

TUESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 1994

Marcus Shores site by reservation to national park status.

Petitions received.

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

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE INVESTIGATIONS

Report

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have to report that I have received the report of the Queensland Ombudsman for the period 1993-94.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Cannabis

From **Mr Littleproud** (48 signatories) praying that the statutory prohibition on the production and usage of cannabis be continued.

Teachers

From **Mr McElligott** (33 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will ensure (a) that teachers are not suspended without pay prior to a court conviction or finding of fault by disciplinary procedures; (b) that there is a prompt investigation of complaints made against teachers; (c) that teachers are immediately informed of allegations made against them; (d) that action is taken to support teachers with a fair and effective disciplinary structure in the schools; and (e) that action is taken to penalise individuals who make frivolous or malicious complaints against teachers.

Adult Theme Shops

From **Mrs Sheldon** (90 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will legislate to ban the operation of adult theme shops on the Sunshine Coast.

Noosa Shire

From **Mr J. H. Sullivan** (1 043 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will (a) support the zero development option contained in the Noosa Shire Council draft development control plan and in the conservation assessment prepared by the Department of Environment and Heritage; and (b) protect the natural heritage values of the

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

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

Egg Industry (Restructuring) Act—

Egg Industry (Restructuring) Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 1994, No. 400

Health Act—

Health (Scientific Research and Studies) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1994, No. 402

Mineral Resources Act—

Mineral Resources Amendment Regulation (No. 9) 1994, No. 403

Public Trustee Act—

Public Trustee Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 1994, No. 401

Superannuation (Government and Other Employees) Act—

Superannuation (Government and Other Employees) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1994, No. 398

Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act—

Superannuation (State Public Sector) Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 1994, No. 397

Transport Infrastructure Amendment Act (No. 2)—

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act that are not in force commence 18 November 1994, No. 399.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

(a) Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing (Mr Gibbs)—

Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation—Annual Report 1993-94

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

National Crime Authority—Annual Report for 1993-94

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

Queensland Ethnic Affairs Policy— Annual Report for 1993-94

- (d) Minister for Lands (Mr Smith)—
Darling Downs—Moreton Rabbit Board—
Annual Report for 1993-94.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tender Process for Woodford Correctional Centre

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Rockhampton—Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: In May of this year, the Government announced a commitment of \$52.6m for the design and construction of a new 400-cell high and medium security correctional centre on the site of the obsolete Woodford Prison. This allocation of \$52.6m forms part of a total allocation of \$170m for law and order infrastructure development in this State over the next three years.

Yesterday, Cabinet decided to adopt an open, competitive tendering process for the design, construction and operation of the Woodford correctional facility. In this process both the Queensland Corrective Services Commission and private sector operators will be permitted to bid in response to tenders which will be called early in the new year.

The decision taken by Cabinet to embark on a process whereby the QCSC, a Government agency, will engage in competitive tendering with the private sector for the design, construction and operation of the new Woodford Correctional Centre is the first by any correctional jurisdiction in this country. This approach will allow the Government to satisfy itself as to the most cost-efficient and effective option for operation of the correctional centre. Further, this will allow the QCSC to actively test and, indeed, build upon the efficiencies gained in recent years against the best that the private sector currently can offer. It will ensure that staff of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission will have an opportunity to participate in the development of a bid and, if successful, they will know the public sector has won the tender on its merits.

This Government's strong commitment to law and order has resulted in a significant growth in prisoner numbers with an increase of 26 per cent in the number of prisoners in Queensland in the past 16 months. As a result, the QCSC brought forward plans to construct an additional correctional centre. The Woodford Correctional Centre site was chosen because of strong community acceptance as the most appropriate location for this new facility. This centre will be the fifth to come on line since the Queensland Corrective Services Commission came into being

less than six years ago. These new centres represent about 1 500 new cell spaces.

Members will recall that in 1991 this Government, on the advice of the QCSC, acted to close the antiquated and poorly designed prison at Woodford inherited from the previous administration. At that time, due to success by the QCSC in removing non-violent offenders from secure custody to more appropriate forms of supervision, a considerable surplus of cell capacity was created throughout the State. The closing of the centre in 1991 has now saved the taxpayers of Queensland some \$18m. The time is now appropriate to replace the Woodford Prison with a modern design appropriate for the needs of the fast-approaching twenty-first century.

In addressing the provision of the new Woodford Correctional Centre, the Government is required to look at the most efficient and effective option, that is, whether the centre should be operated by the public or private sector. Since 1990, the private sector has demonstrated its capacity to effectively operate correctional centres in this State through the operation of Borallon and Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centres. At the same time, under the auspices of this Government, the Queensland Corrective Services Commission has significantly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of its own operations. The QCSC is now firmly established and in many respects is the envy of other jurisdictions in Australia and overseas.

Overall, this competitive tender process will engender in all sectors a higher level of accountability and will assure a cost-effective, whole-of-life design and operation of the centre. Selection of the successful tenderer for the design, construction and operation of the Woodford Correctional Centre will be undertaken by an independent tender evaluation committee, the chair of which will be independent of the QCSC. The committee will include representatives of Treasury, Office of Cabinet, a person with construction and engineering expertise, a person with expertise in major contract evaluation and the chairperson of the QCSC.

The Government intends that there will be clear separation between the QCSC bid team and the tender evaluation committee. Furthermore, the whole process will be subjected to examination by a probity auditor who will report directly to myself.

The Queensland Corrective Services Commission is currently working on the preparation of tender specifications. Tenders for the design, construction and operation of the

centre will be called by February 1995. It is expected that the successful tenderer will be selected by June 1995. This will allow approximately 18 months for design and construction with a completion date of January 1997.

In conclusion, the construction of the Woodford Correctional Centre, which will open early in 1997, is a major development in corrections in this State, and I would hope that, as such, members opposite would recognise the great steps that have been taken by this Government in the area of not only corrections but also law and order in general and will lend their support to this worthwhile initiative.

PARLIAMENTARY TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE

Report

Mr ARDILL (Archerfield) (10.10 a.m.): I table a report from the Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee on the desirability of requiring compulsory third-party insurance for boats and trailers. I move that the report be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

Mr ARDILL: The committee received this reference from Parliament and has determined that the issue of compulsory third-party insurance for boats and trailers is important for two main reasons: firstly, the situation in which CTP cover for trailers is provided differs throughout the States; secondly, the apparently high proportion of boat owners who do not have CTP insurance cover makes them vulnerable to large claims for personal damages resulting from accidents. It also means that innocent boat-crash victims may be denied financial compensation for their injuries.

Subsequent to Parliament instructing the Travelsafe Committee, the Queensland Department of Transport has taken action to ensure that all trailers are roadworthy at the point of sale to a new owner. However, the committee determined that the above matters are more appropriately investigated and resolved by the insurance industry than by a road safety committee. I commend the report to the House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Police Staffing, Logan District

Mr BORBIDGE: I refer the Premier to the comments of Queensland Police Union Vice-president Sergeant Gary Wilkinson that Logan district police have had a gutful and will commence industrial action because they cannot deliver a service to the public because there are not enough of them—his words, not mine—and to his particular claim that there are allegedly 25

unfilled vacancies in the region, and I ask: given that police in Cairns and on the Gold Coast have also expressed similar concerns, when will the Premier acknowledge that Queensland is facing a law and order crisis and that his claim of increased police resources has failed to translate into more police on the beat?

Mr W. K. GOSS: In relation to the Logan police district—I think I have pointed out to members on a number of occasions that, historically, there has been a very poor level of police staffing in this particular district. In fact, until this Government came to power, it was not even—

Mr Borbidge: Five years.

Mr W. K. GOSS: In fact, the Fitzgerald report mentioned specifically the poor allocation of police staffing to this particular district. So there was an implied condemnation of the National Party Government in terms of its handling of the district. The Leader of the Opposition says, "Five years." Let me tell him what this Government has done in five years to improve the appalling legacy and the deliberately shabby treatment of people in that district. The first thing I mention is that this Government has increased police numbers from 179, which was the number under Mr Cooper and Mr Borbidge, to 319. That is an 80 per cent increase. In addition—

Mr Connor: Are they real people?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I take that interjection. If the member wants to keep interjecting, I will keep going. In relation to—

Mr Cooper interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: In relation to those 319 positions—when there are 319 positions in any establishment, there will always be some vacancies. There have been times when the Logan police district has been above the establishment number and there have been times, such as the present, when it has been below the establishment number. It is simply a fact of management that year in, year out actual numbers will always fluctuate above and below the establishment number.

The fact is that as there has been an increase in operational police numbers throughout the State, so has there been a dramatic increase in police numbers in the Logan district—a dramatic increase. This Government will continue to increase police numbers to meet community concern. The other thing that this Government has done—if people want to measure what it has done in monetary terms—is increase the Logan district budget. The budget

has been increased by 44 per cent over the same period. In addition, the Government has replaced the hovel in which police officers were accommodated when the National Party was in Government with a \$6m modern police headquarters to help them do their job.

In relation to Mr Wilkinson—he is well known by local police and local residents as an agitator on behalf of the union. I think one could say that his conduct has been consistent.

There are specific vacancies that need to be filled. For example, there are three scene-of-crime vacancies, which include dusting for fingerprints, which the Government is seeking to fill when the current training program concludes next month. There are other general vacancies that the administration of the Police Service—and this is a matter for the administration of the Police Service—tells us it expects to fill within the next six weeks.

In conclusion, I make two points. The first is that in Government we have acted in relation to police numbers, in relation to the budget, in relation to a new headquarters and in relation to a new police district. The second is that members of the Logan and North Albert police districts have been concerned about police staffing issues. We have as a group raised this matter recently with the Minister for Police. He is addressing that situation and we will take whatever action we can reasonably take when it is possible to provide the police numbers.

Princess Alexandra Hospital

Mr BORBIDGE: In directing a further question to the Premier, I refer to claims by the Princess Alexandra Hospital senior consulting physician that "six operating lists are being cancelled at the hospital every day . . . that scores of operations are being cancelled resulting in . . . a compromise of standards of surgical care of our patients"—again, these are his words, not mine—and I ask: when will the Premier acknowledge that Queensland's once proud public health system is in crisis and that Budget increases under his Government have failed to translate into improved health standards at the point of service delivery?

Mr W. K. GOSS: In relation to the PA Hospital—that is an area in which the Health Minister has recently announced action being taken by the Government in conjunction and in cooperation with the people who work there to try to identify areas of genuine concern and to address them. Let me first make a couple of general points in relation to health and then come specifically to some of the issues that are raised in the question.

The situation in relation to health is simply this: I think the starkest figure that I can put before members and before the public is an increase of \$1 billion annually.

Mr Borbidge: What have you done with it?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I will come to that, too, if the honourable member keeps interjecting. If the honourable member wants to ask half a dozen supplementary questions by way of interjection, then he has to expect half a dozen answers, and he should not complain about the length of time that it takes.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: If the honourable member wants to ask supplementary questions by way of interjection, then he will get supplementary answers.

The first figure that I wanted to mention—and this is the starkest figure of all—is the \$1 billion per annum increase in recurrent spending in respect of the Health budget that we inherited from the former National Party Government. As well as that recurrent expenditure, we have embarked upon a massive rebuilding of capital stock, in addition to the normal budget, totalling \$1.5 billion over the course of this decade.

Yet, as a substitute for research and studied consideration, the Leader of the Opposition runs around parroting, "Where has the money gone? Where has the money gone?" If the Leader of the Opposition wants to go and have a look, we will show him where the money has gone. He should go down to Logan City and have a look at the new hospital and hospital wings. He should go up to Caboolture and look at the new hospital.

Mr Horan interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: The Leader of the Opposition should go up to Nambour and have a look at the new hospital wing. He should go to the electorate of Mrs Sheldon and have a look at the new day surgery facilities that I opened there to try to help prop up the Deputy Leader of the Coalition. He should go to Townsville and look at the North Queensland Clinical School, which we opened in an endeavour to get people from the country into the study of medicine and back into the country in the practice of medicine—something that the Leader of the Opposition would never do. That is something that we would never expect the member for

Surfers Paradise to even think about or raise, and he never has. In relation to major sites—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The Premier obviously does not know the difference between capital expenditure and recurrent expenditure. That is capital expenditure, not recurrent expenditure.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is the last point of order like that that the Leader of the Opposition will take today. I warn the Leader of the Opposition under Standing Order 124. Members cannot raise points of order as a debating point. I warn members generally about doing that.

Mr Stephan interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: The Leader of the Opposition wants clarification of that, so he will get another component to the answer—\$2.3 billion recurrent and an additional \$1.5 billion capital. The way it works is that capital is the new building and the recurrent is the people in it. That is what we are doing—spending so much more and providing so many more services than he ever did.

The Leader of the Opposition is not even listening. He is having a chat. I am giving an answer and he is having a chat with the member for Clayfield.

A Government member interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: So he should. He is just a Liberal in disguise, anyway—Santoro by the sea. We know what his mates think about Liberals. The Leader of the Opposition might as well keep talking to the honourable member.

