WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 1994

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

QUEENSLAND AUDIT OFFICE

Annual Report

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I have to advise the House that today I received from the Auditor-General the annual report of the Queensland Audit Office for the period 1993-94.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Bus Safety Legislation

From **Miss Simpson** (1 179 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will reassess bus safety legislation and introduce more stringent safety regulations.

Fishing, National Parks

From **Mr Stoneman** (5 766 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland immediately withdraw and amend legislation that prohibits fishing as an activity in all streams contained within national parks.

Police Staffing, Gold Coast City Council and Albert Shire

From **Mrs Gamin** (586 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland take necessary action to boost police numbers in southern areas of the Gold Coast City Council and Albert Shire.

Native Animals and Plants

From **Mr Slack** (204 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will actively maintain legal sanctuary and permanent preservation for all native animals and plants in Queensland national parks and revoke all sections of Acts which appear to allow hunting or gathering of native wildlife.

Eastern Tollway

From **Mr J. N. Goss** (96 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will take action to rescind proposals to site the eastern tollway in either Logan City or Redland Shire and ensure that the Pacific Highway is upgraded to include mass transit systems between Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

(a) Treasurer (Mr De Lacy)—

Annual Reports for 1993-94—

Suncorp Insurance and Finance

Queensland Machine Gaming Machines

(b) Minister for Health (Mr Hayward)—

Review of the Medical Act 1939—Discussion Paper and Executive Summary.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Draft Policy Statement and Planning Framework on Institutional Reform

Hon. A. M. WARNER (South Brisbane—Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) (2.34 p.m.), by leave: I am pleased to announce the Government's package on institutional reform for Queensland. There are many people residing in a variety of institutions throughout Queensland who have a physical, intellectual and/or psychiatric disability.

Institutional reform in Queensland will mean providing individual and appropriate support to these people to enable them to live in a non-institutionalised setting. It differs from the notion of deinstitutionalisation, which in other States has been associated with closing institutions and relocating all the residents into the community, regardless of their specific needs and without appropriate support.

To understand the significance of this reform, we need to return to 1989 when the Goss Government came to power and inherited the legacy of many inappropriately institutionalised individuals. Prior to the 1980s, it would seem that anyone who had a disability ran the risk of being put away. Not only were people put away, but their disability was often misunderstood, resulting in them being placed in the wrong facility. For example, some people with an intellectual disability were inappropriately considered to have a psychiatric illness and were then placed in a mental health facility. Inevitably, this could and did lead to human misery on a grand scale.

We as a new Government were faced with the unenviable task of unravelling this human

tragedy. But so huge was the problem, it was not one that we could rush into and change overnight. It required careful planning and analysis to ensure that we got it right. Institutional reform, therefore, has been on the Government's agenda for a considerable period of time.

In 1992, the Government introduced the Disability Services Act. At the same time, it established a cross-Government disability directions committee with representation from 13 Government departments.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Ms WARNER: The committee's mandate was to review the way in which services for people with a disability were delivered by the State Government departments. So its first task was to develop a strategy on disability services, a strategy which has already been released in draft form for community consultation. Equally important was the need to develop a Queensland Government policy and plan on institutional reform. Keeping in mind the findings of the *Burdekin Report on the Rights of the Mentally Ill*, the Government does not want Queenslanders to end up in the wrong community facilities, alone and confused. We want Queenslanders with a disability to be living with the community, enjoying a quality of life consistent with their needs and those of the rest of the community. So we plan to do it right by identifying and implementing appropriate accommodation and levels of support necessary for each individual.

Today, as part of "getting it right", I am releasing a draft policy statement and planning framework on institutional reform. The statement outlines broad principles which are designed to ensure institutional reform occurs in a well-planned and managed way, and the planning framework provides the basis for coordination between the Government and the community. This is an important document, and I am looking forward to input being received from other Government departments, community-based services and members of the public. I would therefore encourage all members in the House who are listening to read the document and discuss it with the relevant community organisations they deal with.

As members are all probably aware, the process of institutional reform has already begun in Queensland. In May this year, I announced the closure of the Challinor Centre at Ipswich. This closure is to be phased in over a three-year period, during which appropriate community alternatives will be found for the residents. Part of this proposal was made possible by the contribution of $10.55m by the Federal Government under its Building Better Cities program.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is still too much audible conversation.

Ms WARNER: It will also be made possible by the allocation of $26.9m by this Government.

Today, I would like to formally announce another three-year plan as part of the institutional reform process in Queensland. Commencing next financial year, the Basil Stafford Centre at Wacol will begin a process of closure very similar to that of Challinor. Over three years, the department will move towards relocating 116 residents and six respite care places into supported community living. A major principle which will guide the process is that quality-of-life issues for people with an intellectual disability must be assured. It will be a well-planned process which will ensure a quality level of care leading up to and following the transition. Also, it will be a highly consultative process engaging families, advocates and carers wherever possible.

As part of this consultative process, families and friends of people at the centre have already been sent a letter advising them of the decision, and tomorrow they will be contacted by phone. Today, the staff of the centre have been formally advised of the decision, as have the relevant unions. To date, the transition phase for Challinor appears to be progressing smoothly. So, in moving further down the track of institutional reform and in the spirit of the progress, I look forward to a positive outcome for the residents of Basil Stafford, their families and staff of the centre.

In summary, it is important to note that the closure of the two centres is not a one-off situation. Instead, these decisions form part of an integrated and coordinated approach to institutional reform, one that will be strengthened by the establishment of a cross-departmental institutional reform implementation team.

QUESTION UPON NOTICE

Vehicle Registration Charges

Mrs SHELDON asked the Treasurer—

"With reference to the Government's decision to increase vehicle registration charges by $3.50 to cover, in part, the cost of the legislation to include de facto spouses in common law claims—

Will he now table the Actuarial and Treasury advice which justifies this increase?"

Mr De LACY: I seek leave to table the answer and have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Honourable Member and the members of the community can be re-assured that the Government has not made any decision to increase CTP premiums or motor vehicle registration charges by $3.50.

As my colleagues announced on Monday, Cabinet has approved amendments to the Common Law Practice Act to extend an entitlement to sue for negligence to persons in a defacto relationship.

This is a welcomed reform to that legislation and will overcome the problems in relation to the rights of defacto widows that have been highlighted by the recent Moura Disaster.

In considering this proposal, Cabinet naturally examined all aspects of the issue including the potential costs involved for various schemes including Workers Compensation and the Motor Vehicle CTP arrangements.

Very preliminary estimates indicate that the total cost to the CTP scheme of claims by defactos may be in the order of $5M per annum. An upward adjustment to premiums in the order of 2% could be necessary to cover this cost if all other aspects of the scheme remain unchanged.

Such an adjustment would be in line with the Goss Government's firm commitment to fully fund accruing liabilities such as workers' compensation, CTP insurance and public sector superannuation.

However, there will be no immediate effect on premiums through the proposed changes as this is only one of a number of impacts, both positive and negative which occur in the scheme during the year. The impact of this and other changes will be fully assessed in the annual actuarial analysis of the CTP scheme.

Other issues which will be closely examined by the actuaries include trends in:

motor vehicle accidents and fatalities;

claim frequencies; and

damages awards.

The Insurance Commissioner has advised that the actuarial analysis of the scheme and the corresponding premium rates for 1994/95 will be subject to independent analysis by Trowbridge Consulting and the State Actuary. That review has already commenced.

Trowbridge are well recognised for their experience in the insurance industry and in particular long tail liability insurance such as CTP. This firm undertook the previous analysis in 1993. Equally the State Actuary is acknowledged as having considerable experience in this area.

The Motor Accident Insurance Act has a prescribed mechanism to be followed in determining the premium rates to apply in each year.

In terms of the Act, the Motor Accident Insurance Commission, before recommending the levies, administration fee and premiums, must invite written submissions on the subject from each licensed insurer and organisations representing motorists in Queensland.

The Commission must consider the submissions received, take the actuarial advice and then make a recommendation to the Minister on the appropriate levies, administration fee and premiums.

The premiums etc, are fixed by Regulations, if practicable, at least 2 months before the beginning of the financial year. Within 3 days after the Regulation is tabled, the Minister must also table:

the Commission's recommendations; and

if the premiums levies or administration fee differ from the Commission's recommendation—a report setting out in detail the reasons for the difference.

That is the process which will be followed in the determination of the CTP premiums for 1994/95.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Royal Children's Hospital

Mr BORBIDGE: I refer the Premier to claims by Dr Ross Shepherd, the Chairman of Medical Staff at the Royal Children's Hospital, that budget cuts will mean that the hospital will have to turn away 2 500 children per year, and I ask: what action will the Premier take to ensure that no Queensland child is turned away from this State's major children's hospital as a result of his Government's hospital budget cuts?

Mr W. K. GOSS: The situation in relation to hospital and health funding in this State is that there has been a massive increase under this Government. It is just plain false to suggest that this Government is cutting funding to health and to hospitals. In fact, the increase since the previous Government was in power is in the vicinity of $1 billion per annum.

An Opposition member: What have you done with it?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I will tell the honourable member what we have done with it——

Mrs McCauley interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Callide under Standing Order 123A. I will have order. I will not have 20 interjections at once.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Members opposite should go to Caboolture, Logan, Caloundra, Nambour or any number of places and see the new hospitals, hospital wings and upgraded surgical wards.

Mr Lester interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Keppel under Standing Order 123A. I issue a general warning. Question time has got off to a very bad start, and it is making me very unhappy.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Honourable members opposite should go to Mackay and see the new state-of-the-art X-ray equipment. They should go to Townsville and see the new tertiary medical services provided in the north by this Government, which are directed in particular towards the medical needs of people in rural Queensland. That is something that members opposite never did. They never spent a dollar on providing services for those people; we have.

In relation to the specific issue of Dr Shepherd—I did not hear Dr Shepherd's interview on the radio in which he raised concerns about a number of issues. I understand that subsequently the Minister for Health went on radio and tried to clarify or explain the misunderstandings that he believed were held by Dr Shepherd. Because of the Health Minister's genuine concerns that Dr Shepherd had failed to understand the budgeting arrangements, he arranged to meet Dr Shepherd subsequently and explain the arrangements to him. On the advice that I have received from the Minister for Health, I believe that Dr Shepherd now has a better understanding of how the budgeting arrangements work.

The Leader of the Opposition has a very interesting approach to budgets and responsible funding. We allocate record funding to the Health Department, and we give each unit——

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I will wait until the member opposite is finished. We give each unit its budget and we say, "This is the budget for the financial year." I think everybody understands that, if one is given a budget for the financial year, one is supposed to use one's best endeavours to keep to the budget. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has a different approach. To highlight this, I will give honourable members an example of the way in which the fiscal cowboys opposite operated on another issue——

Mr Borbidge: Tell us about the 2 500 kids who are going to be turned away.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition under Standing Order 123A. He asked the question. He has not stopped interjecting.

Mr W. K. GOSS: In relation to the issue of the necessary increase in CTP and workers' compensation premiums arising out of the decision to extend rights to de facto spouses—the Leader of the Opposition criticised the Government for raising the premiums. How on earth is an insurance or workers' compensation scheme supposed to operate? Is this one of the hidden policies that we have not seen? We have not seen the policies—the scarlet policies—so we do not know. Do I assume that the Leader of the Opposition proposes, as is clearly implied in his statements in Tuesday's paper, that——

Mr Borbidge: Mr Speaker, am I allowed to answer?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am coming back to that. I have not finished with the honourable member yet. Are we to assume that the hidden policy—the unseen policy—means that in relation to that particular area the Leader of the Opposition is going to run an unfunded workers' compensation scheme?

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. My question related to 2 500 kids being turned away from the Premier's hospitals.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will return to the question.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The clear implication is that the hidden policy provides for an unfunded workers' compensation scheme and an unfunded compulsory third-party scheme.

Mr Veivers interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: It would appear that the same policy is proposed in relation to the delivery of a range of social services, namely, a hospital can be given a record budget but it does not have to pay any regard to the budget that is passed and endorsed by this Parliament and delivered to it. That is no way to run a Government. It is no way to run a hospital. It is no way to run anything. It might be the way that the National Party is run, and the results show it.

Cancer Outpatients Section, Royal Children's Hospital

Mr BORBIDGE: I ask the Premier: is he aware that the cancer outpatients section at the

Royal Children's Hospital cannot be opened because of the $30m cutback to cleaning, domestic and wardsmen services imposed by his Government? What action does he intend to take?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am not aware of the precise details and, as the Leader of the Opposition would well know, for that sort of detailed answer he would either have to go to the Minister for Health or give me some notice and I will get him the answers. The track record of the Leader of the Opposition is that——

Mr Elliott interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: The track record of the Leader of the Opposition is that one simply cannot trust or accept the factual basis of virtually any question that he asks.

Mr Santoro: Oh!

Mr W. K. GOSS: It is true. I have spoken previously of the ethical and other standards of honesty that the Leader of the Opposition applies.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is on his last warning.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I simply do not accept the veracity of the basis of the Leader of the Opposition's question.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: I will seek information in relation to this matter from the Minister for Health, and I will advise the Leader of the Opposition in due course. He will get the answer that he would have got if he had asked the Minister for Health this question today, which is what he would have——

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, it is your question time.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego has been warned already. Honourable members, I issue my final warning that I will not allow question time to degenerate into a rabble. If members do not want to treat it seriously, I suggest that they go outside. I call the Premier.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I was going to conclude by saying that if the Leader of the Opposition were genuinely interested he could have got the answer to his question today. I do not think that the Leader of the Opposition is interested, but nevertheless——

Mr Stephan interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: Nevertheless, notwithstanding the Leader of the Opposition's lack of genuine interest in the matter, I will make inquiries and respond in due course.

Discipline Policies Advocated by Member for Keppel

Mr PITT: I ask the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services: is he aware of statements by the member for Keppel suggesting that shadow Cabinet has caved in to pressure groups in its policy development?

Mr BRADDY: This is a piece of very disturbing information of which I believe the House should be made aware. In the *Morning Bulletin* of 15 October this year, when the member for Keppel was questioned as to why he and his party had abandoned the flogging policy that he had been advocating around the State for some months——

Mr Lester: Controlled corporal punishment.

Mr BRADDY: Obviously I should apologise to the member for Keppel. He insists that he never uses the word "flogging"; it is "controlled corporal punishment" that he has been advocating all this time. I apologise profusely if I have ever accused the member for Keppel of using the word "flogging". Clearly I have been under a misapprehension. The member should take further steps in relation to that matter, because I believe that he has missed a great opportunity. On 18 April this year, page 10 of the *Gold Coast Bulletin* carried an article about the member's controlled corporal punishment policy. That newspaper quoted the member as saying—

> "They should be flogged until they drop."

Clearly, some nincompoop at the *Gold Coast Bulletin* is like me—he cannot get it right. What a dreadful performance that was! What Vince clearly said on that occasion was, "They should be controllably corporally punished until they drop." With that wonderful phrase echoing around the State, the member for Keppel would have won the Winston Churchill prize for political eloquence! The member for Keppel would never have said anything as crass as "they should be flogged until they drop". Clearly, in common with me, the *Gold Coast Bulletin* cannot hear these

timeless phrases emanating from the member for Keppel, and they get it wrong.

We must consider the policy that is coming forth now. The *Morning Bulletin* of 15 October quoted the honourable member for Keppel as saying——

Mr Lester: I've got you a bit worried.

Mr BRADDY: I am very worried!

The *Morning Bulletin* reported that the member for Keppel said that only three out of 1 000 delegates at the Townsville conference of the National Party had opposed his "controlled corporal punishment" policy. What a timeless phrase! I know that the member for Burleigh had the courage and the commonsense to oppose that policy. I know that the Leader of the Opposition sat on the fence in relation to it, and as a result he is still removing the barbed wire from his Fletcher Joneses. I do not know the identity of the third person who opposed the policy. However, despite the fact that 997 out of 1 000 people at the conference supported the policy, the National Party has now abandoned it. Mr Lester was asked how this came about.

Mr Lester interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keppel!

Mr BRADDY: Mr Lester was asked why that policy was abandoned when 997 out of 1 000 people at that conference supported it. Mr Lester's response to that inquiry should be preserved in *Hansard*. He said that he was uncertain why that support had not been translated into policy, but—

> "Probably what's happened is that some pressure groups have got to the members of the shadow Cabinet."

It appears that the great leaders of society opposite cannot stand up to Judy Gamin and the other two members of the National Party who did not support the policy.

The truth of the matter is that the National Party has no law and order policy; it has only a huge vacuum. Striding into that vacuum came the honourable member for Keppel—a sort of giant vacuum flask to enclose the vacuum. Despite the fact that the member for Keppel had 997 supporters in the National Party, he has lost, and the National Party still has no policy on law and order.

QIDC, Profit Performance

Mr PITT: In directing a question to the Treasurer, I refer to widespread criticism by the National Party of the profit performance of the QIDC in the past financial year, and I ask: is the Treasurer aware of whether the National Party has always had this aversion to profit?

Mr De LACY: Isn't it funny how when people get into Opposition they develop an aversion to profit? The embarrassing disclosure that the QIDC actually made a profit has caused us a great deal of problems. I have been on the back foot now for two months defending the fact that we have no net debt and that we have financial institutions that make a profit in this State. In relation to this subject, Mr Borbidge asked—

> "How can rural Queenslanders have confidence in a government that allows the QIDC bank—the bank designed to help rural people—make a profit . . ."

Mr Borbidge went on to say—

> "It is deceitful, when you consider the QIDC was established with the whole purpose of providing a comfort zone to rural producers and businesses."

While he was listing some other problems with the Government, he went on to say—

> "Aside from the latest debacle with the QIDC"—

The debacle referred, of course, to the profit. The Shadow Minister for Primary Industries talked about vultures. He said—

> " 'Vulture' is clearly the right description for the QIDC in the wake of its record profit increase."

Mr Lingard said that it was nothing short of immoral that the State Government had managed to squeeze record profits out of the QIDC. Why is it making a profit? Why is it that it makes a profit now that there is Labor Government? Was it designed to never make a profit?

What members need to understand is that the QIDC was actually created in 1985. In 1985, in his second-reading speech, the relevant Minister, W.A.M Gunn; remember Bill Gunn—the famous "WAM" Gunn.

Mr W. K. Goss: A genuine Country Party stalwart!

Mr De LACY: He is a genuine Country Party person who was one of the great Deputy Premiers of this State, and also one of the great creators of royal commissions. He was also a great creator of financial institutions, and when he introduced the legislation on 10 December 1985, he said—

> "Above all, the corporation will be expected to operate on commercial principles, and to generate a profit which represents a reasonable return on the funds invested by the Government.

> As already noted, the corporation will be expected at all times to act on commercial principles and to earn a commercial rate of return. It will pay, out of the profits of each financial year, a dividend to the Government, which the Treasurer, in consultation with the board, deems to be appropriate.
>
> . . .
>
> The corporation will have a strong private sector orientation. It will be given broad financial independence and flexibility, and it will be required to operate on a commercial basis. Like the business it backs, it will be expected to make a profit."

That is the basis on which it was introduced and that is the basis on which it is being run by this Government. And on that basis it is providing a service to the whole of Queensland, especially those Queenslanders who are affected by drought.

Royal Brisbane Hospital

Mrs SHELDON: I refer the Premier to the fact that the Royal Brisbane Hospital is exceeding his reduced budget by $1m per month, and I ask: at a time when the Treasurer claims to be spending $1 billion more on health, why has the Premier allowed the budget of Queensland's major hospital— RBH—to be reduced by $12m below that required to maintain services at last year's level?

Mr W. K. GOSS: Mr Speaker, it is not true.

Royal Brisbane Hospital

Mrs SHELDON: In directing a question to the Honourable the Premier, I refer to a meeting last week of Royal Brisbane Hospital executives to consider the closure of five wards, including three surgical wards, one medical ward and a cancer ward, the closure of two theatres, and also the redeployment of full-time nursing staff and the sacking of temporary nursing staff and other staff. I ask: will the Premier assure this House that these closures, sackings and redeployments will not occur and that the crisis in Queensland's public health system will not escalate?

Mr W. K. GOSS: It is not true that the closures were proposed. They were not even proposed, so therefore how can it be that they might occur?

National Party Law and Order Policy

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I ask the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services: what knowledge does he have of the broad strategy in Government statement being worked out by the National Party addressing law and order issues?

Mr BRADDY: Again, I am indebted to that fine paper of record, the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin*. On 25 July 1994, on page 3, that newspaper, under a heading titled, "Nationals Policy Plan", printed an article that stated—

> "A broad strategy-in-government statement being developed by the Queensland National Party opposition will have a theme of governing for the majority.
>
> Opposition Leader Mr Borbidge is expected to release the document in September, followed by an informal mid-term campaign around the State.
>
> A spokesman said the focus would be on the key areas of law and order, health and education."

Of course, I think even the Leader of the Opposition knows that it is now October. We are yet to see a strong policy on this issue from the Opposition.

Mr Cooper: I wrote you a letter 12 months ago and I haven't got an answer yet.

Mr BRADDY: The honourable member writes me letters every day.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I think that the member for Crows Nest should discuss that over a beer.

Mr BRADDY: I do not think that even Mr Cooper would think that his letters to me, which arrive daily, would have quite the same significance as the Leader of the Opposition's policies. I know he is egotistical, but he is not that egotistical.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Can I suggest to the Minister that he gets back to the question.

Mr BRADDY: We were going to hear these key policies in September.

Mr Borbidge: No, you weren't.

Mr BRADDY: That is what the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* was told back in July. But what did we get instead? What we got instead was this furphy bantered around the place. The Opposition sent Vince Lester, the member for Keppel, blundering all around the State on his flogging policy. Tiptoeing behind him was the member for Crows Nest, who was not going to flog criminals, he was just going to whip them gently—that was his policy. Of course, the honourable member for Keppel has a horrible habit of telling the truth as he sees it,

even if sometimes he cannot remember the difference between flogging and controlled corporal punishment.

Back on 4 July 1994, when asked about Mr Borbidge's attitude to the caning and corporal punishment issue—which was the Opposition's substitute for a policy—Mr Lester said to the people of Queensland on 4QR AM News—

> "Behind the scenes he is telling me to get on with it and keep the issue alive. He is waiting to see how the public feels about it and I'm quite sure that you will find in time he won't have any option either but to go along with it. I am sure in his heart of hearts he does."

So that is the way the Opposition develops policy. It sends Vince Lester out there as the fall guy and if the public feels good about what Vince says, somewhere, some time, that will become their law and order policy. But it is now October and we have not heard the Opposition's policy yet. We have this vacuum; and that is what the Opposition is, a giant vacuum.

Queensland Export Development Scheme

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I ask the Premier: two years ago this Government established the Queensland Export Development Scheme to support the State's industries in pursuit of export markets. Can he advise the House how this scheme is progressing and what the implications have been for industry in regional Queensland?

Mr W. K. GOSS: When the Government established the Queensland Export Development Scheme we were very keen to ensure that it benefited businesses and that it benefited potential exporters right throughout the State and not just in the south-east corner. I am pleased to be able to inform members that it has been a success generally and that it has been a success on the second count as well, namely, the way it has delivered to regional Queenslanders.

There are five categories of assistance, ranging from overseas market research to support for the engagement of an export manager. To date, nearly $2.9m has been given out to some 79 firms, most of which are small to medium-sized Queensland companies. The scheme is coordinated by my department but it is actually delivered by the Department of Business, Industry and Regional Development and the Department of Primary Industries.

Mr Speaker, 41 of the 79 recipient companies in the portfolio are located in regions outside of Brisbane and they account for over 50 per cent of the funds that have been granted. The regional breakdown is as follows: north Queensland, six; central Queensland, four; north coast, eight; Darling Downs/Lockyer Valley, 12; south coast, 11. I think that demonstrates well and truly that our support for exporters goes right across the State. The success of the scheme is that the portfolio is expected to produce a return of the order of 20 to 1 on grant funds invested over a three-year period.

