Minister to consult the Table Office to see what Shears' brief was on Cape Melville. The bid to undermine Mr Shears now involves not only the Premier's private secretary, on the evidence of Mr Shears, but also the possible involvement of the Premier's principal media adviser, Mr Atkins, as well as, possibly, the politicised Director-General of the Department of Environment and Heritage, Dr Emerson—called into play by Mr Atkins—and the Regional Director, Far Northern, of the department, Mr Wellard. It now also involves the Premier and the Environment Minister. This looks like it is developing into one hell of a cover-up—a whole-of-Government cover-up. The mystery, of course, is: a cover-up of what? Obviously, it is something big, something that, if it were to become common knowledge, would do this Government great harm.

The Opposition has an informed view of just what the substance of the cover-up might be, but, for the moment, is happy to see how deep a hole the Government is digging for itself. Yesterday, with the increased involvement of the Premier and the Environment Minister, the hole reached the required statutory depth. If this hole gets any deeper, it will be a bonus. Let us review the depth of that hole.

- (1) Yesterday, the Premier confirmed that he personally approved a trip by his two most senior personal staff from Brisbane to Cooktown and back on the weekend of 13 and 14 November, a weekend squeezed between two parliamentary weeks, to plan a trip he never took to the Starcke River station.
- (2) No permission was sought, not even notification was given, to the person who held the title to that property of the intention to visit the property, if only briefly, by all the Premier's men.
- (3) The consultant used by the Premier's staff for the alleged planning of this trip was not a local member of the Environment and Heritage Department, nor someone from the Lands Department—although the Minister for Lands today told us the whole visit was irrelevant anyway—but the Lands Department was the department very recently charged with the carriage of the Starcke negotiations.
- (4) That person, apparently an environmental and logistical expert, was a private citizen

who proved to be an Innisfail banana farmer, Mr Paul Barbagallo, brother of the Premier's then private secretary, Mr David Barbagallo.

Mr Littleproud: Don't forget the Barbagallo out in the boat.

Mr BORBIDGE: There was another Barbagallo on the boat, as my honourable friend reminds me.

Mr Welford: What rubbish! You're getting worse. Taking interjections from the back bench now?

Mr BORBIDGE: We will see. The member who interjected on my side of the House is normally well informed.

- (5) On 13 November—in the wake of the seizure of Mr Paul Barbagallo's four-wheel-drive utility in Cape Melville National Park on 11 November, on a foxtail palm seed smuggler's track, within sight of a stand of the palms, containing a semi-automatic Chinese military assault rifle, a shotgun, a lever action .30/.30 rifle, a chainsaw, and a quantity of marijuana—the Premier's staff presented at the Cooktown Police Station in the company of Mr Paul Barbagallo.
- (6) Also on 13 November, according to Mr Atkins, he telephoned the card-carrying head of the Environment and Heritage Department, Dr Craig Emerson, who in turn telephoned the far-northern director of the department, Mr Greg Wellard.
- (7) Mr Wellard commences a vigorous effort to undermine the work of ranger Shears.
- (8) Also on Saturday, 13 November, at least one of the Premier's staff then engages, totally improperly, in an interview involving the ranger who seized the vehicle, Sergeant Spud Murphy of the Cooktown police, Mr Paul Barbagallo, and Mr Paul Barbagallo's companion, Mr Gordon Euchtritz, in a manner open to the interpretation that it was a bid to undermine the actions of ranger Shears.
- (9) Ranger Shears vigorously maintains that that interview, far from being, in Mr Atkins' description which has been read to this Parliament, an amicable discussion, involved no indication that charges might be laid. He maintains it was, in fact, an extremely animated discussion, at which the possibility of charges was openly canvassed, and that, as Mr Atkins claims, Mr David Barbagallo did not play a minor role in the discussion, but that he was, in Mr Shears' words, an aggressive, and arrogant, major player.
- (10) According to the *Four Corners* report, three of the people present at that meeting have

maintained that Mr Atkins was not present at that meeting. I understand those three people are Mr Shears, Detective Sergeant Murphy and Mr Euchtritz.

Despite all this, the Premier is brazen enough—has such a monstrous dose of arrogance—that yesterday he was prepared to stand up in this place and declare that there had been no impropriety. Let me make it perfectly clear for the Premier. The direct approach by Mr Atkins to the Director-General of the Department of Environment and Heritage was grossly improper. Mr Barbagallo's involvement—and it was at least Mr Barbagallo's involvement; Mr Atkins does not seem to know whether he was wandering around the car park or whether he was in the room—was another act of gross impropriety.

That the Premier could personally sanction a trip by his two most senior aides to plan a trip he never took without even ensuring that the rightful owner of that property was aware of their intent to trespass is grossly rude and grossly arrogant, if not of itself grossly improper. The Premier knows that that is only for starters. He knows that the entire proposition that his two most senior personal staff would take off in the middle of a parliamentary session to plan a trip he never took, without asking the permission of the land-holder, without consulting the relevant departmental staff—and using an Innisfail banana farmer who just happens to be Mr Barbagallo's brother—is at best implausible and at worst also grossly improper.

Government members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: As Government members would have us believe, this is not a wall of bad luck, which the Premier improperly attributed yesterday to the *Four Corners* report instead of to its author, Mr Atkins. This is not a wall of bad luck; this is a wall of conspiracies which we intend to breach.

Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (4 p.m.): In my electorate, people used to call the Leader of the Opposition "Bob"; then they called him "Two Bob"; and now they are calling him "Two Bob Each Way" after his little effort yesterday. At the risk of complicating this issue further for the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite, I thought I might introduce a few facts into today's debate. So far, all we have had from the Opposition is insinuation and innuendo—ifs, buts and maybes. This has been true of today's contribution by the Leader of the Opposition. I invite members to read his speech in *Hansard*.

Up until this point in time, I have stayed out of the discussion about the Cape Melville National Park and events which transpired there late last year. My main reason for doing so is that

it was clear that the entire focus of the Opposition's campaign was to denigrate members of the Premier's staff and a number of public servants from the Department of Environment and Heritage. However, in recent days, some attention has been focused on the issues of national park management in Cape York Peninsula and specifically on the problem of illegally collecting seeds from foxtail palms in Cape Melville National Park.

I suggest to honourable members of the House that the reason members of the Opposition are now attempting to shift the focus onto these latter issues is that they suspect that there has in fact been no impropriety by members of the Premier's staff and they are continuing to attempt to milk the issue by tapping genuine community concern for Queensland's national parks and unique species, such as the foxtail palm. So the question for today's Matter of Special Public Importance debate posed by the Leader of the Opposition purports to found primarily the Opposition's concern about the Government's negligence in failing to adequately address smuggling operations in Cape Melville National Park. It is the absolute height of hypocrisy for Opposition members to stand in this Chamber and criticise the Goss Government for its supposed failure to adequately address any management issues in national parks.

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr BREDHAUER: The honourable member should not interject from other than his correct seat. If he interjects from his usual place, I will take his interjection.

None should be more ashamed of the abject failure of successive National Party and coalition Governments over three decades in addressing the needs of Queensland national parks than a former Minister for Environment, Conservation and Forestry, such as the present Leader of the Opposition, who is now slinking out of the Chamber. The far-north region of the Department of Environment and Heritage covers some 27 million hectares, or about 16 per cent of the State's total land area. The Leader of the Opposition should stay here; he might learn something.

In late 1989, when the present Opposition Leader was Minister for Tourism and Minister for Environment, Conservation and Forestry, and the former National Party Government was in a state of rapid decline, how well we remember the greatest pork-barrelling Budget of all times as a desperate National Party Government sought to buy political favour from the public of Queensland. In this climate of largesse, the National Party's Environment and Heritage budget for the far-north region was \$7m. Under

our Government, in just four Budgets, that allocation of resources has doubled to \$14m.

The number of field staff in the region for national parks and wildlife has more than doubled from 41 to 89, and the number of field staff in the Cape York sector has increased by over 50 per cent in five years. We have also opened new district offices in Cooktown and Mossman and significantly upgraded the office in Coen.

Mr Davidson: How many on the ground?

Mr BREDHAUER: They are all field staff. That does not include the management staff. I am quoting the field staff figures. If the honourable member wants details about the management staff, I will provide them. It is an even better picture. As I said, we have also opened new district offices in Cooktown and Mossman and significantly upgraded the office in Coen. Yet these people opposite have the hide to criticise us for not addressing the management needs of national parks, and particularly Cape Melville.