Mr Santoro interjected.

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

Mr W. K. GOSS: That is right. Members opposite remind me of a band in the sixties. I cannot remember the name of the band, but they had a great song called *Friday on my Mind*.

Mrs Woodgate: The Easybeats.

Mr W. K. GOSS: They turn up here on Tuesday and they are just looking forward to the weekend. They just want to get out of the place.

Mr Borbidge: There was another band called the Pretenders, too.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The Leader of the Opposition said that he prefers the name the Pretenders. What about the Troggs?

Mr FitzGerald: The Monkees.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Okay, he wants the Monkees. So we have the Easybeats, the Pretenders, the Monkees and the Troggs. I thank the member for his assistance.

As to the situation in relation to the PA and the RBH—both of these hospitals stand as a testimony to the chronic underfunding that they suffered over many years under the former Government, which we are turning around. I admit that it is taking time. I did not bring with me the figures in relation to the improved throughput, but I will get them. Those figures show the increased number of Queenslanders who are undergoing hospital procedures and the improved number of bed days in terms of performance in that regard. I will show honourable members what the improvements are.

In relation to hospitals such as the PA—the consequence of the improved performance and increased spending is a strain in certain sections of the hospital with which they have not been able to cope. That is why we are trying to identify those areas of need and to increase resources there. We have had the recent announcement by the Minister in relation to Medicare funding, the provision of other State funding and the expediting of that funding to provide real relief for the hospital system. It is a continuing struggle, but we will continue to do the job.

Mr Speaker, if you have a look at the daily newspapers in any State of Australia you will see that there are similar strains on every hospital in the country. So it is a continuing struggle for all Governments, but at least we can proudly point to the fact of greatly, dramatically increased and improved performance on both recurrent and capital expenditure—on both buildings and equipment and on staff and their wages. On every count, we have increased the performance of the State Government in Queensland.

Dealings in Financially Encumbered Motor Vehicles

Mr PITT: I ask the Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs: is he aware of the shonky dealings in financially encumbered interstate motor vehicles? If so, what efforts are being made to crack down on that practice?

Mr Veivers: How was your trip?

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

Mr BURNS: It is nice to be back!

Last year, we received 269 186 phone calls in Brisbane concerning the buying and selling of

cars. That figure illustrates that a lot of concern exists in that area. In April next year, Queensland will move towards a national register of encumbered vehicles when the Queensland motor vehicles security register will be upgraded to a system called REVS—the register of encumbered vehicles. REVS is operating in New South Wales. New South Wales operates it into the ACT and the Northern Territory. Victoria will connect into the New South Wales system, and we will also connect into that system. In about December next year—

Mr Rowell interjected.

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

Mr BURNS: In December next year, Tasmania and South Australia should connect up, and that should mean virtually a national register.

Nearly \$10m a year is recorded as being lost through people buying cars that are not owned by the people who sell them. They are not stolen cars; we are talking about cases in which the person concerned has said that he owns the car but he owes money to a finance company or he owes money to some other private individual but he pretends to own the car and on-sells it in that way. Most members would be aware of cases of young people who have bought cars along the side of the street but have had them repossessed a week or two later by one of the finance companies because they were not owned by the seller. That is a very serious situation.

We have discovered that quite often that is occurring because people are trading between the States. They bring the cars from New South Wales and sell them up here, or they take them from Queensland and sell them down there. They do that with stolen cars but they also do that with encumbered cars. This new system will mean that for the price of a phone call people will be able to get details of the ownership of a vehicle, if it is registered with us, and that is the key to the system. We are getting most finance companies to register those debts. By June next year, we will be able to check through all the eastern States, and at the end of the year Tasmania and South Australia will come on board.

Currently, our system enables financiers to register a security interest over motor vehicles, motorcycles, trailers and caravans. With REVS, we will be able to expand that to include boats, mobile homes, off-road vehicles and even light aircraft. Next April, we will connect to New South Wales, and that will provide us with a much larger database. Every dealer will have to provide a

clear certificate of title for every car sale that is made. I believe that that will help end some of the shonky dealings, because every inquiry made to REVS will result in a compulsory certificate—

Mr Connor: How much are you going to charge for that?

Mr BURNS: We charge \$8 now, and that will remain the same. It will not change. We are spending a bit more money on the computer system to connect into the interstate system.

REVS also means that the Office of Consumer Affairs will be able to expand its service. Motor dealers will be able to connect into REVS through the computer system seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Even with sales that are made on the weekend or when the Office of Consumer Affairs is not open, dealers will be able to carry out that check. For people who ring in by phone and who have a fax, we will be able to fax the certificate to them. All of these measures should improve the service, but the real improvement is the demand that everybody must have a certificate of clear title when they sell a car.

We have held a series of seminars to explain the new system and its advantages. Hopefully, I will be introducing some legislation later this week so that it can be debated before April next year, when the new system will come into place.

Security of International Meat Markets

Mr PITT: I ask the Minister for Primary Industries: in view of the failure of other States to support a national standards and funding procedure for the testing of Australian meat for residues to ensure the security of international markets, can he inform the House what steps are proposed by Queensland to reverse this position?

Mr CASEY: Currently, the Australian beef export industry is facing one of the most serious problems that it has ever encountered. This problem could have been avoided in many ways. Some time ago, this Government took a decision to pursue a national code, national standards and national funding procedures for the testing of Australian meat for residues to ensure the security of our international markets. Unfortunately, this proposal was not accepted by the other States, led by the National Party rump in the New South Wales Government. On Friday, 28 October, at the ARMCANZ meeting in Adelaide, that group again took the lead in rejecting an effort by Queensland to institute a national testing procedure, national standards and national funding procedures. That proposal was being pursued vigorously by this State, but it has been stalled further and put aside for

another 12 months into a bureaucratic committee.

This State has put together a group of people from all sectors of the industry, chaired by Mrs Hazel Marland of the Cattlemen's Union of Australia, which has strongly supported the Queensland Government's move in this direction. The Cattle Council of Australia supported the proposal and spoke to me about the way in which it intended to approach the other States on this issue prior to the ARMCANZ meeting. However, New South Wales was still not prepared to accept that proposal. It was the biggest opponent of the whole scheme. Despite my expression of concern at the ARMCANZ meeting in October, this issue has now hit the fan, as we say in literal Australian. We now have a very serious problem on our hands.

This morning, I once again spoke to Senator Collins, the Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy. As a result of our discussions, he has agreed to immediately reconvene the SCARM committee—the Standing Committee of Agricultural and Resource Management—to work on this matter and to head down the track that the other States have rejected. It has to happen, and it will happen. Tomorrow morning, the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries and Energy from Canberra will be holding discussions here with my director-general and people within my department to start progressing this matter immediately in order to bring about a resolution of this problem.

At this stage, we believe that the problem has been contained. There have been measures in place. For some considerable time in Queensland, people who because of drought problems have had to feed cotton trash to their cattle have operated under a voluntary code which states that they will not feed cotton trash to cattle for a period of at least 30 days prior to slaughter in order to allow any build-up of chemical residue that might have been present to deteriorate. We now have one that is a problem. The United States and Japan accept no residue levels. In Queensland, we have a residue level of one part per million. None of our beef testing in Queensland to date has shown that there is that problem. We have done over 900 tests. It has shown up in a couple of areas in cattle, and they have been moved aside. Therefore, the problem has been contained.

Mr Veivers: Where was that?

Mr CASEY: What we want more than anything at the moment is to restore confidence in the cattle industry in Queensland. We cannot achieve a restoration of that confidence when the Leader of the National Party in

Queensland—the group of people who are opposing the proposal in the other States—

Mr Johnson: What's that got to do with—

Mr CASEY: The member can roar all he likes. He should be roaring at his leader. As evidenced by his actions this morning, the Leader of the National Party is more interested in something at Surfers Paradise.

Mr Johnson: I don't think so; he's interested in this, too.

Mr CASEY: As well, the man sitting alongside the member for Gregory, the shadow Minister, gave notice of a motion that we ought to be noting it. I will bet that he has used cotton trash on his property.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will resume his seat. I call the Deputy Leader of the Coalition.

Mr Casey: Thanks, Jim!

Woorabinda Community Council

Mrs SHELDON: I refer the Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs to the inquiry into the financial management of the Woorabinda Community Council and remind the Minister of the report into Aboriginal councils by the Public Accounts Committee Chairman, Ray Hollis, a year ago—

Mr De Lacy interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Mr Speaker, I understood that we did not have to put up with the constant interjections from the Treasurer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will ask her question. I ask the Treasurer not to interject.

Mrs SHELDON: Yet again! I refer the Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Affairs to the inquiry into the financial management of the Woorabinda Community Council and remind the Minister of the report into Aboriginal councils by the Public Accounts Committee Chairman, Ray Hollis, a year ago in which he stated—

"The Minister and the director-general have an implied duty to ensure that moneys budgeted to councils have been expended in the correct manner. The committee found that this duty has not been fully carried out."

I ask: will the Minister now admit that her incompetence is to blame for this disgraceful situation? What will she do to guarantee that private contractors owed \$1.2m by the Woorabinda Council are paid?

Ms WARNER: The issues surrounding the question of accountability in Aboriginal communities remain the same as they always were, that is, that councils are independently elected bodies that are charged with the responsibility for their own financial affairs. Even under those circumstances it is necessary to make sure that those councils are operating properly.

Now, the Woorabinda case came to my attention when the council was virtually in a state of financial collapse as a result of its inability to deal with a dispute that it had with ATSIC. We intervened to dissolve that council and to replace it with an administrator. That is a very serious action to take against a group of people who are independently elected by their own constituents. However, in the light of the financial difficulties that Woorabinda has found itself in, and in the light of the welfare of the people of that community and their financial situation in terms of their Community Development Employment Program, we have appointed an administrator who will start as of Friday. That administrator will go through the books of the council, the whole administrative process, and move to try to trade that council out of what is effectively a bankruptcy situation.

Mrs Sheldon: You guarantee they'll get paid?

Ms WARNER: Of course, Mrs Sheldon, what happens when one tries to trade someone out of their financial difficulties is that one looks at all the debts that the council has incurred.

Mr Johnson interjected.

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

Toxic Waste

Mrs SHELDON: I remind the Minister for Environment and Heritage of the recent CJC report which severely criticised the State Labor Government for its failure to deal with toxic waste throughout Queensland. I refer her to the Water Quality Summary Report No. 2 subtitled "Oxley Creek—September 1988 to June 1990", which was given to the State Government in 1990 and which was finally released for public scrutiny in September 1993. I ask: why has the Minister sat back and done nothing about the massive levels of poisoning in Oxley Creek and its tributaries exposed in this report completed four years ago?

Ms ROBSON: The question in relation to Oxley Creek probably illustrates the very reason why I put together the Brisbane River Management Group. That group is currently

working on the water quality of all creeks in the Brisbane River catchment area.

Mrs Sheldon: Four years ago.

Ms ROBSON: The honourable member should remember that I recently ordered a total survey of all sewage licence provisions to see whether or not they were being complied with.

The reality is that the matter that the honourable member has spoken about today is one that has concerned this Government for a long time because of a range of activities that has occurred for a long time, including industrial waste and sewage being discharged into creeks. The same sort of problem occurred in Bulimba Creek, and we undertook to have that restored to a usable level of water quality. We are doing the same with creeks all through the catchment area that the honourable member has referred to, including Oxley Creek.

Obviously, I am concerned about the standard of the water in those creeks. That is why my department has put together that Brisbane River Management Group, which is doing some very significant studies into the problems and formulating strategies for fixing them. They are long-standing problems, and we are very conscious of them. We are very concerned about them and we are trying to correct them.

Treasury Loan to Health Department

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I refer the Treasurer to statements by the Leader of the Liberal Party that Treasury has made a \$17m loan to the Health Department and that this means that Queensland is running its health system on bankcard. I ask: can the Treasurer inform the House whether this is the case, or is it just another example of the Liberal Leader getting it wrong?

Mr De LACY: She is wrong again, but does that surprise anybody? People say that there is a light at the end of every tunnel, and I understand that a candidate who has had 25 years' experience in the banking industry has nominated for the seat of Caloundra. So with a bit of luck, in 12 months' time we may have a member for Caloundra who can interpret financial statistics and understand what is going on.

Just to make clear that first point about bankcard, or where the money is coming from—the \$17m that we are giving to the Health Department is coming from the Consolidated Fund. It is coming from revenue. It is coming from exactly the same place the other \$2.3 billion is coming from.

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Deputy Leader of the Coalition to stop interjecting.

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the honourable member. The Treasurer is answering the member's question. I can assure the member that she is not allowed to answer it.

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

A Government member: Throw her out!

Mr De LACY: No, do not throw her out, she is an asset.

I would just like to get that point clear in the member's mind. That money is coming from the Budget; it is coming out of revenue. There is no repayment, it is just the same as the other funds which go to Health.

I will refer to Pool B. At the end of the year, we may or may not get the Pool B funding from the Commonwealth, but that an issue for Treasury. Health has its \$17m, just as it will get \$7.5m on 1 January to implement the case-mix strategy in the health system. I hope that the honourable member has that clear.