The great success that we are seeing in terms of export performance in Queensland is due to a number of factors. I believe that the two crucial factors are, firstly, the focused strategies of the Trade and Investment Development Division of my department and the way in which it has focused on particular countries and particular exporters in our State and given them targeted assistance which has enabled them to succeed in the way that I have outlined; and, secondly, the response to those programs by the private sector—the small to medium-sized companies that have really caught the go-get-'em export culture and are striving to succeed and are succeeding to greater lengths each and every year.

I believe that this bodes well, because it indicates that the Queensland private sector, with the help of the Queensland Government, is establishing a much bigger market for Queensland business and Queensland employment than the Queensland domestic market and, indeed, the Australian domestic market. The private sector is establishing a market that will underpin employment and investment in this State that runs right around the world but is particularly strong throughout the Asia/Pacific region from Jakarta to the north of Japan.

Public Hospital Productivity Dividend

Mr HORAN: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to the dishonest tax imposed by his Government on Queensland public hospitals, called the productivity dividend, which is levied at 1 per cent of the non-labour component of all hospital budgets, and the enormous numbers of doctors, nurses and health professionals who could have been employed by hospitals with that money, and I ask: will the Premier stop this iniquitous and dishonest removal of funds from hospital budgets?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am intrigued and curious to find that the Opposition has a new strategy. Fresh from its stunning success at doing what it says to the press gallery is called targeting weak Ministers——

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Connor interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet. I warn the member for Nerang under Standing Order 123A.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Fresh from the Opposition's stunning success with its strategy of what it calls targeting weak Ministers, which results in all of us going out after question time and asking, "What do you think the strategy was today?" and people from the gallery saying, "Flogged by the wet lettuce again", I have been pretty disappointed——

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have warned the member for Southport under Standing Order 123A. I now ask him to leave the Chamber under Standing Order 123A.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will name the member if he does not leave the Chamber.

Whereupon the honourable member for Southport withdrew from the Chamber.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The intellectual content of the Opposition front bench just went up 10 per cent.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, you are quite rightly imposing the Standing Orders on this side of the House. A number of us have been warned. We do not mind a debate at any time, but could I ask you to apply the Standing Orders equally to the Premier in answering questions?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I find that remark impertinent, and I warn the Leader of the Opposition under Standing Order 124.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. In the absence of Mr Veivers, I ask the Premier to withdraw the insulting comment he made about——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Deputy Leader of the Coalition under Standing Order 124.

Mr W. K. GOSS: In the interests of peace and harmony, I withdraw the comment. The intellectual content of the Opposition front bench has not gone up 10 per cent. I am delighted to see the change in Opposition strategy, because my favourite part of the day, my favourite time of the week, is question time. I have sat here all year while the Leader of the Opposition has pretended not to see me. The Opposition has a new strategy. Great! Keep it up!

In relation to the question from the member for Toowoomba South—he asks about the general application of a policy that has been used frequently around Australia and in other countries and has been used on some occasions in recent years in this State, namely, the application of a productivity dividend to various departments. In fact, all departments have had it at some stage or another over the last couple of years. What is it? It is simply a mechanism—a fairly routine mechanism—to try to get greater productivity and greater efficiency in certain areas of departments. If you think there is any department in any Government——

Mr LINGARD: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, if the Premier is allowed to use the word "you", and we are not allowed to make any reply, I ask you for clarification. Is he allowed to use the word "you"? Clearly, all statements in the Parliament must be directed through you, Mr Speaker. Therefore, the word "you" cannot be used, especially if you are going to stop us replying.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I think the Premier knows that statements should be directed through the Chair.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Mr Speaker, if you think that there is any department in any Government in this country that does not have some fat or some capacity to produce greater efficiencies in some areas—some capacity to produce a productivity dividend—then you are wrong. But I know, Mr Speaker, that you know better. However, there are people in this place who do not know better.

It is a fairly standard lever—a fairly standard tool of the trade—that is applied by Treasuries around this country and around the world at various stages. From time to time, there is within any department, particularly a department that runs a budget in excess of $2 billion, a need to impose a discipline so that managers go through that $2 billion worth of expenditure. We have an obligation to the public. Every year in the Budget we are spending $10 billion worth of taxpayers' money. In departments such as Health the figure is in excess of $2 billion. We have an obligation, and managers have an obligation, to search through their individual budgets each and every year to make sure they are being spent efficiently and look for any areas of waste or saving. Why? If the member for Toowoomba South was genuine, and if he had any wit at all, he would understand—and should understand—that the reason one does that——

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego! I have warned him under Standing Order 123A. I now ask him to leave the Chamber.

Mr FITZGERALD: I rise to a point of order. The member for Warrego was dead silent. He had not uttered a word. He had complied with your every wish.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: As I said, you do that because you are looking for value for the taxpayer's dollar so that you can maximise the amount of money that goes to service delivery. While the member for Toowoomba South, in his pursuit of promotion, may want to defend and resist appropriate management and efficiency measures, this Government will continue to apply the discipline. It will continue to search out any capacity for efficiency. It will continue to search out any capacity for increased efficiency. Every dollar that is found as a result of that discipline will go to service delivery for the health of Queenslanders.

Cuts in Hospital Hotel Services

Mr HORAN: In directing a question to the Honourable the Premier, I refer to the $30m hotel services cuts being forced on Queensland hospitals by his Government, which will reduce positions and service in catering, domestic, trade and wardsmen services. These cuts include $2.4m at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, $1.5m at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and $317,000 at the Royal Children's Hospital. I ask: what action will the Premier take to stop these destructive cutbacks that will have serious effects on the ability of hospitals to maintain basic standards and basic services?

Mr W. K. GOSS: See last answer! To take the last answer——

Mr Horan: They're the backbone of hospitals—wardsmen, cleaners, domestics; all those positions that you're eliminating.

Mr W. K. GOSS: It is called "hotel services". See the last answer, you obviously did not listen.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Toowoomba South under Standing Order 123A. I am running this Chamber.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I made the general point in my last answer, so you should have a look at that—sorry, the member for Toowoomba South should have a look at that because he clearly did not listen. To take that general answer in relation to productivity and productivity dividends further, and explain what is happening in relation to hotel services——

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am coming to hotel services, you big sook; just try to contain yourself. Give your new strategy—sorry, the Opposition should give its new strategy a chance to work. Give it a couple of weeks at least, please.

What is happening in relation to hotel services is this: within the budget of the Queensland Health Department, which, as I said before has a record annual budget of close to $2.3 billion, we spend around $300m on support services such as cleaning, laundry and catering. Our advice is that that figure is higher than those interstate. You should look at the way they do it in New South Wales——

Mr Hayward: And Victoria.

Mr W. K. GOSS: And Victoria—go and have a look at what they do there. If you do some homework—I am sorry, the member for Toowoomba South claims to be interested in hotel services, but he sits there babbling away and not listening to the answer.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I now have the right to warn the member for Gregory under Standing Order 123A and I ask him to leave the Chamber.

Whereupon the honourable member for Gregory withdrew from the Chamber.

Mr W. K. GOSS: At this rate the intellectual content of the Opposition front bench is going reach a sky-high figure this afternoon. If the member for Toowoomba South would do some homework instead of relying on the current Opposition strategy of "a press release a day keeps the critics at bay", he would see that on an interstate comparison—he should go and look at what his mates in conservative Governments are doing in New South Wales and Victoria——

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Yap, yap, yap, yap, yap! A figure of $300m out of that budget is well above the figure that should be spent if you apply best practice standards. It is important that a Government have regard to best practice standards or some recognised measure in terms of the way in which it manages substantial funds. The savings target that the Government is investigating in this regard is around about $10m or, roughly, 3 per cent. If an organisation is spending $300m, and that is well above what it should be spending if it is operating on best practice and is operating on the sort of levels that one sees in New South Wales and Victoria, then it must come to the conclusion that there may well be scope—there should be scope—for savings and if there are savings to be had, they

should be had and they should being directed towards service delivery. That is what we are doing, and we are doing it because we care about trying to deliver more hospital services—more bed days, more procedures—and that is what we have been doing. We have improved the performance of the hospitals in this State in terms of bed days and procedures by a mile compared with the pen and quill——

Mr J. N. Goss interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: —operation that you used to run, or your predecessors used to run. An amount $300m for cleaning, laundering and catering is a lot of money. We have an obligation to the taxpayers of this State and the patients of the public hospitals—a public hospital system that we established and we are determined to maintain—to make sure that whatever money there is available is being spent efficiently and that whatever money can be saved is directed towards health services, which is the No. 1 priority.

Education Services, Mapoon

Mr BREDHAUER: In asking a question of the Minister for Education, I point out that in recent years there has been a gradual return to Mapoon by the Mapoon people. This growth has created a need for new or increased services in the area. I ask: could the Minister please advise the House what new services the Department of Education will provide to the people of Mapoon?

Mr COMBEN: I thank the honourable member for Cook for his ongoing interest and involvement in this issue. The member is quite right—there has been a rapid growth in population in Mapoon. The Mapoon area on Cape York was originally inhabited by Aboriginal people of three different tribes. In 1891, a church mission was established there for Aborigines from throughout Queensland. In 1960, this mission was closed by the then coalition Government under fairly controversial circumstances, and the numbers obviously declined.

Since the beginning of this year, the Mapoon people have gradually begun to return to Mapoon through their own means. The current population is 150 and it is still increasing. With this growth in the Mapoon community, the Marpuna Corporation has been providing some educational services as well as negotiating with the Education Department to establish on-site schooling. This has been vigorously supported by the member for Cook, particularly when I visited the area some months ago. That lobbying and negotiating has been successful and I am pleased to say that a provisional school will open at Old Mapoon for the commencement of 1995 school year. Initially, the school will be a joint operation between the Education Department, which will provide staff and resources, and the Marpuna Community Aboriginal Corporation, which will provide the physical facilities. The Mapoon community and the member for Cook are to be congratulated for the work they have undertaken and for their cooperation in providing a school for their children. This is yet another example of where we spend money on education—where it should be: with students, in communities.

Sale of Water, Gympie

Mr BREDHAUER: I ask the Deputy Premier, Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs: is he aware of a complaint alleging the short measure of water to drought-stricken rural consumers by a Gympie business? If so, could he advise of the nature of the complaint and what action he is taking to address the problem?

Mr BURNS: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is true that the Trade Measurement Branch has recently conducted investigations into a complaint alleging the delivery of short measure of water by a Gympie business.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BURNS: I do not know whether the member is making a smart remark, but to find that people are being short measured when they are buying water in the middle of the drought is a serious matter. The complaint was based on the measurement of water delivered to a rural consumer by the business in its road tanker. The business stated that the tanker held 1 500 gallons or 6 819 litres of water. A test of the tank found the maximum carrying capacity was 5 755 litres—1 266 gallons— which represents a shortfall of 15.6 per cent that people are paying for water in the middle of a drought. I do not think that is a joke by any means. Investigations are now proceeding with a view to prosecuting the business. If members know this industry they will know that there is a pretty slap-happy way of doing business. When checking a council-owned water meter, used by the business to fill its tank, we found it to be delivering short measure also. So during the longest drought in the history of this State, action will be taken to check water tanks and water delivery throughout the State where people are buying water.

Royal Brisbane Hospital

Mr LINGARD: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer him to his last answer in which he spoke about spending $300m on cleaning services, best practice and his thoughts on improved performances. I now ask: is he aware that the cutbacks to hospital budgets and to hospital support services has reduced cleaning in parts of the Royal Brisbane Hospital to only two days in three? With the risk of lowered cleanliness standards and infection control at Queensland's major hospital, is he prepared to stop these cutbacks to the hospital budget?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I must be honest, I do not know what the cleaning roster is for each individual hospital throughout the State.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: No, I am not aware of what the cleaning roster is for each individual hospital in this State.

I want to nail this furphy about some sort of hard-hearted approach in this regard. I have already explained to the member for Toowoomba South that what we have been trying to do is to improve the performance of the public hospital system. Why have we been doing that? Because we, above and beyond any other party in the history of this State, actually believe in the public hospital system. We care about it. We happen to believe that it is absolutely essential and fundamental to social justice for Queenslanders that we maintain and improve the public hospital system, and certainly improve the performance over what it was when we came to Government. It is because we care about the health of Queenslanders and, in particular, those Queenslanders whose circumstances are such that they cannot afford private hospital care, that we put more money into the public hospital system. It is because we care that, at the last election, we promised an increase in tax dedicated towards funding the public hospital system.

The figures are there in the budget to prove that we put in the extra money. The mantra from Opposition members is, "Where has the money gone? The money has been wasted. The money is gone." Once again, if they were honest or if they did their homework—and they seem to have an incapacity to do either—they would see where the money has gone. Obviously, health is the Opposition's priority area today, and because it wants to explore it, I will give them the details on where the money has gone.

The Leader of the Opposition led off this morning, so let me give him the figures for the South Coast district. Up to 30 June 1994, the number of admissions in that region went up by over 50 per cent—51.33 per cent. The projected increase in admissions by the end of this financial year for the South Coast district is 60 per cent—a 60 per cent improvement on the 1989-90 year, a 60 per cent increase on admissions in the area from which the Leader of the Opposition comes. That is the measure—60 per cent more Queenslanders in the South Coast area receiving a service than was the case when the Opposition was in Government. That is where the money has gone.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The Opposition wants the detail, and it is going to get the detail. The Deputy Leader of the Coalition asked questions, so let us see if she will be quiet while we hear how much better off——

Mr BORBIDGE: I move—

"That the Premier table the document."

Mr W. K. GOSS: After I have read it out.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am sure that the Premier will table the document after he has read it out.

Mr W. K. GOSS: In the Sunshine Coast area—Mrs Sheldon's electorate—there were 58 per cent more admissions. Fifty-eight per cent more people on the Sunshine Coast are getting public hospital services.

Mrs Sheldon: Tell us the increase in population.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Tell us about the increase in population? I thought that is what the member said. I thought to myself, "I have to go after this interjection. I have to pull in this one." I thank the honourable member. Let me tell the honourable member what the improvement in admissions will be in the member's area, the Sunshine Coast region, for the end of this financial year. It will be 81 per cent—way above the population increase.

Mrs Sheldon: Possibly the Premier could also tell us the number of people who could not get into the hospital. That might help.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am flabbergasted! Why do Opposition members protest? They want to know where the money has gone and I am going to tell them. In the Brisbane North district, 27 per cent. I am going from the base year, which is when the Opposition was in Government, to 30 June 1995, the end of this financial year. Brisbane North, 27 per cent—and do not anybody tell me that the population of Brisbane North has increased by more than 27 per cent—Brisbane South, a 53 per cent increase in admissions; Central, 9.11; Central West, 19.26 per cent; Darling Downs where you come

from—sorry, Darling Downs where the member for Toowoomba South comes from; I should not use that offensive word—22 per cent. That is what has happened. If the honourable member's party was still in power, on its performance, 22 per cent fewer people from Toowoomba would have received public hospital services. In the Mackay district, 32 per cent; the Northern District, 7 per cent; Peninsula, 37 per cent; South Coast, 60 per cent; South West, 2.89 per cent; Sunshine Coast, 81.48 per cent; West Moreton, 35 per cent; Wide Bay, 18.5 per cent. It is because this Government cares about people getting more services and better services in public hospitals that we spent that money and delivered that performance.

Before I sit down, because Opposition members claim to be genuinely concerned about where the money is going, I am going to give them one more category of performance. The other area in which the money is going is in investment in the quality of the service that hospitals can provide—the technology. Because we want to have more admissions and we want to have more procedures carried out, it is important to make an investment in the technology of hospitals so that we shorten the time that people have to spend in hospitals. Let me give the figures on average length of stay, which is another key performance measure where we have improved the performance: Brisbane North, a 20 per cent reduction in the average length of stay; Brisbane South, 27 per cent; Central, 19 per cent; Central West, 18 per cent; Darling Downs, 15 per cent; Mackay, 22.68 per cent, Northern, 6 per cent; Peninsula, 24 per cent—you are not listening; you will make me suspect that you are not genuine.

I have three more to go: Sunshine Coast, 22 per cent; West Moreton, 24 per cent; and Wide Bay, 15 per cent. We care, and we have put in the money to prove it. We put our money where our mouth is, and the results are there. I table with great pleasure, at the request of the Leader of the Opposition, conclusive proof of the improved performance of the public hospital system in this State under this Government compared with the base year of 1989-90 when Mr Borbidge was in Cabinet. He never did a thing to increase hospital spending or gave one dollar of increased funding for the public hospital system of this State.

Princess Alexandra Hospital

Mr LINGARD: I ask the Premier: if he does care about improved performance, is he aware that three of the 13 operating theatres at Princess Alexandra Hospital remain permanently closed and another is closed part-time? Is he prepared to take immediate action to open those theatres as waiting lists for south-side patients blow out?

Mr W. K. GOSS: From a comment by the Minister for Health, who is behind me, I understand that a number of wards are closed for three weeks because they cannot get the people to staff them.

Queensland Fire Brigades

Mr PEARCE: I direct a question to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs. In recent weeks, Queensland has suffered from a number of serious fire outbreaks which have caused losses to flora, fauna and property. The commitment of rural and urban firefighters is paramount in minimising those losses. I ask: would the Minister please provide the House with details of these fires and the work of fire fighters and what action he intends to take to ensure that the rural bush fire brigades are funded and properly equipped?

Mr BURNS: I thank the honourable member for his question. Jim Pearce has been very much interested in rural fires and has been very helpful to me on this issue. The fires of September and early October were really early for us. We expect our bushfire season to start in about November. As a result, a lot of the fire reduction that normally takes place at this time of the year had not been done.

In the space of two weeks, over 600 fires were attended by urban and rural firefighters, with 186 of these fires being regarded as large and potentially serious.

Mr Slack interjected.

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

Mr BURNS: Some 1 200 firefighters were in the field on the evening of Tuesday 27 September from 200 brigades across the State, fighting fires that had the potential to cause massive loss of property, be that structural or rural property. The full details of all the fires are not yet to hand, as it shall take some time before firefighters submit their reports. At this time, we can say that it appears that damage has been restricted to five homes, approximately 10 sheds, two vehicles, one boat, national parks country, 6 000 hectares of cane and approximately 1 400 hectares of forest product.

Importantly, the volunteer firefighters who worked out there must be commended and thanked for their support. For some time, we have been working on a rural residential fire levy. I raised the issue when I first became the Minister

about 12 months ago. We have been working with a lot of councils, and quite a number of them have now agreed to introduce levies. In fact, some have. This afternoon, I will be introducing part of the legislation to make it certain that that levy can be collected by rural councils and passed on to their rural fire brigade boards.

As a result of steps taken by Paul Braddy when he was the Minister there has been a three-year special funding arrangement with rural fire brigades, which has given them a lot of extra money. This year we carried out the bushfire audit after the big fires in New South Wales. An extra $1.7m was allocated in the Budget on top of the money that Paul Braddy had raised in the past. As a result, this year $5.3m will be spent on rural fire brigades, as against about $2.6m in the days of the previous Government.

Since we have called them together, they have started to get their acts together in relation to equipment. They have been given quite a number of pieces of equipment, including 14 000 sets of uniforms and gloves. Now we are looking at communication equipment, because the various rural fire brigade groups need to be able to communicate with one another.

It is marvellous to see just how many will respond to a fire. Our problem in the rural residential areas is quite different, because in bush areas rural fire brigade volunteers do not really need a lot of support because the council, the graziers and the farmers——

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

MATTER OF SPECIAL PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Coalition Policies

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I advise the House that I have received a proposal for a special public importance debate pursuant to the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 5 November 1992. The proposal submitted by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning is for a debate on the following matter—

> "The failure of the coalition to release their policies for public scrutiny."

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy) (3.44 p.m.): I am very concerned about the current state of the Opposition in this place. We just heard the Premier annihilate the coalition on health issues. He annihilated them; he showed them up for what they are.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to a very serious issue—the complete absence of any statement on Opposition health policy. The people of this State deserve better from the people who aspire to Government. At the moment, all the people of this State have to go by are the ramblings of the Opposition Health spokesman, whose greatest claim to fame is shotgunning beers with his son, and the health and patient care policy of the Liberals, which was put together by the member for Moggill and dates back as far as 1992. I am informed that the Liberals have now begun to distance themselves from that policy document, taking it as no longer current.

As a rural member of this House and a member of the Government's parliamentary health committee, I believe that I am qualified to judge that there is a great distance between the Opposition and health policy in general. What are we waiting for exactly? If the Opposition follows the example set by its Federal counterparts, we can expect to see a health policy which barely fills one A4 page. The policy vacuum plaguing the Opposition certainly does not instil any confidence in me that it will ever get around to releasing a health policy. We can only conclude that the Oppositions here and in Canberra want to be seen as the comedy act of Australian politics. But it is not so comical when we consider the high stakes involved in health care.

Under the Goss Government and the stewardship and sheer determination of the Minister for Health to reform our public health system, Queensland has gone forward. It has thrown off the reputation of being irrelevant on national health schemes and now leads the other States in providing the future direction for the delivery of health services in this country. Where has the Opposition been during this time of remarkable change to the State's health system? I can tell the House exactly where. Its members have been criticising for the sake of it, without even bothering to formulate a health policy to back their ignorant criticism. It is all right to criticise us, but they should tell us what options they have to offer. They have nothing.

Not only have they failed to make any valuable contribution to the health debate in Queensland, they have also failed to come to an agreement among themselves. As in most things, the coalition parties are divided on these matters. I make this observation based on evidence dating back to 1992, which clearly shows that the central principles in the health policy of the Liberals are frequently disputed by the Health spokesman.

There does not appear to be any evidence to suggest that the Opposition will come to agreement on a whole host of important health policies, or any other policy for that matter. Earlier this year, the Opposition Health spokesman said in a lead-up to the National Party's State "will we

flog 'em" conference that the Goss Government was wasting money on peripheral things such as health promotion and community health schemes. According to the member for Toowoomba South, the Opposition will reduce spending on these important activities. His Liberal colleagues do not agree with this policy. The policy of the Liberals supports health promotion and community health programs in some detail. However, the problem is that they simply cannot have a shoe in each court on these issues; it is either one or the other.

The division on policy has infiltrated members opposite to the point where contradiction pervades the Opposition's entire approach to issues of health policy. For example, the health policy of the Liberals also supports contracting with the private sector to service public patients with the aim of reducing waiting times in the public hospital system. It comes as no surprise at all to see the member for Toowoomba South repeatedly criticise any such arrangements. He has attacked the Minister's efforts to utilise $11m of Commonwealth moneys allocated to Queensland for this specific purpose. But before he got around to attacking this initiative, he supported the proposal. He forgot for a minute that his role is to oppose anything—even if it is right.

It was not so long ago that the Opposition Health spokesman was promising to dismantle regionalisation and replace it with a greater number of smaller health management areas. Such a proposal would not dismantle regionalisation but simply increase the number of regions, which would hardly scale down health management. Not only is the suggestion inept; it is also the best recipe for bureaucracy that I have ever come across. It is yet another case of the left foot not knowing what the right foot is doing, given that the proposed policy of the Liberals, which was still current at the time, actually supports the following form of regionalisation—

> "Decentralise powers currently exercised by the Health Department thereby ensuring that local health services are granted greater autonomy with budgets and services based on needs."

The disturbing reality of this is the ad hoc nature of the Opposition's response to health issues.

In the absence of a coalition health policy, we can conclude only that the Opposition is content to continue to make a mockery of its role in this place. The Liberals and the Nationals are one big contradiction. We have to forgive the public for wondering why its members would even bother to maintain the facade of togetherness when they are clearly at odds with each other on the things that really matter.

What a great marriage we have here! Get a load of members opposite sitting together. They appear in public together starry-eyed, looking at one another, smiling and feeling happy with themselves, but when they go home, what do they do? They go off to separate bedrooms, lie back on the bed and start to dream about the things that they could do if they only had the ability. This is truly a sad indictment of the coalition, and it illustrates my point that it is not only a policy-free coalition but also a divided policy-free coalition. The coalition will never be taken seriously by Queenslanders because they are too smart to be fooled by its ad hoc, inept approach to health and everything else.