But let us be clear about what the Opposition is asking. To this point in time, since 1977, when Cape Melville National Park was declared, there has been no permanent presence of national parks rangers in the Cape Melville National Park.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is not speaking to the matter presently under discussion. He is talking about the management of national parks.

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

Mr BREDHAUER: To do so would require the construction of ranger headquarters, staff accommodation and other infrastructure to ensure that such rangers had a safe and viable working environment. If the member for Western Downs knew what he was talking about, he would know that half the discussion is about preventing smuggling from national parks, which the Opposition says a national parks ranger was prevented from doing. Estimates of the cost of establishing such infrastructure in the national park have approached \$1m.

We should also be aware that the Cape Melville National Park is in an advanced stage of negotiation in terms of its claim by the traditional owners under the provisions of the Aboriginal Land Act and the Nature Conservation Act. Negotiations for the joint plan of management are under way. It is my argument to the House that it would be inappropriate for us to make such a major investment in infrastructure in the national park and to appoint full-time ranger positions out of the Department of Environment and Heritage at a time when the negotiations

over joint management have not been finalised. It would pre-empt the outcome of our negotiations with the traditional owners and place the Aboriginal people at a disadvantage in terms of negotiations over the long-term management of Cape Melville National Park.

I have heard calls from Queensland Greens representatives for the establishment of a permanent national parks presence in Cape Melville. I would be interested in ascertaining the views of the Wilderness Society in Cairns, given the campaign that it has been conducting to seek greater Aboriginal management in national parks on the proposal to establish a permanent presence for national parks rangers without that being part of an agreed plan of management with the traditional owners.

We should all be conscious of the fact that the State Government is negotiating with the owner of the Starcke property, and the traditional owners, over the acquisition and future of that property. It would be improper for us to make decisions in relation to the future of the Cape Melville National Park when its size and configuration and the degree of Aboriginal ownership and interest in the area are likely to change once those negotiations are concluded.

I also want to canvass briefly the conservation issues involved in the illegal collecting of *wodyetia bifurcata* seeds within the Cape Melville National Park. I want to make it quite clear that, under the present circumstances, and given the basic management principles for national parks, I do not support the commercial collecting of seeds from national parks. Clearly, I have no truck with anyone who is illegally collecting seeds and profiteering from their sale. That motley crew on the other side of the House are the only ones who support the commercial collection of seeds from national parks. However, they are at loggerheads with the conservation movement about that. Advice from senior officers of the Department of Environment and Heritage indicate that the customary method of seed collection is unlikely to pose any conservation threat to the species.

When we talk about wildlife protection issues in the region, it must be realised that there are many important issues which will attract the attention of field staff from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. We have been aware for some time that threats to the golden shouldered parrot are pushing that bird to the verge of extinction. Other species such as the eclectic parrot, the fig parrot and the palm cockatoo are also threatened.

It makes sense in the case of Cape Melville and *wodyetia bifurcata* that national parks officers should be primarily involved in monitoring,

surveillance and reporting of suspicious activities and that appropriate programs should be undertaken in conjunction with the police and other relevant agencies, such as customs. I do not for a second believe that the Cape Melville National Park is the type of wild west show which Murray Hogarth, Drew Hutton and the ageing parliamentarian from Burnett would have us believe. But, nevertheless, if there are firearms and drug smuggling involved with the seed collecting in Cape Melville—as appears likely—then it is all the more important that officers of the National Parks and Wildlife Service do not place themselves in life-threatening situations. In my opinion, a national parks officer would be most unwise to directly confront or provoke a potentially armed or violent person within a national park, irrespective of what activities they are pursuing. In fact, this would fly in the face of the advice which police consistently give to other members of the public; that when they are confronted with such situations, they should behave in a compliant and non-threatening manner.

I also want to nail the lie which continues to be perpetuated by members of the Opposition, including the Opposition Leader, by the media and by some others that Mr Pat Shears was sacked by the department. I am aware of some of Pat Shears' employment record and I am conscious of the fact that both within the department and within the community he has operated at a high standard. I was contacted by a constituent of mine who said—

"National Parks have declined to renew the contract of Pat Shears, the ranger up there. He has been working in that capacity for eight years. Apparently money is being reallocated . . ."

My constituent said that Mr Shears is doing a great job and she asked whether I could intervene. That was on 25 June 1993—five months before the current contract expired.

The point I am making is that Mr Shears has only ever been employed on a contractual basis and that, from time to time, his contract has expired. He has also declined to apply for full-time positions within the Department of Environment and Heritage, specifically at the Cape Tribulation National Park in the middle of last year. If he wants to do that, that is fine; I have no problems with that. But he should not imply—and neither should Opposition members—that we have acted improperly or sacked him when it was of his choosing that he did not apply for those full-time positions.

It is not my intention to comment at any length on the latter part of this discussion, because I believe that has been appropriately

handled by the Minister and the Premier since discussion about this matter first arose. I want to confirm, however, that the Premier's former private secretary, David Barbagallo, contacted me in my electorate office in late October or early November 1993 as a matter of courtesy as the local member to advise that his office was tentatively arranging for the Premier to visit Starcke in company with representatives of the media and that they may need to undertake a reconnoitre of the property to work out logistics such as transport.

The Opposition's motives in this matter are transparent. It has no interest in better management of national parks, no interest in stopping smuggling or illegal seed collecting, no genuine interest in the future of Pat Shears' employment and no interest in getting to the bottom of what happened in Cooktown. In essence, Opposition members have deliberately muddied the waters, in conspiracy with sections of the media, in a vain attempt to score political points off members of the Premier's staff and to hide the paucity of their own ability and their ability to raise issues as an Opposition.

Time expired.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (4.10 p.m.): What a pity that the member for Cook has allowed himself to become a stooge in this sordid affair. The saga of Cape Melville is a salutary lesson for Queenslanders about the extent to which this venal Government will readily abuse its oft-quoted commitment to accountability. This story of the Premier's men living the life of Riley at the taxpayers' expense is as breathtaking as the Premier's repeated assertions that he can find nothing improper in their actions.

The story began when the Premier sent his two most senior staff members on a thinly-disguised weekend junket to travel through the exotic north Queensland wilderness accompanied by family and friends with an open chequebook provided by Queensland taxpayers.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: You're pathetic. You really are pathetic.

Mrs SHELDON: I see that they have let the member for Chermside off his leash again. They should not do that; it does not help their side at all. Their cover story, which gave them a veneer of respectability every time they produced their Government Amex cards, was so thin that it stretched the bounds of credibility, but Premier Goss gave his authorisation and so the two were free to go.

Of course, Premier Goss never expected their journey to be publicised or scrutinised at all.

He expected their claims for hotel rooms, cars, meals, drinks and phone calls would disappear forever into the maze of the Premier's Department's accounting system. But in his arrogance, the Labor Premier did not allow for the comparatively menial but diligent toilings of a hard working park ranger named Pat Shears, whose efforts to do a difficult job to the best of his ability got in the way.

The two "junketeers" travelled business-class to Cairns and boarded their hired four-wheel-drive vehicle on the pretext of visiting the Starcke land holding, north of Cooktown. But at no time had the Premier, or either of the two travellers, sought permission from the Starcke land-holder, the vendor of the land, to allow them to enter onto his land. Either they intended to trespass, and indeed Mr Atkins did tell the press this was the case, or more likely, they had no intention of visiting Starcke at all. Barbagallo and Atkins claimed to be a scouting party for a far more elaborate junket involving the Premier himself. However, in two days of free travel, accommodation and entertainment, they claim to have spent a grand total of just 15 minutes at Starcke—that is 15 minutes on a job that cost taxpayers more than \$2,200.

Not surprisingly, there was another side to the story, and it involved Barbagallo's cane-growing, pig-shooting brother Paul and a friend of his, Gordon Euchtritz, both from Innisfail. These are the family and friends with whom the visitors hoped to enjoy a pleasant interlude in the scenic north. The cover story gave these two a role in guiding the Premier's men to Starcke, but even if everything had gone to plan, they would have been hard pressed in the available time to travel with the official party further than the Starcke homestead, at the southern boundary of the property. To accomplish this feat, they would need nothing more than a road map and a couple of hours. But as it turned out, they first had to return from the area where their vehicle was located by Pat Shears on a smuggler's track among the unique foxtail palms. The car contained guns, a chainsaw and some marijuana.