I am amused that the Leader of the Liberal Party talks about funding social services on bankcard. I can remember just a couple of months ago, when I announced that Queensland was net debt free, that she said on the Anna Reynolds program that we ought to start borrowing for social programs. So if there is any bankcard, it is "bankcard Joan". She is the one who supports that. However, she is not the only one who supports that—everybody on her side of the House does.

I make the point, and I think we should all remember this, that as of 30 June this year we were still servicing \$535m worth of hospital debt that was raised by the National Party. Today, Queensland taxpayers are still paying off debt that was raised by the National Party. Fancy the National Party getting up here and talking about raising debt or borrowing for social expenditure! We are still paying off debt that was raised in the days when it was in Government. In fact, we reduced that debt by \$66m in interest and redemption. If that \$66m had been available to Queensland Health, last financial year we could have hired another 1 700 nurses. We could not hire those 1 700 nurses because we were still paying off the previous Government's debt.

In the future, there will be no debt. It will take some years to get rid of the previous Government's debt. The National Party Government used to borrow for social infrastructure; it used to borrow for its health system. We do not do that any more. The

taxpayers of Queensland are still paying off the National Party Government's bankcard debt. Members opposite should not forget that.

Ensham Coal Project

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I ask the Minister for Minerals and Energy: can he inform the House of the significant developments this week at the Ensham coal project?

Mr McGRADY: I am pleased to inform the House that the first coal production from the main Ensham mine area will occur this week. The coal will be hauled to the existing Yongala rail load-out point and stockpiled separately. The first shipment of Ensham coal is expected next month.

This is an exciting project for Queensland. The history of Ensham demonstrates the total mismanagement of the previous Government. It created a giant mess that has taken us four years to unravel, and unravel it we have, creating more jobs and more export dollars for this State.

The open-cut operation at Yongala pit, which forms phase 1 of the total Ensham project, employs a total work force of 66 people. The main Ensham open-cut operation, which is known as phase 2, is already under development and is scheduled to commence full production in February next year. Once this phase comes on line, total production for the mine will increase from current production of 900 000 tonnes to 1.6 million tonnes per year. This will see further employment opportunities.

Jobs growth and export dollars make this a very promising project for our State. A lease for 35 years for the Yongala area was granted in February 1993, and in April this year mining leases were granted over the main Ensham deposit for almost 34 years. The coal project was recognised clearly as a serious long-term proposition, but now, as of this week, it is not just a proposition; it has become a reality. This is the sort of reality that makes Queensland Australia's leading State. If it was not for this Government coming in and cleaning up that mess, this would never have happened. This is a great week for Queensland.

Port Hinchinbrook Development

Mr ROWELL: I ask the Premier: is he aware of the anxiety welling up in the people of the town of Cardwell over the decision of the Federal Environment Minister to use external treaties to stop work at the Port Hinchinbrook development? Will the Premier now agree to meet with Senator Faulkner, the developer and relevant groups in a spirit of cooperation to ensure that the project proceeds and the economic future of the region is assured?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I have already spoken to the Federal Minister twice. In both conversations I pointed out to him that the deed of agreement, which authorises all the work, that is, the deed between the council, the developer and the State Government, was approved by him and his department. That agreement includes reference to the clearing of the mangroves. That was something that his officers were well aware of at all times. I also pointed out to him that, by the time he got the proclamation late on Tuesday of last week, most of the mangroves would have been cleared. Indeed, at the time of the actual telephone call from him to me, most of the mangroves had been cleared.

Mr Borbidge: You'll release the deed, will you?

Mr W. K. GOSS: Release the deed? They are right on the ball over there. It was released two weeks ago. The Leader of the Opposition hurtles up to Cardwell to get right on top of the situation, and here he is, two weeks later, asking for a copy of the deed. For Heaven's sake!

This is a matter of concern to the Government. This development, as we know, succeeds a previous development that failed—the previous developer having abandoned the site. He did not leave behind a pristine piece of Queensland coastline. What was left behind was a pretty ugly scar—a degraded site. When the new developer approached this Government, we saw the opportunity to approve a smaller-scale development with strict environmental controls that would enable us to repair the site and to respect and protect the World Heritage values of the Hinchinbrook Channel.

Because of the World Heritage area being adjacent to the site—the site is not in the area—and because we were concerned about the World Heritage values of the area, we approached the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Federal Government. The first approach was in December of last year. There was 10 months of notice and 10 months of consultation before Senator Faulkner gave the green light for the deed of agreement to be signed. As I said publicly last week, in the week leading up to his giving us the green light, I said to him twice, "John, it's your call. Either knock him on the head or let him go, but just make a decision", because we were having trouble getting a decision. We got the green light. We also got an agony letter about his concerns for the area, which has been used retrospectively to reverse his position. That is a matter of concern.

The whole handling of this matter raises serious issues in respect of

Commonwealth/State relations in regard to the tourism industry, in regard to protection of the environment and in regard to investor confidence. When Senator Faulkner phoned me last week, he said the reason he wanted to stop work was so that he could convene a workshop of experts, and they would come to some conclusion about the effect on the seagrass of the clearing of mangroves. Those mangroves were cleared twice—in the seventies and eighties—and there is a healthy bed of seagrass there despite the mangroves having been cleared previously. Furthermore, the studies that were done prior to the deed of agreement being signed indicate that the effect of the clearing of the mangroves would be to create some short-term turbidity. Our advice was that the short-term turbidity would have no impact or a minor impact on the seagrass. Our advice now is that the state in which the site has been left, namely, a big mud hole, poses a more significant problem and a more significant danger for the seagrass than the work the developer was undertaking.

Senator Faulkner said that he was going to stop the work until he could have that workshop. He wrote to me on Friday asking would we cooperate in relation to a site inspection and the workshop. I said, of course, that we would. We wrote back to him on Friday—and that letter has been released publicly—saying that we would continue to cooperate in the way that we had been for 10 months before he gave the approval. So we will send two of our experts for their on-site inspection tomorrow, and we will attend the workshop with the same two experts. I understand that workshop is to be held on Friday. At this stage, I understand that the senator is tentatively planning to have that workshop in Brisbane. I believe it should be held in north Queensland, because my concern is that some of those experts—some of the academics—might say, "We need to have a look at the site." So they would adjourn the workshop and go up there.

What we need from the Federal Government—and I believe that the whole of the Federal Government should be getting involved in this—is a clear decision from Senator Faulkner and the Federal Government, and we need it as soon as possible. Only by doing that will we do the two important things that have to be achieved, that is, protect the environment and, secondly, save the project and save it for the jobs of people up there who are legitimately and understandably upset at the way in which this matter has been handled.

Port Hinchinbrook Development

Mr ROWELL: I refer the Premier to an offer by the developer of Port Hinchinbrook for the planting of a comparable area of mangroves to those required to be cleared for the project, and I ask: has the Premier rejected this offer, and did he instead require the developer to pay \$100,000 to his Government?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I do not know about the \$100,000. I will check that and let the honourable member know. I have referred to the deed of agreement, but I will provide to the House a history of our involvement with the Federal Government, which deals with the kind of work that had to be done and the kinds of approvals that had to be undertaken. I will table these documents for the information of the member and other members who are interested.

Mr Rowell: What about the replanting of mangroves? That's the important issue. That's the question I asked.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I know that, and I am coming to it.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am coming to that. The member for Hinchinbrook is asking the question. The Leader of the Opposition does not even know about the deed of agreement, so he should leave it to the local bloke, who knows a lot more about it. When the member for Hinchinbrook can outdo the Leader of the Opposition on this, I would just sit back and take it quietly.

I table a list of formal communications between the State and the Commonwealth. In addition to those formal communications, which run from 9 December last year to 13 October this year, there was regular telephone communication in relation to all the issues associated with the work and the environmental conditions. In addition, there is a history of our involvement with the Commonwealth Government in relation to the project, starting with the correspondence on 9 December.

In relation to all the issues and all the offers by the developer and all the requirements of the developer—all these were canvassed with the developer, the council and the Federal Government. The result of those discussions was the deed of agreement. In other words, a million things were discussed. Keith Williams wanted to do this and that; we would not let him do this, or we imposed conditions. He made numerous offers.

Mr Rowell: I'm just referring to the planting of mangroves.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I ask the honourable member to listen. The honourable member referred to one particular item in 10 months of

negotiations and discussions on a whole range of issues. The final result in relation to all the things that were raised was the deed of agreement, which was approved by all parties and agreed to by Mr Williams.

In relation to the particular issue that was raised—the planting of mangroves in another place does not change the argument about the impact of the clearing of these specific mangroves on the adjacent seagrass. It does not matter how many mangroves are planted in other places. That may be a good thing and good luck to anybody who wants to do it, but planting mangroves in another place does not affect the argument in relation to the impact of the clearing of those mangroves on that seagrass.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Golden Casket Systems and TTI

Mr VEIVERS (Southport) (11 a.m.): On 18 October this year, the Premier of Queensland came to this Parliament to bring us a most important Bill—the Public Sector Ethics Bill. Mr Goss acclaimed it as part of a comprehensive program of reform in Queensland. He was careful to assure us that the proposed legislation arose not from any conviction that his Government's public sector was corrupt or racked by unethical conduct, but in response to a need for a modern approach to public sector ethics.

In the last sitting of this House, I made revelations about the conduct of some high-ranking public servants and the activities of some Government agencies which suggest otherwise. On 27 October, I spoke against the Lotteries Bill, and in the course of that I told this Parliament about the relationship between Golden Casket Systems and TTI. I explained that public servants who were members of the board of Golden Casket Systems Limited were simultaneously board members of a private company, which was in direct conflict with the Government agency in respect of exactly the same product.

A mere week after Premier Goss tried to convince us that nothing was rotten in the State of Queensland, Mr De Lacy, in keeping with this new emphasis on public sector ethics, presented a piece of legislation designed to turn back time, to redeem the sins of the past and to hide any evidence of unethical conduct.

Mr Goss espoused a whole list of principles for the public servants of Queensland. He explained the first, respect for the law and the system of Government, as meaning that public officials should exercise powers lawfully and

obey lawful instructions. It is interesting, is it not, that such instruction should be given to public servants by members of Parliament who do not show the same regard for the law. This Labor Government's actions in response to the revelations about activities of public servants involved in the now-defunct Government agency, Golden Casket Systems, and its blatant introduction of retrospective legislation to effectively legalise illegal acts, shows its complete lack of respect for the law and system of government and its complete lack of understanding of the concept of ethics.

Under the principle of integrity, Mr Goss told us that officials should not abuse the powers or resources available to them, that they should avoid conflict between personal interests and official duties and avoid conduct which could undermine public confidence in the Government. Again, we are listening to the devil preaching about how to pray. The Government would not know the first thing about it.

The Premier's example of disclosing known fraudulent or corrupt conduct or maladministration is illuminating. To return to the case of Golden Casket Systems and the actions of its directors, we know that the Treasurer and many other high-ranking public officials were very aware of the maladministration of that company. Not only did they fail to act in the public interest, they walked all over it.

Mr Goss told us that the principle of economy and efficiency meant that officials should manage all forms of public resources in the interests of safeguarding public assets and revenues and ensuring efficient programs and service delivery. I wonder if that is how he describes wasting more than \$3m of taxpayers' money, sitting back and doing nothing while directors of a Government company spend massive amounts with no apparent accountability and covering up for the blatant misuse of public funds by some of his senior public officials.

The activities of the Golden Casket Systems agency and its directors, as well as the involvement of other high-ranking public officials and even Ministers, proves that Premier Goss' Public Sector Ethics Act is just another farce—rhetoric and rubbish designed to fool the Queensland public into believing this Labor Government is committed to ethical and honest conduct.

The Treasurer obviously knows more about this little charade than even I knew. In desperately trying to defend his own integrity—by slandering mine—he let slip an interesting fact. Mr De Lacy told us that, between 26 October and 6 December 1992, payments of more than \$8,000 were made to TTI from the

coffers of Golden Casket Systems for consulting services provided by Mr Mark Harrison. Is it not interesting that the Minister responsible for these areas, a Minister bound by the standards of integrity, honesty and ethics that his Premier has recently bestowed upon him, failed to tell us about such unethical activities before I prompted him?

Mr De Lacy tried to convince this House that I was talking rubbish and that there was no knowledge of, or records to indicate, any dealings between TTI and the Golden Casket Art Union Office. Au contraire, Mr Treasurer—as he will see amongst the documents I am tabling today. I find it incredibly hard to believe the Premier's and Treasurer's claims of ignorance of the activities of Golden Casket Systems. Interdepartmental committee meetings about Golden Casket Systems were attended by David Barbagallo, the Premier's esteemed policy adviser on information technology; the Assistant Under Treasurer, Glenn Poole; the Acting Director of the Casket Office, Warren Bale; and other Treasury and Premier's Department representatives. Documents detailing the attendees will be tabled today.