It is time for the coalition to come clean, face up to the people of Queensland and let them judge its health policy for themselves. Members opposite have sat patiently; they have listened. What I would like to know is: where is their health policy? Is it in the desk? Is it upstairs? Or is it the case that members opposite do not want to give the people of Queensland the opportunity to have a look at it? Members opposite are probably having trouble with working out the costings of whatever they are thinking about introducing.

I would like to see the coalition do something to demonstrate to the people of Queensland that it is an alternative to the Government. That is the role of an Opposition—to give the people an alternative to the Government of the day. What we have in Queensland is just a rabble with no policy, no direction and definitely no alternatives. We have the Health spokesman wandering around all over Queensland attacking and criticising the Government and generally whingeing and whining. We have the member for Keppel appearing on TV and on radio whingeing about various services. However, I have never heard one member opposite say, "If we were in Government, this is what we would do."

Mr Ardill: Have a look at their record.

Mr PEARCE: Since they have been in Opposition, members opposite have gone nowhere. Former Governments left this State with a hospital system that was in a disgraceful condition. A lot of taxpayers' money has had to be injected into the hospital system in an attempt to rebuild services to the level that the people of Queensland expect.

I am very fortunate that in central Queensland the Central Regional Health Authority is a go-ahead body. It is committed to implementing new initiatives. Some people seek to question the level of funding that this Government has committed to the health system

in this State. The commitment of that funding is evident. It is outlined in the Budget papers. It is there for everybody to see, but still some people ask, "Where have the funds gone?" I cannot really speak about what happens in the metropolitan region, but one does not have to travel too far into country areas to witness the new initiatives that have been implemented in the field of primary health care. We must address health problems before people reach the stage at which they have to go into hospital.

The initiatives that have been implemented in my area are certainly benefiting many people. There are now more people going through the hospital system, and more people now believe in the service.

Time expired.

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (3.54 p.m.): In submitting this topic for debate, the Government has proven once and for all that it has lost its "Rudd"-er. If ever we needed evidence that this Government has no agenda, no plan, no interest in the real issues facing Queensland, then we have it today. At a time when Queenslanders are dying because of long public hospital waiting lists, at a time when Queensland's premier public hospital is closing wards, at a time when medical professionals are warning that more than 2 500 sick Queensland kids will have to be turned away due to budget cuts, what do we have? When Queensland has become the leading State for bank robberies and break-ins and theft, when Queenslanders are no longer safe in their homes, when political correctness is running rampant in education, when the Government's own power base—the Australian Workers Union—is accusing the Family Services Department of incompetence, when the Government is bulldozing peoples' homes and livelihoods to make way for David Hamill's latest road, when people cannot even get a title to their own home, when Parliament resumes for its thirty-first sitting day of 1994 and immediately following a six-week recess, what do we get from this "Rudd"-erless Government: a motion for a debate criticising the coalition for not releasing its policies for public scrutiny! That proposal came from the Labor Party, which has not released one—not one—policy commitment for the 1995 State election. All I can say is that the Government must be desperate. It must be scraping the absolute bottom of the barrel.

Let us consider the speaker's list for this debate. The Government speaking list is a veritable "who's not who" of caucus. It is the charge of the light brigade! Where is the Premier? Where is the Treasurer? Where is the Deputy Premier? Where are they? They are not participating in this debate, because they do not have the guts and they have wimped out again.

The priorities of the coalition are simple. We will rebuild Queensland. We are committed to taking Government services back to basics to ensure that Government does what it has to do and does it well. We are committed to ensuring that Queenslanders are safe in their homes and at their place of work. We are committed to ensuring that sick Queenslanders have access to a public hospital bed when they need one and not to have a Premier who skulks and ducks his responsibility on public health, as we saw today. We are committed to ensuring that sick Queensland kids are cared for. We are committed to providing Queensland children with a decent education free of political bias and indoctrination. We are committed to rebuilding rural and regional Queensland. We are committed to restoring Queensland's position as Australia's leading State. We are committed to building a Queensland where all Queenslanders are treated equally, both before the law and in the allocation of Government services. That is our vision for Queensland. That is the commitment of the coalition parties working together to defeat Labor, and that is what has Labor scared—the prospect, for the first time in a generation——

Mr Robertson: Ha, ha!

Mr BORBIDGE: The member for Sunnybank will not be here for much longer. He is dead.

That is what has Labor scared—the prospect, for the first time in a generation, of the coalition parties working together bringing together the collective strengths of the two parties to produce a joint policy platform.

Mr Foley: Where are your policies?

Mr BORBIDGE: What hypocrisy from the "Minister for Humbug"—the big blob of humbug opposite—who asked, "Where are your policies for 1995?" I ask: where are the Labor Party's policies for the 1995 election campaign? The coalition will have a policy platform which will be relevant to the people of Queensland and which will deal comprehensively with the issues facing this State. The detailed policies will be released according to our agenda—the coalition agenda—not that of the Minister and not that of the Australian Labor Party, which has not released one policy for the 1995 election campaign.

Our policies will be provided early enough for the media, the press gallery, the public and the Labor Party to scrutinise them, to ponder over them, to endorse them or to criticise them. Just as in our recently released drought policy, all

our policies will be prepared with maximum input from community groups, peak organisations and grassroots party members. There is a big difference there. That is the way we do business on the conservative side of the Parliament. Our policy formulation is out in the open and it is debated and discussed at conferences and central council meetings held four times a year—four times, each year, every year! Compare that with the motley crew opposite, the Labor Party, which is game to hold conferences only once every three years and where the decisions are arrived at following meetings of faceless factional leaders in smoke-filled backrooms or according to what Billy Ludwig and the heavies at the AWU want.

There are a number of commitments that I am prepared to give. Firstly, unlike Labor, our Government will not sit back and let wanton crime go unpunished. Our Government will be prepared to give the judiciary the tools it needs to get crime back under control. Under our Government, the rights of victims of crime will also be protected. For too long, our criminal justice system, as refined and reformed by this Government, has actively discriminated against those it is supposed to protect. A coalition Government is determined to tip the scales of justice back in favour of the victim. We will also tackle juvenile crime by toughening up the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act so that police and the courts can take strong and positive action against repeat juvenile offenders.

The last five years has seen our once proud public health system destroyed. Over many years, the coalition parties worked to build a public hospital system the envy of the nation, and back in 1989 EPAC reported to Bob Hawke, ex-Prime Minister and well-known author, that the Queensland public hospital system was equal to the best or better than that being provided anywhere else in Australia despite the fact that we spent, per capita, less than the national average. A coalition Government is committed to restoring confidence and pride in Queensland's health system. Our immediate commitment will be to getting the public hospital system working again—cutting waiting lists and ensuring that scarce health resources are directed away from middle-level management to primary patient care.

We have already committed ourselves to matching the current Government's alleged $150m Capital Works Program. But within that spending program our priorities will change. Our first and overwhelming priority will be to restore services to rural and regional areas, but further than that, we are committed to embracing rural and regional Queenslanders as equal partners in the development of our State. We are committed to restoring local input into the decision-making process. We will have in Cabinet members who live in and who represent rural areas of the State. Cabinet decisions that are detrimental to rural areas will be blocked in Cabinet. We will establish the means for better representation for rural Queenslanders. We will not force local authorities to amalgamate. We will abolish Labor's performance dividend on local authority borrowings. We are committed to restoring many of the 89 court houses taken away from rural communities under Labor in the past five years. We will immediately make provision for two fully-staffed electorate offices for those MPs who represent the largest electorates in the State.

The coalition has plans to rebuild Queensland after two terms of Labor mismanagement. Do not be fooled; this Labor Government is a Goss Government. Its failures are Goss failures. As Queensland Labor hides behind its leader, its leader must accept responsibility—personal responsibility— for its failures, instead of skulking out of the Chamber to read his Phantom comics.

This Government's failures in health, its failures in law and order, in education and in public administration are Wayne Goss' failures. We have a Government that has been built on smart PR rather than substance. It is a house of cards that Queenslanders are waking up to. We have a Premier who is not so much modelled on his hero, the Phantom, but on Mandrake, the master of illusion.

Queenslanders are seeing through the illusion. I once again express my disappointment that on a debate of any substantive issue, let alone a waste of time such as we have this afternoon, the Premier is not prepared to go one-to-one in this place or anywhere else. He skulks off and leaves it to first and second-term backbenchers to do the dirty work for him.

Time expired.

Mrs WOODGATE (Kurwongbah) (4.04 p.m.): I am very pleased to take part in this debate, but before doing so I would just like to answer a question that the Leader of the Opposition put to this House. He wondered why the veritable list of who's who from the Labor caucus had been asked to speak. Let me just say to the Leader of the Opposition that this Government does not need the heavyweights to knock over the lightweights on his side of the House.

When the Whip spoke to me before lunch and said that I was listed to speak, I asked, "What is the topic?" He said, "The coalition's policies." I asked, "Am I allowed to stand up for ten minutes and say nothing?" because that says it all about the coalition's policies.

But, anyway, getting serious—one area of immense interest to me, as most people know—certainly on this side of the House—is the issue of law and order and the safety of our communities. We would all agree on that. Under the Nationals, law enforcement in this State was allowed to fall into disrepute. Since coming into office, the Goss Government has had to spend much energy and resources fixing up the mess we inherited. So it is with a great deal of interest that I personally have awaited some detail on how the coalition would handle the important issue of law and order.

We know how they used to handle it. We know that the Queensland Police Service was the most underfunded, underresourced and underpaid in the whole nation and we know that their response to concerns about law and order was to tie up the police resources in arresting students and protesters while the real criminals roamed scot-free. So it would be interesting to see if the disgraced Opposition parties had learnt anything from the mistakes of the past.

Let us look at their rhetoric. What do we find? We find a total vacuum—a vacuum that the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition spokesman on police matters, Mr Cooper, have been happy to let Mr Lester fill, and fill it Mr Lester has been happy to do. He has filled that vacuum by raising a cynical debate about flogging and corporal punishment—a debate that has seen so many backflips from the Leader of the Opposition that he makes Alexander Downer look like a rock of consistency—the rock of ages. Whilst against flogging, the Leader of the Opposition admits that he could change his mind—he is on the public record as saying that—but we are not sure under what circumstances he would do so.

The member for Keppel has said—

"Behind the scenes he"—

that is, Borbidge—

> "is telling me to get on with it and keep the issue alive. In time he won't have any option either but to go along with it. I am sure in his heart of hearts he does."

The National Party's lack of a law and order policy has been exposed and it is further proof that the Nationals will do and say anything in a pathetic attempt to gain cheap publicity. While the members for Crows Nest and Keppel have been prepared to act as the fall guys by supporting the introduction of flogging, the people of Queensland are still waiting for a sensible and coherent law and order policy from the people opposite. This whole debate about flogging and caning, promoted by the member for Crows Nest and the member for Keppel for months now, has been exposed for what it always was—just a cynical, hypocritical attempt to hide their lack of policies and mistakes of the past.

Mr Bredhauer: A smokescreen.

Mrs WOODGATE: As the member for Cook says, it is a smokescreen. Instead of wasting all this time by raising issues they knew were dead in the water, they could have been developing constructive policies for the benefit of our wonderful State.

When is the Leader of the Opposition going to show some leadership and when is he going to accept some responsibility? It is not good enough for the Leader of the Opposition to play "Send in the Clowns" with Russell Cooper and Vince Lester. Crime is a serious issue and, unlike the Nationals, the Goss Government treats it as such. The member for Crows Nest's ridiculous calling for the introduction of a Singapore system of caning for juvenile and adult offenders has been nothing more than a time-wasting exercise. They should understand that the public are sick of point scoring by politicians of all colours. The sad fact is that the Opposition is not prepared to do the work and address the issues of real concern to Queenslanders. In common with their policies when they were in Government, the Opposition's total law and order policy revolved, as I said, around prohibiting street marchers and arresting demonstrators, while allowing corruption to flourish—and flourish it did in this State. They still think that a lack of action can be covered up by cynical posturing, grandstanding and one-liners. It is quite sad to think that the Nationals have learnt nothing from the past.

Improving the police resources and efficiency and upgrading the Police Service's involvement in community anti-crime measures are the best crime deterrents we can come up with. Queensland had the smallest per capita Police Service under the Nationals and it was the worst funded. In contrast, this Government, the Goss Labor Government, has spent over $200m more on police this year than the Nationals did in their last year in office, and Labor has 1 500 more police on the streets. There are certainly more police in my electorate.

The statistics are improving, as evidenced by a phone call I made to the Petrie Police Station last week, because I had received a complaint that rape was out of control in the electorate of Kurwongbah. I thought, "I have not heard of this; they are not knocking on my door." I made some inquiries, then the police rang me and they said, "Well, we do not know where you are getting your information from, but there has not been one rape case in Kurwongbah this year."

The resources provided by this Government have seen the number of sworn police boosted at more than one and a half times the rate of population growth. On top of this, by implementing a policy of increasing the number of civilians in the Police Department, police are now able to get out in the community and out on the beat where they are needed, and I am happy to see that that has happened. But as we all know, it is not enough just to have more police officers. An effective, efficient Police Service needs to be properly resourced. Our Government increased the budget by 70 per cent, by $295m in 1989 to $503m. That is a documented fact.

Under the last Government, before 1989, Queensland police officers were the poorest paid in Australia—so were the teachers, but we are on the subject of law and order. Our police put their lives on the line for our community. They deserve fair pay, and under this Government they have got it. The Goss Government increased pay rates significantly in its first three years of office, with increases of up to 28 per cent for some ranks, making Queensland police the highest paid in the country, along with our teachers.

Furthermore, this Government is committed to building a new 400-bed prison at Woodford at a cost of over $50m—not to mention the 318 extra cells that are currently under construction at existing correctional centres. We do need more cells. We have heard a few jokes about that in the past, because crime is out of control. We need more cells because, under our Government's tough response to crime, more criminals who are guilty of serious crimes are going to gaol for longer periods. Let us talk positively and compare our policies, which are already in place—Mr Borbidge said that we have no policies, but our policies were announced in June 1988; that was when the first policy was announced by the then Labor Opposition. Those policies are in place, and they are working; it is steady as she goes. There may be a few changes along the way. Who is to say? But those policies are going well. We do not need to find a policy—as do members opposite, who are lost.

The initiatives have already been put in place by the Goss Government, and new initiatives are under way, such as the Property Crime Squad, shopfronts and the new Criminal Code, which sat there for 32 years and did nothing. It is the Opposition's Criminal Code that we are changing, not ours. That will ensure that the fight against crime is backed up with appropriate resources.

Crime is a community issue. Instead of playing politics, positive support for the police would help them in their difficult job. Queenslanders should expect such support from the Opposition—the Nationals and the Liberals—who, for 32 successive years, allowed corruption to flourish.

One very successful initiative of the Goss Government—our policy—has been the Police Shopfront Program. This is very dear to my heart. I have been pushing for it for a long time. Even before it started, I used to talk about shopfronts, because I had seen them working overseas. The Police Shopfront Program is probably one of the most important programs introduced by this Government to address shopping precinct security. As a member who has an office in one of the large Westfield Shoppingtowns, I know just how effective those shopfronts are. The Queensland Government believes that the most effective way to reduce crime is to continue building on our crime prevention initiatives.

A shopfront was put on trial at Strathpine. People were caught stealing cars. Crime in that area dropped. The shopkeepers in the centre loved it. We are keeping our fingers crossed that a shop becomes vacant soon for a permanent police shopfront. We are trying hard, but space is at a premium in Strathpine. Every day, Westfield gets a call from me; I am driving them crazy. I am hopeful that, before the next election, a shopfront will be in place at Strathpine.

Other initiatives by the Goss Government include legislative reforms; more operational police back on the street; community policing, which has proved very successful and is very popular with the people in video land; prevention programs; and very tough law enforcement policies. The Government has put its money where its mouth is. I am proud to say that our Police budget is up by 70 per cent, and the number of operational police is up by 1 500.

I am the first to admit that all the money and all the police in the world will not prevent crime if local communities are not asked or are not prepared to become involved in the process. Smart, modern, effective policing is all about community involvement. I am one of the first people to get out there in the front line to try to get the community involved. That is where projects such as the shopfronts come in.

The budget for the Police Beat Shopfront Program has been increased from $1.4m to $3.7m. That has allowed for the employment of extra operational and administrative staff at each permanent shopfront. The Police Service now has a network of existing permanent and modular shopfronts across metropolitan and regional Queensland. Together they constitute part of a wider campaign to take more police away from their desks and offices and put them back on the

beat and in places where Queenslanders work and shop, such as Westfield.

Time expired.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (4.15 p.m.): After the attempt by the two Government speakers in this debate, I must admit that I feel as though we have been mauled by a dead sheep and assaulted with a limp lettuce. If that is as good as they can do, I wait with breathless anticipation to hear the third speaker from the Government.

The pathetic policy status of the Queensland Labor Government has been highlighted by this topic put forward for debate by the Government today. I say "pathetic" because, at a time when myriad problems assail the people of Queensland, and when this State Government is showing its absolute lack of responsibility and accountability to the people of this State, this Labor Government has put forward a title for debate that is nothing but pure political point scoring, or an attempt thereat—and pathetic point scoring at that! It just goes to show the paucity and poverty of talent on Government front bench that, with the departure of Kevin Rudd as the Premier's right-hand and Right Wing adviser, this is the sort of pitiful rubbish that the Government comes up with for debate in this House.

Let me put this in some context. The Queensland hospital system has deteriorated to such an extent that there is now an air of absolute despair over the entire Queensland health service and those who work in it. Health professionals are leaving Queensland Health in a flood; nurses are still campaigning for enough staff to cater for patients; and the people of Queensland are dying on waiting lists. The Royal Brisbane Hospital is running $1m a month over budget because it cannot fit into Minister Hayward's and—we heard today—the Premier's "Scrooge McDuck" plan, which calls for more middle management, fewer people at the coalface and less care for patients.

Mr Santoro: The Sergeant Schultz of Queensland.

Mrs SHELDON: He certainly is the Sergeant Schultz of Queensland policy. Wards and operating theatres face closure, and every public hospital in the State is under immense pressure. The destruction of the public health system is something that has touched every Queenslander; yet this Government, instead of using an opportunity like today's debate to inform Queenslanders of what it will do to fix the problem, has gone for the cheap trick. It makes me sick, particularly when I look at the Queensland branch of the ALP's policy document, which was released with much fanfare—and I do believe that Mrs Woodgate mentioned this—before the 1989 State election. I shall refer the House to a bit of it. Page 35 of that document stated—

> "Labor will promote total health care. Labor is committed to a cost effective, efficient and equitable public health care system, including maintenance of the free public hospital system."

Oh, how sad! This was the promise of this Labor Government when it was in Opposition. This was its policy. What a lie! Look at what it has done to the health system and read that policy; then one understands the true policy failure of this so-called Goss Government. Nurses, doctors and other health professional care workers struggling with underfunding and disdain from Ken Hayward and the Premier would cry at Labor's pre-election policy line, which stated—

> "Labor will ensure staff levels in all health services reflect work force planning levels and demand forecasting."

That is quite unbelievable, is it not? This is the policy statement of the Labor Party before it won Government in 1989. So we can see that, when it came to health, Labor has made an appalling mess of its own policy directives and sold out everyone in the health industry who voted for it in the hope of something better. Instead, we have a system in crisis, a Government that cannot deal with it and a Minister who is hopeless.

Let me randomly look through and pick another policy subject of the Labor Party before the 1989 election: housing. The policy before the ALP won Government in this State in 1989 stated—

> "To maximise employment opportunities in the housing sectors."

To achieve this end, the State Government, under that so-called champion of the battler, Tom Burns, immediately whacked a whole new range of levies on every subcontractor and builder, failed to protect these same subcontractors from non-payment, even on Government projects, and hit them with everything from workers' compensation to superannuation levies that are too high and cost jobs. So, once again, this Government failed to live up to its policy promise. And that is not even to begin on the absolute disaster it made of the HOME Scheme—do members remember HOME—which has cost thousands of Queenslanders dearly and led to incredible anguish and anger among those who were promised affordable housing and instead were sold a lemon which, in many cases, cost them everything. This State Labor Government is not going to compensate those people. In New South Wales, the Government is

compensating them. Here, the Government does not want to know about it, and it is not compensating the people who are locked into the system.

So far, not so good. Labor has failed to live up to its pre-election promises in Health and Housing. Let me go on. What about economic policy? The pre-election ALP policy document grandly stated that a Labor Government would work towards—

> ". . . development of a strong, efficient and diverse economy capable of achieving full employment and high and consistently improving living standards with the elimination of poverty treated as an urgent priority."

Five years on, and unemployment is still unacceptably high, increasing by 0.2 per cent this month and heading back to double figures, and the State's economy now relies almost solely on tourism, primary production and housing. So much for diversification! It would be laughable if it was not so sad.

Under the title of "State Taxation", the policy stated that Labor would—

> ". . . aim to reduce the Government's reliance on payroll tax as a major source of income and recognises the adverse employment effects of this tax."

I ask those nonentities on the Government back bench: how did Labor live up to this election policy promise? Payroll tax, which brought in $726.6m in 1989-90, has now risen to $851.6m in actual revenue in 1993-94, an increase of more than $125m, or 17 per cent. So much for that promise! Instead of removing the tax on jobs and lessening its impact, as Labor promised, this Government has increased it every single year, and it is still going up well above the increase in population.

Let us look at stamp duty. In 1989-90, the Government received $769m from stamp duty. The actual revenue for 1993-94 was $925m—a massive increase of $157.8m, or 20.5 per cent. I remind the boys and girls opposite that we are talking about increased taxes. They will remember that the Treasurer says, "No increased taxes." What a lie!

Overall, this Labor Government has increased taxes, fees and fines from $2,292m in 1989-90 to $3,583m in 1993-94. That is a huge jump in taxes, fees and fines of $1,290.8m, that is, $1.3 billion—a 56.3 per cent increase. That is right, an increase of 56 per cent in just five years in the amount of taxes, fees and fines that this Labor Government has sucked out of the people and businesses of Queensland. That is yet another policy promise broken by this Labor Government. But it does not even end there.

Let us look at law and order. I am so pleased that the honourable member came back into the Chamber. Let us look at the law and order policies released by the ALP before the State election in 1989—just in case the members opposite are forgetting where these quotes are coming from. In the election policy it is stated that a Labor Government would—

> "redeploy police resources so that priority is given to solving the most serious crime, with particular emphasis upon violent crime . . ."

That is another abject failure! This Minister can ask anyone in the community and he will be told that he has failed to protect the people or their property, that he has closed community police stations and that police on the beat are grossly understaffed.

Violent crime is on the rise in Queensland, and people are afraid to walk the streets in many areas—and Mrs Woodgate spoke about the increase in the incidence of rape in her area—because of roaming gangs of unsupervised teenagers who have either walked out of one of this Government's correctional facilities such as John Oxley, or have not been arrested because police cannot afford the time and effort to do so when they know that, under this Government's laws, those kids will be back on the streets again within hours.

Of course, the policies that I have mentioned so far are just some of the major policies in regard to which Labor has let down the people of Queensland while in Government. A plethora of broken promises, from scrapping tolls on the Sunshine Motorway and not building the southern bypass road in Brisbane to improving Legal Aid and introducing some accountability, litter the sorry record of the so-called Goss Government.

In November 1989, the then Opposition Leader, Wayne Goss, promised the people of Queensland change. What he did not reveal was that it would be change for the worse. In his election policy speech, Wayne Goss promised full accountability. What a joke! He promised no new taxes. He promised that increases in all existing taxes would be kept below inflation. Wayne Goss has broken all of those promises; in fact, he lied. In that speech, Wayne Goss also bragged that he would establish the HOME scheme. He stated—

> "This can be achieved at no cost to Queensland taxpayers as has been the case in other states."