Now the Premier rages that the Opposition has no evidence of impropriety on behalf of his two representatives. The facts are that individually or together these men, firstly, used their positions to rot travel entitlements and to have a cosy holiday at taxpayers' expense. Secondly, they devoted significant public resources and considerable personal effort to frustrate the legitimate prosecution of Paul Barbagallo and Gordon Euchtritz by National Parks authorities. Thirdly, they used their considerable political influence over the head of the Department of the Environment, would-be ALP candidate, Craig Emerson, to demand

alternative transportation for Barbagallo's brother. Fourthly, they sought to intimidate Mr Shears and acted improperly by intervening in a police interview at the Cooktown Police Station. Fifthly, they endeavoured to cover up the incident by making false claims about their involvement.

The Premier has shut his eyes to the behaviour of senior staff who used his personal authority to behave like SS officers on vacation. Funded by the taxpayers, they spent more time in the Cooktown Police Station endeavouring to pervert the course of justice than they did at Starcke attending to the flimsy duties they had assigned themselves. Their 15 minutes at Starcke cost taxpayers more than \$148 a minute. It cost Pat Shears his job and it destroyed the important campaign to fight foxtail palm seed smuggling at Cape Melville.

Mr BREDHAUER: I rise to a point of order. The assertion by the Deputy Leader of the Coalition that it cost Mr Pat Shears his job is wrong.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Cook knows better than to take that point of order.

Mrs SHELDON: They got on the phone to the biggest political stooge in the Queensland public service, the ALP candidate, Craig Emerson, and succeeded in raising orders for a replacement pig-shooting truck at Government expense.

An Opposition member: It is an outrage.

Mrs SHELDON: It is an outrage. Documents show that an aircraft was sought, and it causes me to wonder how drunk with political power someone must be to demand a Government aircraft for use on a private pig-shooting excursion.

Today, I table the monthly budget of the Department of the Environment's Far North Regional Office for November last year. Despite the stench that permeates this entire case and the clear impropriety with which the incident has been handled, the Premier has continued to claim that Mr Shears was not sacked, but lost his job when his contract expired and there were insufficient funds to allow him to continue. This budget statement gives the lie to the words of the Premier and the Minister for Environment. It shows clearly that, with Mr Shears on the payroll, the far north office was running to budget. There were sufficient funds to allow Mr Shears to continue in his important work——

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: I know that the member for Cook is not interested in preserving the foxtail

palms, and does not care about the rape of the cape, for which he is the local member, but it is about time that he did.

Mr BREDHAUER: I rise to a point of order. I find the comments of the Deputy Leader of the Coalition offensive. I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mrs SHELDON: Mr Speaker, they are truthful.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I think that I will have to ask you to withdraw them.

Mrs SHELDON: I will withdraw them, Mr Speaker, at your direction. As I was saying, Mr Shears was sacked in a straightforward case of political payback by the Labor Government.

Ms ROBSON: I rise to a point of order. I am getting rather tired of hearing the Deputy Leader of the Coalition saying that Pat Shears was sacked. He was not sacked. There was no evidence——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Before this debate degenerates any further, I warn members on both sides of the Chamber that they are not points of order; they are debating points.

Mrs SHELDON: Yesterday, in this House, I called on the Premier to release full details of the travel schedule, itinerary, air tickets, accommodation, and receipts furnished by Atkins and Barbagallo, along with their written report on the trip. Given the way in which these two abused public trust and their own high office, it is just not acceptable for the Premier to continue to hide those documents from public scrutiny. The Premier would not table the documents. We later had a release of selected documents by Mr Atkins, and this was just not acceptable. His account of flight arrangements did not include stubs to prove whether or not the intended flights were taken. He revealed that, with Mr Barbagallo, he spent a total of \$826.50 on accommodation and car hire. They travelled by car a total of 905 km, but gave no account of their movements. Two business class airfares would have added at least \$1,400 to the bill, but no details of this cost were included by Mr Atkins. The conservative total of \$2,226 for the trip still excludes meals and some fuel costs. Receipts for these have not been provided.

Mr Atkins is under a black cloud as a result of his part in this sorry episode and his subsequent efforts to muddy the waters. The Opposition wants to know who the Premier is trying to protect, but at the same time the Premier hides behind the implausible explanations and questionable accounting of Mr Atkins. The Opposition will not accept an account of travel movements in this case unless the Premier is

prepared to vouch for its veracity. He is the Minister responsible for the actions of his staff. He must table all the relevant documents and stand by their contents and accuracy.

The Premier finds no impropriety in this shameful incident, but he is going to have to wake up eventually. The people of Queensland do not pay taxes so that the favoured Labor mates of Wayne Goss or David Barbagallo can have questionable trips. I say "questionable trips" because, among all the other information we have been given over the last few days, there is the answer this afternoon by the Premier's own Minister for Lands, Geoff Smith. When I asked Mr Smith why these two men had booked to visit Starcke on 9 November, when he had not even announced that the Government would negotiate for the purchase of the property until 11 November, Mr Smith gave an interesting answer. The Lands Minister said in part—

"The visit of the Premier's staff to the Starcke property had no impact whatsoever on the responsibilities and actions of the Lands Department."

So, the Lands Minister did not even know they were going to visit the Starcke property, and did not think there was any reason for them to go in the first place.

An honourable member interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Why should they? It is under the Lands Department that this property was to be acquired, if it was to be acquired, and at considerable taxpayers' expense. Is the honourable member telling me that there was supposed to be no interaction? This gets more of a joke as we go on—particularly more of a joke by the Labor members and the Premier.

Dennis Atkins has a lengthy reputation as the Government's dirty tricks man, and his involvement in the subsequent cover-up and the various improper demands channelled through Dr Emerson in particular is highly questionable. Media representatives in this town have received many controversial background briefings from unnamed Government sources, and on many of these occasions it is Mr Atkins whose name is whispered around the corridors. I have heard his name mentioned in connection with various smear campaigns, not the least being those directed against the former head of the CJC, Sir Max Bingham, and the former Police Commissioner, Noel Newnham. This time he has used the same dirty tricks, but outsmarted himself by misleading journalists who had the temerity to investigate further.

As I said yesterday, Premier Goss has no proper alternative but to sack Mr Atkins. It seems bizarre that the Premier should seek to endanger

himself by shielding his employee in the way he has.

Time expired.

Mr WELFORD (Everton) (4.20 p.m.): There is one point upon which the Deputy Leader of the Coalition and I are in total agreement, and that is that as this whole episode goes on, it becomes more absurd and more ridiculous. It becomes more absurd and more ridiculous simply because the entire exercise engaged in by the Deputy Leader of the Coalition is based upon the same evidence that she just cited for her baseless criticism of Mr Dennis Atkins, namely, whisperings that she has heard in the corridors. That is the basis of the Opposition's attack upon the Government and upon people who cannot be here to defend themselves.

Pat Gillespie of the *Sunday Mail*, who I have had the unfortunate experience of having to comment upon in this Parliament before, has engaged in a conspiracy—as she has in the past—with Mr Slack, the Opposition spokesperson for Environment, to beat up this issue on the only evidence that they have ever had—as the Deputy Coalition Leader mentioned—whisperings in the corridors. Are they not going well?

Let me just get some of this straight. Let me try to understand what it is that Opposition members are saying is improper. Not once have we heard them utter one bit of evidence to support their contention that a criminal offence occurred. In fact, they have not suggested what criminal offence, if any, was committed by anyone they have reported to the Criminal Justice Commission. Despite all the repetitious utterances in the speech that was made by the Leader of the Opposition today about impropriety, where is the evidence? What is the act of official misconduct that the Opposition spokesman for Environment alleges occurred? Let him place his finger upon one element of their conduct that amounts to official misconduct which, he says, justifies his referral of the matter to the Criminal Justice Commission. They have not yet identified one act of alleged official misconduct. No, it is more whisperings in the corridors. That is the best they can do.

As I said before, I am just trying to understand this. What happened here? Presumably, the Premier wanted to inspect Starcke. I think that there is general agreement about that. Somewhere along the line, the Premier of the State wanted to go up and have a look at that place which, ultimately, as we now know, he undertook to buy back for the people of Queensland. That is a laudable proposition. Indeed, after what the National Party did, Starcke

was run by a developer who, quite frankly, has a despicable record on the cape. Anyhow, our Premier was going up there to see what the Government could do about recovering Starcke for the people of Queensland.