Amazingly, this Government's Ministers and senior public officials never questioned the propriety of Golden Casket Systems directors Harrison and German, even though others who came into contact with them considered them unethical and dangerous. Letters from a computer systems expert, liaising with potential buyers in Amsterdam, prove that many were unwilling to deal with Golden Casket Systems and its directors, believing they had done the Art Union Office significant damage in the credibility stakes.

Several of the documents that I am tabling today clearly establish a relationship between Golden Casket Systems and TTI, the private company established and conducted by public servants Mark Harrison and Merv German. Both attended the Government's interdepartmental committee meetings chaired by Barbagallo. But other documents show they were also at a meeting in September 1991 to discuss the formation of a private company, which resulted in the formation of TTI three days later.

Documents here indicate that TTI pursued its own interests overseas, in deference to Golden Casket Systems' interests, even being invited by a major UK lotto company to become a shareholder with a seat on the board. One fax from this UK company to Merv German proves that they were confused and misled as to the relationship between the Queensland Government and TTI—and why would they not be? This Government has no excuse to not

investigate this obvious conflict of interest now that documentary evidence is put before it.

Included among these documents are copies of minutes of meetings of the TTI directors, proposed business plans and future considerations, TTI weekly reports and other correspondence between the parties involved. The picture painted by these documents is unequivocally one of corruption and conflicting interests. There is also evidence contained in these documents of the involvement of Brisbane solicitor Bruce Purdue. Mr Purdue's handwritten minutes—he was from Clarke and Kann, if honourable members remember—business plans and letters have been faxed to Mark Harrison from locations around the world. They clearly indicate his involvement in TTI and his knowledge of its relationship with Golden Casket Systems. In one such faxed letter, Mr Purdue specifically mentions that TTI's "competitive edge" is its association with Golden Casket. There is also a fax from Mr Purdue, sent to Geoff Stevenson, Director-General of the Transport Department. In a later TTI report, again in Purdue's script, there is mention of contact between Purdue and David Hamill's office. The plot just keeps thickening.

I table a set of documents relating to the relationship between a Government agency, Golden Casket Systems, and a privately established company, TTI, which indicate the conflict of interests of certain public servants and the possibility of knowledge of such activities on the part of some members of this Parliament. I move for the establishment of a judicial inquiry to investigate the matters here raised.

Remember, we instigated the Fitzgerald inquiry, which ultimately gaoled four of our members for having a drink and a long lunch. With such a precedent, just imagine what we are going to do to Government members who display such serious breaches of the law. After the next election, when this coalition takes Government, we will take them to the limits of justice and demand a royal commission into this matter, and the many others like it. If the Government fails to investigate this matter, we will. It will not be allowed to die quietly without explanation.

My warning to Government members is that, when the royal commission is held, there will be no Government sponsorship or assistance for legal or representative fees; it will be just like what was dished out to Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Let me assure them that the Ministers responsible for these actions and inactions will face the music on their own and they will be using their own resources.

Overseas Visits by Parliamentarians

Mr BEATTIE: (11.10 a.m.): Today, I wish to report to the Parliament on two recent parliamentary trips in which I participated: firstly, as a member of a parliamentary trade delegation to Japan, China, Korea and Hong Kong between 2 October and 17 October 1994; and, secondly, as a member of a parliamentary transport visit to the gulf region of Queensland between 7 November and 10 November 1994.

Before doing so, let me put on record my concern about media reporting from time to time of parliamentary and ministerial trips overseas. It is about time some petty-minded journalists and media outlets realised that it is fundamentally crucial to Queensland's and Australia's future and economic and trade welfare for regular and repeated overseas trips by parliamentarians, particularly Ministers. Countries such as Japan, China, Korea and Hong Kong do business very much on regular personal contact. Without it, our trade suffers. More trade means more jobs in Queensland and, of course, more economic growth. So I urge Queensland's media to adopt a more mature approach when reporting parliamentary and ministerial trips and to remember that Australia is not some isolated continent in the Pacific, as it was when it was settled by the British in 1788; it is part of the world and it needs to continue to develop close commercial and political ties with its Asian neighbours such as New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, China, Japan, Korea and, of course, New Zealand and our other near Pacific neighbours.

In my view, overseas travel entitlements should be available to all members of this House. It is my view that the travel entitlements of members should be extended beyond just Australia, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand, as is currently the position. Members should be provided with the opportunity to travel throughout the Pacific and Asia in order to broaden their knowledge. I am not suggesting that there should be an increase in the allowance—the allowance should stay exactly as it is. However, I am suggesting that members should be provided with the opportunity to broaden their knowledge. Of course, and quite rightly, in order to ensure accountability—as was recommended by the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, which I headed—members have to table in this House reports on and, indeed, details of the travel. I think that it is now time we broadened our horizons and ensure that members of this House undertake the role that they should be playing as ambassadors for this State.

Let us not forget that Japan is Queensland's largest trading partner. Our exports to Japan totalled \$A4,268m in 1992-93, representing 28 per cent of Australia's exports to that market. Queensland's major exports to that country are coal, aluminium, zinc, copper and meat. As we all know, Japanese tourism is a major generator of foreign exchange throughout the whole of Queensland, particularly on the Gold Coast and in north Queensland, and Japanese investment in development is strong, notably in the resource industries, property and tourism. The Republic of Korea is Queensland's second-largest export market, and in 1992-93, exports to Korea totalled \$A909.6m, representing one-fifth of Australia's exports to that market. Queensland's major exports to that country include coal, cotton, wool, meat, sugar and aluminium. Korean investment in Queensland is growing, particularly in coalmine development and, as a result, a strong trade and investment relationship is developing between Queensland and Korea.

Queensland and the People's Republic of China have a strong relationship that has been cemented through continuous high-level visits to that country, and that relationship will flourish if those visits continue. In 1992-93, exports to China totalled in \$A169m, representing 12 per cent of Australia's exports to that market. Queensland's major exports to that country are agricultural and mineral resources, equipment, technology and manufacturing services.

Hong Kong is Queensland's ninth-largest export market. In 1992-93, exports to Hong Kong totalled in \$A290m, representing 11 per cent of Australia's exports to that market. Queensland's major exports to Hong Kong include coal, seafood, fruit and vegetables, meat, dairy products, metal, metals and wool. Its strategic position as the gateway to southern China and as a conduit for trade with Taiwan make it very attractive to Queensland. As a result, it is host to some 300 Australian companies and hundreds of agents as well as more than 20 000 Australian expatriates. Hong Kong is a major source to Queensland of business migrants and investors and a significant market for services provided by Queensland's institutions and companies, for example, in education and engineering.

It is little wonder then that, in October this year, the Queensland Parliament sent a parliamentary trade delegation to Japan, China, Korea and Hong Kong, led very capably—and I put on record my tribute to him—the Honourable Jim Elder, the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development. The delegation comprised Dr Lesley Clark, the member for Barron River; Mr Steve Bredhauer, the member for Cook and me as representatives of the

Government; and Mr Denver Beanland, the member for Indooroopilly; Mr Tony FitzGerald, the member for Lockyer, and Mr Rob Mitchell, the member for Charters Towers, as representatives of the Opposition. During the long list of meetings and official functions that occurred all members played a constructive role in promoting Queensland.

The objectives of the delegation were, firstly, to acquire a greater appreciation of Queensland's economic and trade relationships with north-east Asia through inspecting major industry, infrastructure and other economic development projects; secondly, assessing the economic potential of key markets in the region, particularly for Queensland's exports and also for attracting investment to the State; and, thirdly, meeting with leading businesspeople, parliamentarians and Government officials in the region. On all these aspects, let me report and assure the House that the delegation was a considerable success. In addition, the role of the delegation was to promote the economic and trade development potential of Queensland in this north-east region of Asia by promoting, firstly, Queensland's products, services and development opportunities; and, secondly, encouraging commercial contracts between Queensland and Asian business and industries. The full program has been provided already to the House by the Honourable Minister.

Let me say that when Queensland and the rest of Australia have problems, such as we are experiencing currently in the beef industry, it is only through these close contacts and through an ongoing relationship that those difficulties can be sorted out. I should also put on record the sound economic strategy being pursued by the Goss Government, in particular the Premier and his key economic Ministers. The trade flavour for this parliamentary delegation resulted directly from the Premier's leadership. It should also be remembered that Premier Goss was the first Queensland Premier for over 100 years to visit Papua New Guinea. So this Government's commitment to developing trade in the Pacific region and expanding Queensland's export opportunities in Asia is well established and needs to be continued.

Recognition should also be given to the excellent work being carried out by Queensland's offices in Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan. I know that there is an officer stationed in Britain, but I will deal only with the officers stationed in Asia. Their key roles, which the delegation saw first-hand in Osaka and Hong Kong, are to represent and promote Queensland's business interests in these markets through identifying overseas firms that can be targeted by Queensland's exporters of

goods and services and targeted for the attraction of new investment to Queensland; introductions, advice and liaison services for firms wishing to do business overseas and in Queensland; promoting Queensland as a destination for business migrants and tourists, and participating in trade fairs and international exhibits.

As I said, we saw at first-hand the operations of the Queensland Government office in Japan. That office complements the activities of the Japanese secretariat, which is based in Brisbane. As I said, Japan is Queensland's single most important export market and is also a source of new investment, particularly in resources and tourism development. In 1993-94, the Tokyo office handled over 370 export and 50 investment-related inquiries, and facilitated exports to Japan of products worth an estimated \$10.7m, with potential exports of \$33m projected over the next 12 months.

Indeed, in 1993-94, the Hong Kong office handled over 670 export and 210 investment-related inquiries, facilitated \$19.72m worth of Queensland's exports to Hong Kong, with additional exports of \$38.25m projected over the next 12 months, and assisted in attracting \$63m worth of new investment to Queensland, including identifying and facilitating the winning bid for the South Bank Convention Centre hotel project, with future projects under consideration valued at \$202.5m.

There are a number of key relationships between Queensland and its near neighbours. For example, there is the Queensland/Shanghai Sister State Agreement, which is important to developing our trade relationship. Also, the friendship agreement between Osaka and Queensland has been built on and expanded by this Goss Government.

I table for the information of the House a series of reports from Korea, China and Japan as well as some photographs taken on that trip.

Finally, at the invitation of the Minister for Transport, between 7 November and 10 November 1994, I participated in a Transport visit to the gulf region. I table that program for the information of the House. The members of that group included not only my parliamentary colleague Wendy Edmond but also nine representatives of the Department of Transport. The trip covered a range of road, port and rail inspections, plus a number of meetings with key councils such as the Croydon Shire Council, the Etheridge Shire Council, the Eacham Shire Council, the Herberton Shire Council, the Atherton Shire Council and the Mareeba Shire Council. Inspections included the Gulflander and the Undarra lava tubes.

In the short time left to me, let me advise the House of the enormous tourist potential of this region, from the Lawn Hill National Park through to the natural beauty of the gulf and the Undarra lava tubes. Such trips are invaluable to the work of members of Parliament. I repeat: they are important for the State.

Improper Behaviour by Politicians

Hon. N. J. TURNER (Nicklin) (11.21 a.m.): In the media, in the Parliament and within the public at large there should always be a balance of competing interests, a balance of proof and a balance of what is fair and just. Sadly, this has not happened in recent years when the National Party has been constantly painted as some evil, black, corrupt force, yet the ALP is portrayed as pure, white and holy. In the interests of justice and fair play, my speech today is designed to attempt to correct this glaring imbalance. I will start by referring to an article in the *Sunday Mail* of 2 October 1994 in which our Prime Minister, Mr Keating, was reported as follows—

"Only last week the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, told Federal Parliament: 'Only for one friendly juror we'—

and I emphasise "we"—

"would have had Joh behind bars for his role in running the most corrupt State in the history of the Commonwealth'."

I would ask the question of this Parliament: is this the same Mr Keating who, as Treasurer of this nation, did not lodge a number of tax returns over a period of years? Is he the same Mr Keating who had a large part of his piggery debt taken over and forgiven? Is he the same Mr Keating who claimed \$30,000 accommodation for costs for living away from home to which he was not entitled? While he was accusing others of abusing fringe benefits, he claimed this travelling allowance while he lived in Canberra. I believe that smacks of double standards.

Is he the same Prime Minister who in 1989, decided on an image-building trip to Melbourne to watch a football final and, instead of taking a commercial jet, took the VIP Government jet with a plane load of journalists as well as friends to promote the trip? I guess he is the same Prime Minister who recently purchased a mansion for \$2.2m in Sydney, as did his predecessor, Mr Hawke.

Mr Veivers: What about the workers?

Mr TURNER: He is not terribly worried about what the workers are doing. He purchased his home in one of the elite suburbs of Sydney, as did Mr Hawke, who paid some \$3m for a

house, knocked it down and built a \$3m or \$4m mansion on that site. What a marvellous achievement!

Mr Beattie: Why don't you attack him personally?