The Queensland Treasury Corporation's annual report for 1993-94 revealed that the HOME

scheme was in debt for more than $800m. That is the cost that the Queensland taxpayer is bearing for the rash promise of Wayne Goss.

In that speech, Wayne Goss also said—

> "We will govern for all Queenslanders, no matter where they live or work."

He should ask rural people about that.

Time expired.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave) (4.25 p.m.): One of the best kept secrets during the four long, hard years of drought has been whether the National Party has any actual policy for dealing with it. It is a bad sign for people in rural Queensland that the once Country Party does not know enough and does not care enough to come up with some positive plan of action. Fortunately, the Goss Government does have plans, and it continues to honour its commitment that as long as the drought goes on, drought assistance will continue.

Fortunately, the Goss Government's drought policy and fair administration has given it credibility with the Commonwealth. Thanks to representation by the Goss Government, notably through the Minister for Primary Industries, Ed Casey, dealing directly with his Federal counterpart, Bob Collins, the Federal Labor Government has come in with its $140m drought assistance package.

Rural industry leaders have expressed satisfaction with that fair and necessary initiative. In the meantime, almost nothing has come from the Opposition, except some catcalling from the sidelines—negative criticism that did no good for anyone. Finally, when the great day came for the policy to be announced, we had already come to the end of a cold, dry winter—the fourth such winter. It was noticed in the regional press that the Leader of the National Party had departed from downtown Surfers Paradise for a so-called drought tour. It was pointed out that he managed to complete that tour without visiting a drought-declared property. Perhaps the honourable member and his party did not know about the drought declaration system or did not really care. They were more interested in the politics than they were in the plight of the people whom it affected.

In the end, the wraps came off, and the great policy could be revealed. It was then that we found out why members of the National Party had been so shy about revealing their policy, why they had refused to come out with it during four long, hard years of drought. The answer is that it was our policy. The National Party came up with the strongest, ringing endorsement of Labor's drought policy.

Let us briefly go through the items on offer. First of all, members of the National Party ask for generous taxation incentives for farm storage and water facilities. Already foreshadowed in the Prime Minister's drought package, these things are now being delivered. Other taxation concessions are being raised with the Commonwealth by Mr Casey at ARMCANZ—the Agricultural and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand.

They also ask for local representation on local drought committees, or LDCs. For their information, LDCs have been functioning well on the basis of local membership, from both the Department of Primary Industries and producers, since 1982. The Goss Government has never had occasion to knock back recommendations from any of the LDCs. They ask for a new division of the DPI to specifically handle drought. The organisation of the DPI itself is already well geared for its tasks. It received high praise around the country for undertakings such as its risk management and drought program.

Additionally, they ask for other wide-ranging measures. The assistance measures are already set up in other areas, including the deferral of rental payments by leaseholders on Crown land; interest support for producers and aid for small enterprises; interest-free loans for local authorities under financial pressure because of the drought; moratoriums on State Government fees and charges; and exemption from stamp duty for loans refinanced due to drought. These are already available and they are being delivered by this Government.

The Goss Government is interested to see that the National Party is endorsing these initiatives, but they are policies developed by us—not by them. In fact, the only proposal from the Opposition of any significance that is not already being implemented by the Government is the discredited proposal for freight subsidies on movement of stock to agistment. That is where the rorts were occurring. The National Party's own Public Accounts Committee reported to the Parliament in 1989 on evidence of rorting of the system, and the then National Party Government scrapped the subsidy on movement to agistment. Today's Opposition spokesman on Primary Industries, the member for Barambah, was on that committee and signed the report.

Let us look at some of the figures from that report. Over a seven-year period in the 1980s, $26.6m was paid out in subsidies on forward movement to agistment. Only $8.5m was paid out in subsidies for return of stock from agistment after drought conditions had eased. All of those cattle did not die on agistment. Their

owners did not pass up the option of a subsidy on return from agistment. Most of them went straight to the butchers. That was the rort, and that is the rort that the National Party would revive by again tacking on this subsidy.

As things stand, there is already good subsidy support under this Government. A 100 per cent subsidy is paid on return transport of stock from agistment to give properties a positive chance of recovery. Subsidies are paid also on transport of fodder and water for stock on drought-declared properties.

The present State and Federal Governments have a fair policy focused on delivering practical help at all levels. Today, the Prime Minister is meeting leading bankers to discuss cooperation and proposals for bank policy, both for recovery, or, if the need arises, to negotiate a further extension of drought declaration in 1995.

This week, Mr Casey announced drought declarations on another six Queensland shires—Balonne, Eidsvold, Monto, Mundubbera, Tara and Wambo. While producers in those shires would obviously prefer to be out of drought, the declarations have provided access to the full range of drought assistance being provided by this Government.

Last month, the Premier and Mr Casey were at Gatton to launch Operation Lockyer Revival, which involves State spending of about $200,000 to assist with the clearing of silted up streams and weirs to improve the replenishment of the aquifer when it rains. The scheme is based on proposals from farmers and local authorities in the region. Again, that highlights the point that this Government is listening to those local people, and there is no need for the National Party to have policies which pretend that they are something that is not happening. That is occurring already.

These are examples of the Goss Government actually taking action while the Opposition comes up with virtually nothing, preferring to sit on its hands and whinge. The Goss Government is consulting actively with producer organisations every step of the way. Since the start of the drought in mid-1991, it has committed well over $100m in drought support. That includes spending so far on State Government support under the Rural Adjustment Scheme, principally in the form of loans, interest subsidies and freight subsidies of $57.24m. That has been done over the four-year period, while the Opposition came up with nothing in the way of positive policy— nothing but silence, or here and there, some negative knocking and carping.

Wild horses find it hard even to get the Opposition Leader onto a drought-declared property. His party got him to wear a big hat. All members and camera crews of Queensland are waiting to see if he is going to be phoney enough to get himself into elastic-sided boots. During four long hard years of drought, both the man and his party, the National Party, have turned their backs on the country, only just recently accepting that the Government's policy is for the best.

As for the Liberal Party, it would not know about country Queensland. It could not care less and, as a consequence, it has remained irrelevant in the bush.

I have a final word to say on that other Opposition policy that was also recently brought out from under the covers, the so-called national policy which went back to basing everything on fodder subsidies— another great area for rorts. That so-called policy was greeted by producer organisations such as the National Farmers Federation with the distrust it deserved. It could not be taken seriously.

Drought is a serious problem for the entire community. The Goss Government, with the Federal Labor Government, is taking effective and responsible action to assist producers and rural communities during these hard times. The Opposition has done no service to Queensland by failing to come up with any positive proposals on the drought. Its belatedly produced non-policy includes some of the discredited measures of the past. The best that can be said for the policy is that most of it tries to ape what the Government is doing. Because the Opposition, in the absence of policies of its own, has decided to adopt the policies of this Government, we have at least an element of bipartisanship in this House to take us through the crisis affecting Queensland.

It has been very interesting to listen to the previous two speakers from the Opposition as this debate has unfolded. We have not at any stage seen from them anything at all that could in any way resemble a policy that could be carried to the people of Queensland at the next election. At least this Government throughout its period in Opposition leading up to its taking office in 1989 was able to give to the people of Queensland detailed policies submitted for open scrutiny, which allowed people to realise that there was an alternative in this State, an alternative to the corruption and the inefficiency of the National Party.

Also, we have heard the accusation this afternoon that the Government does not have any current policies. A Government that day in and day out delivers to the people of

Queensland, explains itself day in and day out, has Ministers stand in this House explaining to members opposite what it is doing and why it is doing it—that is its policy. It is called being in Government—a situation that members opposite are not likely to enjoy for a long time to come.

Mr LINGARD (Beaudesert—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.35 p.m.): This debate is all about diverting attention from this Government's atrocious record in public administration. This Government has failed to deliver services to the public. This Government continues to talk about how much money it is spending; but, like all socialist Governments, that money is failing to get through to the public. This Goss ALP Government has suddenly reached the point, as all socialist Governments do, at which the people are saying,"Where are all the benefits you promised us?" Clearly, they cannot see them. The people are suddenly realising that any Government that says that it is big enough to give them everything they want is also big enough to take from them everything they have.

The Government has reached the point which in the 1920s made George Orwell reject socialism after initially believing that it was the answer to everyone's dreams. To outline his thoughts, George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm*. He placed all animals on the farm on an equal footing. Everyone was to be given the same opportunities, the same power, the same support. However, the pigs became the bureaucracy and the bureaucracy became powerful. It became rich and adopted the attitude that whilst they were all equal, some were more equal than others. So Boxer the horse and all of those fellows continued to plough the fields. Everyone was asked for a greater effort but, in the end, the pigs, which represented the bureaucracy, paid no attention at all to the needs of those below them, and they were able to dominate the leaders.

That is what we see in Queensland today. We see a bureaucracy based on the disgraced Dr Wilenski and Gough Whitlam. We see a bureaucracy based on the ideas of Peter Coaldrake and the PSMC; we see a bureaucracy which is highly paid; we see a bureaucracy which does not provide a basic service to the community, and we see a Government which panders to the bureaucracy and has very, very little control over it. This Government ignores the real issues that Queenslanders want this Government to address—and as the party in Government it should be addressing.

This Government is destitute of initiatives. Instead, it runs off whingeing and moaning that the Opposition will not give it the benefit of perusing its policies. The Government cannot hide the truth about its pathetic mismanagement. It cannot hide from the people of Queensland who, every day, are left to confront the results of this Government's failure—failure in health, failure in law and order, failure in family services, failure in education, in employment, in the DPI, in transport and in local government. In every sphere of administration, this Government has failed to deliver services. It knows it, and the people of Queensland know it.

Health Minister Hayward found out on the weekend how the Government's approach to this debate will backfire. In the *Sunshine Coast Daily*, Mr Hayward had the gall to criticise the Opposition for not releasing its health policy. That feeble attempt to divert flak away from his own bungling mismanagement of the Health portfolio left egg on the Minister's face. His failed attempt in embarrassing the Opposition was transparent to the editor of that newspaper, who had the following to say in response—

> "State Minister for Health Ken Hayward is hardly in a position to be critical of the Opposition.
>
> Mr Hayward is responsible for a health system that is simply incapable of meeting the demands placed upon it by the public."

The editor goes on to say—

> "Mr Hayward seeks to make political gains by lampooning the Opposition. What Queenslanders want to see from the Opposition he declares, is a health policy. But at the same time, they want to see clear signs from Mr Hayward that he himself is coming to grips with a portfolio which is vitally important to every one of them."

The Government cannot take the heat of public disgust of its destruction of the health system. It cannot take the heat of the lack of morale in the teaching profession and the lack of resources in schools. The list is endless. Look at what the Government did to the class size issue. That was blatant collaboration. In 1989, the Government talked about class sizes, but in its last Budget not one word was mentioned about class sizes because it compromised and collaborated with the union and instead gave non-contact time for teachers.

The Government cannot get the money through to the public level. It cannot get money through to the services. That is the Government's fault, and it has always been the fault of a socialist Government.

In the last few days alone, we have seen frustrated social workers on the Sunshine Coast threatening to strike over severe staff shortages and chronic underfunding. Today's *Courier Mail* reveals that juvenile justice staff working with

young offenders in detention centres have also threatened to strike because of a similar lack of resources.

Again from the Sunshine Coast come reports that 2 000 low-income families face a three-year wait for public housing. Let us look at the Government's record on jobs. In the last 57 months of conservative Government in this State we created two and a half times more jobs than the Labor Party has managed in the same time frame. We cannot disregard those facts. The Government cannot even centre the debate today on something as important as jobs for the thousands of Queenslanders who are out of work. With a record like that, no wonder the Government needs our help. It has crises in every area of Government. It has failed the people of Queensland.

We will address the things that matter to the Queensland people in our policies. We will get to the heart of the problems plaguing services in Queensland with policies that will provide the level of services that Queenslanders deserve. The Queensland public will have ample opportunity to examine the coalition's policies. There is nothing secretive about the coalition's policies, unlike the Government's record when it comes to issues such as roads or a Criminal Code—a Criminal Code that this Government has promised for five years but has not delivered.

The Minister for Justice has stood in this Parliament and in front of TV cameras waving the Criminal Code, but that is the closest that the public has come to scrutinising that document. I understand that the Government has gone back to the drawing board with it yet again, because it still cannot get it right. It is yet another example of a leaderless Government running around in circles.

What has the Premier achieved in his years of office? He is a spring flower that has wilted. He came to Government on the back of the Fitzgerald inquiry, not on sound policy, and he has led with a reactionary style rather than with constructive policies since then. He has never initiated an original policy in his life. He has continually referred hard decisions to either referendums or the CJC. On difficult questions he has always hidden his indecision behind the views of the public majority. He has swayed in the wind of public opinion and has relied on issues and policies generated by the former conservative Government.

To camouflage his multiple deficiencies with regard to constructive policies, he has become an expert manipulator of the media. He basks in the radiance of the achievements of others. The sound economic health of the State that he inherited is a prime example. For example, even at the football, whom does he hide behind? He hides behind Wayne Bennett, hoping that something will rub off onto him. Under the former conservative Government, the Queensland people appreciated a frank and clear direction in policies and administration. Labor has been unable to attain the benchmark standards set by us.

Rumour has it that the Premier—obviously short on challenges in Queensland—intends to move to the Federal seat of Rankin. Has he finally exhausted his limited policy options for Queensland? We all remember the question by the Leader of the Opposition to the Premier when the Premier was asked to outline one initiative that he has implemented. The Premier's answer did not outline one initiative that he himself had implemented.

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

FIRE SERVICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs) (4.44 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Fire Service Act 1990 and other Acts."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs) (4.45 p.m.): I move—

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

The Bill before the House is an important component of the Government's strategy to upgrade rural fire brigades in this State. This is a commitment which has been ongoing since 1989.

The recent fires throughout the State clearly demonstrated the need for well equipped rural fire brigades. A most significant factor in the success of fire fighting operations during that period was the enhanced training and equipment support which this Government has provided to our fire services.

An audit of bushfire preparedness has been conducted and a new blueprint for future development made available for public comment. One hundred and twenty new rural fire appliances, 51 fire fighting trailers, 14 000 sets of protective equipment and enhanced communication systems have been placed into service. Additional training staff and rural fire inspectors are being recruited. This demonstrates the Government's strong support for rural fire brigades.

In 1989, when the Rural Fires Board became an operational division of the Queensland Fire Service, it was clear that it had suffered from decades of neglect. Since then the budget of the Rural Division of the Queensland Fire Service has been increased by 230 per cent to a record level of $5.38m. This has been the third year of record rural fire budgets. The amendments to the Fire Service Act 1990 proposed in this Bill will provide local governments with the discretionary power to make and levy certain rates or charges and contribute the amounts raised to rural fire brigades in their areas.

Local governments in urban areas already are required to raise a levy to support their fire brigades. In the past, local governments in rural areas did not require the power to impose a levy on landowners who contributed their own time and machinery to fight fires. But there are now many rural areas which are more residential than rural in composition. Many of the home owners in these rural residential areas are absent at work or elsewhere during the day. They are unable to assist the volunteers who risk their lives in firefighting operations.

Not only do our volunteer fire fighters provide the labour to fight fires, they also have the additional burden of raising funds to purchase the necessary equipment. This Bill is aimed at easing the burden and ensuring that all the community which benefits from the services of the rural fire brigades contribute equitably to the operating costs. But if some local councils do not listen to the call of their volunteers for funding assistance, the State Government will strike a levy and give all the money to the Rural Fire Division of Queensland Emergency Services.

The nature of the fire hazard in rural residential areas has changed substantially—from grass and bushfire hazards—to also include structural fire hazards. This requires different capital equipment and more extensive training for volunteer firefighters. It is appropriate that those home owners who benefit from the presence of a well-equipped service support it financially.

This amendment is retrospective to 26 March 1994 because that is the day upon which the relevant provisions of the Local Government Act 1993 commenced. Some rural local governments have already budgeted for and made such levies. This amendment is made to ensure that they have always had the authority to do so.

The Bill also amends two other Acts. The proposed amendment to the Local Government Act 1993 removes uncertainty by clarifying the power of local governments to make a levy and apply the revenue to a service not provided by the local government. When the Local Government Act was drafted it was intended that a local government's power to levy separate or special rates or charges would include the power to contribute the proceeds to a local rural fire brigade or brigades.

The Solicitor-General has expressed a view that the Local Government Act may not be interpreted as permitting a local government to levy a separate or special rate or charge to fund the activities of a rural fire brigade on the basis that a local government can only raise these types of rates or charges for services actually supplied by the local government.

The amendments to the Local Government Act proposed in clauses 9, 10 and 11 of the Bill clarify the interpretation of sections 567, 568 and 569 of the Local Government Act to remove any doubt that local governments may levy rates or charges for services, facilities or activities whether or not they are supplied by the local government itself.

The need to clarify the interpretation of the provisions of the Local Government Act raises the issue of whether section 14A of the Acts Interpretation Act 1954 has been fully considered. Section 14A requires an interpretation that best promotes the purposes of an Act. In other words, it promotes a purposive approach to legislation.

The proposed amendment of section 14A of the Acts Interpretation Act is designed to enhance purposive interpretation. By the existing section 14A (2), the purposive interpretation applies even if the Act's purpose is not expressly stated. The proposed section 14A (2) ensures that purposive interpretation is enhanced without creating or extending criminal liability.

The proposed section 14A (3) is a declaration intended to remove any doubt about uncertainties in interpretation similar to those that have resulted in the proposed amendment of the Local Government Act 1993. If legislation is made after 30 June 1991, a purposive

interpretation applies despite any presumption or rule of interpretation.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

FINANCIAL AGREEMENT BILL

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (4.50 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to approve an agreement between the Commonwealth, States and Territories, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (4.51 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill relates to the new Financial Agreement which was signed by the heads of Government at the COAG meeting on 25 February 1994 following endorsement from members of the Loan Council. The new agreement has been made pursuant to Loan Council's decision to amend the Financial Agreement between the Commonwealth and the States. The Commonwealth and the States have agreed that amendments to the Financial Agreement would be effected through the enactment of complementary legislation by the Commonwealth and each of the States and Territories. The Commonwealth and a number of the other States have already enacted the legislation required in those respective jurisdictions. However, the new Financial Agreement does not take effect until the complementary legislation is enacted in all jurisdictions.

The amendments to the Financial Agreement remove the obsolete provisions of the previous Financial Agreement and simplify its administration. These amendments involve—

> abolishing the restriction on States borrowing in their own names;
>
> removing the Commonwealth's explicit power to borrow on behalf of the States; and
>
> removing the requirement for future Commonwealth and State borrowings to be approved under the provisions of the Agreement.

The new Financial Agreement also provides for the continued existence of the Loan Council and sets out certain obligations in respect of past borrowings.

As a consequence of the amendments to the Financial Agreement, provisions which previously allowed the Treasurer to borrow on behalf of the State have been removed. Accordingly, this Bill provides for amendments to be made to the Financial Administration and Audit Act to provide the Treasurer with the specific legislative power to borrow on behalf of the State.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Bundamba— Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (4.53 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Liquor Act 1992, and for another purpose."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Bundamba— Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (4.53 p.m.): I move—

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

When the new Liquor Act commenced on 1 July 1992 it brought with it sweeping changes to the system of liquor regulation. That Bill gave Queensland what is arguably the best administrative systems for fostering the liquor industry and minimising harm caused by the use of alcohol in the community.

Given the extent of the changes made, the Bill contained a requirement that a review be commenced one year after its introduction. This amendment Bill represents the findings of the review process carried out over a 16-month period in consultation with all industry sectors. Whilst the bulk of this review Bill simply corrects

minor administrative problems that have become evident in the 1992 Act, a number of significant reforms are also included.

The Bill is indicative of the Government's commitment to stamping out practices that encourage binge drinking or the irresponsible supply of liquor. This will be achieved through having a code of conduct formulated for every industry sector to which individual licensees will subscribe. The Bill contains a regulation-making power to encourage the responsible sale and supply of liquor which will allow these codes to contain a number of central provisions that will attract fines if breached. This will give important elements of each code suitable regulatory support to encourage compliance with the negotiated industry standard of responsible practice.

The codes will be developed by joint Government and industry task groups with full involvement of the Trade Practices Commission to ensure that the codes are compatible with the Trade Practices Act and that errant licensees cannot use the Trade Practices Act to avoid compliance with the code. By this, I mean simply that within the industry we will be taking steps under these agreements to ban practices such as the tequila slammer hours and the two-for-one binge drinking which has occurred in many establishments throughout Queensland.

The Bill will also bring Queensland into line with other jurisdictions in respect of allowing the operator of a licensed restaurant the choice of operating as both a licensed and BYO establishment. Restaurant operators, whether they are holders of an on-premises (meals), residential or general licence will all have the option of allowing people to bring their own alcoholic beverages into the restaurant for consumption with their meal. This provision emphasises the Government's commitment to providing the industry with the flexibility to best service the needs and wants of its client base.

The Bill also brings forward the time when cabaret licence holders may serve liquor without the patron having to consume a meal from 8 p.m. to 5 p.m. Cabaret licensees will also be allowed to obtain the 20 per cent non-diners provision for the period that the premises are allowed to open prior to 5 p.m. This effectively brings cabaret licences, which are required to trade as a restaurant before 5 p.m., in line with the entitlements held by other restaurateurs.

The Bill also provides reform of the extended hours permit system by differentiating between any regular extension of hours after 3 a.m. and those up to that time. From 31 March 1995, all extended hours permits past 3 a.m. will expire and will require renewal every six months from that date. The views of the relevant local government and assistant police commissioner will be invited at the time of each renewal.

Where sustainable evidence is provided by the local government or the police that the amenity of the area or the functions of those bodies in maintaining the amenity would be assisted by the non-renewal of a permit or all permits in the area, serious weighting will be given to their submission.

This action serves notice on all operators who trade past 3 a.m. that a line has been drawn after which trading is an absolute privilege and not a right only removable when definitive evidence can be substantiated against the particular premises. It can be expected that if in a locality it is established that the allowance of trading of all licensed premises after 3 a.m. causes additional problems in terms of street violence, disturbances or criminal activity, a general ceiling of 3 a.m. for all premises with extended hours permits will be imposed. The fact that all permits will come up for renewal on the same day should provide adequate warning to premises in several notable areas of the State that this Government is serious in controlling problems with liquor trading in the early hours of the morning.

Under the former Act, less than 200 applications a year were required to be advertised for public objection. However, with the introduction of the flexibility contained in the new Act and a greater commitment to public consultation, the number of applications advertised now approaches 1 000 per year. The Bill contains a major review of the application processing procedures.

No application for a new licence will be allowed to proceed to the advertising stage until any relevant local town planning approval is in place. This will ensure that the unacceptable situation of an application under a town planning scheme and the Liquor Act inviting objections for different purposes at the same time no longer occurs. Instead, by ensuring that any applicable town planning processes are a prerequisite to acceptance of the application, local governments will have the appropriate filtering capability on applications for new licences. To ensure that the applicant is not disadvantaged by this process, a power to waive advertising under the Liquor Act is included where the proposal has been appropriately advertised for town planning consent.

The advertising process as it now stands has provided members of the public with a greater opportunity to have their say on the potential effect of an application on the amenity of the area. However, the current two-part

process of first determining public need and then advertising the application introduced with the 1992 Act failed to give members of the public or other licensees an opportunity to comment on whether or not the activity to be allowed by the application is necessary to meet the reasonable needs of the locality. Under the new system, applications for a new licence, extension of hours or a detached bottle shop will be advertised prior to any determination on public need.

Advertisements of applications to which the public need test applies will include an invitation for any interested person to make a submission on matters relevant to the public need determination. Submissions could include practical evidence on—

what are the reasonable requirements of the public and locality;

what are the services currently provided by licensed and unlicensed premises in the locality;

the likely health or social impact of the application; and

as is always the case, the relationship of the application with the objects of the Act.