What is the impropriety? I fail to see it, but perhaps the Opposition spokesman can enlighten me. Where is the impropriety in the Premier sending his personal staff to investigate how best they could go to Starcke and what they might do in terms of making an announcement there, if that was the idea? It seems to be perfectly sensible to me that the Premier would send his senior staff up there to check out the situation and ask questions such as, "What parts of Starcke are precious?" "Where might we make an announcement about the recovery of Starcke, if that is what we want to do?" That is a perfectly natural thing for any leader of a Government or, indeed, any Minister to do—to send his or her staff to a place in advance to find out what was going on.

Mr Barbagallo was going up there and presumably—I do not think that one would need to be a rocket scientist to work this out—discovered that his brother was going to be up there on a pig-shooting expedition. If one's brother was in the area on a pig-shooting expedition, one might say, "Can you take us up there?" What is the problem with that?

Mr T. B. Sullivan: No problem.

Mr WELFORD: No problem. We have come this far, yet there is still no official misconduct, and still no criminal offence. Barbagallo gets up there and discovers that this vehicle has been seized. I do not know Pat Shears from a bar of soap. He seems to be a perfectly nice guy to me. However, Pat Shears was up there with a couple of Aboriginal elders to take them into the Cape Melville National Park so that they could see what they might do in respect of their land title claim for the national park. He was simply showing a couple of elders through the area. He was doing that as part of a range of duties that he undertook during the course of his three-month contract. The duties involved in that contract included keeping an eye out for any misconduct that might be occurring up there in the nature of palm-seed smuggling, and reporting that misconduct to the appropriate authorities. I do not recall anyone anywhere, least of all Pat Shears, saying that he was the Lone Ranger of criminal investigations who was sent to the cape to save it from the world. That was not Pat Shears' role.

However, let us assume that it was his role. Let us assume that Pat Shears was sent up there with the plenary powers of the Criminal Justice Commission to haul in at whim anybody found

anywhere on the cape. Leaving aside for the moment that it was anyone by the name of Barbagallo, what would happen in this place if a person's vehicle was confiscated by a national parks officer? Let us assume that a friend of Doug Slack was up there on a pig-shooting expedition——

A Government member: Or Pat Gillespie.

Mr WELFORD: Better still, Pat Gillespie. Pat would get it on the front page, the middle page and the back page if the only offence that a friend of hers committed while on a pig-shooting expedition in the cape was to transgress the boundary of a national park and then the next minute, some public servant is taking away his or her vehicle. Members could imagine the cries from the Opposition benches about breaches of civil liberties if a Government officer was running around rural Queensland confiscating people's vehicles on the basis that they happened to be in a national park. My gosh! That is an extraordinary turn of events. However, because of the mere circumstance that it happened to be someone by the name of Barbagallo, it suddenly becomes something sinister. That is the trap into which *Four Corners* fell. Poor old Pat Gillespie of the *Sunday Mail* continually falls into that trap in her desperation to ingratiate herself with the Opposition spokesman for Environment.

Frankly, there is nothing in any of this. As the Premier has said, there is not one scintilla of evidence to support the allegation of impropriety. The Leader of the Opposition thinks that he can prove impropriety by simply making repetitious utterances. It is not an argument; it is an argument by assertion, and it simply will not hold.

Let us assume that Mr Barbagallo is a member of the Premier's staff. He arrives there and finds that extraordinary circumstances have occurred. The Opposition spokesman featured prominently on the ABC program. It was real Jungle Jim stuff. I must say, I was impressed. He was traipsing around, knee-deep in the mud and in crocodile-infested creeks. What a man! "Crocodile" Doug! Members could imagine that, if they arrived there to find that a person's car had been confiscated, they would ask, "What offence has been committed here?" Even on the program, Pat Shears said that he saw the vehicle, saw some things in it, heard the people up ahead, but did not bother to go and investigate whether they were actually smuggling palms or playing tiddlywinks. Instead, he jumped in the car, and away he went. What an extraordinary state of affairs! If I was a senior officer of the Government up there and I discovered that a citizen's car had been confiscated on the

evidence that it had some guns in it, which everyone takes up into the cape, and on the fact that it was in a national park, I would want to know why. I would want to know what disaster the department was bringing on us now. That is the simple fact of the matter.

As Pat Shears himself said on the program, he did not know David Barbagallo from a bar of soap. He thought that he might have been a lawyer. So the proposition that Mr Barbagallo exerted his authority as a member of the Premier's staff simply does not stand up. Mr Barbagallo asked the question, "Why did you confiscate the car?" I think, in those circumstances, anyone's brother would ask that. There was no evidence, and there is still no evidence, of any smuggling of seeds by people in that area. That is why the vehicle was handed back. It was not ordered back; it was returned under a direction by the police because there was no evidence to justify keeping it.

Time expired.

Mr SLACK (Burnett) (4.30 p.m.): I was very interested to hear the colourful contribution of the previous speaker, the member for Everton. Although he might take guns on a trip to Cape Melville National Park—and he said that everybody takes guns there—I can assure him that on a recent trip to Cape Melville National Park, I did not take any guns. It is an offence to have rifles in a national park. Obviously, the member for Everton does not know about that.

However, let us return some sanity to this debate. There is no way in the world that the Opposition would say that it was improper for the Premier's staff to plan for a trip to Starcke. However, based on all of the circumstantial evidence that we have heard, the logistics just do not add up. It is crazy to suggest that the Premier would let his staff make that trip between consecutive weekly sittings of Parliament. It is crazy to suggest that the Premier would have to sent his two staff up there, with Paul Barbagallo, the brother of David Barbagallo, acting as a guide. National Parks and Wildlife Service and Lands Department officers were available to act as guides, but it seems that they were not even consulted. These are some of the things about which the Opposition is asking questions.

As I asked yesterday: why would Paul Barbagallo drive from Innisfail to Cairns and then to Cooktown—a journey of about five or six hours—and then drive to Cape Melville National Park? We can argue about whether there it takes 12 or 15 hours to drive from Cooktown to Cape Melville National Park. Let us say that it takes 12 hours—I will give members opposite the benefit of the doubt. The Government is asserting that

to meet a commitment he did a round trip from Cooktown in 24 hours.

Let us look at what Pat Shears did in that national park. I hope that the member for Everton listens to what I say, because this is the situation. He went into the national park and found a green vehicle that had full petrol tanks. That indicated to him that that vehicle had not been driven from Cooktown. It was consistent with the actions of smugglers in the park. It contained a rifle, which is illegal in a national park. It also contained a chainsaw, which is illegal in a national park. The vehicle drove beyond a sign, a photo of which I now table.

A few days before, there had been shots fired in the park. The Aboriginal people were scared. Everybody up there was scared. The smugglers carried SKS rifles. It is a vast area, a long way from anywhere. Shears and the two Aboriginals were on their own. I will table the report written by Shears' superior, which indicates how scared the Aboriginal people were. One of the Aboriginal people even said, "By the time I reached Hope Vale, I was white." That indicates how scared they were and how bad the situation was. He was in an area in which he had no backup whatsoever. He was in an area in which criminal activity has occurred. What would members opposite expect him to do?

The Minister said that he acted appropriately in the circumstances. After seizing the vehicle in the national park, on his way to Cooktown he met some Army personnel. I will table his report about the Army personnel who were on an exercise in the area.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that the member for Burnett would do a better job if the member for Clayfield would stop assisting him. I suggest that he should do it solo.

Mr SLACK: The area concerned is vast. Members opposite do not seem to understand that. Have any members opposite been there? Has the Minister been there? She has not. Earlier, the Minister and the member for Everton said that Pat Shears could have his job back—no problem—and that he left on amiable terms.

Mrs Bird: He didn't lose his job.

Mr SLACK: He was on three-monthly contracts, but he had every reason to believe that that job would continue and that his contract would be renewed.

Mr Bredhauer: Tell me why he didn't apply for a full-time job.

Mr SLACK: Because this took place at the start of the peak time for illegal activity in the park. He was in the middle of a surveillance exercise.

Ms Robson interjected.

Mr SLACK: To answer the Minister, I will quote from an article in today's *Gold Coast Bulletin* that refers to a letter written by David Barbagallo, the Premier's secretary, to explain his position. It states—

"Premier Wayne Goss was told"—

this is by David Barbagallo—

"a National Parks and Wildlife Service ranger had indicated that he was threatened with dismissal for seizing a vehicle owned by the brother of his then private secretary, according to the letter to Mr Goss, backdated 30th November, 1993."

The Opposition is asking these sorts of questions—although the Government wonders why we are asking them—because the Government's explanations do not add up. There is no doubt in my mind that Shears is a reliable person. He is an honest person.