Mr TURNER: I will take the interjection from the honourable member. Let us forget Mr Keating for a while and let us have what I could describe as a corruption competition with the honourable member, if he likes, because he has interjected. Where does the honourable member want to start? What about the Mungana mine scandal in 1929, in which McCormack and Theodore salted that mine? Does the honourable member want to talk about the contraband tobacco scandal in 1946, in which "Fine Cut" Foley had 241 kilograms of contraband tobacco? Perhaps he would like to raise the Bulimba vote-rigging scandal in 1950. The honourable member can get all of this information from the Parliamentary Library, from which it is readily available. He can read all about what his mob has done in the past. He could read about the pastoral lease scandal in 1956—and, once again, "Fine Cut" Foley was involved. But perhaps the honourable member does not want to go back that far; he might prefer to read about more recent times.

For example, what about when Mr Warburton brought in retrospective legislation in the middle of the night to validate the illegal activities of trade unionists so that they could not be pursued by the Cook inquiry. Let us forget about that, too. We can talk about a lot of other things in the time that is available. We can compare the National Party Government—

Mr Barton interjected.

Mr TURNER: I take the interjection. The honourable member for Waterford is interjecting. He knows full well that what I am about to tell him will sink home, because he has a reasonable amount of intelligence. Let us compare the National Party right across the length and breadth of Australia with the Australian Labor Party.

Mr Beattie: Ha, ha!

Mr TURNER: I hear "ha, ha!" from the member for Brisbane Central. We will take the "ha, ha!" out of the member in just a moment. Never has a leader of the National Party in Australia been gaoled for interfering with 11-year-old girls or raping under-age kids. We have never had a prisons Minister gaoled for 10 years for releasing long-term rapists and murderers in return for \$30,000 or \$40,000 a pop, which was gambled. Honourable members can blame El Nino or the tooth fairy, but the truth

of the matter is that what I am quoting here is absolute fact; none of it is a figment of my vivid imagination.

Never has a National Party Premier or Deputy Premier been sent to gaol for pocketing tens of thousands of dollars of public money and party funds. We will talk a little about that later; maybe honourable members have had enough of that for the moment. It hurts a little bit, does it not?

I would like to return to the article that I referred to in the *Sunday Mail* on 2 October 1994, which stated—

"Attorney-General Mr Wells said after a Cabinet discussion on the subject that the Jury Act would be overhauled to 'prevent a repeat of the manipulation that occurred during the trial of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen'."

I find that interesting, because on page 476 of Mr Carter's report into the possible manipulation of the jury system he said that there was no manipulation of the random jury system designed by CITEC. I heard the honourable member for Brisbane Central talking about the Carter inquiry in the Parliament last week. We are constantly told that QCs are infallible, that they are men of upright integrity and are high in principle and propriety. I would believe that without question, if we lived in a perfect world. Sadly, we do not. If one listens to the ALP, one would believe that Bill Carter, QC, is one of these men of integrity. It grieves me deeply to say what I have to say, but I must question his propriety in accepting the position to head the Joh jury inquiry when at that time he was in the middle of heading an inquiry into Operation Trident, the car-stealing operation in which the CJC was mentioned in the terms of reference.

For the information of honourable members, I will quote the terms of reference, which state—

"1. All the events, facts and circumstances involved and surrounding the investigation code named Operation Trident conducted by the Queensland Police."

So he had to investigate that. The terms of reference continue—

"(a) The conduct of any member of the Queensland Police Service who was engaged in any way in Operation Trident;

(b) the nature and extent of the involvement in Operation Trident of any other person or statutory or other body and its officers including but not limited to the Commission within the meaning of the Commission of Inquiry Continuation Act

1989, Criminal Justice Commission and Director of Prosecutions;"

The point I am making is that Mr Carter was in the middle of conducting investigations into Trident when the CJC went up to him and said, "We will employ you, Mr Carter, to do an investigation into the Joh jury", although he still had not brought down his findings. I think that is something that has to be brought to the attention of this Chamber. It is not something that has not been published before.

In the short time available, I would like to quote directly from the report of Mr Carter, because then I cannot be accused of using selective argument. He was engaged on 2 October 1992 to conduct the inquiry into the Joh jury affair although, as I mentioned, he was still doing the Trident inquiry. One of the major terms of reference under which the inquiry was conducted was whether the procedures used to create lists of prospective jury panels for criminal trials was manipulated to include the name of any person who was subsequently empanelled in the Bjelke-Petersen trial, whether any person in the Sheriff's Office or in the Centre for Information Technology and Communications—CITEC—improperly disclosed confidential information concerning any juror who was subsequently empanelled on the Joh Bjelke-Petersen trial and, if so, by whom, and from whose knowledge did it come.

Finally, at the back of Mr Carter's report—I will not go into the bias, because I do not have enough time—he said—

"Finally, I need only add that the evidence of Jennifer Jane Kerry Smith and the report of Inspector Huddleston"—

a CJC police investigator—

"dated 11 December 1991 to the Criminal Justice Commission, is relied upon to support the finding that there was no manipulation of the random jury system with the Centre for Information Technology and Communications."

That is on page 476 of Mr Carter's own report. It is conclusive evidence that Mr Carter, the CJC—and I guess maybe the Attorney-General and the Director of Prosecutions—all knew a year before the Joh jury inquiry was conducted that the major term of reference was a farce. They already knew the answer to it. That is the point that I am raising in relation to the Carter inquiry. One could go on further in relation to other information—

Time expired.

Livestock Straying onto Highways

Mr DAVIES (Mundingburra) (11.31 a.m.):

This morning, I would like to speak about the subject of livestock straying onto highways and the civil liability for damage in relation to that. I would also like to acknowledge the students of the Salisbury State High School from Mr Ardill's electorate. I know that Mr Ardill has a strong interest in the subject matter that I will address this morning.

Over the years, along with other members, I have received representations from a number of people concerning stock straying onto busy roads. In two instances that I am aware of in the Townsville/Thuringowa area, one on Herveys Range Road and the other on Mount Low Parkway, very serious accidents involving horses occurred, causing near-fatal injuries to occupants of the motor vehicles involved.

I understand that, at common law, owners' or occupiers' liability for damage caused by animals straying onto highways is governed by an old English rule now abolished in most Australian jurisdictions but not in Queensland. Under that rule, land-holders are under no legal obligation to motorists to keep and maintain fences and gates in order to keep animals from straying onto the roadway. Attempts over a long period to have the rule abolished in Queensland have met with vocal opposition from groups such as the United Graziers Association, which argues that farmers cannot afford to fence entire properties and that, in any case, there are not enough accidents to justify a change in the law.

Before I go any further, I have to say that I acknowledge and sympathise with the arguments put forward by the United Graziers Association. Queensland is a vast State. To require all of those properties to be fenced to try to overcome the problem would place a massive burden on that section of the community. Nevertheless, although that is true for the vast rural regions of the State, I believe that the average motorist is entitled to protection on major roads in semi-urban environments such as Herveys Range Road and Mount Low Parkway in Townsville/Thuringowa. I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the common law rule and then possibly suggest a solution to the problem.

At common law, owners' or occupiers' liability for damage caused by animals straying upon highways is governed by that old English rule, which is now abolished by statute in England and Wales and most Australian jurisdictions. "The rule" is known colloquially as the rule in *Searle v. Wallbank*. According to English common law in *Searle v. Wallbank*, owners or occupiers of land adjoining a highway are prima facie under no legal obligation to fence or maintain fences along the highway so as to

prevent their animals from straying onto the highway, nor are they under a duty as between themselves and users of the highway to take reasonable care to prevent any of their animals not known to be dangerous from straying onto the highway.

The rule as formulated thus has two limbs, though it is said that the second limb effectively encompasses the first. The historical origins of the rule are variously described as archaic, anachronistic and ill-adapted to modern conditions and they pre-date the enclosure of English forests, commons and waste land, the growth of roads and highways and the advent of bicycle and motor vehicle traffic. The following classes of animals are known to English common law: animals mansuetae naturae, or domestic animals, and animals ferae naturae, or wild animals. Immunity from liability under the rule in *Searle v. Wallbank* is conferred only in relation to domestic or tame animals. I will acknowledge the interest of the prominent barrister and Minister for Industrial Relations, Mr Matt Foley, who is present in the Chamber. If I get some of the Latin terminology wrong, I ask him to accept my apologies.

In contrast, strict liability attaches at common law to keepers of wild animals, whether or not an animal's dangerous propensities are known to its keeper. In the case of domestic animals, an owner is under a duty to take steps to prevent it from endangering users of the highway where the animal is known to be vicious or mischievous. I understand that the precedent for that is *Brock v. Richards* (1951) 1 Kings Bench 529. According to that case, a mere proclivity to stray is not, however, a propensity sufficiently peculiar of itself impose liability on the owner. The rule in *Searle v. Wallbank* applies not only to what are commonly known as highways but also to lanes, streets, roads, bridges and thoroughfares. It is not qualified by factors such as the nature of the highway, the extent of traffic upon it or topographical circumstances.

Overseas and in Australia, there may, however, be statutory exemptions to the rule, though opinions differ as to the extent of liability under such provisions. I do not intend to elaborate on the overseas situation. I will simply say that the exact status of the rule in *Searle v. Wallbank* has been the subject of much controversy. In Australia, the principle in that case was followed in *Brisbane v. Cross* but not in *Thompson v. Nix*, nor in *Jones v. McIntyre*. In Queensland, in *Stevens v. Nudd*, which is a 1978 case, the applicability of the rule was questioned. His Honour Mr Justice Andrews thought that *Searle v. Wallbank* should either not be followed in Queensland or else its application should be restricted to particular circumstances.

Subsequently, in *State Government Insurance Commission v. Trigwell and Others*, which is another 1978 case, in a decision which casts doubt upon the correctness of the various Australian decisions, the High Court of Australia, with Mr Justice Murphy dissenting, held that the rule in *Searle v. Wallbank* had been correctly decided. In His Honour Mr Justice Murphy's view, the exception in *Searle v. Wallbank*—

". . . permitted graziers, by unreasonable behaviour, to harm road users with impunity, making them a privileged class in the judge-made law. It elevated the economic interests of graziers above the safety as well as the economic interests of road users."

As I said earlier, I do have difficulty with the proposition of trying to hold graziers accountable in such a vast State as Queensland. The majority view in that case was that whether the law in *Searle v. Wallbank* should be altered and, if so, how, was a matter for the Legislature, not the courts.

Although technically the *Trigwell* case held only that the rule formed, at settlement, part of the law of South Australia, in *Trindale and Cane's* opinion the decision will—

". . . probably . . . be treated as a general application."

The rule in *Searle v. Wallbank*, as affirmed in *State Government Insurance Commission v. Trigwell*, has subsequently been applied in Queensland in *Graham v. The Royal National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland*, and it has been the subject of much criticism from jurists, academics and law reform agencies alike.

There are a few other things that I would like to say about that, but I will not have time. I would like to come to what I think might be a way of solving the problem. If I have some more time, I will return to those other matters.

I believe that there is a commonsense solution to the problem. We really have to be able to find a commonsense solution because, as I said earlier, many of the persons who have been involved in accidents as passengers in a vehicle which has collided with animals have been severely disadvantaged, in that the future of any legal proceedings is clouded because of the operation of this rule. As I have said twice, I understand and sympathise with the objections of organisations such as the United Graziers Association. The costs to graziers of having to fully enclose their properties would be horrendous and would ruin many businesses. I do not believe that that is a desirable outcome.

I believe that the potential liability could be covered specifically through the motor vehicle

insurance system. In the case of motor vehicle accidents where the other party to the accident cannot be found, there is the Nominal Defendant Fund. If a vehicle collides with a fixed object such as a tree, there is still a remedy available, but when the accident involves a moving object such as a horse, there are problems because of the rule in *Searle v. Wallbank*. It seems to me that a facility such as the Nominal Defendant may be the answer. I am not saying that it has to be the nominal defendant, but I believe that that type of facility is the way to go.

As I understand it, relatively few of these types of accidents occur, and the Nominal Defendant facility or something like it would therefore be an equitable remedy, because it would spread the cost across all vehicle insurers rather than the primary producer who happened to own the adjacent property from whence the stock strayed. That could be done by a slight increase in premiums. The burden then would be spread across the entire State, just as it is when a claim is made against the driver of another vehicle. If the system can operate when a person collides with a tree, why can it not apply when a person collides with straying animals?

Airport Tollway

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (11.41 a.m.): Honourable members will undoubtedly recall that in early July this year, the Goss Labor Government was ready to announce the construction of the airport tollway through the northern suburbs of Brisbane, including the suburbs of Wooloowin, Kalinga, Eagle Junction, Lutwyche and parts of Clayfield. Honourable members will recall that a conscientious whistleblower blew the whistle on these plans and made the community and the Opposition aware of this dastardly proposal by dastardly people by leaking the Government's plans. Honourable members will also recall that there was no doubt that the plans were genuine and finalised to the extent that information booths had been booked at major shopping centres to explain the plans to the unsuspecting public; telephone hotlines had been set up to answer the undoubtedly thousands of angry calls which would follow the announcement of the Government's plans to build the motorway, and tens of thousands of full-colour, glossy pamphlets were printed for distribution—and they had "Cabinet Approved" stamped all over them.