In considering the issue of public need at the same time as public objections, the department will take into consideration the submissions made by various parties and, of course, the objects of the Act.

However, persons who lodge submissions on public need will not be eligible to appeal as this would be a return to the adversarial system of the former Act where current operators sought to place barriers to reasonable competition by appealing on the grounds of being economically disadvantaged.

Let it be made clear here and now that the Liquor Act is not about protecting commercial interests but about ensuring that any commercial licence, detached bottle shop, or permanent extension of trading hours is only allowed where there is a proven need. Providing flexibility does not mean an open slather approach to licensing.

In considering the issue of public need, the department will give weight to the fact that for some licence types where the sale of liquor is secondary to the primary purpose, such as providing meals, residential accommodation, sporting activity, tourist attraction and so forth, a need is to a degree established by the people who are at the premises for that primary purpose.

However, this is definitely not the case for proposers of new general and cabaret licences which permit the virtually unrestricted supply of liquor, and applicants wishing to prove a public need for these licence types will have to exhibit definitive reasons why, given the objects of the Act, and the public need parameters, the proposed licence is necessary to meet the reasonable needs of the locality.

The offence of selling liquor to a minor on licensed premises will be extended to all places and will ensure that the supply of liquor away from licensed premises by a home delivery service attracts the same penalty as a sale across the bar. In a similar vein of the Government's commitment to ensuring liquor is not sold to minors, it will be made clear that it is an offence by a licensee if a minor is found on the licensed premises other than in specific circumstances outlined in the Act.

The Bill also recognises that the establishment of detached bottle shops has started to depart from the original intention of allowing a local hotelier to extend his service into the local shopping centre as a convenience to his or her customers. The Bill provides for the establishment of all detached bottle shops to be subject to the public need process. This is in accordance with the Government's intention that all liquor outlets are only established where it is proven to be needed in order to meet the reasonable requirements of the locality. The Bill also provides power to make regulations for the parameters for approval of these outlets.

The Bill will also allow regulations to be made to correct an anomaly which prevented hoteliers from conducting wine tastings and product promotions within a detached bottle shop. Hoteliers will be allowed to conduct a limited amount of free sampling of product to enable the promotion of such things as fine wines and newly released liquor products.

It was always the intention that the Liquor Appeals Tribunal be set up as an informal arbitrator of the merits of matters brought before it and not a legalistic forum where matters are determined by complex legal argument. To this end, the Bill provides that the Liquor Appeals Tribunal may determine if a party before it can be represented by legal counsel. Protection is provided in that in considering an application to have legal representation, the board must take into account whether or not complex questions of law might arise and if any person is likely to be disadvantaged by not being represented.

The Bill abolishes the Liquor Advisory Board established by the 1992 Act. The members of the board—Mrs Judith Maestracci, chairperson; Reverend Alan Soares, deputy chair; Ms Helen Ryan; Mr William Ludwig; and Mr Robert Hagan—have provided excellent service since their appointment. All advice provided by the board has been accepted by the department

which has formulated the board's advices into policy, particularly in the areas of what type of operation is most appropriate for each licence category. The board has been so successful and diligent in its efforts in this regard that the majority of doubt created by the more flexible 1992 licensing system has been removed. I specifically wish to pay tribute to the board members for their efforts.

This Government is committed to ensuring that small community-based clubs are not disadvantaged should those clubs not have either the desire or financial capacity to obtain a full club licence. To this end, the Bill replaces the restricted club licence with a restricted club permit. This permit will allow small clubs such as squash clubs, cricket clubs, small football clubs and work-based social clubs limited rights to sell liquor for up to 21 hours per week without having to meet the permanent tenure requirements of a full licence.

The regulations will set the cost of a restricted club permit to commence at $50 for three months for bodies which trade 10 hours or less per week. This cost of less than $1 a day removes any excuse for unauthorised trading by small organisations. The transfer to a permit system will also relieve the concerns of a number of local governments which have expressed a concern that the term "restricted club licence" when introduced with the 1992 Act caused former sporting body permit holders to obtain town planning consent even though no change of use occurred.

The Bill provides for trading of licensed premises to continue on the morning of New Year's Day until 2 a.m. as a matter of right. This is expected to greatly reduce costs to the individual operators and the administrative workload of approving many one-off extended hours permits for operators who quite reasonably seek to trade to 2 a.m. on that special day.

The Bill provides clarification on the entitlements of licence holders with an endorsement on their licence to cater away from the premises for functions. These endorsements are available for the holders of general licences, on-premises licences and residential licences, and allow the licensee to serve liquor and operate a bar at other premises provided that the event catered for is a genuine bona fide function organised by another party and not by the licensee.

The Bill gives clearer guidance on what arrangements for subletting and franchising are allowable. The holders of special facility licences will be able to enter into arrangements over various parts of their operation. However, each sub-operator will be required to nominate a nominee and pass the test of fit and proper status contained in the Act.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Bredhauer): Order! There are too many audible conversations in the Chamber. I would ask members to come to order, please.

Mr GIBBS: This Bill must be making some honourable members thirsty, Mr Deputy Speaker. This will ensure that in major tourist operations such as South Bank and Sanctuary Cove, each of the separate sub-businesses which operate with a degree of exclusivity from the main licence holder are put to these very important tests.

Other licensees will continue to be allowed to enter into management agreements or franchising over the whole of their premises but will not be allowed to divide away individual facets of their operation, such as a nightclub area or bottle shop from the premises.

The Bill provides that matters before the Licensing Court can be settled by the chief executive if all parties are agreeable. This will ensure that the few remaining outstanding applications under the old Act can, in non-adversarial situations, be finalised without the expense of legal counsel or a formal court appearance. The Bill also specifically validates any order of a judge of the court which referred continuing matters under the old Act to the chief executive as if the chief executive were the abolished Licensing Commission. Whilst it is considered that this was the clear intention of the transitional provisions of the 1992 Act, this has recently been the subject of interpretations to a different effect and this Bill will ensure the intent of the 1992 Act is respected.

The Bill abolishes the Liquor Act Trust Fund, which lost its primary purpose of buying back uncompetitive licences with the abolition of the rationalisation scheme in November last year. Other functions of the trust fund in supporting various health and transport programs will be continued by direct payments from consolidated revenue without the administrative burdens of a trust fund operation.

The Bill will also correct an anomaly created by the conversion table of old licences to licences contained in the 1992 Act. Under that conversion table, resorts which were to be converted to residential licences would lose any beneficial conditions that were held for the unrestricted service of liquor to non-residents. This was an unintended effect, and by allowing resort licences which held beneficial conditions to be reviewed as either a general or special facility licence—depending on which is more

appropriate—the rights of these licensees will be protected.

The Bill will cut the administrative red tape and difficulties involved with a council approving consumption of liquor in a public place forming part of a BYO restaurant. This will be achieved by allowing local governments to approve, without advertisement, consumption of liquor in specific areas adjacent to the BYO restaurant, such as on a footpath or in a pedestrian mall.

The introduction of the 1992 Liquor Act, with its departure from the inflexible, adversarial approach of the 1912 Act, has been a great success. Applications for new licences have more than doubled from 177 in the 1991-92 year to over 400 in the 1993-94 year. The removal of the adversarial court-based system and the associated red tape and legalistic approach resulted in reduced staff resources being able to process far greater numbers of applications even with the greatly increased commitment to public participation in the application process. The decision-making processes in place are greatly respected, as evidenced by the phenomenally low appeal rates against decisions made under the new system. In all, in the last financial year, the department dealt with over 17 500 matters that required a decision, with only 31 appeals lodged.

In summary, the Liquor Act 1992 has been, to date, a resounding success, providing the flexibility required to ensure that bureaucracy does not get in the road of job creation but, at the same time, ensuring that economic considerations do not overtake the need for responsible hospitality practices and protection of the amenity of areas near to licensed premises. This Bill enhances the commitment to community consultation in the decision-making process whilst further cutting red tape.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

ELECTRICITY BILL

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa— Minister for Minerals and Energy) (5.14 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act about the electricity industry and use of electricity, and for related purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa— Minister for Minerals and Energy) (5.15 p.m.): I move—

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

The electricity supply industry is one of Queensland's largest and most important industries. It employs more than 8 000 people throughout the State, has assets of more than $10 billion and has an annual revenue of around $2 billion. Its importance goes beyond mere size. Electricity supply is the driving force, the energy that allows us all our modern lifestyle. Electricity is by far Queensland's most important source of artificial light, heating and cooling. Electricity powers the things that our forefathers would have considered luxuries, or magic—the refrigerators, microwave ovens, televisions and radios that today play a major role in so many homes.

In hospitals, electricity makes possible what once was impossible, saving lives through highly technical machines such as humidicribs, dialysis units and heart monitors. In schools and colleges, electricity powers the computers and other modern teaching aids, while in commerce electricity is of paramount importance, providing airconditioning, computers and the very quickest of communications.

Electricity is of tremendous importance to Queensland's industrial operations, and it has a direct bearing on the State's current and future progress. In Queensland, electricity turns the wheels of industry. It enables downstream processing of our vast mineral wealth, and it is instrumental in attracting manufacturing industry to Queensland. Reliable, economical electric power is a prime reason so many industries are establishing here in Queensland or relocating here from southern States.

This Government recognises the importance of electricity to the present and future wellbeing of Queensland. The Government's determination is to ensure economical, efficient and environmentally sound electricity generation and supply. With this Bill, we have moved to ensure the industry's contribution to Queensland's development into the next century.

Last year, the Government decided to restructure the industry, separating the generation segment from the transmission and supply segment, and to corporatise the restructured industry. To accommodate the restructure and the development of a competitive electricity market, a new Electricity Act is necessary.

In preparing for this legislation and corporatisation, substantial consultation has taken place with management and employees of the QEC and the electricity boards, board directors, union representatives and electricity customers. A number of working groups were formed with members from the industry and the Department of Minerals and Energy, together with members of trade unions and this Assembly. These groups consulted widely within the electricity industry and with parties outside the industry to ensure a wide range of views would be considered. A steering committee comprising representatives of a number of Government agencies, the electricity industry, the Electrical Trades Union, the private sector and the Queensland Conservation Council has overseen the process.

The objective of this Bill is to set the framework for all participants—private sector and Government-owned entities—within the electricity industry to encourage the efficient, economical and environmentally sound provision of electricity to the people of Queensland. The Bill sets out the conditions under which these participants may operate. The Bill provides the framework for the purchase and sale of electricity and is designed to accommodate the national electricity industry reform process being overseen by the Council of Australian Governments.

The Bill contains a general provision that electricity entities may set their own prices for electricity. However, it also provides that the Minister may act to maintain uniform tariffs throughout the State. The Government has already stated that the uniform tariff policy will continue. This policy ensures that whether persons live in Bowen, Birdsville or Brisbane, they will pay the same price for electricity.

The Bill provides for the regulation of the electricity industry and the regulation of the use of electricity. Safety in relation to the supply and use of electricity is also addressed. Regulatory responsibilities have been transferred from the Queensland Electricity Commission to the Director-General of my Department of Minerals and Energy. For the generation and transmission sectors of the industry, the Bill provides for entry into the industry through authorisations granted by the regulator. The Bill contains a number of conditions with which the regulator must be satisfied before granting such authorisations.

To encourage private participation and competition in electricity generation, the Bill allows any person who complies with the conditions to obtain a generator authority irrespective of existing generating capacity. The operation of transmission grids is vital to the integrity of the electricity system of Queensland. A transmission body is under a positive obligation to operate and protect its grid with sufficient capacity to cater for demand and provide access to the grid on non-discriminatory terms to persons authorised to connect to the grid or take electricity.

The Bill establishes a system of authorities with similar conditions for the supply sector of the industry. Bodies given the right to supply electricity in specified areas of the State will have an obligation to supply electricity of appropriate quality to would-be buyers. The obligation does not require the supply of electricity if it is not technically and economically practicable. There are two categories of authority to supply. Supply entities are to be given their authority to supply by the regulator. A supply entity may choose to give another entity, called an authorised supplier, an authority to supply, however the overall obligation to supply still rests with the supply entity. The Bill also allows special approvals for generation, transmission or supply outside the general industry authorities in special circumstances.

The Bill provides for persons known as electricity officers to be appointed with powers for carrying out the operational needs of electricity entities, such as reading meters and connection/disconnection of supply. These electricity officers also have power to act immediately where electrical safety is considered an issue.

Another class of persons, known as authorised persons, will be appointed by the regulator to give effect to regulatory functions described in the Bill. Authorised persons will have powers of entry to places to carry out safety regulatory functions or to enforce rationing orders in emergencies. If it is suspected that there is a danger or could be a danger of electric shock or injury, the authorised person may enter premises at any reasonable time. All other entry required for enforcement must be with the occupier's consent or by warrant.

The Bill contains provisions to ensure that the arrangements entered into in March this year with the purchasers of the Gladstone Power Station can be preserved. Members will recall that the sale was the subject of special legislation, the Gladstone Power Station Agreement Act, and a State agreement which is part of the Act. The present Bill provides for the continuation of the operating licence issued pursuant to the Act. It also provides for the negotiation of amendments to the State agreement to, as early as possible, maintain the rights and obligations of the parties to the State agreement and the parties to the transaction

documents governing the sale and subsequent operation of the power station. On proclamation of the Act resulting from this Bill, the existing Electricity Act 1976 will be repealed.

I will now briefly describe some of the important parts of the chapters in the Bill. Chapter 1 sets out the objectives of the Act, defines some basic concepts of electricity industry operations and describes the circumstances where the Act binds Government entities. This chapter also spells out that the Act is subject to the Gladstone Power Station Agreement Act 1993.

Chapter 2 describes the categories of electricity industry participants, namely generation entities, transmission entities, supply entities and authorised suppliers. These each have authorities which set out the conditions with which the holders must comply. The chapter describes how the two proposed electricity industry Government owned corporations will fit into these categories, specifies their functions and explains special approvals. It establishes the regulator and sets out its functions, provides for the appointment of electricity officers and authorised persons and continues in existence the Electrical Workers and Contractors Board.

Chapter 3 describes the obligation to supply placed on supply entities and authorised suppliers.

Chapter 4 provides that regulations can be made setting out the arrangements associated with the establishment of the electricity market. These include the basis on which trading can take place and payments made under these trading arrangements. Additionally, the chapter covers two important areas for the operation of the industry—prices and access to land. Electricity entities can set the prices for electricity and services they provide. However, the Minister has the reserve power to fix these prices. As I said earlier, the Minister can act to maintain the Government's policy of uniform tariffs throughout the State and, as I mentioned before, this policy will continue. Electricity entities planning works need access to land and the existing State-owned electricity entities will have the powers of a constructing authority under the Acquisition of Land Act. QEC has held these powers for many years. However non-Government electricity entities will need authorisation from the Minister to enter onto and acquire land related to works or proposed works of the entity.

Chapter 5 concerns industry regulation. It provides for the regulator's role in the settlement of disputes and the grounds for taking disciplinary action against electricity entities. The regulator may be authorised by the Governor in Council to take over the operation of certain works of electricity entities in order to ensure the provision of electricity to customers is not disrupted by the failure of these entities to carry out their responsibilities.

Chapter 6 is about the powers of an electricity officer needed for operational purposes such as reading meters. Electricity officers will be appointed by the chief executives of the electricity entities

Chapter 7 gives powers for safety and enforcement purposes to authorised persons.

Chapter 8 requires that electrical accidents must be reported and investigated and includes other provisions designed to contribute to safety.

Chapter 9 sets out the basis on which authorities and approvals under this Act will be issued. It describes what the regulator will consider before granting authorities, including relevant Government policies about environmental and energy issues.

Chapter 10 provides for review of and appeals against administrative decisions. Persons affected by a decision can approach the regulator to have the decision reviewed and, in certain circumstances, appeal against the regulator's decision to a court.

Chapter 11 lists a series of offences under the Act and provides that advisory committees like the Electricity Industry Safety Advisory Committee may be established.

Chapter 12 concerns the electricity Government owned corporations and their subsidiaries. It provides that the Freedom of Information Act and the Judicial Review Act do not apply to documents relating to the commercial activities of these entities. It also provides that these entities do not represent the State. This chapter provides that through a regulation the Minister may require the Queensland Generation Corporation to provide generating capacity and also addresses superannuation for the Government electricity entities.

Chapter 13 describes the subjects about which regulations to the Act can be made. Chapter 14 covers a number of transitional issues.

Chapter 15 refers to Schedules 3 and 4 to the Bill, which list Acts to be repealed or amended. This Bill provides the opportunity to improve the provisions of the Government Owned Corporations (GOC) Act 1993 with respect to dividend payments.

Consequently, in Schedule 4 the Bill provides for the amendment of the GOC Act to provide for dividends to be paid by GOCs for the

year of and year prior to corporatisation. These amendments will preserve the existing power of the Government to impose dividend or equivalent payments on non-corporatised entities. The proposal is to contain the dividend-raising power in respect of GOCs in the umbrella GOC Act rather than providing for it—for the year of and immediately prior to corporatisation—in legislation specific to individual GOCs.

I spoke earlier about the extensive consultation carried out throughout the preparation of this Bill. I am pleased to be able to say that thanks to this consultation there is widespread support for this Bill, which provides the framework to enable Queensland's electricity industry to move into the next century. Electricity is the major factor in the home, in commerce and industry in Queensland and the Government is determined to ensure its efficient, reliable, economical and environmentally sound generation and supply into the next century.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Gilmore, adjourned.

TRANSPORT OPERATIONS (MARINE POLLUTION) BILL

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development) (5.29 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to protect Queensland's marine and coastal environment by minimising deliberate and negligent discharges of ship-sourced pollutants into coastal waters, and for related purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development) (5.30 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill is very significant environmental protection legislation. However, out of deference to my state of vocal chords and in consideration of the ears of the members of the House, I seek leave to table my speech and have it incorporated in *Hansard.*

Leave granted

Mr. Speaker

This Bill is progressive legislation that aspires to provide the correct and appropriate level of control on ship-sourced marine pollutants, in a world which is increasingly discerning of the need to care for our seas.

Conscious of the importance of protecting and preserving the marine and coastal environment of Queensland, the Government has adopted an approach which draws on international best practice, in establishing a legislative framework which is directed at minimising deliberate, reckless and negligent pollution of our coastal waters by all classes of ships.

Being aware that the current statute, the Pollution of Waters by Oil Act 1973, does not legislate for the enormous growth in the maritime transport of oil, the size and number of tankers and bulkships plying our sensitive coastal waters, and the increasing amount of chemicals being carried by sea, we set about a complete review of the current Act, to ensure acceptable and appropriate controls would be put in place, which acknowledged the growing concern for the protection of Queensland's characteristic marine and coastal environment.

The present Act, Mr. Speaker, has a number of fundamental deficiencies in administering the distinctive requirements to deal with pollution originating from commercial shipping in both the international and domestic sense and as a result of recreational boating activities.

Firstly, the Pollution of Waters by Oil Act deals with oil and oily substances only, and does not address other contaminants likely to be discharged by ships.

The Act also incorporates a now superseded international convention which imposes obligations on ship owners and masters to operate vessels according to pollution prevention standards designed in the 1960's. While these standards were seen to be appropriate at that time, they are certainly not acceptable in 1994.

Within the present Act, "any waters" is interpreted as "waters of the sea" and "waters that are not sea".

Thus the Act covers all State waters, including inland waters, a situation not appropriate in an Act which has a primary function in dealing with discharges from international and coastal shipping, operating to international marine transport standards and conventions.

Additionally, the fact that administrative responsibilities are divided between marine authorities—that is, with Queensland Transport and the port authorities being responsible for marine waters, and local government authorities controlling inland waters—has in the past led to fragmentation and uncertainty, not providing the standard of accountability expected and indeed, required of modern public administration.

What we have set out to achieve, Mr. Speaker, is a responsible balance between sound environmental practice and the well being of the economy of the State.

This does not mean we are in any way compromising the environment. In fact, the whole thrust of this legislation is to ensure that standards of marine pollution control are second to none.

While legislation alone cannot avert accidents, the Bill deals thoroughly with the prevention of marine pollution through the adoption of a regime of responsible and practical operating practice.

Mr. Speaker, I will now outline the Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Bill—(which I will refer to from this point on as simply the "Marine Pollution Bill").

The overriding principles behind this legislation are that the shipping industry should regard pollution control management as an integral part of commercial business, requiring a high level of professionalism from ship owners, masters and related cargo interests.

Similarly, operators of smaller commercial and recreational vessels should ensure the public interest and ultimately the environment is best served through taking responsible pollution prevention action.

This legislation will achieve the broad objective of reducing the risk of polluting Queensland's marine environment, through enacting effective, realistic controls on ship operations and management and through the development of enhanced marine pollution prevention initiatives and incident response programs undertaken by Queensland Transport.

Prior to, and during drafting of the legislation, comprehensive consultation was undertaken with Commonwealth and State Governments, national and State industry interests, conservation groups and community organisations.

An Information Paper outlining the intent and implications of the proposed Marine Pollution Bill, based on the drafting instructions approved by Cabinet, was widely distributed.

The result of this initial consultation demonstrated absolute support for the principles proposed in the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill will apply to all ships, boats and pleasure craft, and will include an aircraft that is able to land on the water.

By the term "all ships", I mean international, interstate and those vessels that are registered in Queensland.

The broad range of maritime industry and community activities affected by the Bill is a measure of it's importance to the well being of our marine and coastal environment.

These activities include:

. the shipping industry and consignors of harmful substances;

. the oil and chemical production industries;

. the fishing and mariculture industries;

. coastal and island tourism;

. recreational boating, it's infrastructure and related aquatic activities; and

. the rapidly increasing coastal urban habitation occurring in Queensland.

The area of jurisdiction covered by the Bill is Queensland's coastal waters, which includes port areas and coastal rivers and streams, up to the extent of the limit of the tide.

Before I address the specifics of the Marine Pollution Bill Mr. Speaker, I will explain briefly the process of portfolio strategic planning I have adopted to rationalise all transport related legislation.

The key to this process has been the establishment of peak legislation, namely the Transport Planning and Coordination Act 1994, which provides a legislative obligation to develop a Coordination Plan for the strategic management of all modes of transport operations across the State.

In relation to this Bill, I am committed to developing marine pollution strategies which include a specific statement of objectives, the provision of pollution prevention and incident response initiatives, criteria for deciding priorities for Government spending on these initiatives and the consideration of Australia's international and national pollution prevention and response obligations.

Programs developed and funded under these strategies are not necessarily restricted to issues directly associated with marine pollution and response.

The Bill therefore, also provides that these programs include proposals for the allocation of funds to programs other than those directly related to pollution control, but which may enhance prevention and response.

Programs developed under the Bill Mr. Speaker,

will contribute to safeguarding our coastal and marine environment in a number of ways.

They will reduce the probability of a marine incident occurring and will reduce the impact of a marine incident when it occurs.

They will, Mr. Speaker, also improve freight movement by more efficient and effective delivery of maritime operations services, and will minimise the cost to the shipping industry.

Included in this range of initiatives are marine pilot training, establishment of vessel traffic guidance systems, ship reporting and surveillance schemes, strategic pre-positioning of specialised oil pollution containment and recovery equipment, pollution response management and field operations training, contingency planning and the continued maintenance of a coastal resource information system enabling prompt, informed response to a pollution incident.

In line with best international practice, the provision of vessel traffic guidance and surveillance systems in the approaches to Queensland's major ports is proposed, in conjunction with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

Discussions are in fact progressing between Queensland Transport and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority on a range of issues relating to the monitoring and control of coastal vessel traffic. These include the extension of compulsory pilotage, exclusion zones and traffic separation for vessels carrying dangerous and polluting cargoes.

This cooperation between the Commonwealth and Queensland is a logical progression of joint arrangements of the National Plan to Combat Pollution of the Sea by Oil, the successful national cooperative marine pollution response agency.

The inclusion of sophisticated radar, communications and surveillance systems will enable vessels to be tracked and guided in real time and thus increase safety and manoeuvrability.