Mr Santoro: He was a good ranger.

Mr SLACK: He was a good ranger. So why, at the height of the smuggling season, was his position not renewed? I went to the area and saw a boat moored there. There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that that boat was being used for illegal activities.

Ms Robson interjected.

Mr SLACK: Yesterday during question time, when we talked about surveillance activities, the Minister talked about a big covert operation. I suggest that there was no big covert operation; there was nothing. As I understand it, the Fauna Squad indicated also that there was no big operation. Shears himself said that he was unaware of it. If that were the case, one would expect him to be aware of it.

What have we seen? There are some prosecutions supposedly pending against a few people. A few minor inroads have been made. These are minor incidents in respect of the overall picture. The Customs Service said that, in the last four years, \$20m worth of fauna and flora have gone from north Queensland, and that 700 000 seeds have gone from Cape Melville over this summer. Shears could have been there.

In respect of the *Sunday Mail*, and Pat Gillespie in particular, I suspect that this Government, and the Premier in particular, would be looking to do a Pamela Bornhorst on Pat Gillespie. She has carried out ongoing research into this matter. Can members opposite tell me when one of her articles on this issue has been wrong? If members opposite want to pick on the *Sunday Mail*, they should also pick on the *Gold Coast Bulletin*. David Connolly has done a good

job in reporting on this issue. His articles are well researched. Madonna King, of the *Australian*, is doing a similar job. Even taxi drivers are asking questions. Is the Minister saying that the *Four Corners* story was not well researched? The *Sunday Mail* would have received dozens of writs if it had been wrong. Let us face reality.

Ms Robson: Do you know they haven't?

Mr SLACK: As far as I am aware, it has not. All members opposite can do is denigrate the people who ask questions that they are entitled to ask. I will table another photograph. It is of a vehicle that has no number plates. No doubt, it was used for smuggling foxtail palms.

Ms Robson interjected.

Mr SLACK: There were shotgun shells in the glove box. Why does the Government wonder why we are asking questions? It said that it was going to clean up the crooks.

Time expired.

Hon M. J. ROBSON (Springwood—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (4.40 p.m.): This business has become unbelievable. The Deputy Leader of the Coalition referred to the actions of two of the Premier's staff in travelling on a weekend to inspect the Starcke site as a waste of taxpayers' money. The actions of members opposite on this issue since November last year have represented a political beat-up on an issue where there is no evidence, where the facts have been tabled before this Parliament and where the facts have been presented to the CJC. Appropriately, this matter is being investigated by the CJC, yet the Opposition continues to waste the time of this Parliament. I have to tell the folks opposite that, for the rest of Queensland, life goes on. It is an absolute joke that the Deputy Leader of the Coalition should refer to wasting taxpayers' funds. In reality, the only activity that has resulted in a waste of taxpayers' funds is the Opposition's handling of this issue.

I want to outline some of the facts. We should calm down and reiterate the facts relating to this issue, particularly those relating to ranger Shears. Mr Shears was not sacked. I will repeat that statement. The Premier has also said it. If Mr Shears has told members opposite that he was sacked—

Mr Slack: He hasn't.

Ms ROBSON: Isn't that interesting! Mr Shears has not told any member opposite that he was sacked, but they insist that he was. Members opposite believe that they have some sort of divine knowledge about this issue. Mr Shears was not sacked. Mr Shears' contract

expired, as was appropriate, after a 12-week period.

Mr Shears was patrolling an area that is extremely dangerous. The member for Burnett is aware of that fact. He has visited the area. It is extremely inaccessible. The period after Mr Shears' 12-week contract expired is a period in which it is almost impossible to traverse that area. As members have heard, the area in question is very dangerous. We are very conscious of the safety of our rangers. I have read the statements of the two Aboriginal elders who accompanied Mr Shears. They stated that they were frightened about the activity in that area. Those elders were concerned about the environmental conditions. We are very conscious of that matter.

The security of our rangers is vital to us. We are conscious of the fact that Mr Shears is obviously a very capable person. He has had a very adequate background to help him to overcome the dangers of the purported smuggling that occurs in that area. Of course, we have evidence that such smuggling is occurring. I might say that, to our knowledge, such smuggling was occurring over the 12-year period from 1977 until the change of Government. Of course, nothing was done about it by the former Government. However, in 1992, our Government took action to actually try to do something about ceasing that smuggling. However, we did not do it alone. The Department of Environment and Heritage is not a police force. There is a separate police force. We got together with the appropriate Federal authorities, the State Government police authorities, my department's rangers and the Fauna Squad to devise a surveillance system. For the past two years, we have been keeping an eye on the activities in Cape Melville in order to gather evidence and undertake prosecutions.

The little excursion that the member for Burnett and his colleagues made to the area does not help those surveillance activities. Clearly, we are attempting to undertake low-key surveillance and to make arrests when we have evidence. Again, evidence is very important to us. Members opposite can stand in this place and make as many accusations as they like about whomever they choose, but until members opposite produce evidence, they will never get anywhere on any issue. It is about time members opposite did their homework and learned that evidence must be collected. They cannot collect evidence on this issue, because there is none to collect.

Pat Shears has been employed on a variety of projects. Quite clearly, he has performed very well. There is documentary evidence to that effect. His employment has been over an eight-

year period. His employment has taken the form of broken time contracts, because he goes off and does other things. It is for him to decide whether he applies for a contract that is advertised. At present, a contract is being advertised by the DEH for which I believe Mr Shears will apply. If he proves to be an appropriate person, he will secure that contract. There is absolutely no reason why he should not, because he performs his duties very well and he is familiar with that area.

Mr Veivers: I don't like his chances.

Ms ROBSON: Let us wait and see. This Government does not interfere. Let us allow the normal processes to continue.

There has been a point of contention about Mr Shears' duties. I want to clarify that issue. We have seen his duty statement. It is pretty much a standard duty statement for his classification. One of the vital points that we are trying to get across to our ranger staff—whether they be full time or on contract—is that we need to impart knowledge as to how to manage those areas, particularly areas that are subject to claims by Aboriginal people. The member for Cook explained that to the Parliament. It has been explained previously.

A very important function of Mr Shears is to show representatives of Aboriginal communities how to manage those areas. We want interchange with them. We want knowledge from them; we want to impart knowledge to them. That is fundamentally what it is about. The activities that were outlined on Mr Shears' duty statement are what we want those people to be taught. It is fundamental that those activities be listed. One of those activities would be the training of Aboriginal rangers or tribal elders to help us with the management of those parks at a later stage.

In terms of his last 12-week contract and prior to his assignment to Cape Melville, Mr Shears was briefed by Mr Geoff Kelly, who is the regional manager for coastal protection. Mr Shears was instructed by Mr Kelly not to engage wrongdoers directly, and of course he did not. He confiscated a vehicle. Mr Shears assured Mr Kelly that he would exercise considerable tact and discretion. Mr Shears said words to this effect to Mr Kelly that if he and his team were observed by other people while on the park, he would consider that his surveillance mission had failed. That is fine. That statement indicated clearly that Mr Shears would be fitting in with the surveillance operation. I do not know how he could not know that surveillance was occurring. That is a matter of interest to me. Mr Shears was told not to involve himself or his coworkers in any situation that could lead to a confrontation. As I said, we care about our rangers' safety. Mr

Shears assured Mr Kelly that he was far too sensible to allow that to occur.

Mr Shears was not sacked. He departed on amicable terms. All of this controversy has developed since the media beat-up and the political point scoring beat-up for which members opposite are responsible. Mr Shears was not behind it. Members opposite have beaten up this issue because they are out to get the Premier, the Premier's men, me and my director-general. The member for Burnett has made a concerted political attack on my director-general. That in itself is a disgrace. My director-general is a very capable and competent person who does not interfere—

Mr Slack: He's got a phone in his office that he uses for private business. He's a political operator.

Ms ROBSON: The member for Burnett would not know about the role of the director-general. His role is to ensure that the operations of my department throughout the State proceed smoothly and according to guidelines. He performs that function very well. It is disgraceful that the member for Burnett continues his disgraceful attack on my director-general.

I have been quite disgusted by the actions of the Leader of the Opposition in casting a slur on all of the people involved in this matter—the Premier's staff, my staff and everybody else involved, including me. The Leader of the Opposition has asserted constantly that Mr Shears was sacked. That is an indication of how much of this issue members opposite understand. The member for Burnett has just confirmed that he knows that Mr Shears was not sacked. Why is the Leader of the Opposition saying that Mr Shears was sacked? That is an indication of how much notice anyone can take of anything members opposite say. The member for Cook alluded to the fact that at another stage early last year Mr Shears was offered an opportunity for employment but turned it down because he had other things to do. Mr Shears has the option to take up such offers.