The decision which was to be made on Monday, 11 July never proceeded following the initial public outcry and controversy which erupted on that day following my distribution of the leaked pamphlet to the electorate within 24

hours of it having come into my possession and the wide media coverage which the leaked information received that morning. Honourable members will also recall the way that the community backlash against the Government's airport tollway proposal mushroomed—a community effort supported by the vast majority of the residents of the suburbs most affected and many thousands more from throughout south-east Queensland. Irrespective of people's political leanings or affiliations, they rallied around the efforts of the Airport Motorway Action Committee, ably led by Mr Nick Allen, and eventually the airport tollway proposal was scrapped. This represented a great victory for the community, and I think that this is good. However, there is one worrying aspect of this whole sad and sorry tale, that is, the attitude, deceit and posturing of other members of Parliament in relation to this issue. It is to this aspect of the issue that I wish to address my comments today.

My concerns and findings touch on the way that this Government does business and on how various members of the Government will go along with decisions irrespective of what impact these decisions have on the people we represent in this place. Members should be aware that when I first raised the issue of the proposed airport tollway I stood alone as the local member of Parliament in declaring my opposition to it. However, as the community's view about the tollway became entrenched, politically pointed and embarrassing, other local politicians became more interested and pressured into saying something, so much so that on 8 September, almost two months after I distributed the leaked pamphlet to my electorate, Mr Terry Sullivan, my parliamentary colleague and constituent—and local resident and the former representative of the area most affected by the tollway proposal—went on the public record in this place and stated—

"I oppose the construction of the proposed airport motorway because I believe other solutions are possible."

In the same contribution he went on to say—

"It is my strong and preferred view that the answer to these traffic problems is not the construction of a new facility such as an airport motorway, but other alternative solutions."

It took almost two months for Mr Sullivan to make such strong public statements in this place, but they were welcomed by me and the community nevertheless.

On 15 September, the local newspaper, the *Northern News*, carried the banner headline that the airport tollway proposal had been attacked in

a submission which had been proposed by Mr Sullivan and carefully considered by Cabinet. On 15 September, the editorial of this paper stated rather pointedly—

"No-one, it seems, wants this motorway.

Now the State Member for Chermside, Terry Sullivan, has joined the fray. He does not want the motorway either."

Despite him taking all that time to come around to this point of view, it was good to have him on board.

However, Mr Speaker, projects such as the airport tollway just do not materialise out of thin air; they take many months, perhaps even many years, of planning, consultation and briefings. So I decided to try to find out just who knew what about this project and for how long prior to the day when I distributed the leaked pamphlet.

I have shown in this Parliament that the Premier, the Treasurer, senior public servants and many others had secretively known for months that this tollway was definitely on. However, I decided to outlay a few dollars and submit several FOI requests. What I found out is most interesting, not to mention damaging to those local Labor Party champions who decided to take the bulk of the credit for the Cabinet decision which eventually saw the scrapping of the tollway.

Mr Speaker, I claim in this place today—and FOI documents show this—that Mr Sullivan knew about the proposed tollway for many months prior to the distribution of the leaked pamphlets, and not only that, he approved of the proposal. This is particularly serious in view of the accusations levelled against me that I was scaremongering when I raised the issue publicly. It is even more serious when one considers the claim of many that they knew nothing about the Cabinet proposals until they were leaked.

Mr Speaker, the first document I will refer to is the file note of a ministerial briefing dated 23 December 1993 within which it is detailed that the Minister was briefed "on the views of MLAs" in relation to the airport motorway. Mr Sullivan is not mentioned by name, but one would have to assume that he is one of the people who would have had views on this issue, given that he is a local resident within one of the suburbs which was to be affected by the proposed motorway and one of the MLAs neighbouring on my electorate of Clayfield. I will table that document.

However, even more damning is another file note obtained under FOI dated 24 February 1994 which details a meeting with Terry Sullivan, MLA under the heading "Comments/Concerns" which states—

- "1. Concerned about acquiring the properties between the Railway and Jackson Street and along Junction Road.
2. Changes/difficulty of local access.
3. How does the Motorway fit into the overall picture. In particular will it affect the 'trouble' spots of Gympie/Rode Road intersection and Nundah Shopping Centre.
4. Concerned at ability to maintain local traffic movement along the railway Albion to Woolloowin.
5. Overall, accepts need for facility but must address local issues."

This last point is particularly damning, for without any consultation with the community within which he lives and which I represent, Mr Sullivan accepted the need for the motorway and then kept silent about it. I also table that document obtained under FOI. This is a predisposition he maintained, as a meeting with the Minister on 28 April 1994 shows. The meeting was organised to discuss various traffic issues, including the Nundah bottleneck, the airport motorway and traffic matters relevant to Mr Sullivan's electorate of Chermside. The record of the meeting, also obtained by me under FOI, states—

"Minister indicated that if the Airport Motorway were to proceed he would recommend that Nundah Bypass—Option Three be constructed (which includes provision for tunnel).

Mr Sullivan agreed with the Minister's recommendation.

Mr Sullivan indicated that if the Airport Motorway were to be constructed there would need to be associated works undertaken on the road network in the region—particularly on the east-west links.

In particular, Mr Sullivan proposed that major works be undertaken at the intersection of Rode Road and Gympie Road.

...

The Minister undertook to have the Department address the possibility of works being undertaken at the intersection of Rode Road and Gympie Road in association with the construction of the Airport Motorway."

I table that document.

So there we have it, Mr Speaker—a bit of cosy dealing with the Minister, tacit agreement with the proposal and a total disregard for the views and the feelings of my constituents, from a

person who these days is going around my electorate saying that it was he and other local Labor Party champions who saved them from the tollway. I say to the Parliament that with friends like Mr Sullivan, I know that the people in my electorate are happy to have a representative like me looking after their interests. However, Mr Sullivan, Mr Wayne Swan and all the other good Labor people have another opportunity to prove their commitment to the best interests of the community which I represent. If they take advantage of this opportunity, I will be the first person to give them credit for doing so.

In this context, I refer to the lingering issue of what is now known as the Leckie Road connection. In fact, a major road menace still exists and it is called the East-West (Leckie Road) Connection. This is a protected road corridor within which the Government owns much property, and its aim is to connect Gympie Road and Stafford Road to Rose Street and Junction Road. Once this happens, Rose Street and Junction Road will become a major freeway. In fact, I am inclined to believe that more traffic is likely to use this new freeway than what was expected on the proposed tollway. The effect will be the same—more cars and trucks, more pressure to widen the roads and resumptions. We all know the story!

The question is: how does the community stop the East-West (Leckie Road) Connection? The answer is simple and has two components—people power and the selling-off of the land and houses owned by the State Government. If this occurs, the Government and bureaucrats will not be tempted to consider and possibly implement the major road upgrade option. Mr Deputy Speaker, who favours the sell-off? As the local member, I certainly do. So do the majority of local residents in Woolloowin, Kalinga, Eagle Junction, Lutwyche and Clayfield.

The day after Cabinet decided to scrap the tollway, I issued a media release which states—

"The State Government should sell off the land and houses it owns along the Gympie Road/Rose Street/Junction Road corridor if it is truly against the construction of a major road or a Tollway through Brisbane's northside."

But what about our local Labor champions? I was heartened to read in the *Northern News* of 29 September 1994 letters from Terry Sullivan and Wayne Swan saying that they opposed the construction of the East-West (Leckie Road) Connection to Rose Street and Junction Road. This is good, but not good enough! They either want that connection or they do not—if they do not, then selling off the properties owned by the

State Government makes sense and should be advocated by all who oppose the connection.

So I again challenge our local Labor champions who take credit for knocking off the tollway to come out loud and clear and publicly call for the selling-off of Government owned land and houses along the Leckie Road Connection. If they do that, they will prove their bona fides, they will tell the community—through their actions—that they really do not favour a major road through the suburbs, and, being the very fair person that I am, I will be the first one to give them credit, as always, if they do so.

Time expired.

Agroforestry

Mr ROBERTSON (Sunnybank) (11.50 a.m.): I rise to talk about agroforestry. I believe it is fair to say that one of the most important environmental issues facing Australia today is the problem of soil salinity. According to the CSIRO, soil salinity accounts for between \$300m and \$500m annually in lost farm production in Australia.

A recent report in the Australian Conservation Foundation's magazine *Habitat* indicates just how harmful soil salinity can be to our land and its productive capacity. The Australian Conservation Foundation article quotes water resource experts who say that each year soil salinity around creeks, canals, dams and bores renders more than a billion cubic metres of water too salty for crops and stock. It suggests that over the long term a further \$500m may be required to desalinate town and city water supplies and repair corroding taps, washers and pipes.

As underground watertables rise as part of the soil salination process, roads and buildings can become destabilised, requiring more costly repairs. The worst affected area in Australia is the Western Australian wheat belt, where it is estimated that over 50 per cent of some areas is now wasteland, most of it caused by dryland salinity. The effects of soil salinity are profound; plants cannot grow because of the high salt concentration in the soil. As we all know, where plants do not grow, soil is easily washed away or blown away by wind.

Dryland salinity occurs principally because many farmers continue to clear the plants that grow naturally on their properties, replacing them with shallow rooted crops. Nationwide estimates calculate that about 500 000 hectares of native vegetation are currently cleared each year in Australia. This is in stark contrast to the benefits of the one billion trees program, which has

resulted in over 500 000 trees being planted under this program thus far.

There is a cruel irony to the clearing of native vegetation for farming, because native vegetation uses a relatively large proportion of rainfall, and most native grasses have developed a deep root system to tap sub-surface moisture. In the absence of this vegetation and its replacement by crops, rainfall quickly soaks into the watertable, causing the watertable to rise. This, in turn, brings salt water to the surface. It evaporates, leaving the salt behind, and renders the soil virtually unusable for further agricultural purposes.

Mr FitzGerald: What type of salts are they—sodium chloride, bicarbonate? Do you know anything about it?

Mr ROBERTSON: The rate and severity of this salination process depends on local hydrology and geology, proximity of the watertable to the surface and evaporation rates. I am surprised that the member for Lockyer would ask those questions, because everyone, including him, should know the answers to them.

However, once entrenched, the degradation of salted land is difficult to reverse. The recognition of the soil salinity problem has resulted in many farmers and Governments changing their approach to land management. Many farmers are now engaged in tree planting schemes, which is a longer-term response to the problem of soil salinity. In the meantime, other responses, including planting crops with a deeper root system, are being used as a means to control the rise in the underground watertable. But the problem of soil salinity and the recognition that tree planting programs are only one way to address this issue have resulted in some interesting results.

For example, for several years some Western Australian farmers have been growing trees for timber, which doubles as a soil saver and an additional source of farm income. It is reported that the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management recently attracted about \$260m worth of investment in agroforestry from major Japanese firms. They will plant about 20 000 hectares of trees on farmland near Albany. It is estimated that this will generate about \$100m a year in sustainable returns.

On a recent trip to Tasmania, I noted with great interest how many farmers, particularly in the north-east region, have converted part of their land to tree cultivation. Given the Western Australian and Tasmanian examples, I was therefore pleased to read that the Queensland Department of Primary Industries is currently investigating how best to establish commercially viable native hardwood plantations.

A recent Department of Primary Industries Forest Service journal reported that, as a result of improved technology and an increase in demand for native hardwoods, a fresh look at hardwood plantations is being undertaken. The findings of the Queensland Forest Service support the work carried out by the CSIRO, which has found that some fast-growing eucalypt species can produce good quality timber in 20 to 30 years. Combined with improvements in tree growing and sawmilling technology, the length of time needed to grow good quality timber is decreasing.

The Queensland Forest Service notes that large areas of native forest in south-east Queensland have been removed from timber production over the past decade, including Fraser Island, Cooloola and parts of the Conondales. Justifiably, some of these areas have been World Heritage listed or are now national parks. However, the Forest Service noted that hardwood supplies in this region, as a result of the protection of these environmentally significant areas, have halved. Therefore, hardwood plantations could supplement these diminishing supplies. Importantly, as a result of the success of Forest Service projects in the Ipswich, Gympie and Beaudesert regions, it is now hoped that sufficiently increased interest will be generated for private growers to consider planting eucalypts in the region.

The projects carried out by the Forest Service reflect the provisions of the 1992 National Forestry Policy Statement in recognising developing market opportunities. The policy statement notes that—

"Australia's commercial plantation resource already contributes significantly to the domestic wood processing industry and is dominated by softwoods. But there are also increasing market opportunities for hardwood plantations".

It is therefore appropriate that agroforestry be seen by the community as an industry deserving of support and encouragement here in Queensland—not just for the obvious longer-term economic benefits such an industry will bring to Queensland, but for the environmental reasons that I spoke about earlier.

Growing trees can be integrated into farming operations in many ways, providing both economic benefits and contributing to preventing land degradation, enhancing agricultural production and improving the farming environment. Plantations specifically for growing wood can be made part of the farming operation, such as I witnessed in Tasmania. Areas of land suitable for growing timber trees can be set aside primarily for this purpose. Trees grown for timber

can be used for purposes other than simply preventing soil salinity. Tree plantations can provide other benefits, such as wildlife habitats and shelter for stock.