The introduction of this technology in the English Channel has resulted in an 80% reduction of marine incidents, over a period of increasing traffic.

With the assessed likelihood of a 48% chance of a major incident occurring in our waters over the next 5 years, the introduction of vessel traffic systems on the Queensland coast is imperative.

Programs developed under the strategic planning process will also ensure that we maintain high standards of marine pilot training as a critical element in ensuring the ongoing safe operations of the Queensland port system.

While prevention of pollution remains a priority in minimising ship-sourced pollution, reports such as the "Ships of Shame" have clearly identified the risks posed by the declining standards of some vessels and crews, and the need to be adequately prepared for response.

This Bill will ensure, Mr. Speaker, that our marine incident response services will be equipped and trained to provide an appropriate, effective response capability, when an incident occurs.

A number of these initiatives, I might say, have already been substantially progressed.

Mr. Speaker, the Marine Pollution Bill will, for the first time, implement State control of internationally accepted standards over oil, noxious liquid substances, harmful substances, sewage and garbage, in relation to ships plying Queensland's coastal waters.

The State will achieve the objectives of the Bill through a number of mechanisms, but primarily through giving effect to relevant provisions of an internationally accepted pollution prevention convention, convened and developed by the International Maritime Organisation.

This convention, which has been ratified by the Australian Government, is the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution by Ships, commonly referred to as MARPOL.

While the operational and technical regulations developed in MARPOL are aimed primarily at regulating pollution control in larger, commercial ships, the fundamental principles contained in the Convention for preventing pollution will apply to all vessels, including small recreational craft.

The operational and technical details contained within MARPOL are reviewed in detail in the Cabinet Submission and the Explanatory Note.

I will, however, briefly outline the implications of the Convention and it's effect on Queensland's coastal waters.

MARPOL, Mr. Speaker, deals with ship generated pollution and includes specific Annexes to deal with each pollutant.

These are:

. Oil, which includes all petroleum products, oily mixtures and oily residues;

. noxious liquid substances carried in bulk form; these are mainly chemicals, which, if discharged into the marine environment, are liable to manifest a hazard to human health, aquatic life and other environmental resources.

. harmful substances carried in ships in what is termed packaged form—that is in containers, road or rail wagons or portable tanks. Again these are chiefly chemicals which are classified as marine pollutants.

. and garbage, which includes all food scraps, plastics, metal, glass and timber wastes generated aboard ships.

The sewage provisions contained in MARPOL have not yet been agreed to internationally and are not therefore, included in the Bill as an Annex to the Convention.

However, Mr. Speaker, the Government recognises it's responsibilities in implementing realistic controls over sewage discharge from vessels of all sizes, to safeguard human health, recreational quality, our domestic and international tourist industry and the ecology of our unique coastal zone in general.

In line with community expectations, the Bill provides a sensible balance in dealing with both ships and small craft in acknowledging that, while quantities of ship sourced sewage are relatively small from an environmental standpoint, the adverse impacts on Queensland's coastal urban habitation, aquatic activities, public health considerations and the tourism industry are very real.This issue will be dealt with in a very realistic manner through regulations pursuant to the Bill, in considering the practical difficulties that may be encountered and the cost factors involved, particularly for owners of smaller commercial and recreational vessels.

The development of these regulations will be undertaken in full public consultation with all stakeholders.

When we consider the economic value of coastal tourism to Queensland and the large proportion of Queenslanders either living, or spending recreational time in, on, or adjacent to the sea, there are benefits to be gained by implementing—and I emphasise this—responsible, but practical sewage discharge controls in appropriate areas.

The Marine Pollution Bill does not deal with the discharge of ballast water from ships loading cargoes in Queensland ports or operating in coastal waters.

While there is no ready solution at present to control the introduction of exotic marine organisms into Australian waters through shipping operations, a national ballast water strategy is being developed by both Commonwealth and State authorities and industry, in conjunction with the International Maritime Organisation and other concerned nations.

This strategy is addressing management techniques, research programs and the promotion of education amongst both scientists and mariners.

This initiative is in addition to a current range of voluntary operational guidelines laid down for ships entering Australian waters in order to minimise the risk.

Recently the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) introduced international guidelines based on the Australian system, which has led to the formation of an international group to commence drafting of a ballast water control Annex to the MARPOL Convention.

While the MARPOL Convention forms the basis of technical regulations contained in the Bill, Mr. Speaker, there a number of other important means through which the objectives of the Bill will be achieved.

Commercial shipping is primarily an international industry and the Bill, importantly, will provide a legislative approach corresponding to the Commonwealth and other State Governments in implementing MARPOL, and in a range of administrative provisions.

Authorised officers, primarily Regional Harbour Masters, marine pilots, surveyors and marine service managers, will be given wide powers in respect to ships and places on land to ensure pollution control and response standards are maintained at a high level.

The Bill provides authorised officers with emergency powers to react immediately in the event of a discharge or a probable discharge, of a pollutant from a ship into coastal waters.

In keeping with our obligations under arrangements agreed in the National Plan to Combat Pollution of the Sea by Oil, the Bill gives the State prime responsibility for directing an emergency response to a pollution incident.

If the situation is urgent, the Minister may also, through an emergency declaration, proclaim a local law that is inconsistent with, or hinders the State or a port authority's response to an incident, to be of no effect for a period of 14 days.

Certain authorised officers will be given the power to detain a ship if there are clear grounds for believing that a ship has committed an offence.

This provision is in accord with Australia's rights under the International Law of the Sea Convention and is provided for in existing Commonwealth legislation.

Detention of a ship provisions also require lodgement of security covering the cost of discharge clean up costs and a likely penalty payment, before allowing an offending ship to sail from coastal waters.

Where a shipping casualty poses grave or imminent danger to the Queensland coastline or

related interests and the threat of pollution may be expected to result in harmful consequences, provisions of the Marine Pollution Bill enable the State to invoke powers of intervention.

These powers include the removal of the ship from Queensland waters, removal of it's cargo, the undertaking of salvage operations and, with Ministerial approval, the sinking or destruction of the ship.

Costs and expenses incurred by the State when responding to a discharge of a pollutant, Mr. Speaker, will be recovered using the "polluter pays" principle.

These costs will include action taken to investigate, prevent or minimise the effects of a pollutant, treating animals or plants affected by the impact of a discharge and measures required to rehabilitate or restore Queensland's marine and coastal environment.

While an extensive public and industry education program will be undertaken to provide guidance and assistance in understanding the provisions of the Bill and emphasising both individual and corporate obligations towards protecting and conserving our unique marine environment, the Bill contains severe penalties for non-compliance with the offences provisions.

Maximum fines of up to $210,000 for individuals and $1,050,000 for corporations will apply to discharges of the prescribed pollutants. This is in harmony with both national and international practice.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important and somewhat complex piece of legislation. It provides however, a clear and essential pathway to ensure that protection of our marine and coastal environment from ships sourced pollution is achieved through ensuring that all owners and operators of ships—whether they be large commercial trading vessels, or small privately owner recreational craft—will adopt pollution control standards for the benefit of coastal Queensland.

Mr. Speaker, I consider that this Bill will provide a marine pollution management framework which is imperative to the continued well being of our coastal environment—both ecologically and economically.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (5.32 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Criminal Justice Act 1989."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (5.33 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill is a purely technical initiative designed to allow for greater flexibility in determining an appropriate term of office for the reappointment of an incumbent commissioner (including a chairperson) of the Criminal Justice Commission.

The CJC Parliamentary Committee has agreed to extend the term of the present chairperson of the Criminal Justice Commission, Mr Rob O'Regan, QC, by a further six months. Under present legislation, during that six-month period, he would have the title of Mr Acting Chairperson. While it would be possible under the existing Act to extend his substantive term as chairperson by a further two or three years, if the extension was to be for six months he would necessarily be addressed as Acting Chairperson. This is because of an anomaly in the Act that a substantive appointment must be for a term of not less than two years nor more than five years.

The problem arose because the original draft of the legislation did not envisage that substantive office holders might wish to have their appointments extended but only for a short period.

In addition, this Bill dispenses with the requirement in section 11 of the Act to mount a national advertising campaign seeking applications from suitably qualified persons to be considered for selection to such positions. In the situation of the reappointment of an incumbent, especially for a short period, that process could be considered superfluous. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that appropriate safeguards have been put in place by section 11, which requires that the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee support the proposed reappointment in each case.

The provisions in section 11 relating to the consultation with the parliamentary committee in respect of appointments to the position of chairperson apply also, as Crown Law has advised, to the reappointment process.

As I said at the outset, I consider this Bill is merely one which is designed to accord greater flexibility in the process of the reappointment of an incumbent chairperson and incumbent commissioners generally of the Criminal Justice Commission. This is a desirable initiative in that it allows for reappointments to be considered in a wide range of contexts and circumstances. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

VALUATION OF LAND AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. G. N. SMITH (Townsville— Minister for Lands) (5.35 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Valuation of Land Act 1944."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. G. N. SMITH (Townsville— Minister for Lands) (5.56 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill seeks to amend the Valuation of Land Act 1944 to clarify the intentions of section 13BA (1) which was introduced in 1993 as a consequential amendment flowing from the Local Government Act 1993.

Primarily, this Bill seeks to close a loophole that was created regarding the adjustment of previous valuations and consequential refunds of general rates. Section 13BA (1) enables a previous valuation to be altered when advice of changed circumstances is received late in a financial year or where it is received in the next financial year.

Currently, section 13BA (1) allows for a changed circumstance to be reflected by adjusting any previous valuation affected. For example, a heritage restriction in the Brisbane City Council Town Plan may require adjustments back to 1987.

The original intention of the amendment was to limit the alteration in valuation to the valuation which was used by a local government only in the previous year. The purpose of the Bill is to ensure that the original intention of the amendment is achieved. This amendment will protect the rating base of local governments and eliminate the possibility of large refunds in rates resulting from the amendment of valuations made over a number of previous financial years.

This amendment does not remove any rights which a landowner had before the 1993 amendment came into force on 26 March 1994. Landowners had the right to challenge each valuation at no cost through both objection and appeal processes.

In summary, the Bill will limit the amendment of valuations to those that were used as a rating base in the previous year. The amendment will have a date of effect of 26 March 1994, the date the original section 13BA (1) became effective. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr FitzGerald, adjourned.

PUBLIC SECTOR ETHICS BILL

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development) (5.38 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act about public sector ethics and conduct."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr W. K. Goss, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development) (5.39 p.m.): I move—

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

I am pleased to introduce the Public Sector Ethics Bill 1994. This Bill is part of the comprehensive and ongoing program of reform in Queensland which has made this State respectable again.

One of the matters to which the Fitzgerald inquiry paid particular attention was the need for high standards of integrity and ethical behaviour in the public service. In particular, the report of the inquiry dealt with the proper role of the public official in a Westminster-style system of Government and public administration, and many of the commission's recommendations were concerned with the quality of public administration.

In response to the Fitzgerald report, the Government established the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission—EARC as it is better known—to continue the work of identifying further reforms to Queensland's system of public administration. The great majority of EARC's comprehensive and detailed recommendations in relation to the code of conduct for public officials were endorsed unanimously by the Parliamentary Committee for Electoral and Administrative Review in May 1993. The Government agrees with the conclusions of the parliamentary committee.

The Bill which is before the House provides for a comprehensive approach to setting appropriate standards of professional ethics for public servants and other public officials who make decisions, exercise powers and control taxpayer-provided resources on behalf of the Government.

Public sector ethics covers a broad range of issues, including the proper role of public servants in relation to the Minister and the Government of the day, resolution of conflict between professional and employer obligations, and control of public comment by public servants on Government policy, as well as matters formally defined in the Criminal Justice Act and the Criminal Code.

The proposed legislation arises not from any conviction on the part of the Government that Queensland's public sector is corrupt or unconcerned about ethical conduct, but in response to the need for a modern approach to public sector ethics, and specifically for more detailed guidance and training. These were concerns which many Government departments and individual public servants identified in submissions to EARC in its review of the old code of conduct for the public service.

Put at its simplest, it is no longer safe to rely on comfortable assumptions that the traditional "Westminster" conventions of public service are matters of common knowledge, or that such conventions are still relevant. We live in a society which is changing rapidly and in sometimes unexpected ways, and as a result there are continuing pressures on Governments and public sector organisations, and on individual public officials, to respond to situations and dilemmas which have never arisen before.

Technological change, social change, and new ways of managing public resources are combining to change the way the public service functions. Indeed, it may no longer be safe to assume that there will be general agreement about what the traditions of "Westminster" Government require in any particular situation. The expectations of Parliaments and Governments which are held by Queenslanders in 1994 are very different from what they were in 1954, or 1914, and the role of the public service in 1994 is very different also.

The exercise of good judgment among the many competing interests in a complex society is increasingly what modern democratic Government is about. Of necessity, public officials make many decisions on behalf of Ministers—for example, in the process of giving effect to the policy directives of a Minister, or in deciding whether a particular application for Government assistance fits within the policy objectives of the relevant legislation.

The report of the EARC review of public sector codes of conduct concluded that the existing "code of conduct for officers of the Queensland public service", promulgated in 1988 and based on a model drawn from the Commonwealth, was deficient in coverage and provided inadequate guidance. Further, EARC found that the large majority of officials surveyed would prefer to pay little attention to that code, because they regarded themselves as ethically competent. EARC found there was apparent justification for their confidence.

EARC also found that the code is not well known within the public service, because the overall approach to development of the code of conduct had been limited, with little or no coordination and training support. Lack of ethics training is still seen as a major weakness in present accountability arrangements, which emphasise reporting of wrongdoing to the CJC and other external watchdog bodies after the event.

The Public Sector Ethics Bill is therefore concerned with the professional ethics standards which may reasonably be expected of public officials in Queensland today, and the role of a modern professional public service, or what the Fitzgerald report called "the proper relationship between Ministers and officials", rather than the personal moral standards of individual public servants.

I will now outline the central features of this important Bill. The main objective of the Public Sector Ethics Bill is to declare the fundamental ethical obligations of public officials as the basis of good public administration, and to provide for agency-based codes of conduct, effective implementation, including training in the implementation of such codes, and related administrative mechanisms, including sanctions for breaches of codes.

The Government has accepted the model for ethics codes proposed by EARC and the parliamentary committee, namely, that the same basic ethics standards should apply to all

appointed and employed officials in the Queensland public sector. EARC considered that such standards should be based on a small number of general principles declared in legislation, with specific requirements and local interpretations of the principles being set down to the minimum extent necessary in individual agency-based codes of conduct. Consultation with affected staff, clients, and other interest groups was seen as essential to the codes being adopted effectively.

The Government has rejected the alternative model for codes, namely, specific and exhaustive regulation for all foreseeable eventualities, as likely to be ineffective in developing individual ethical competence among officials and "ownership" of the provisions of a code.

The enactment of a Public Sector Ethics Act emphasises the Government's commitment to achieving high standards of professional ethics for public officials. Legislation also enables the many and varied agencies in the public sector to apply its existing disciplinary powers and procedures to breaches of a code prepared in accordance with the Act, without the need to amend other legislation.

EARC's approach emphasised the position of trust occupied by public officials, and recommended what amounts to a "professional ethics" code for public officials, based on the core features of "Westminster" conventions of democratic parliamentary Government—elected Ministers who are accountable to Parliament and the electorate for the administration of their portfolios, and a partnership between Ministers and appointed officials in which the Minister has the ultimate right to decide on policy and priorities.

The Bill declares five "ethics principles" to be the basis of good public administration, reflecting the Government's support for the conclusion reached by both EARC and Commissioner Fitzgerald, namely, that high standards of ethical conduct by officials are essential to good Government, and the general wellbeing of the community.

The Bill's ethics principles, which I will detail shortly, are to be reflected in individual codes of conduct, which individual agencies will be required to develop in consultation with their staff and other relevant interest groups.

Traditionally, public service codes of conduct have provided general definitions of acceptable and unacceptable conduct for public sector employees, and have usually included a good deal of detailed regulation of personal conduct. Such codes typically provide for disciplinary and other action by the employer in cases of non-compliance, but rarely provide any "aspirational" element in relation to optimal ethical standards. Experience shows that such codes have rarely been effective.

The Public Sector Ethics Bill will ensure that Queensland's public sector codes of conduct will be more relevant to the circumstances in which they apply, better understood by the officials to whom they relate, and a more useful source of guidance for officials dealing with the complexities of modern public administration. Queensland will also include a strong emphasis on achieving high standards of public administration, and a reiteration of the traditional idea that public office, and public employment, is a public trust.

Under the Bill, chief executives of agencies are to be responsible for ensuring that their agency's code is implemented effectively, and in particular for ensuring that adequate consultation and training is undertaken. The Government has adopted the EARC and PEARC recommendations that codes be developed in consultation with staff to ensure the maximum staff involvement in the process, and thereby maximum "ownership" and understanding of the requirements. Relevance and flexibility is also likely to be enhanced; for example, a commercial unit might establish more flexible rules for receipt of small gifts from the private sector than a licensing branch. However, both agencies would be required by the "integrity" principle in the Act to ensure that gifts are not allowed to compromise the integrity of the agency.

The reduction of present uncertainties about what constitutes acceptable conduct by an official in a particular situation will remove many difficulties for public sector managers. The Bill's five ethics principles, which are identified as the basis of good public administration across the whole of the public sector, were identified by EARC, and endorsed by the parliamentary committee, following extensive research in "Westminster"-style systems of Government, and after considerable public consultation.

The principles are set out in the Bill, and they are as follows—

respect for the law and system of Government;

respect for persons;

integrity;

diligence; and

economy and efficiency.

The Bill states the ethical obligations of appointed officials in terms which follow the recommendations of EARC and the PCEAR closely. In each case, the requirements of the Bill

have immediate practical application to the daily work of public officials, for example—

Respect for the law and system of Government

In practice, this obligation requires that officials should, for example, exercise powers lawfully, obey lawful instructions, be responsive to the mandate of the Government of the day, and provide information and assistance to a parliamentary committee, where authorised to do so by a Minister. The exception provided for in the second section of the obligation statement recognises that independence from the need to observe Government policy may be, in our society, a characteristic feature of the function of some kinds of public official, for example, commissioners and statutory office-holders, independent tribunals, and academic members of a university.

Respect for persons

In practice, this obligation requires that officials should, for example, avoid patronage and favouritism in employment matters, exercise powers fairly and equitably, seek to ensure that members of the public receive their proper entitlements and know their rights, avoid sexual harassment, recognise that other officials are also bound by official obligations, and should respond to requests in a timely way.

Integrity

In practice, this obligation requires that officials should, for example, not disclose official information improperly, not abuse the powers or resources available to them as officials, avoid any conflict between personal interests and official duties, or resolve such conflict in favour of the public interest. The obligation also requires officials to avoid conduct which could undermine public confidence in the Government or the system of public administration, for example, failure to disclose to a relevant authority known fraudulent or corrupt conduct, or "maladministration" by another official. (This latter requirement complements the disclosure provisions in the Criminal Justice Act which place a duty of disclosure on principal officers, but not public officials generally.)

Diligence

In practice, this obligation requires that officials should, for example, return "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay", observe the procedural fairness ("natural justice") requirements of good administrative decision making, make all reasonable efforts to provide high standards of service to clients, act in accordance with relevant "duty of care" requirements, avoid negligent conduct, provide expert and comprehensive advice to Ministers, and seek to maintain high standards of public administration.

Economy and efficiency

In practice, this obligation requires that officials should manage all forms of public resources (for example, human, material, and financial resources, intellectual property and official information) in the interests of safeguarding public assets and revenues and ensuring efficient programs and service delivery.

The ethics obligations are not ordered hierarchically, reflecting the fact that ethical decision making often involves the exercise of judgment between competing principles or interests.

Agency codes are to be approved by a "responsible authority". This is usually the relevant Minister, although there are some exceptions, such as local government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils.

As to sanctions—the Bill will not create any new offences for wrongdoing by public officials. Breaches of codes will be dealt with as matters to which an agency's existing disciplinary and other management prerogatives apply.

Other offences, such as those contained in the Criminal Code, will be referred to in agency codes, and allegations of "official misconduct" will continue to be referred by principal officers to the CJC for investigation under the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

The Ombudsman will continue to have jurisdiction to investigate public complaints of maladministration by public officials—for example, unfair or unlawful decision making affecting the rights of citizens—under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974.

Staff of GOCs are not to be covered by the Act, but GOCs will be encouraged by their shareholding Ministers to develop their own codes along similar lines, reflecting their commercial circumstances.

The Bill provides for the eventual replacement of the 1988 "code of conduct for officers of the Queensland public service" by the new agency-based codes, ideally within two years.

To assist agencies with the training and casework functions, and to provide a coordinated policy approach to interpretation of the new ethics standards, a new central ethics training and advice function will be established on a two-year temporary basis within the Public Sector Management Commission.

The relationship of this legislation with the Whistleblowers Protection Bill is important. This Bill is to be considered by the Parliament in conjunction with the Whistleblowers Protection Bill. The two submissions are related. Both aim to

create a work environment in which defined standards of ethical conduct are widely understood and observed, and staff are encouraged to report serious wrongdoing using approved internal and external channels. Both encourage chief executives to take responsibility for ethics training and case management rather than relying on the CJC, or doing nothing, and both Bills provide for an advice function to assist CEOs and employees on public sector ethics matters.

The Public Sector Ethics Act will complement the proposed Whistleblowers Protection Act by placing an obligation on public officials to expose fraud, corruption and maladministration of which they are aware. Agency codes will also enable chief executives to provide procedures to allow employees to challenge directions that are considered to be improper or unlawful.

In summary, the Bill and its related agency-based codes of conduct provide a clear basis for agencies to take effective disciplinary action for breaches of ethics standards by staff, and to encourage exemplary standards of official conduct.

An effective code of conduct, based on broadly legislated principles, will provide improved public administration in a number of ways—reduced time spent by managers dealing with unacceptable conduct, increased effectiveness of disciplinary action, reduced waste and inefficiency, and increased public confidence in the integrity of Government administration.

It is the Government's wish that the Public Sector Ethics Bill be passed before the end of the year to enable public sector agencies to proceed with developing their ethics codes in a timely fashion, while allowing for necessary consultation with affected staff.

This is very significant legislation for this Government, for the Fitzgerald reform process, for an increasingly responsive and professional public sector in Queensland, and indeed for the people of Queensland who will be the ultimate beneficiaries of the trust they place in our public officials.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Borbidge, adjourned.

WHISTLEBLOWERS PROTECTION BILL

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development) (5.58 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to protect whistleblowers and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr W. K. Goss, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development) (5.59 p.m.): I move—

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

I am pleased to introduce the Whistleblowers Protection Bill 1994. As with the Public Sector Ethics Bill, this Bill is part of the comprehensive and ongoing program of reform in Queensland which has made this State respectable again.

One of the major recommendations of the Fitzgerald inquiry was for legislation to protect public officers who disclose misconduct in the workplace. In response to the Fitzgerald report, the Government acted quickly to provide legal safeguards for whistleblowers. In 1990, in the first year of Government, the Whistleblowers (Interim Protection) Act increased the protections for persons assisting the Criminal Justice Commission. The Act made it an offence to victimise such persons. It also allowed the CJC to seek injunctive relief to prevent victimisation of whistleblowers and other persons assisting the commission.

Certain protections were also enacted for persons making complaints to other independent review bodies, namely the Health Rights Commission and the Anti-Discrimination Commission. Subsequently, EARC and the parliamentary committee examined the protections available for whistleblowers. Notwithstanding the advances made, they concluded that a more comprehensive approach was needed. The Government agrees with this conclusion.

The Bill before the House provides for a comprehensive scheme of whistleblower protection in the public sector. The Bill widens the types of misconduct about which whistleblower disclosures can be made and also greatly extends the protections for persons making such disclosures.