The Cape Melville National Park is an extremely difficult park to manage, and I admit that quite frankly. It has caused us a bit of a headache. In March last year, I issued a directive that my staff were to put as much energy as possible into taking every precaution to ensure that the illegal removal of foxtail palm seeds and any other flora or fauna from parks was curbed. The Opposition has referred to that directive. It has obviously made an application for it under freedom of information. The Cape Melville National Park is a very difficult park to access. It has very low visitation, and therefore

infrastructure is not a high priority. We engage rangers on a part-time basis to carry out an overseeing role. As I mentioned, a surveillance operation has been established to detect and deter smugglers. We do not appreciate any interference in that operation. We are on top of the issue.

The appropriate resources are being allocated to the Cape Melville National Park. Quite clearly, if the smuggling continues, we will be allocating more and more resources to it. However, we are hoping to be able to curb the smuggling and secure that particular area so that no danger faces our rangers as they perform their jobs. Unlike other species, the foxtail palm is not threatened. Clearly, we focus our energies on threatened species. I can assure the House that the foxtail palm is not in danger. However, we do not approve of illegal practices in any of our parks. We are doing whatever we can to curb such practices.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for this debate has expired.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Rockhampton—Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (4.50 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Southern Brisbane Bypass

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (4.51 p.m.) I rise because I want to spend a few moments mentioning the appalling conduct of a Minister of this Government, the Minister for Transport, and another member of this House on the matter of the Southern Brisbane bypass. I am about to expose what could only be described as deceitful and shameful actions deliberately perpetrated by the Minister for Transport and the member for Sunnybank against innocent citizens only seeking answers, proper representation by their State member and full and open community consultation.

In September 1993, Transport Department consultants delivered a community update to affected residents showing two options, the "red" and the "blue". I will not dwell on the content of that community update, but let me assure honourable members that the content was quite misleading. Under freedom of information legislation, residents opposing the Southern Brisbane bypass discovered a map and other documentation showing the existence of an additional secret option which had been under discussion between Brisbane City Council officers and the Department of Transport.

Residents of Stretton and Calamvale were rightly warned by anti-bypass protesters of the possibility of a route wrapping around Stretton, travelling closer to Washington Place and Gowan Road and impacting heavily on their properties and quality of life.

When questioned in this House about the existence of a secret option under discussion between Brisbane City Council officers and the Transport Department by the member for Sunnybank on 8 December 1993, the Minister for Transport denied its existence and denied any such discussions having taken place. In fact, prior to the close of Parliament last year, the honourable Minister even sought permission to speak—and all honourable members would remember that—when he further denied the route and discussions and labelled anti-bypass protesters as mischievous and dishonest. The Minister and the member for Sunnybank then had articles published in local newspapers, again denying both the route's existence and any such discussions. Residents in Stretton and Calamvale received comfort from the advice of the Minister and their own State member.

The Brisbane City Council Freedom of Information documentation obtained by residents shows a map labelled "DOT's Preferred Route Alignments" with further secret routes other than the "red" and the "blue" ones. This was attached to a council agenda for a meeting by council officers with a Transport Department consultant on 18 October 1993. A further file note shows a meeting occurred with Brisbane City Council officers, Transport Department consultants and a Queensland Department of Transport representative on 4 October 1993. This memo refers to the possibility of a route option "within the existing powerline easement and Gowan Road"—none other than the secret option. This evidence proves that such a map did exist and that discussions did take place. I put to honourable members that it is the Minister for Transport who has not only been mischievous and dishonest, but who has also falsely and wrongfully accused innocent residents. While his department and Brisbane City Council officers connived and plotted a secret route, the Minister himself had the audacity to stand here in this very Chamber and deny its existence to honourable members.

On announcement of the final route, the Minister once again embarked on his degrading campaign of personal attacks against anti-bypass protesters, saying that their secret option route claims were nothing more than scare tactics. The Minister even stated on radio that "there was no secret option". The route adopted from Persse Road South, wrapping around Stretton behind Washington Place and veering nearer Gowan

Road is almost identical to the secret route in that area on the FOI documentation from the Brisbane City Council, disclosed by anti-bypass protesters, which had caused such distress and concern to Stretton and Calamvale residents. It certainly bears a much closer resemblance to that route than the "red" and the "blue" routes on which the so-called consultation was conducted.

The residents of Stretton and Calamvale have had no consultation on this route. In fact, when questioned on its possibility by the member for Sunnybank following disclosure by anti-bypass protesters, the Minister for Transport, as already outlined, totally denied the existence of secret discussions or secret routes. The Minister for Transport has deceived and misled the Parliament, the media and the residents of Stretton and Calamvale. He has degraded and publicly attacked residents who spoke truthfully on the possibility of the secret option, which obviously did exist and which was the subject of talks between his own department and Brisbane City Council officers. The Minister for Transport is a disgrace to this Parliament, as has been seen on previous occasions in relation to the Sunshine Coast toll road, and, of course, his famous letters—particularly to the people of Winton—about keeping rail lines. Such behaviour is not acceptable for any member of the Parliament, and definitely not a Minister of the Crown. I join the calls of anti-bypass protesters and call for the immediate resignation of the Minister for Transport from his ministerial position.

The actions of the member for Sunnybank in deliberately misleading instead of properly protecting and representing his constituents must also be questioned. Of course, we know how he went about trying to deceive his constituents in relation to this matter. It turns out that events that then followed went from bad to worse. When residents received speeches, which in no way totally opposed the by-pass, they wrote to the member for Sunnybank, expressing their disappointment.

Time expired.

Growth in Maryborough/Wide Bay Region

Mr DOLLIN (Maryborough) (4.56 p.m.):

The growth in the Maryborough/Wide Bay region is a matter of great concern to the National Party. On 7 April 1994, in an article in the *Maryborough Chronicle* titled "Concern over the Area's Growth", the Federal member for Wide Bay, Warren Truss, had this to say—

"Latest figures reveal people are

flocking to the Fraser coast triggering massive leaps in population predictions.

...
Capping the population has been floated as an option if growth outstrips predictions in some areas. Member for Wide Bay, Warren Truss, said yesterday, 'Australian Electoral Commission statistics showed a major jump in enrolled voters in the Maryborough and Hervey Bay areas. The number of people on the Hervey Bay electoral roll was expected to grow by 36.25 per cent in the next four years', he said. Maryborough was only expected to grow 1.6 per cent but Woocoo shire would grow 20.8 per cent and Tiaro shire 23.6 per cent."

Both of these shires are serviced by Maryborough.

What a remarkable turnaround. When I was doorknocking in the lead-up to the 1989 State election, there were empty houses in every street and many others for sale at give-away prices. Maryborough was dead and just about every person I spoke to told me so. One of Maryborough's most prominent real estate agents told me that he was considering quitting Maryborough as the amount of business he was doing was not paying for his office expenses. EDI/Walkers was in trouble and there was a great fear in Maryborough that it would close. The sugar and grazing industries were on their knees. I attended meetings of sugarcane farmers who were contemplating getting out of sugar as they were not recovering the cost of production.

Unemployment in Maryborough was running at 12 per cent—double the national average at that time—and jobs were being lost to the region at an ever increasing rate. Maryborough had been in a nosedive since sandmining on Fraser Island ceased in 1976, when the Fraser Government shut it down and put nothing in place to assist the 500 people who lost their jobs. They took no notice of the dramatic economic effects this had on Maryborough business and the community, not to mention the workers and their families, who were not given any assistance whatever. This is a pretty standard practice for the way the Conservatives treat the workers. They did compensate the mining company, but there was nothing for Maryborough or the 500 workers they tossed out of work. They did not give a hoot about the workers and their families. They got no assistance whatever.

The Fraser Island logging issue hung over Maryborough like a black cloud. The timber industry and workers did not believe that the Goss Labor Government would deliver. They had

30 years of broken promises from the National Party. They received nothing and lost plenty. They remembered the cessation of sandmining and how they were thrown on the rubbish heap by the Nationals and Liberals. They no longer believed politicians, but they do now. Goss delivered, just as he promised.