The efforts by the Queensland Forest Service in promoting agroforestry deserve greater attention by the community. The research and trials conducted by the service will enable this industry to gain wider acceptance by farmers and investors. The Forest Service acknowledges that at present there is a lack of information on what are the optimal combinations and arrangements of species for farmers who would like to try agroforestry in Queensland. However, two trials conducted by the Forest Service in south-east Queensland are expected to provide the necessary information for future growth of this industry.

The trials at Warril View near Ipswich and Tinana Creek near Gympie centre on investigating the effects of different tree species and tree spacings on pasture productivity and composition. As well as measuring tree and pasture productivity, these trials are also examining how trees and pastures interact. For example, the effects of tree species and tree spacing on the amount of water available for pasture growth are being measured. As both of these experiments age, increasingly useful information will no doubt emerge. It is hoped that this information will be used to build a computer model able to predict the performance of agroforestry systems for a range of tree and pasture combinations in south-east Queensland.

At Palen Creek, south of Brisbane, a field trial is also under way to test a different approach to establishing an agroforestry system. In this case, instead of planting trees at wide spacings, an existing forest has been thinned out and pasture has been planted underneath the remaining trees. This system is being trialled as an alternative to the traditional approach of clearing forest to establish pasture for grazing.

By combining tree crops and other agricultural crops on the same piece of land, agroforestry has the potential to improve the overall productivity of the land. Under the right conditions, trees can be grown for timber or other products such as fodder or honey, whilst crops or pastures can continue to provide similar or even improved production. In addition, the trees can help prevent or rehabilitate land degradation problems such as salinity and can provide ecological benefits such as habitats for native birds or other wildlife.

Agroforestry should not be seen just as an activity for established farmers. The Forest Service notes that smaller blocks of land can be used for this purpose. The area of land

necessary for tree plantations will depend on many factors, such as whether it is planned to grow trees for wood production as a sideline or whether it is intended to make a major investment in the industry. Blocks of land as small as one to two hectares can be suitable for small woodlots. This would be particularly of interest to small lot holders in the south-east Queensland region. On the other hand, large-scale operations can be several hundred hectares. While much of Queensland remains in the grip of one of the worst droughts on record, that should not mean that research into better farming methods and land care should not continue.

Time expired.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order! The time allotted for Matters of Public Interest has expired.

FIRE SERVICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 19 October (see p. 9674).

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Western Downs) (12 noon): The Fire Service Legislation Amendment Bill is designed to create a way of funding bush fire brigades. Members would well know that those people who live in urban areas are already serviced by either professional firemen or auxiliary fire services and that those two types of brigades are, in fact, funded by a fire levy that is levied by the local government of the area.

New circumstances have been created by many people choosing to live in rural settings outside town areas. This piece of legislation addresses the problems that arise because of that change. About 12 months ago when the people in and around Sydney had tremendous trouble with the bushfires a focus was given to this piece of legislation. As members would have seen then, there is a similarity between the surrounds of Sydney and the land right along the rest of the east coast of Australia. We have a mountain range not far from the coast and various heavily timbered spurs of that mountain range run right into the city areas. Wherever that occurs there is a great build-up of flammable material. People are moving out and living in those areas. That is a new circumstance that we have to do something about.

I know that some members of the Government will stand up and say the same old thing: "It was an awful mess and it is about time funding was put in." There has never been a crisis such as this arise before; it must have been an adequate service that we had before. However, I acknowledge that we must do

something about it and I am prepared to be supportive of the Minister, knowing that those new circumstances exist and that a new sort of fire service has to be funded in what people term the "rural-urban interface". It seems to me to be peculiarly on the eastern side of the escarpment of the Great Dividing Range; although some pockets exist in other areas—the Minister would be aware of the Millmerran and Tara areas. In fact, some of those people are already doing a good job in their own way. The new set of living circumstances are basically allied with the coastal side of the range.

I think we learnt from the New South Wales bushfires that the people living out in those areas are urban people who do not have much experience fighting fires; so they need training. They also need equipment. Another lesson from New South Wales is that, because of the nature of the land down there and the similar nature of the land around here, the service needs special coordination. The Department of Emergency Services is doing a very good job in regard to coordination by plotting and sending messages through its nerve centre. Nevertheless, it can be upgraded. So, three areas need to be addressed—equipment, training and coordination—and all of those need money. So a decision has been made by the Government to introduce legislation to make possible regular funding to bush fire brigades.

About 12 months ago, after the bushfires in Sydney the Minister stated that, unless we do something, the same will occur in Brisbane. In the past few weeks that prophecy has been fulfilled to some degree, but luckily not the same degree of damage has occurred as in New South Wales. Nevertheless, about 12 months ago Mr Burns realised that we needed to do something about it. As the Opposition spokesman, I listened very closely to the sorts of things that were said. Various statements were made by the Minister, myself and other people who had a vested interest in this matter. Two things were promised by the Minister. Firstly, he said that we would have a system of voluntary levies. I was supportive of that. I will explain what we mean by a voluntary levy: it should be voluntary for the local government to strike a levy should it see fit. However, I believe that the intent is that it then becomes compulsory for the ratepayers in that levied area to actually pay the levy. The payment of the levy is not voluntary—once the council decides that the ratepayers have to pay a levy, they are a part of that system—but it is up to the council to decide on a voluntary basis whether or not that area needs that levy. The levy would be imposed only if a bush fire brigade within a local area requested it.

Of course, it must be understood that within a shire or local government area there can be a number of bush fire brigades. A problem of definition exists that the Minister will probably address later on. I think it is important that the voluntary levy is imposed only in that part of the shire that is covered by the bush fire brigade that requested it. There may well be other bush fire brigades within that same shire that, in fact, are pretty happy with their present arrangement because of the nature of the country—the area that they cover may be open farming country, they may have their own equipment and they may not need a levy. So, I am asking the Minister to consider that the voluntary levy be applied by the council only in that part of shire in which a bush fire brigade makes a request.

Mr Burns: Don't worry about that. In fact, it will be that way. What I also say, though, is that if a bush fire brigade asks a council to strike a levy and the council says "No", then next year when we do this fire service legislation, we will look at the right of the Government to strike a levy.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That is the next issue that I was going to raise, because I did notice that one paragraph in the Minister's second-reading speech signalled that intent. I have been speaking to the Local Government Association of Queensland since then and the Minister foreshadowed to them that, when the new emergency services legislation comes up next year, the Minister is considering putting in place the power for the Government to strike a levy for a bush fire brigade if the local council does not do it. The Minister will have some trouble from me about that and many other people in rural Queensland would have a worry about that.

I know that in the last few weeks the Caloundra City Council seemed to be disregarding some of the people who live in that area and it was refusing requests. My point is: why make all the people of Queensland suffer just because one local authority in Queensland—

Mr Burns: The only people who will suffer will be those in the place where they don't pay the levy. You wouldn't do it anywhere else.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: So long as the Minister is specific about that because people from rural organisations, such as the United Graziers Association and the Cattleman's Union, who want to ensure that they are not caught in the net have been contacting me and they have probably been contacting the Minister also.

Another promise made by the Minister was that the money that was raised would be spent locally. The Minister foreshadowed in his second-reading speech that the Government might strike a levy that would go to the Rural Fire

Division. That is understandable. I think he could have gone further and reasserted his promise that the money raised would be spent locally. The Minister might like to expand on that in his reply.

While the Minister was away, two Ministers acted in his capacity. Firstly, the Minister for Police had some problem with the messages coming backwards and forwards about what actually happened during that near tragedy. It was a near tragedy, but it was not fatal. The next person to act in that capacity was Mr Mackenroth. Last week, while the Minister was still away, he seemed to clear up the issue a bit when he said that the legislation may come forward and that the levy would be voluntary. That has now been cleared up because the Minister has foreshadowed the effect of the Emergency Services legislation that is further down the track. I accept that.

I note that in this legislation it is proposed to amend the Fire Service Act, which is understandable, and it is also necessary to amend the Local Government Act to take away any doubt. I noticed that the Minister mentioned the fact that the Solicitor-General had to give an opinion because there was some doubt about whether or not the council could strike a levy and collect money for a service that it did not perform. I accept that. There also has to be a slight change to the Acts Interpretation Act. That is within the Attorney-General's area; it is a bit heavy for me, but I understand that it has to be done.

Mr Burns: Me, too. Don't ask me any questions.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: No, I will not. I understand that three Acts have to be changed, as is proposed by this legislation. A few minutes ago I circulated to the Minister my suggestion of a better way to improve the Act so that the Minister can be very specific about his promises. During the course of the debate he might like to consider them. I have already spoken about my intentions. People in local government have expressed to me that there may well be a frustration factor. They do not want people to think that the State Government can say, "We have just passed the Bill. It is up to you fellows now." Administratively it will take a few months to put things in place. I notice the amendment that the Minister has just circulated as a result of which it will be possible for a council to pass a resolution to set a levy at a meeting other than its budget meeting. I accept that. I think that is a good idea because the local governments can then do that as quickly as possible. However, there is still going to be a lag period; it will be a few months before they get the system up and running. We have to be careful not to criticise the

people in local government because already there is some consternation within their ranks that they are seen as the poor unfortunates who gather a lot of money on behalf the State Government for the services it provides. They have to deal with the administrative load and the problems involved in putting the system in place.

Initially, when the legislation was mooted in its most basic form, we were talking about rural residential zoning levies. I had problems with that because some of the people in some of the towns in Queensland are already living in an area covered by the auxiliary fire brigade, yet they are living in a rural residential setting and are already paying a levy to the council. So the term "rural residential zone levy" was not quite right. The possibility was then mooted of a rural zone that would be applied throughout the State. Obviously, the Minister does not agree with that—and neither do I—and, of course, other people were not happy with that suggestion. We have achieved the right balance by allowing the local authorities to be able to react to a request from the bush fire brigade. The local people know what is the best thing to do. They know their circumstances—whether or not they need more funding, or whether or not they believe they have sufficient equipment, or whether or not they are pretty happy with the situation.

Mr Burns interjected.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The Minister has just frightened the hell out of me. We will see what he comes up with.

Mr Burns: You can understand. Councils have come to me and said—and, in fact, in Kev Lingard's area there is a fellow out there campaigning saying, "Everybody has to pay a levy." Now, I'm saying, "No." It should only be on rural residential, but if we do it the way we've got it here, it could be that the council could determine to charge everybody. So I might just ask the Parliamentary Counsel to have a look at the question of coming back with a notation struck on land that they deem rural residential that is vacant.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: My proposed amendment, in fact, determines that it should be levied only on an area that is requested by a bush fire brigade. We can discuss that matter at the Committee stage.

Another matter that I raised while the Minister was away was the fear that, once we put a levy system in place and these bush fire brigades are going to have access to more money on a regular basis, the State Government's fire services are going to back away from making available that subsidised equipment. I issued a press release on that matter, and all I received was abuse from the

Treasurer. I am told that he is pretty careful with money, but he was also pretty careful with his words. He abused me, but he did not give me a guarantee on this subsidised fire equipment. That subsidy is a very good deal. People can get a four-wheel-drive ute or a trailer with pumps on it for \$5,000 or \$6,000. That is terrific. That equipment makes it possible for people to go out and provide the service that is required. I ask the Minister to address this matter in his reply and guarantee that the subsidised equipment will still be available, because some people have doubts about it.

The next matter that I want to raise is not contained in this legislation, but it is a matter that could be introduced into the legislation by way of amendment. I refer to the situation that arose at Roma recently. The people of Roma are serviced by an auxiliary fire brigade, and problems were created out there through a difference of opinion between some people in the brigade. Things became pretty nasty and reached the stage at which one fireman was stood down, and then the fire chief was stood down. Along with the Mayor of Roma, Mayor Barry Braithwaite, I made representations on behalf of the people of Roma and talked to the Fire Commissioner. He was somewhat frustrated because, under the PSMC Act, he has to go through set procedures.

It occurred to me that it is probably not a bad idea to think about changing the terms of employment of auxiliary firemen. Currently, they are treated as public servants. The amount of money those firemen receive for attending training and attending fires is only a pittance. Those fellows do not do it for the money that they make; they do it out of a sense of service. They get caught up in the spirit of the fire brigade and they know that they are doing a good service for the town. It is a bit frustrating for those fellows when the heavy hand of public administration, in the form of human resources and personnel management, bears down on them. The brigade in Roma had to go through a process of standing down both of those fellows. They had to go through counselling and mediation, and both of them had to receive a reprimand. These are blokes who go out and fight fires for the brigade after work. They receive a pittance for their service in saving someone's property. They say, "It is not worth it. I am not going to put up with this. I will just get out of the show."

In fact, it has been brought to my notice that the morale in the Roma auxiliary fire brigade is not good at present because the circumstances under which the Fire Commissioner had to resolve the matter were not the best that they could be. So the Minister might consider thinking about that matter. It is not only a belly-ache for the Minister; it is also a belly-ache for me.