Let me outline the key features of the legislation. Conceptually, the scheme is simple. The Bill protects public officers who make

whistleblower disclosures about certain types of misconduct identified in the Bill. The Bill calls these disclosures "public interest disclosures". Public officers can make disclosures to their own agency if its own conduct is involved, or that of its staff, or to any appropriate public authority which can investigate the wrongdoing. Depending on the type of conduct disclosed, such an authority could include the Criminal Justice Commission, the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman, the Queensland Police, the Department of Environment and Heritage and the Queensland Heritage Council. It could also include the relevant parliamentary committees such as the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Works Committee.

This arrangement gives public officers wide flexibility in determining which agency they can disclose the wrongdoing to, including their own agency if the disclosure is about its own conduct or that of its staff. For example, one type of disclosure that can be made under the Bill is about negligent or improper management resulting in substantial waste of public funds. If a public officer finds that fellow officers are engaging in such mismanagement, this Bill enables them to report the conduct to their own agency without fear of reprisal. Alternatively, or in addition, they can report the conduct to any external authority that can investigate the mismanagement of funds. This includes the Auditor-General, and could also include the Public Sector Management Commission or the Public Accounts Committee if they have power to investigate the matter.

Notably, the Bill allows disclosures to be made to a wide range of persons within public authorities. These include: the chief executive officer; any supervising officer if the person making the disclosure belongs to that authority; or any officer having responsibility to take action on the type of information disclosed. An example of the latter would be the authority's internal auditor if the disclosure is about mismanagement of funds.

If a person is unsure about which authority they can disclose wrongdoing to, the Bill protects the person if they disclose the wrongdoing to any public authority, even if the public authority has no power to investigate the disclosure, provided that the whistleblower honestly believes that the authority is an appropriate entity to receive the disclosure. The Bill gives the entity power to refer the disclosure to the relevant authority.

I now turn to the types of disclosures that can be made under the Bill. The Bill's primary purpose is to protect public officers disclosing wrongdoing within the public sector. In this context, the Bill prescribes a wide range of wrongdoing that can be disclosed by public officers. Firstly, this Bill enables public officers to disclose official misconduct. Official misconduct is defined by the Criminal Justice Act and centres on serious misconduct by public officers in such areas as fraud, corruption and misappropriation. This disclosure category will protect staff who report official misconduct to their own agency or to appropriate external authorities, including the Criminal Justice Commission and the Queensland Police.

The second type of disclosure that public officers can make is about maladministration—that is, administrative decisions which are unlawful or unjust and which adversely affect a person's rights in a substantial and specific way. The relevant external authority most likely to receive complaints of this nature is the Ombudsman, although, as I have said, whistleblowers can also report such disclosures to their own agency if its own conduct is involved.

The third type of disclosure that public officers can make under the Bill is about negligent or improper management resulting in substantial waste of public funds. I have previously mentioned this category.

The fourth type of disclosure is about conduct causing a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety or to the environment. This is a particularly broad category. It allows public officers to disclose any conduct in the public or private sector that substantially endangers the public or the Queensland environment. Potentially, a wide range of public authorities could receive disclosures under this category, including the Department of Environment and Heritage, the Department of Transport, Queensland Health, DEVETIR and the Queensland Heritage Council.

The definition of "public health and safety" embraces not only members of the public using Government or community services, but also persons under the care and control of public agencies. So, for example, if a prison officer witnesses a fellow officer assaulting a prisoner, he or she would be protected for disclosing the assault to prison management, or to any relevant external authority, including the Queensland Police.

While the Bill's primary purpose is to protect public sector whistleblowers, it also protects private sector employees who disclose wrongdoing in three important areas. The first is where staff employed by the private or public disability services expose practices which substantially endanger their clients. In light of recent investigations by the Criminal Justice

Commission, there is a need to protect the interests of intellectually disabled persons in institutional care who are, because of their disability, more than usually vulnerable to abuse. Accordingly, the Bill protects anyone disclosing substantial and specific danger to a person with a disability.

The second area is where private sector employees expose serious environmental offences. The Bill allows any person to disclose a range of prescribed offences where the commission of the offence poses a substantial and specific danger to the Queensland environment. These include offences under the new Environmental Protection Act, the proposed Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act and the Nature Conservation Act. Whistleblower protection for private sector employees will facilitate the reporting and investigation of such offences in the interests of effective enforcement of legislation designed to protect Queensland's environment.

The third area is where private sector employees and other persons report abuses by health service providers, particularly in the area of mental health care. The Bill amends the Health Rights Commission Act to strengthen the protections for complainants to the Health Rights Commission, which is the primary body for investigating complaints in this area.

In order to attract the protections in the Bill, disclosures must be made to appropriate public sector authorities. The Bill does not protect persons who make disclosures to or through the media, although it does not prohibit whistleblowers going to the media. Persons who make disclosures to the media under existing common law and defamation law are not affected by this Bill. However, their disclosures will not attract the more certain and wider protections provided by the legislation.

The requirement that disclosures be made to appropriate public authorities is based on two objectives: first, to ensure that disclosures are directed towards authorities that have proper authority to investigate the complaint; second, to avoid unfair damage to reputations through inappropriate publication of unsubstantiated disclosures.

Any balanced whistleblower scheme must take into account a variety of competing interests. These include the need to expose wrongdoing, the need to protect the whistleblower and the need to give proper—and I stress "proper"—consideration to the rights of those named in the disclosures. It must be emphasised that the Bill does not require that the disclosures be substantiated in order to attract the protections. It is sufficient for the disclosure to have been made honestly and on reasonable grounds. In light of this, disclosures may be made against private citizens, community groups and companies, as well as public officers, which turn out to be baseless or which simply cannot be substantiated. It would be quite unfair to give special legal protection to such disclosures made through the media.

The Bill requires that public sector authorities receiving disclosures must treat them with appropriate confidentiality. However, the authority is authorised to disclose the contents of a disclosure for a proper purpose, including investigation of the disclosure and for disciplinary and criminal proceedings.

The House should note that the Bill does not impose confidentiality obligations on disclosures made publicly in proceedings of a parliamentary committee, a commission of inquiry, a court or other public authority taking evidence in public proceedings. The media will be able to report such disclosures, except where the entity, under established law or practice, prohibits publication in the interests of fairness. I note that the Senate Committee on Public Interest Whistleblowing was also concerned about unfair damage to reputations. The committee also considered that whistleblower allegations should be handled with appropriate confidentiality.

The Bill does not require authorities receiving whistleblower disclosures to investigate them. Wide powers already exist to enable departments, the Queensland police and independent bodies such as the Audit Office, the Ombudsman and the Criminal Justice Commission to take action on disclosures received. However, the Bill does place an onus on all public authorities to provide whistleblowers with updates on progress made in investigating their disclosures. The Bill also requires agencies to report annually to Parliament on the number of disclosures received and whether they have been substantiated.

The Government rejects the view of some Queensland so-called whistleblowers that a new body should be established to investigate whistleblower complaints. The Government has also declined the suggestion of the Senate committee that a further investigation should be undertaken of a number of so-called unresolved whistleblower cases. I have written to the chair of the committee, Senator Newman, outlining the Government's views on this matter. I seek leave to table my letter to Senator Newman and have it incorporated in *Hansard*. The letter is dated 10 October 1994.

Leave granted.

PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND

Executive Building 100 George Street, Brisbane, Q. 4000

Telephone: (07) 224 4500

Facsimile: (07) 221 1206

10 Oct 1994

Senator Jocelyn Newman

Chair

Senate Select Committee on Public Interest Whistleblowing

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Newman

Report of the Select Committee "In the Public Interest"

Thank you for your letter of 1 September 1994 enclosing a copy of your Committee's Report entitled "In the Public Interest".

I note with interest the Committee's recommendations for new Commonwealth legislation to protect persons who disclose wrongdoing in the public and private sectors.

Initial Queensland Responses to Fitzgerald Report

As you would be aware, the provision of adequate protection for whistleblowers has been a policy objective for the Queensland Government since the Report of the Fitzgerald Commission of Inquiry was presented in 1989. That report recommended that legal protection be given to honest public officials who disclose misconduct or other wrongdoing within public instrumentalities.

In response to the Fitzgerald Report, a number of things were done very quickly to ensure that protection was given to whistleblowers. The legislation setting up the Criminal Justice Commission (the Criminal Justice Act 1989) provided persons who assist the CJC with protection from legal action for breach of secrecy obligations. As well, the Witness Protection Division of the CJC was established to provide protection to persons who assist law enforcement bodies including the CJC.

Further protections for whistleblowers were enacted in 1990 with the passage of the Whistleblowers (Interim Protection) and Miscellaneous Amendment Act. This Act increased protections for persons assisting the CJC and also the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission. Included was a provision making it an offence to victimise a person for assisting the CJC and enabling the CJC to seek an injunction from the Supreme Court to prevent victimisation. The EARC was given similar powers.

This legislation was the first specifically designed whistleblower protection legislation in Australia.

Subsequently, protections were also enacted for persons making complaints to two additional independent review bodies—the Health Rights Commission and the Anti-Discrimination Commission. These were provided under the Health Rights Commission Act 1991 and the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991.

Whistleblowers Protection Bill 1994

Comprehensive whistleblower protection legislation (the Whistleblowers Protection Bill 1994) will be introduced into Parliament in the October 1994 sittings.

The Bill derives from a substantial review by EARC and the Parliamentary Committee for Electoral and Administrative Review into whistleblower protection arrangements. The legislation will protect public officers of State and local government who disclose serious wrongdoing within the workplace including official misconduct, substantial waste of public funds or activities causing substantial danger to public health and safety or the environment. As well, any person, including a private sector employee, will have protection for disclosing the commission of a range of designated environmental offences if the commission involves a substantial and specific danger to the environment. Any person will also be protected for disclosing abuses (e.g. by disability service providers) against disabled persons (including the intellectually disabled) and abuses against mental health patients and other persons in receipt of health services.

Because the legislation covers such a wide range of public sector activity, and because a large number of bodies exist which already have power to investigate matters covered in the legislation* the legislation does not set up a new body to receive disclosures under the Act. Rather the legislation protects a public officer for disclosing the wrongdoing to any public sector entity that is an appropriate authority to receive the complaint. The entity is appropriate to receive the complaint if the information relates to the conduct of its staff or it otherwise has a function or power to take action on the matter. In this way a public officer will have the choice of disclosing the conduct to their own agency (if the disclosure concerns the agency) or to any external body if the disclosure involves a matter which the external body can investigate. These bodies include those listed in the footnote below.

The legislation does not require agencies to investigate disclosures as the procedures for investigation of complaints is, in most cases, provided for under other legislation such as that

establishing the CJC, Health Rights Commission, the Queensland Audit Office, the Ombudsman and other statutory authorities. However, the Bill will place an onus on all public sector entities to provide whistleblowers with updates on progress made in investigating disclosures and to report annually to Parliament on the number of disclosures received by the entity and whether they have been substantiated.

The legislation will provide the most comprehensive legal and administrative protections presently enacted anywhere in Australia and possibly anywhere in the world. The protections will include the following:

. the whistleblower will have immunity in civil and criminal proceedings including absolute privilege in defamation proceedings,

. a public officer who takes a reprisal against a whistleblower will commit a criminal offence and will be guilty of misconduct and may be dismissed from office or otherwise disciplined;

. the CJC will have authority to investigate a reprisal taken by a public officer that would constitute official misconduct or misconduct by a Police officer;

. a whistleblower who suffers a reprisal will have a right to apply to a civil court for damages including damages for pain and suffering;

. where there is a right of appeal in relation to disciplinary action, or a promotion of another officer, or a transfer, or unfair treatment, the whistleblower will be able to appeal to have the action set aside on the additional ground that the action constituted a reprisal;

. to protect a whistleblower from possible reprisals, the Governor in Council will have an extra-ordinary power to move the whistleblower (if a public servant) to another department together with their position, provided that the transfer is made on the recommendation of the independent Commissioner for Public Sector Equity and the whistleblower consents to the move;

. the Industrial Relations Act 1990 (Qld) will be amended to make it unlawful to dismiss an employee for making a disclosure. If dismissed, the employee will be able to seek remedy from the Industrial Relations Commission;

. the Bill will enable an injunction to be sought from the Industrial Relations Commission to restrain a reprisal against a public officer where the reprisal involves a breach of employment conditions under the Industrial Relations Act. The injunction may be sought by the public officer, or by the officer's union, or by the CJC if it involves conduct that the CJC may investigate. Where an unlawful reprisal does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission, the Bill enables an injunction to be sought from the Supreme Court.

The Bill will protect disclosures about wrongdoing which occurred before the commencement of the legislation but will not apply to disclosures made before the Act takes effect.

Disclosures Must be Made to Appropriate Authorities

In framing whistleblower legislation, appropriate consideration must also be given to the rights of those against whom allegations are made as well as to the rights of the whistleblower.

Under the Whistleblowers Protection Bill, to qualify for protection the whistleblower will have to demonstrate that they had a honest belief on reasonable grounds that the information they disclosed showed the wrongdoing in question. However, it will not be necessary to show that the disclosure was objectively true. Consequently, information unfairly damaging to reputations may be lawfully disclosed by a whistleblower who has a reasonable belief that the information was accurate but which, on investigation, turns out to be misleading, or without substance. Provided that the information was made honestly on reasonable grounds, individuals named or referred to in the disclosure will have no recourse through defamation proceedings or other legal action which could otherwise be taken against the whistleblower.

To minimise unwarranted public damage to reputations, the Bill does not protect disclosures made to the media. To receive protection, disclosures must be made to public sector bodies with the power to investigate the complaint in accordance with due Parliamentary, legal or administrative process. The Bill imposes a duty on the investigating authority not to disclose confidential information received in a public interest disclosure, including the identity of the whistleblower and the identity of a person against whom the disclosure has been made.

The appropriate entity is authorised to disclose confidential information for the purpose of carrying out a lawful function, including investigation of the disclosure, and to disclose the information to a court or tribunal, e.g. for the purpose of criminal or disciplinary proceedings. (The Bill recognises that from time to time public interest disclosures are, and will be, made in public proceedings of a Parliamentary committee, an investigating authority such as

the CJC, a court or tribunal or other public authority authorised to take evidence in public proceedings. Such public disclosures are also protected by the legislation. The confidentiality obligations in the Bill will not apply to such disclosures except where the authority under another law or practice resolves to prevent publication out of fairness to others or in the public interest.)

I note your Committee's own concerns about unfair damage to reputations through publication of unsubstantiated disclosures and the Committee's recommendation that whistleblower allegations should be investigated with appropriate confidentiality, and that whistleblowers who disclose their allegations through the media should not have absolute immunity from defamation proceedings.

Changing Management Culture

The Government will also be introducing a Public Sector Ethics Bill in conjunction with the Whistleblowers Protection Bill. The Public Sector Ethics Bill 1994 will establish fundamental ethical obligations for public officers, require public sector entities to prepare codes of conduct for their staff and ensure that staff are provided with training on ethics principles.

The Public Sector Ethics Bill will complement the Whistleblowers Protection Bill by establishing a positive, proactive approach to improving the ethical culture of public sector organisations. Among the principles to be established through codes of conduct and education is the appropriateness and value of allowing staff to expose fraud, corruption and other wrongdoing in the workplace and to ensure that channels are available to staff who wish to disclose malpractice, challenge unlawful or improper directions or raise ethical issues generally with supervisors.

I note that your Committee also regards attitudinal change within organisations as a key element of whistleblower protection. I agree with the Committee that effective internal reporting procedures within organisations are the cornerstone to whistleblowing and that effective procedures should enable many reports of wrongdoing to be resolved at this level.

Whistleblower Cases Raised by Whistleblowers Action Group

Your letter drew attention to a recommendation of the Committee concerning certain "apparently unresolved whistleblower cases in Queensland". These cases appear to have been drawn to the Committee's attention by the Whistleblowers Action Group and by individual members of that Group in submissions and evidence given to the Committee. The Report recommends that the Queensland Government establish an independent investigation into these apparently unresolved cases within its jurisdiction. In a footnote on page 5 of the Report, the Committee refers to cases raised by Mr Kevin Lindeberg, Mr Des O'Neill, Ms Teri Lambert, Mr Peter Jesser, Mr Gordon Harris, Mr Tom Hardin, Mr Robert Osmak, Mr Greg McMahon and Mr Bill Zinglemann.

I note the Committee's comment that "it was not the Committee's function to make judgements as to the merits or otherwise of individual cases" and that "many cases involved organisations not within the Commonwealth's jurisdiction".

I am not aware of all the cases referred to by the Committee. However, I am advised that the more prominent of these cases have, in various ways, been subject to independent investigation by the proper authority established to investigate complaints of official misconduct, namely the Criminal Justice Commission. I refer in particular to:

. allegations raised by Mr Lindeberg (and Mr O'Neill) in relation to the shredding of documents concerning the Heiner Inquiry; and

. allegations made by Mr Harris (and other persons) concerning the appropriateness of the response from the CJC, the Director of Prosecutions, the Police Service and other authorities to investigations by Mr Harris (when a Police officer) in connection with former Police Superintendent Huey.

In respect of allegations raised by Mr Lindeberg concerning the lawfulness of redundancy payments made to Mr Coyne by the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, and the lawfulness of the destruction of documents relating to the Heiner Inquiry, the CJC concluded that there was no official misconduct involved.

In respect of complaints concerning the handling of allegations against Mr Huey, various matters have been subject to inquiries by the CJC and two separate inquiries by the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee (PCJC). In its first investigation, the PCJC engaged two senior NSW Police officers to conduct an independent investigation. The NSW Police officers found that none of the complaints made to the PCJC could be substantiated. For its second inquiry, the PCJC engaged a senior Member of the Criminal Bar to assist the Committee. In a majority report, the Committee found that none of the further complaints raised with the Committee could be substantiated, including a complaint that the investigation by the NSW Police officers was not thorough or independent.

In its second report, the PCJC also examined the prosecution of Mr Harris for unlawful release of

confidential Police documents. The Report noted Mr Harris' conviction for unlawful disclosure of confidential Police information and the subsequent confirmation of Mr Harris' conviction by the Court of Appeal. The Report referred to the judgement by the Court of Appeal that Mr Harris disclosed confidential Police information for the purpose of pursuing his investigations against Mr Huey when Mr Harris had been instructed not to continue with the investigation because of advice from the Director of Prosecutions that no further action against Mr Huey could properly be taken in law. The Court of Appeal found that Mr Harris' conviction was correct as it could not have served to go on with a prosecution that was in law bound to fail or with an investigation that would bring no offender to justice.

I must remind the Committee that in accordance with legislative arrangements established since the Fitzgerald Inquiry, the proper authority responsible for investigating complaints by whistleblowers about official misconduct or misconduct by a member of the Police Service is the CJC. The CJC has been substantially resourced to undertake investigations (its 1994-95 budget is $20.8m), it has been given extraordinary legal powers to uncover misconduct, and it has available to it a range of mechanisms to protect and support whistleblowers (in this context I understand that the Commission has recently established a Whistleblowers Support program to provide counselling and support to persons who assist the CJC).

Most importantly, the CJC has complete autonomy in conducting its investigations and is required by its Act to act independently and impartially at all times. It would not be proper or lawful for the Government to attempt to interfere in the conduct of any particular investigation and it is not the practice of the Government to do so.

If a whistleblower is dissatisfied with an investigation by the CJC, it is open to them to take the matter up with the Commission or with the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee which, on behalf of the Parliament, oversees the operation and performance of the CJC.

I do not support the establishment of a independent investigation into the cases to which the Committee refers given the fact that the more significant cases have already been considered by independent review bodies. Apart from the additional cost to the taxpayer, I do not accept the proposition that whenever a whistleblower takes a complaint to the CJC, the Audit Office, the Ombudsman, the Health Rights Commission or a relevant Parliamentary Committee that person should be entitled to a further independent review of the matter if he or she is dissatisfied with the outcome. There may be exceptional circumstances which might warrant such a course but I do not consider that these circumstances apply in the cases referred to by the Committee.

Further, from the evidence given to the Committee, I am not convinced that any investigation that could be sanctioned by Government or Parliament would be acceptable to all whistleblowers concerned. Your Committee's report drew attention to the "cynicism" of some whistleblowers towards Parliamentary and government review mechanisms which they regard as all part of a "corrupt" system. The report noted the view of the Queensland Whistleblowers Study that the best method for protecting whistleblowers would be an organisation outside state apparatus, preferably under the control of whistleblowers. With respect to the authors of that Study, no government would be prepared to establish a mechanism for reviewing whistleblower allegations made against other persons without proper regard being given to the rights of those against whom allegations are made as well as to those of the whistleblower. The cynicism of persons who have been subject to improper retaliation for whistleblowing by government agencies is perhaps understandable. However, I cannot see how investigations into whistleblower allegations could be conducted independently if persons who are making allegations have, directly or indirectly, substantial control over the investigative and protective process.

In 1989 the Fitzgerald Inquiry recommended that an appropriately resourced and professionally qualified Commission (the CJC) be established outside the then administrative and criminal justice framework to achieve the independence necessary to undertake investigations into misconduct and with proper legislative and legal authority. Your Committee also has recommended that an independent statutory body be established by the Commonwealth Parliament to investigate complaints by whistleblowers within Commonwealth jurisdiction. If such an agency is established, I wonder whether it too will not be seen by some whistleblowers as part of the "system".

I also reject the proposition that the CJC is not an appropriate body to investigate complaints by whistleblowers because the CJC may also be required to investigate misconduct by whistleblowers themselves as public officers. Under the proposed Bill, if a public officer knowingly makes a false or misleading allegation he or she will be open to prosecution for a criminal offence. Such conduct is likely to be official misconduct and is therefore a proper matter for the CJC to investigate.

I note that your Committee also considers that whistleblowers who knowingly make false allegations should be subject to a penalty.

Further Cases Referred to by Committee

I note that two of the cases the Committee refers to (Messrs Osmak and Grove) concern alleged wrongdoing in the Corrective Services Commission. The CJC does not have jurisdiction to investigate misconduct by officers of that Commission. However, it is intended that the Whistleblowers Protection Bill will protect officers of the Corrective Services Commission who disclose to the Queensland Police or other appropriate entities danger to prison officers under the care and control of the Commission or who disclose conduct by the Commission or any other authority that involves a substantial and specific danger to public safety.

In the case of Mr Rothe, I note that Mr Rothe complains that he was victimised for reporting a matter to his local authority. The CJC stated to the Committee that it could not investigate the Council's treatment of Mr Rothe as the alleged victimisation occurred as a result of his complaint to the Council rather than to the CJC. Under the Whistleblowers Protection Bill, the CJC will be able to investigate alleged reprisals taken against public officers for making disclosures to their own organisation as well as to external bodies such as the CJC.

Mr Hardin's case referred to by the Committee would appear to be primarily a matter for the Commonwealth Government.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to acknowledge the considerable progress Queensland has made in establishing mechanisms for investigation of complaints by honest whistleblowers and protecting such persons from unlawful reprisal—I am not aware of any other Australian Government which has done more than Queensland in this regard. Statistics were given to the Committee by the Criminal Justice Commission which clearly showed that a large number of whistleblower complaints investigated by the CJC have been substantiated. The Committee was informed that to 31 January 1994, the CJC had received a total of 949 complaints of official misconduct or misconduct from whistleblowers in public sector units. Of these complaints, 107 had led to 319 criminal charges being laid and 153 recommendations for disciplinary action to be taken against employees.

I believe it is unfair to single out Queensland for special mention in the Committee's report on the basis of information given to the Committee by the Queensland Whistleblowers Study and the Whistleblowers Action Group. I am not aware that comparable analyses of whistleblower cases in other states have been undertaken by academic researchers or interest groups. The existence of the Queensland Whistleblowers Study or the Whistleblowers Action Group do not in themselves indicate that Queensland "whistleblower cases" are more, or less, prevalent than in other parts of Australia, or are more, or less, likely to have been resolved. Rather, I think their existence owes much to the fact that Queensland has been in the forefront of public debate and action on whistleblower protection issues over the past five years.