The State Government \$38m growth and development package for the Great Sandy Region gave the kick-start that this region so badly needed. Today, we have the fastest growing economy in Queensland. In the last 12 months the region finished with 3 200 jobs above last year—an increase of 4 per cent, slightly above the State average of 3.7 per cent. According to a new index from the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, during the past four years housing trends in Maryborough have been among the most buoyant in the State. The real estate industry is going through a bonanza period. Walkers has over 500 employees, up from 350 in 1989, and \$140m worth of orders, both exports and local. Cattle prices are the best for years and there is plenty of grass. The sugar industry is heading for its best crop and best prices in decades. The timber industry has never been busier. Tourism has increased by 400 per cent over the last four years. Is it any wonder the Nationals are concerned about the area's growth and want to cap it? The growth shows what a lousy job they did. There are bigger and better things to come. The chip mill is injecting over \$100m over 10 years and will create 80 jobs.

Workers are fleeing the Fahey and Kennett Governments of New South Wales and Victoria and are rushing to where Bill Nunn and I are—the paradise of Maryborough and Hervey Bay, wakened by the Great Sandy Region's growth and development package that was delivered to the workers and citizens of Maryborough and Hervey Bay by this Government. All the Nationals can say is, "Cap it—too much growth." What high praise for this Government! In four years, Maryborough has gone from rags to riches in the middle of a very severe recession. Watch us make their caps fly when the economy lifts.

Time expired.

Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South) (5 p.m.): The Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital has been a special hospital to some 67 000 war veterans, widows and their families. Recently, the Queensland State Government turned its back on one of the most generous and amazing offers. The Federal Government, through the Department of Veterans' Affairs, has been gradually getting rid of repatriation hospitals

throughout Australia, and the Greenslopes hospital is one of the last that is left on its list. The Federal Government offered that magnificent hospital to the Queensland Government absolutely free of charge—a 350-bed hospital in the middle of Brisbane's southern suburbs—plus a \$6m cardiac centre, plus full funding for the first five years of its operation, that is, all operational funding, and, for years six to 10, funding on the basis of case mix.

The Minister claims that the Government knocked back that offer purely on the basis that, in that second five-year period, the Government would lose \$16m per year on the basis of case mix funding. But the Queensland Government, through the Department of Health, is going to bring in the case mix funding system some time next year, anyway. That is the method by which practically all the health funding throughout Australia will be funded in the very near future. If the Government thinks that it cannot run the hospital budget on a case mix system, that is an admission that it will not be able to work in all the other public hospitals in Australia.

The RSL is extremely disappointed about the Government's refusal to buy the Greenslopes hospital and take it over. During a speech in Federal Parliament, the local MHR, the Honourable Garrie Gibson, expressed extreme disappointment with the Queensland Government for not taking up that generous offer.

What was so special about the Greenslopes hospital? First of all, the special thing about it is the companionship that the veterans have. They have each other's company and can talk about their past. That makes for the right sort of atmosphere that they like. I have spoken to some veterans from that hospital, and they simply love it. There is a special relationship between the staff of that hospital and the veterans. As a result of that atmosphere, the hospital has been able to obtain some of the best staff in Australia.

The 350 beds at that hospital are likely to be reduced to 250 when whoever buys the hospital applies for a licence from the Queensland Government. What is going to happen to all the hospital beds on the south side of Brisbane? We have seen the QE II Hospital virtually destroyed as a community general hospital. Now, whatever facility is set up there by a private firm will be reduced to some 250 beds.

More importantly, what is going to happen to some of the wonderful services that are offered at that hospital? A total of 70 community patients per day access that hospital. Most of them come from the Greenslopes area. They are going to lose that hospital. Where are they going to go? Will they go to the PA Hospital, which is already

chock-a-block and has a waiting list of 12 months to two or three years? Those people have been able to access that magnificent surgical complex at the repatriation hospital.

What about the Post Traumatic Stress Unit? It contains 70 beds—30 acute beds and 40 rehabilitation beds. That unit is especially important for Vietnam veterans. Where is that going to go, and what is going to happen to those veterans who need that special care? What is going to happen to the Hypertension Unit which was established in 1970 by the University of Queensland—23 years of work? That unit treats 1 000 Queenslanders, including 300 new patients, every year. The unit teaches them about self-diagnosis. It also teaches them non-drug treatment for hypertension. Where is that unit going to go? It has been partly funded by the Federal Government. Those patients certainly will not be able to get into the PA Hospital.

Where is the Dialysis Unit going to go? Where is the Intensive Care Unit going to go? That hospital has one of the best operating theatre complexes in Queensland, and it was recently totally upgraded. Where is the Glaucoma Unit going to go? All of the services that are provided to the veterans and the people of Brisbane's south side will all be lost to Queensland because of the ridiculous attitude of the State Government and Queensland Health.

What is going to happen to the staff of that hospital? What is going to happen to the 67 000 war veterans and widows? I wonder if someone can tell me why the Government turns its back on such a magnificent and generous offer. Who could refuse all of that infrastructure—the theatre, those services, the Post Traumatic Stress Unit and so on? This has really been a callous sell-out of veterans, war widows and their families. It has also been a callous sell-out of the 70 Queenslanders—non-veterans—who use that facility daily and no longer have the QE II Hospital to attend. This has been a sell-out of the south side.

The National/Liberal coalition will support that hospital if we get that opportunity. The sale will probably go through by the end of this year. If the sale falls through, we will make sure that, whatever the RSL needs, we will fight to see that those needs are retained.

Maleny Folk Festival

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN (Caboolture) (5.05 p.m.): Each year since 1986, the Sunshine Coast hinterland has hosted the Maleny Folk Festival. That festival has eclipsed all other folk festivals in Australia and is now firmly established on the international calendar. In fact, I believe it has now surpassed the Winnipeg festival as the

world's largest folk music festival. This is an achievement by a group of dedicated, ordinary Queenslanders whom we in this place should acknowledge and applaud.

The Maleny Folk Festival is not only a great folk music festival; it is one of Australia's greatest and most successful arts events. Earlier this year, it was admitted that organisers of the Adelaide festival—long regarded as the premier arts festival in this country—were having difficulty selling tickets. No such problem was encountered by the organisers of the eighth Maleny Folk Festival, who achieved about 20 per cent growth in ticket sales. That figure is notable in itself, but more so because the festival's advertising budget for the 1993-94 festival was less than \$800—I repeat: less than \$800. Attendance over the four days and five nights of the festival was in the order of 55 000 people. Gate takings were around \$860,000. Nearly one-third of the festival's visitors were from interstate or overseas, including one Japanese couple who made the journey to Queensland specifically to attend the festival.

It is both pleasing and ironic that the Maleny Folk Festival enjoys its excellent international reputation, because it has never relied on international artists. Certainly, it has some international performers. This year, notable overseas visitors were singer/song writer Roy Bailey and the exciting band from the Reunion Islands, Grat Fils. However, it is a deliberate policy of the organisers to showcase Australian and, where possible, Queensland talent. In the 1993-94 festival, over 320 Australian acts were featured, including folk music icons such as Ted Egan, Judy Small, Mike McClellan, Dennis Kevans and Eric Bogle, through to popular new acts such as the bands Pop Properly, Maireid, the Hot Potatoes and the Whirling Furphies. The program has plenty to satisfy a wide range of musical tastes—Celtic, blues, country, poetry, traditional folk, percussion, numerous ethnic styles, musical dramatisation, jazz and folk. In fact, if anyone is playing it, there is a fair chance it will feature on the program somewhere.

Apart from myself, several members of the Parliament attended the most recent Maleny Folk Festival. I personally noticed the presence there of Deputy Premier, Tom Burns, Family Services Minister, Anne Warner, the member for Greenslopes, Gary Fenlon, and the member for Sunnybank, Stephen Robertson, who all spent some time at the festival. I would not be surprised if I have missed out a couple of people.

One would expect that a festival that attracts international acclaim, attracts more people than a single State of Origin football match or a whole season of Sheffield Shield cricket games and

provides work for over 300 Australian music acts would have a secure future. Unfortunately, that is not the case. I have seen the festival grow each year, but it is that steady growth that is now threatening the very survival of the event.

For eight years the festival has been located at the Maleny showgrounds—a site that has now become too small. As well, the organisers have given an undertaking to the Caloundra City Council to move from the showgrounds to satisfy those few local residents who, while certainly affected by the festival in one way or another, disregard the amount of money injected into the local economy by the influx of visitors and have lobbied for the festival's discontinuance. As of this moment, the festival is virtually homeless. The identification of a possible alternative site led to the establishment of a protest group—the Maleny and District Action Group, or MADAG—to oppose the site. When the festival organisers withdrew their offer for the site, many of that group finally flew their true colours and now simply oppose the festival.

The search for a new site goes on, but it is a race against time. If a new site cannot be found virtually immediately, the festival scheduled for the next Christmas/new year period may have to be cancelled. That would be a tragedy for folk music. It would cause hardship for local businesses that benefit from festival spin-off and would be a severe blow to Queensland's status as the host State of Australia's most successful art festival.

There has been a great deal more money invested by the Government in less popular entertainments, such as State of Origin football and Sheffield Shield cricket, than it would take to ensure the future of the Maleny Folk Festival. I know that, for some time, the Arts Division has been dealing with the Queensland Folk Federation on this matter. I now take this opportunity to call on our Government to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the future of that internationally significant event is secure.

Minister for Minerals and Energy

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (5.10 p.m.): I rise in this Adjournment debate to bring to the attention of the House the appalling failure of the Minister for Minerals and Energy to properly administer his department. At a CJC inquiry into pollution, one past officer and two serving officers under whistleblower protection gave evidence that the Department of Minerals and Energy has failed in the administration of the mineral resources legislation and environmental legislation, which is the responsibility of the

department. Allegations have been made that environmental officers were instructed not to issue notices and not to fulfil their obligations under the Act where they discovered breaches of the legislation.

Today, in question time, the Minister admitted that he had known about the problems that were divulged to the CJC. Therefore, we must question the Minister's competency in the administration of his department. Did the Minister at any time, in the knowledge of the problems faced by his department, instruct his department to rectify the problems and without fear or favour administer the requirements of the law? Did the Minister regularly question the head of his department and relevant staff members about the progress of the department in the cleaning up of the problems mentioned in the report to which the Minister alluded in Parliament today?

Only two conclusions can be drawn. Either the Minister failed to appropriately direct the department which was his responsibility or the department, having been appropriately directed, treated the Minister with contempt and refused to, or failed to, carry out his instructions. The evidence for that is that officers of the department were instructed not to do their job. Only one conclusion can be drawn, and that is that those instructions came from either the Minister's desk or his departmental head. In either case, the Minister must have known of the substance of the instructions and the reasons for them, and he must have also understood the implications of his actions. If that is not the case, it is clear that the policy of the Government, the policy of the department and the policy of the Minister is to have laws which appear to be adequate but which will not be enforced. It is either deliberately poor or sloppy administration.

The laws are known by the mining companies. There is not one mining company that was not apprised of the proposed laws prior to their introduction into the House. It is standard networking policy for the department to consult with miners and mining companies prior to legislation being introduced. Mining companies universally accept that whatever the law, regardless of whether they agree with it or not, they have to comply with it.

This Minister loves limelighting with good news. It is doubtful whether he has ever read the various statutes pertaining to the mining industry. He is clearly not in control of his department. It is an absolute disgrace that whistleblowers have had to seek the protection of the CJC inquiry to blow the whistle on the department and the Minister to expose the problem of environmental pollution and non-

performance by the department. These people have risked their future employment with the department in a last final attempt to force the Minister to have his department obey the law.

Clearly, attempts by this Labor Government and the Labor Party to mislead the community about their commitment to the environment and their environmental credentials are nothing and were nothing other than electoral grandstanding. Labor has no commitment other than to trawl for votes with motherhood statements. If this Labor Government and the Labor Party has a commitment to the environment, then the Minister is incompetent and has exposed his Government to enormous ridicule. The Premier should sack him.

As evidence of the Minister's sloppy administration, he was forced to admit in the Parliament that he has failed to fulfil his personal obligations with respect to the parliamentary register of pecuniary interests. For the benefit of the House, I refer to the guidelines contained in the Declaration of Registrable Instruments of 1990. It is your document, Mr Speaker—or the document of your Government—and I ask you to read section 3.11, "Other substantial sources of income."

In summary, it says that other income of \$1,000 must be shown. The Minister said that, in his opinion, the remuneration that he received from his directorship of a credit union was negligible, or not a substantial amount of money. The Minister received \$2,000 in fees. I can assure the well-heeled members of the Labor administration that many parents, many mums and dads—and many people are unemployed in this State—who are struggling with the cost of school books and other items and who are struggling to keep house and home together think that \$2,000 is a small fortune. If that was his justification for not completing the document honestly—which was his personal responsibility, as directed by this Parliament—then it is no wonder that the Minister approaches his ministerial responsibilities in a sloppy and ridiculously inept manner. It is no wonder that his administration is sloppy and a shambles. He disregards the guidelines with respect to pecuniary interests and disregards the law with respect to environmental pollution. The Minister must resign.

Emergency Services in Central Queensland

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy) (5.15 p.m.): I would like to bring to the attention of the House the improvements made to the emergency services in central Queensland. A new district communications centre to service the

Queensland Ambulance Service is being established at the Rockhampton station and will be the final link in making the communications network in the region one of the best in the country areas of Queensland. It is proposed to officially open the new centre within the next few months. Unfortunately the Nationals have been engaging in a politically motivated campaign to denigrate the QAS and the district communications system. No credit is given by the National Party—just more of the ongoing campaign of knocking everything. It has no policies and no direction. All that members of the National Party can do is knock. By doing so, they have been casting a slur on the hardworking ambulance officers in the region.

The National Party has been trying to make out that the district coordination of ambulance resources means a loss to the local communities. Let me assure the House that it does not. It means better use of resources and better coordination of resources; in other words, a better overall response to calls, especially accidents and major emergencies. It means more staff on the road. The district communications system is freeing up ambulance officers so that they can do the job that they are trained to do. They do not have to sit by the phone at an ambulance centre taking calls. It allows more of them to get out on the road and deliver high-quality pre-hospital care to the sick and injured. It allows for the better coordination of local resources. The Nationals are still living in the past; they still have not learnt what it means to be in Opposition in this State. Queensland now has one Statewide Ambulance Service. We have got rid of the 96 separate and fragmented services of the past.

Many other QAS initiatives in central Queensland are improving ambulance services. For example, the opening of the new QAS Woorabinda station is expected within the next two or three months. The Woorabinda community is providing residence, office and care accommodation and has provided an ambulance vehicle. The QAS is putting in a permanent officer-in-charge and is seeking to train local Aboriginal community members as honorary ambulance officers. The Gracemere Honorary Ambulance Station—a joint facility with the Queensland Fire Service—has been built with the assistance of the Queensland Electricity Commission. An official opening was held last month. The Emu Park Honorary Ambulance Station commenced operations in December 1993.

A new communications network has recently come on-line which has greatly enhanced communications in the Rockhampton district. This has also improved communications

in the surrounding rural areas. That is very important. This new network will be connected to the new district communications centre at Rockhampton.

Staffing numbers in the region continue to grow. Four student ambulance officers commenced training at the Rockhampton QAS centre on 14 February this year. There is plenty of evidence to support the fact that the QAS has made rapid progress in the central region, especially around Rockhampton. The central region now has 25 defibrillators, 65 vehicles, and 115 staff. It is fair to say that the former QATB committee area is certainly smaller than the current Rockhampton district, but there are significant improvements that are benefiting the people of central Queensland. Most importantly, more people than ever are arriving at the hospital alive and in better condition.

I would like to turn now to the Queensland Fire Service. Rockhampton is the regional headquarters for Region 2, the central region of the Queensland Fire Service. Rockhampton City has three stations located at Kent Street, Alexandra Street and Thozet Road. In addition to the three fire stations in Rockhampton, which are staffed by 63 permanent firefighters and three communications operators, there are part-time stations at Yeppoon, Emu Park and Gracemere. These are staffed by five permanent firefighters and 30 auxiliary staff.

In Rockhampton City's three fire stations there are seven appliances—four pumpers, one hydraulic platform, a hazmat van, and one emergency rescue tender. Yeppoon has two pumpers, while the other stations have one pumper each. One share pumper is also available for the district.

A Government member interjected.

Mr PEARCE: We certainly look after the people in our region. Importantly, because of the better facilities and the vehicles that we now have, response times in Rockhampton City and surrounding areas are under 10 minutes in normal circumstances.

The QFS has made a particular effort to improve and upgrade its communication systems in the Rockhampton area. Some of the initiatives include the installation and commissioning of a radio link and repeater station at Mount Hopeful, which will combine the Rockhampton and Gladstone networks, thus allowing control of the whole area from Rockhampton headquarters—

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 5.20 p.m.