Yours sincerely

(Sgd) Wayne Goss

Wayne Goss

*such bodies include the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee, the Parliamentary Public Works Committee, the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, the Courts, the CJC, a Misconduct Tribunal, the Queensland Police, the Queensland Audit Office, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman), the Health Rights Commission, the Anti Discrimination Commission, the Public Sector Management Commission, the Queensland Heritage Council and the Department of Environment and Heritage.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am aware that some Queensland whistleblowers consider that the CJC is not the appropriate body to investigate whistleblower allegations. The fact is that the Criminal Justice Commission has been substantially resourced to uncover misconduct. It has available to it a wide range of legal powers and facilities to protect and support persons disclosing official misconduct. These include a Witness Protection Division and a new whistleblowers support program. Most importantly, the Criminal Justice Commission has complete autonomy in conducting its investigations and is required to operate independently of the Government of the day. It would not be lawful for any Government or, indeed, the Opposition to attempt to interfere in the conduct of any particular investigation of the commission, and it has never been the practice of this Government to do so.

If a whistleblower is dissatisfied with an investigation by the Criminal Justice Commission, it is open to that person to take the matter up with the commission or with the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. Of course, not all whistleblower allegations are substantiated after investigation. Merely because a person is labelled or labels himself or herself a whistleblower does not mean that that person's allegations are necessarily true or provide sufficient legal grounds for criminal

prosecution or disciplinary action to be taken against persons named in disclosures.

The Senate committee report failed to indicate that many whistleblower allegations have been substantiated by the Criminal Justice Commission. The Criminal Justice Commission informed the committee that, to 31 January 1994, a total of 319 criminal charges and 153 recommendations for disciplinary action resulted from complaints made to the commission by whistleblowers. That is a significant result and demonstrates the important role that honest whistleblowers play in reporting serious wrongdoing.

Let me now address the protections for whistleblowers provided in the Bill. The Bill provides the most comprehensive legal protections for whistleblowers presently enacted anywhere in Australia and possibly anywhere in the world. The whistleblower will incur no criminal or civil liability for making a public interest disclosure under the Bill. This means they cannot be sued for defamation, nor can they be prosecuted for breaching confidentiality obligations owed to their employer or any secrecy requirements imposed on them as a public officer.

Second, the Bill makes it unlawful for anyone to take a reprisal against a whistleblower for making a disclosure. The Bill requires that public authorities must establish procedures for protecting staff from reprisals by other officers. Public officers who do take reprisals will be guilty of a criminal offence and will also be guilty of misconduct and may be dismissed from office.

Third, the Criminal Justice Commission will have authority to investigate reprisals by public officers that would constitute official misconduct or misconduct by a police officer. Fourth, public officers will be able to exercise employee appeal rights if they suffer reprisals for whistleblowing under the Act. Additionally, a departmental employee may lodge an appeal to the Commissioner for Public Sector Equity seeking relocation to another department if there is a continuing risk to the employee. If the commissioner supports the appeal, the Governor in Council is empowered to relocate the employee provided, of course, that the employee consents to the move.

Fifth, any person who suffers a reprisal will be able to apply to a civil court for damages, including damages for pain and suffering. Additionally, any person, if dismissed for whistleblowing under the Act, will be able to apply to the Industrial Relations Commission for reinstatement or compensation.

Finally, the Bill enables an injunction to be sought to restrain a reprisal against a whistleblower. The injunction can be sought from the Industrial Relations Commission if the reprisal involves a breach of employment conditions or from the Supreme Court in other circumstances.

These protections compare very favourably with the only whistleblower legislation enacted elsewhere in Australia, namely, in South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. For example, the South Australian Act makes no provision for employee appeals, no provision for relocation of an officer to another department and no provision for injunctive relief. The Government will not be relying on legal protections alone for whistleblowers. The Public Sector Ethics Bill, which was also introduced today, will reinforce legal protection for whistleblowers by a concerted effort to improve the ethical climate for whistleblowers in the workplace.

It is the Government's desire that the Whistleblowers Protection Bill be passed before the end of the year to enable the protections to commence as soon as possible. Very extensive public consultation was undertaken by EARC and the parliamentary committee during their reviews, and I do not consider that further extensive consultation is required. Nevertheless, the Government has agreed that the Bill will lie on the table for a short period to enable interested persons to comment on the Bill if they wish to do so.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Borbidge, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (6.18 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Proposed Amalgamation of Ipswich City and Moreton Shire

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (6.18 p.m.): Recently, the Commissioner for Local Government, Mr Greg Hoffman, handed to the Minister the preliminary report on the proposed amalgamation of Ipswich City and Moreton Shire. Tonight, I wish to address my comments to that report. There are major ramifications for a section of the Moreton Shire which falls into the electorate of Lockyer, that is, the larger rural areas of the shire. Those areas will be greatly

disadvantaged by any amalgamation into a greater Ipswich City.

The villages and towns in the electorate that will be affected are Peak Crossing, Harrisville, Warrill View, Mutdapilly, Rosevale, Grandchester and Franklin Vale. They will all be part of a city. It is a nonsense to think that the people in those towns would be living in a city. Their representation would be greatly reduced from the present level. For instance, when one divides the proposed new City of Ipswich into 12 different divisions, there will be approximately 6 514 electors per division. At present, Ipswich has an average of 4 833 electors in each division, whereas in the Moreton Shire the quota is 2 663. So their representation would go from 2 663 to 6 500 electors per member.

Mr McElligott interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: The honourable member says that they should be able to handle that. I assure the honourable member that there would be problems associated with representing a larger area including rural properties such as Peak Crossing, Harrisville and Rosevale. The rates charged for the services provided in that area are greater. On a rate-paying basis, the people in that area are paying a large amount of rates per head of population compared with what city people pay.

A Government member interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: What is wrong with the present system? At present they have a very cheap way of servicing the ratepayer's needs. The neighbouring Boonah Shire is a rural shire. Honourable members should consider the cost to the ratepayers of servicing that area. That shire is providing that service much cheaper than the Moreton Shire Council and much cheaper than the existing Ipswich City Council. That is because the ratepayers in those areas have plenty of representation. Their councillors are not paid exorbitant salaries; they are paid what those shires can afford. That is commonsense. The ratepayers in small shires have more representation and the councillors are paid a level of remuneration that is consistent with what the shire can afford. The ratepayers are getting good service. They are very happy with that arrangement. They will not be happy when they lose that representation. They will have councillors who will be paid more money, but because of the logistics involved they will only have one person whom they can approach .

When honourable members look at the proposed boundaries of those 12 divisions, particularly those boundaries in the Lockyer area, they will see that those boundaries run from a solid urban area down to a large rural rump. The ratepayers will have virtually no representation because it covers a large area and very few people live in some of those areas. Those boundaries slice up the area as if it were salami. They run from a densely populated area down to open-space farming areas. The honourable member would only have to look at the map to see that that is rather ridiculous.

I know that the people will be objecting to the amalgamation. They would probably prefer to go into Boonah Shire. That has problems associated with it, because in the Boonah Shire the rating in the dollar is less than what it is the Moreton Shire. That proves that the larger shires are not always the most efficient. Boonah Shire is an extremely efficient shire. It is small and very efficient. So the lesson that we have to learn from this is that—and I know that the Minister for Local Government who is in the Chamber is listening, because he will eventually have to make a decision on the final recommendation when it comes to him—small is not always inefficient. The greatest example of that is how efficient the small shire of Boonah is. It is a very small shire but it is a very efficient shire.

Time expired.

Ageing

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (6.23 p.m.): Today, I wish to raise the important issue of Queensland's ageing population. On Saturday, 27 August 1994, I had the honour to open the Queensland Council on the Ageing's Healthy Lifestyle Seminar at the Holy Spirit Hospital, at Spring Hill in my electorate. That occasion impressed on me the importance of the ageing issue.

When we look to the future, the health of older people is a significant issue for Queensland Health because Queensland's population, like the rest of the world's, is ageing.

It is interesting to examine the predicted growth of our older population. In 1993, almost 16 per cent of Queenslanders, or one in seven, were aged 60 years or more. By 2011, 19 per cent are expected to be 60 years or more. By 2031, 27 per cent of Queenslanders, or one in four, will be 60 years or more. Clearly, the growing number of older people will have an impact on the way health services are structured and delivered.

Older people are far from being an homogenous group. They vary in their personal histories and experiences, economic and social circumstances and their linguistic skills and cultural background. A growing proportion of older people were born in countries with a non-English speaking background. Their circumstances and health status are often quite different from the rest of the Australian

population's and they are likely to have special health needs.

A particular concern, for example, is that people from non-English speaking backgrounds often lose their English language skills as they grow older. By contrast, the social and economic circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are such that many experience premature ageing. As a result, the ages of 60 and 65, which are the accepted standards for "older age" in the general population, may not be appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The health of future populations will be directly affected by society's health history. An essential part of understanding the impact of our ageing population on the health system is acknowledging that the conditions for health are largely determined outside the health care system. For example, people born in 1921 who will be 75 in 1996 lived their childhood and adolescence before there was effective screening against tuberculosis or a vaccine against poliomyelitis. It has been traditional for health services, particularly those used by older people, to have a curative focus. So whenever the term "healthy lifestyle" has been used, it has often been in the context of physical health only. However, the past decade has seen great advances in the way health is defined.

I am pleased to say that Queensland Health has embraced a social view of health and recognises that health is not simply the absence of disease or infirmity. Health is influenced by the environment we live in, as well as our physical, social, emotional and mental well being.

Older people, particularly those over 75 years of age, are major users of health services. Given the predicted population increases in this age category, it is clear that appropriate health services are not all we need. There is also a need for a range of health enhancing programs and activities which enable older people to remain independent and enjoy a quality of life comparable to that of the rest of the community.

Older people contribute to society in many ways, for example as carers, which includes child minding, through financial support to family members and, of course, as volunteers. At least 25 per cent of older people are active in their local communities as volunteers.

Queensland Health is now funding a range of programs and services which pro-actively address health issues related to the general ageing of the population. For example, the Home and Community Care Program, known as HACC, addresses the needs of younger people with disabilities, frail older people and their carers. Of a total budget of $82m in the last financial year, HACC provided some $66m for 515 projects directed to older people. These included services such as Meals on Wheels, Home Help and domiciliary nursing.

A more recent initiative is the provision of Statewide funding for the 60 and Better Program. 60 and Better is a community development and a healthy ageing program which aims to involve older people in decisions and activities which affect their health and well-being at a local community level. Currently, there are 18 programs being trialled across the State. 60 and Better programs provide a range of activities based on the identified needs of older people in their local communities. Exercise is an issue frequently identified as important by older people and many 60 and Better Programs offer gentle exercise, aqua aerobics, Tai Chi and walking. Exercise was one of the topics addressed at the Healthy Lifestyle seminar at the Holy Spirit Hospital. There are benefits of regular exercise for people in general, but older people in particular.

Over the past two years, Queensland Health has supported projects aimed specifically at the exercise needs of older people. For example, in 1992 at a seminar for the International Day of the Elderly, staff from the Program Development Branch were so inspired by a presentation by Mrs Judy Morwood, one of the speakers at the Holy Spirit seminar, that they worked with her to produce a booklet on exercise titled *Happy, Fit and Active*.

Time expired.

Law and Order, Mooloolaba

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah) (6.28 p.m.): Tonight, I would like to speak about the most serious matter facing the Mooloolaba community at the moment. I refer to the various unpleasant activities that take place at Mooloolaba at night. We have had actual cases of assault, rape and murder. In addition, we have regular attacks of vandalism against property in the area. We have too many hoons in motor cars, revving engines and screeching tyres. What is also becoming increasing offensive at Mooloolaba at night is the loud, offensive language that echoes around the streets until the early hours. This is obviously a situation that cannot be allowed to continue.

As a member of the Opposition's task force on law and order, I have had the opportunity to listen to people in other places talk about what they believe is the cause of this sort of behaviour. Many have talked about the lack of respect that some young people show for others

and for the property of others. One could nominate institutionalised unemployment as a major contributing factor to that lack of respect. I would like to add that this in no way can be used as an excuse for the behaviour that some exhibit.

Obviously, alcohol has made a huge contribution to these problems. More disturbingly, we have seen a move towards binge drinking, a most disturbing development. Unfortunately, this excessive drinking is not only in licensed premises but is now seen in public. These days, of course, we have the added threat of other forms of substance abuse. Obviously, those substances are in use in places like Mooloolaba.

Adding to the drama, we have a transport problem in moving people away from nightclubs as most of the patrons leave the licensed premises at about the same time. There is very little public transport and people have to rely on the taxis, which quite often are not available in sufficient numbers to move people away quickly.

However, the scope of the problem must not deflect us from our determination to eradicate it. We in Mooloolaba are determined to take back our town for the good residents and the good visitors to enjoy. Firstly, we must all work together to find meaningful employment for all who wish to work, and it must be found as a priority. We must support those school teachers and principals who hold strongly to established values and the benefits of maintaining firm discipline in the schools.

I mentioned earlier offensive language in the streets. I have been told by police officers in my area that it is difficult to charge people for using offensive language because magistrates claim that such language can be heard daily on the TV. The Government is responsible for controlling this. If such language is offensive in the street, it certainly ought to be offensive on television in our homes.

I believe that the Gold Coast has introduced a code of conduct among nightclubs in the area. I have spoken to various people in that area and I am told that it is working. I believe that we on the Sunshine Coast should look seriously at this aspect. I also believe that the offence of public drunkenness should also be maintained if for no other reason than to protect people who are intoxicated from themselves.

Last Friday, a group of us at Mooloolaba, including my colleague the member for Maroochydore, conducted a safety audit in which we found a number of surprising aspects that could have contributed to some of the problems. Those will be addressed by the community. Dog patrols have been commenced in the area and although at first I recoiled from the thought of them, they seem to be doing the job. Local business people and now the Maroochy Shire Council support the concept.

I believe that surveillance cameras must eventually be installed in some parts of Mooloolaba and I hope that this Government would support such an initiative. I have written to the Minister for Transport to seek part-time taxi licences to ease the peak load periods, which would help. Obviously, we need more police. The police who are operating out of the Mooloolaba police beat are doing a great job, but I believe that they need more officers on the beat, with extra vehicles and equipment to make sure that this most important job is done to the best of their ability and to meet the expectations of the community.

As we head towards another Christmas/new year holiday period, it is imperative that the Government, the council and the community work together to ensure that Mooloolaba regains and retains its family reputation. I would like to take this opportunity to suggest that the system known as SETONS be made available to police officers for enforcing offences under the Liquor Act. These self-enforcing ticketable offence notices would be used in such a way as to allow police to issue on-the-spot fines for public drinking. In this way, police officers would be able to enforce the law quickly and efficiently without being tied down by unnecessary court procedures.

The Government has a very large role to play, and I summarise the points in which the State Government must become involved as follows: the Government must work towards supporting discipline and respect in our schools; the Government must work towards eradicating offensive language from our films, videos and TV screens; the Government must work with the nightclub industry to encourage a code of conduct; the Government must introduce a system of part-time taxi licences on the Sunshine Coast; the Government should work together with local government and the community to install and monitor surveillance cameras; the Government must find more police for areas such as the Sunshine Coast that require more police so that their job can be done properly; and, lastly, the Government should seriously consider the introduction of SETONS or on-the-spot fines under the Liquor Act.

Sandgate and District Historical Society and Museum Incorporated

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate) (6.33 p.m.): Yesterday, I spoke in Parliament about one of the community groups in my electorate that was doing a lot of good work. This evening, I want to

take the opportunity of speaking about another one of those groups, and that is the Sandgate and District Historical Society and Museum Incorporated.

This organisation was founded back in 1982. Of course, since then it has become a very important part of the local community within my electorate. The society itself is now preparing to make its own history by opening up the first museum in the Sandgate district. The building that the society has managed to acquire is the old Jehovah's Witness hall, which is situated in Rainbow Street in Sandgate. That will be turned into meeting rooms and a public museum, which I understand will be open five or six days a week. The opening of the new museum will take place on 5 November this year, and the society has invited the Minister for the Arts, the Honourable Dean Wells, to officially open the complex. I spoke to the Minister today and urged him to come along if he can to open the museum.

The current office bearers in the society are Mr John Keilly, who is the president, Mrs Jes Skinner, who is the secretary, and Mr Kev Stephenson, who is the Treasurer. Those people are carrying on some of the good work of the former committees of the organisation. Actually, Mrs Skinner, who is currently the secretary, was one of the founding members of the society and was the foundation secretary.

As I said, the society was formed back in 1982. It actually started off with three local people—Mary Steffens, Iris Elms and, as I said, Jes Skinner. They kicked the society off and at the first meeting, which attracted over 40 local residents, Mr Dave Preston, who was at that meeting, was made inaugural president.

The aims of the society are to record permanently the district's history and progress. If one cares to look at the history of Sandgate and its area, one would find that its first settler dates back to 1853. So the settlement of Sandgate is quite old and has a significant role to play in the history of the Brisbane metropolitan area.

The society's building in Rainbow Street will allow for the display of thousands of photographs that have been collected by the society and various other items. The organisation received funding of $38,750 from the Arts Queensland's Cultural Facilities, which was put towards the costs associated with the purchase of the building for the society's headquarters.

The Sandgate and District Historical Society and Museum holds a number of public meetings, puts on a number of public displays and also visits a number of local schools and community groups educating people about the history of the area. The society also manages to produce a monthly bulletin titled *By the Seaside*.

Mr Keilly, who is the president of the society, has stated that the facility being provided will be for the benefit of the total community of Sandgate. I want to put on record my appreciation of the work that has been done by that society. Indeed, it has gone to a great deal of trouble, particularly over the last 12 months since it has managed to purchase the building, to bring it up to scratch and to make it presentable. I am sure that the community within my electorate are certainly looking forward to the opening of their first museum. I invite all honourable members, if they are in my electorate, to avail themselves of the opportunity of coming along and having a look at such a fine display.

In closing, I congratulate the committee on its hard work. It needs to know, and I want to place on record, that it has my total support.

Law and Order

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (6.38 p.m.): I wish to follow on from the member for Mooloolah and highlight some of the law and order problems that we are experiencing.

The headline of the local paper in my electorate, the *Gympie Times,* states—

"Drunken hoodlums infuriate retailers."

I can say that such people are not only infuriating retailers but also householders and older people who walk on the streets and around the area.

Government members interjected.

Mr STEPHAN: Although I am hearing a lot of noise from Government members, a bit of action from them would be very handy indeed. Such action has not been forthcoming from them. They have been forthcoming with rhetoric and promises, but they have not put into action anything that they have said.

The article in the *Gympie Times* states further—

> "The escalating problem of drunken youths rampaging through Mary Street and destroying property has outraged two Gympie restaurant owners who yesterday called for stronger court deterrents and more police patrols.
>
> The problem, which some traders say has increased markedly since the beginning of the year, is at its worst on Friday and Saturday nights and came to a head."

Yobbos, as they are called, from as young as seven years old to teenagers, are rampaging through the streets and annoying shoppers and people who are trying to enjoy each other's

company at a restaurant. The article states further—

> "You have yobbos from as young as about seven years old to teenagers running up and down the arcade . . . screaming obscenities and damaging property.
>
> . . .
>
> 'It reaches the point where I consider closing the restaurant to give my customers some comfort while they're eating.' "

It is a shocking situation when somebody in the community has to take that sort of action just to give his customers and patrons a bit of security and comfort. Where will this mentality take us? The problem is that the little blighters know that they cannot be touched. They know that they cannot be given a swift kick up the backside, which would do them a lot of good.

Government members interjected.

Mr STEPHAN: Again, instead of hearing anything sensible from members opposite, all we hear is rhetoric. The situation is getting beyond a joke. Gympie used to be a nice little town, but if this sort of behaviour is not nipped in the bud we will end up like other places. We certainly do not want Gympie to be reduced to that level. Apparently, it is a level at which Government members are used to operating. That is a problem that Gympie has. Unfortunately, it is a problem that is occurring right throughout the State.

Recently, after returning from doing the shopping, a pensioner had her handbag stolen whilst she was on the telephone. Before she was able to lock the door behind her, someone entered her house, grabbed her purse and then disappeared. How do honourable members think that elderly people feel when they hear about instances such as that? This is a type of activity that no community should have to put up with. When we discover that this sort of activity is reasonably prevalent, it certainly makes us wonder.

Someone has to pick up the bill for the damages when this activity takes place—and some of the glaziers are making a small fortune. In practically every other week in such places as Gympie, rocks or bricks are being thrown through glass shopfronts, which costs about $1,200 to $2,000 to repair. Although the Gympie Glazing Works is not really complaining, it can see the problems associated with this activity.

Time expired.

Youth Parliament

Ms POWER (Mansfield) (6.43 p.m.): It is my pleasure this evening to highlight an event that occurred here last Friday night. To celebrate Youth Week, we had our first secondary school Youth Parliament.

I want to place on record my thanks to the Speaker for allowing the high schools the use of the Green Chamber. I want to thank Graeme Kinnear and Ted Newton in the Education and Protocol Office for their assistance and support. I want to thank the school principals for allowing the schools to participate, the Bills and Papers Office for providing the paperwork for the students to work from, and *Hansard* for agreeing to tape and prepare a copy of this historical moment.

Mr J. H. Sullivan interjected.

Ms POWER: I take the interjection. This was an historical occasion, and I commend the students for their behaviour on a Friday night. The purpose of Youth Parliaments has been to teach young people about the parliamentary process. Unfortunately, some of the people who have used the Chamber have not been interested in the parliamentary process but more interested in the political process or checking out the chair that they hope to occupy when next they visit it.

We have come to a fairly standard procedure in the House to give them an experience of Parliament, taking about two hours, which starts with prayer, some ministerial statements, some legislation and the Adjournment debate. This year, we decided to try using the legislation in conjunction with the Budget papers. We did so for a number of reasons. The Budget papers are prepared and the students find them much easier to use when doing their research. We were more interested in the parliamentary process than in sending students out to do copious amounts of writing.

The schools that were invited—obviously, I had a vested interest—were Mansfield and Rochedale High Schools in my electorate. Students from the Years 11 and 12 classes in those high schools who are studying either legal studies, modern history, government, or those who are public debaters were invited to attend. Some 35 students from the two schools attended. I have to congratulate them on their effort. After we had finalised it all, it was the school holidays. They had only two weeks after the holidays in which to prepare themselves for the project. A number of the students were actually out on work experience, so we were getting frantic telephone calls from work sites to find out the answers to their questions or to help them with something that they needed.

As I said earlier, I have to commend the students for their effort. They took the day very seriously. They raised a number of issues. One I mentioned yesterday was youth suicide. They also went on to highlight issues such as unemployment, education, the environment and, of course, the dreaded south-east corridor.

It is unfortunate that the media did not pick up the Youth Parliament as part of the Youth Week activities. In fact, it did not pick up many of the Youth Week activities. People would have observed a very interesting evening. As I said, students credited themselves very well, and raised the issues. They had some understanding of the issues. In fact, some of the members here might have taken some lessons from them. One of the things that I found most interesting was the number of young women who were present and taking an active role. I think that augurs well for the future.

As to what the future might hold for Youth Parliaments—I have been haranguing the Speaker and the Deputy Clerk for some time to conduct Youth Parliaments outside of the political parties as a teaching point for students. We have used it at the university level, but Friday night was the first time that the Green Chamber was used for secondary schools. I have done some work with primary school students as well. We are hoping that next year we will have the money and time to hold more of these events. My two schools have volunteered to host schools outside of the Brisbane area, so that country schools may participate.

On 2 December, I am hoping that the youth wings of the party will hold their Youth Parliament. I hope that they can take a lesson from secondary students and conduct themselves in the same manner. I would urge members to look at the possibility of the schools in their electorates taking up the opportunity, if we continue down this track of inviting these schools to participate, either in Youth Week or at other times, in the Youth Parliament for secondary schools.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 6.48 p.m.