However, I think it is worth considering whether those auxiliary firefighters should be under the same strict controls that apply to full-time public servants, because their conditions of employment are of a different nature. I raise that matter for the Minister's consideration. It may be something that he will address in the emergency services legislation that will be introduced next year.

The Minister would be well aware of the Rural Fire Brigade Association. That association wanted me to bring to the attention of this House the good work that it does. It coordinates the bush fire brigades across Queensland. The association is at its strongest along the coastal area, where it is easier for people to travel and to be in contact. However, of late, the association has made a conscious effort to travel into the western parts of Queensland. It is very keen to get bush fire brigades throughout Queensland affiliated with the association. Members of that association meet, set policy, and hold discussions with the Commissioner and the Minister about matters pertaining to bush fire brigades. I am told that, currently, the association receives a grant of \$12,000 a year. I am sure the Minister is aware that the secretary of the association, Mrs Chalker—she probably sent him a letter similar to the one which I received—has set a budget—

Mr Burns: I was handed it this morning.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: She has asked for \$84,000 a year. There is probably merit in considering giving the association a bit more help. I do not know whether or not its figures are fair dinkum but, certainly, it is an association that has potential. I think that it acts as a good sounding board. The fellows involved in it know what they are about. I know that, last Saturday, they met at Blackbutt. Members travelled from areas throughout Queensland. The expense that these fellows incur in travelling throughout Queensland to attend these quarterly or monthly meetings is pretty large. If the Minister could give some consideration to helping with those sorts of costs, it would be very much appreciated and, in that regard, I support their case.

I must take this opportunity to speak about a couple of other issues relating to the fire brigade. First of all, it was brought to my attention that, currently, there is a conscious effort by the Queensland Fire Service to extend fire services into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. I commend that initiative. An effort is also being made by the Queensland Fire Service to get more ethnic representation within the service, and also to get women into the service. It was put to me—and I do not know whether this is right or not—that, over the past

four or five years, 1 700 women have applied to join the Fire Service in Queensland, and not one of them has been successful. The bloke from the Fire Service to whom I spoke thought that that was a bit of a joke. He said to me, "Do you believe there is now a series of seminars taking place that are trying to stir people up and get women enthused about joining the Fire Service?" One firewoman from the ACT and one firewoman from New South Wales have been involved in this. I had a bit of a grin about that. However, the Minister is part of a Government that is pushing hard for equal opportunity for females. I talked to a couple fellows about it. They said to me that it would work all right. They believed that women could play a useful role, as long as—

Mr Burns: They do in the rural fire brigades. They are really great in the rural fire brigades. In fact, in some of the brigades, it is nearly more women than men.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Actually, there was a group of women near Tara and, one day, they were running a raffle in Chinchilla for their own brigade. As the member says, I am sure that they are helping with the equipment and doing all of those sorts of things. I had to raise that matter because I thought it was a bit fancy that, over the past four or five years, 1 700 women had applied to join the Fire Service, and none was accepted.

I want to indicate that the Opposition supports the notion that a new set of circumstances exist out there, and we have to raise funds in the correct way to cope with those circumstances. We have to be sensitive to the needs of people and make sure that we do not lock them in, yet we have to do it in such a way as to provide the level of training, equipment and coordination that is necessary. So the Opposition supports the Bill. However, I will be pushing for the acceptance of my proposed amendments, and I will be keen to see some of the Minister's amendments at the Committee stage.

Mrs WOODGATE (Kurwongbah) (12.20 p.m.): I am certainly pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of this Bill. I support fully all of the statements made by the member for Western Downs. I was a bit surprised to hear him wanting to get women into the job of putting out fires, because my sex usually gets blamed for starting fires. I support that initiative also, but the member can forget me!

I believe that, recently, quite a number of the members of this House would have seen evidence in their own electorates of the devastation that can be caused by bushfires. I refer to the ones that occurred in late September and early October. I know that some occurred in November, but I will speak about them later. The

bushfires that occurred in September and October had a devastating effect on areas in my own Kurwongbah electorate—in Samsonvale, the area between Samford and Dayboro, and also the beautiful area between Petrie and Dayboro.

About three weeks ago, I drove from Petrie to Dayboro. The landscape around there is usually a very beautiful green colour. It is one of the prettiest areas in south-east Queensland. The predominant colours, instead of the greens and reds, were black where the fire had raced through the previous week and, anywhere the fire had missed, the metre-high grass was brown. I could not help thinking that it would be only a matter of time before the next idiot came along and carelessly tossed a cigarette out the window and, with the blustery winds, we would have more damage. It is a very depressing picture around the rural parts of my electorate at the moment.

Luckily, because the dedicated members of the bush fire brigades around Samford, Dayboro and Samsonvale worked tirelessly alongside the regular firefighters, the fires were contained to a certain extent. These rural firefighting volunteers deserve better. They deserve our moral support and, more importantly, they deserve better financial support than they have had in the past. I will not stand up in this place and talk about the previous conservative Government and so on. We have been in Government for five years, and it is time that we all got our acts together and started doing something, which is what this Bill is all about.

As has been shown recently by the audit of bush fire services, which made very interesting reading, State Government support is not the total answer. It is for these reasons that I fully support the main objective of this Bill, which is to give the local authorities the power to impose a levy and contribute all amounts raised to rural fire brigades in their own local authority areas. I say, "Hear, hear!" to this initiative, which has come at long last. I believe this change will ensure future funding for this State's 50 000 rural firefighting volunteers.

In spite of the fact that there has been a 230 per cent increase in State Government support for our rural brigades, which includes a record budget of \$5.4m for 1994-95—and this, I might add, was the third year of record rural fire budgets—the provision of 120 rural firefighting appliances, more than 50 firefighting trailers delivered in the past three years, almost 14 000 sets of protective clothing distributed to volunteers, and significant upgrading of communication systems, we still hear critical statements from some members on the

Opposition benches, in particular from the Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Caloundra, Mrs Sheldon, who is always reported in the local papers on the Sunshine Coast as saying that the State Government is starving the rural fire service. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have read a couple of replies from the Deputy Premier, and I fully endorse his statements.

I believe this is nothing more than a deliberate misleading of the people of Queensland or, as the Deputy Premier has pointed out on many occasions, the member for Caloundra is failing in her job to keep up with the many initiatives taken by the Goss Government to boost the rural fire services. Thousands—50 000, to put a figure on it—of men and women devote much of their time and effort as volunteer firefighters throughout this State. They deserve better support from all politicians. I am glad to see that this is forthcoming. They should not be used as political footballs by some members opposite.

There has been some misunderstanding by some of our local authorities of just what this Bill will mean to them. My office has received queries as to whether the levy is compulsory. The answer to that question is: of course it is not. It is also important to remember that councils can be selective of the areas that they may wish to levy. This can be done now, and can still be done under the amendment that we have before us in the House today. We do not have to look too far afield for examples of whether they have to levy the whole area or not.

At present, in the Cooloola Shire the southern suburbs are charged a rural residential fire levy, whereas the northern or outer suburbs are not. The Maroochy Shire has different rates in different parts of that shire. In my own area of the Pine Rivers Shire, if my memory serves me correctly, we have seven bush fire brigades—Mount Nebo, Mount Glorious, Samford, Clear Mountain, Closeburn, Samsonvale, Dayboro and Ocean View. Some of the bush fire brigades in these areas have levied a voluntary levy of \$25. The last time I inquired about these bush fire brigades, I was told that approximately 40 per cent of the population served by the brigades who requested the voluntary levy have opted to pay this \$25. It could well be the case that the council will opt to levy certain parts of the shire and, for whatever reason, opt to not do this in other areas of the shire. But whatever is the case, these amendments now give local authorities this discretionary power to make and levy certain rates or charges and contribute the moneys raised to rural fire brigades in those same areas.

It has always been my belief that something good seems to come out of something bad. An example of this belief was brought home to me loudly and clearly in the form of a message to local governments as a result of the recent disastrous fires which raged out of control in the Sunshine Coast hinterland in the first week of November. We all read the reports in the press. We all watched the television and thought how dreadful the fires were. We saw Sunshine Coast rural firefighters blasting—and no other word would fit it—the local council after almost losing their lives because of equipment failure while fighting blazes in the Glasshouse Mountains.

It has been reported that the Landsborough Rural Fire Brigade has lobbied the Caloundra City Council for the past six months to apply a \$25 per year rural fire levy to raise money to replace inadequate equipment. Those are their words, not mine. I believe the message that has been delivered most dramatically to the Caloundra City Council is to think seriously about what the firefighters, who are the workers at the coalface, or cliff face, have been telling them. It is not good enough for Des Dwyer, the Mayor of Caloundra City, to refuse to collect a levy because he believes it is a State Government responsibility. His neighbouring councils of Maroochy, Noosa and Caboolture all collect the rural fire levy.

The recent fires showed that the difference between these regions' equipment and Caloundra's equipment was—and I quote the *Courier-Mail* of 8 November—"absolutely glaringly obvious". Let us hope that the something good to come out of the something bad will come in the form of this council or all councils taking a long, hard look at their responsibilities towards rural fire brigades in their areas. Let us not hear any more rubbish about how this is another money grab by the State Government. The Deputy Premier has told us ad nauseam that not one penny of this levy will find its way into State Government coffers but will be contributed to rural fire brigades in those local authority areas.

I am sure that we are at the beginning of what promises to be another long, hot summer, and we will see more unwelcome fires. The lack of rain will contribute to the dangers posed by these fires. It may well be that the public needs to be better educated about the dangers of starting fires—for example, by the careless disposal of cigarettes, and fires lit in the open, which have a remarkable ability to get out of hand.

As to those whom we could only call poor beggars who seem to get a kick out of starting fires deliberately—what can we say? We cannot legislate for stupidity. We cannot educate people who are determined to carry on in such an idiotic

way. I understand that in relation to some of those bad fires on the Sunshine Coast hinterland a couple of people have been questioned or arrested. We will just have to wait for what that outcome will be. And, I might add, it is not always kids who are to blame.

Whether we do see more devastating fires this summer, I think it is incumbent on all members of this House to support their bush brigades, both morally and through encouraging their local authorities to impose this levy where it is glaringly and obviously needed, as stated in the *Courier Mail*. I support the Bill.

Mr LINGARD (Beaudesert—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.28 p.m.): The Opposition readily supports moves to increase funding and better equip the men and women who volunteer their services to the firefighting service on a localised needs basis. Brigade volunteers not only give up their time and their money to supporting their brigades; they also risk their lives in order to save the lives and property of others. They provide their labour and often their own machinery, including bulldozers, graders, tractors, trucks, four-wheel-drive vehicles, mobile phones and radio communications equipment and pumping equipment.

The Opposition recognises the need to provide an increased level of support to rural fire brigade services. This is very important, and the community should put the weight of its support behind its own local brigades. I support the previous speaker, who said that we should acknowledge the great work that these groups have done, the pride that they have taken in their service and the time that they have put into their service. Personally, I have always thought that they should have done more in respect to chasing funding within the community. I note that over the last two or three weeks, especially in my area, brigades have done a lot of chasing of voluntary money. It would seem to me that there is an extra effort going in just now to obtain voluntary contributions of \$25 and \$30 before this legislation is enforced, under which the levy will become compulsory. I honestly believe that if the brigades had put in as much effort previously, they would have raised a lot more money in some of the new rural residential areas. Many of us who live in those areas were never contacted previously by the local brigade, which did not put in the effort to chase voluntary contributions.

The Goss Government also cannot be let off the hook. It has been slovenly when it comes to providing adequate funding and resources to volunteer brigades. The Goss Labor Government has known in the five years it has

been in Government that voluntary rural fire brigade services have been under-resourced, yet subsidies have been tightened and often removed on some equipment which some of our brigades consider necessary. There has been report after report and Government-sponsored reviews that have confirmed this basic fact, including the Rural Fires Board survey by the Consultancy Bureau in 1989; the 1988 Leivesley report; a Treasury evaluation in 1991; the Kenning internal investigation into rural fire services in 1992; the PSMC report into emergency services in 1993; and, more recently, the bushfire audit report of this year.

Each review has conclusively recommended an increase in funding and support for the rural fire service. Year in, year out, these services have pleaded with the Government to give them modern equipment and additional training, but the Government's response has been an annual swipe at local authorities. As Caloundra Mayor Des Dwyer pointed out, following the recent bushfires on the Sunshine Coast, his council had refused to collect the rural fire levy on legal advice. Local councils simply did not have the backing of legislation to collect levies to give to voluntary fire brigades. That is not the fault of local governments; that is the fault of this Government, which should have acted long before this to make a specific provision in the Local Government Act. Despite this, for five years straight, the Government has argued that local councils should take on the responsibility of underwriting local brigades. What about the Government's responsibility also for these brigades? The Government has an obligation to adequately resource and provide modern equipment and training to the brigades. They are part of the Queensland Fire Service and come under the direct responsibility of the Minister.

There has been only a small increase in State Government funding from consolidated revenue to rural volunteer brigades. In the absence of the Minister, Mr Burns, during the most recent bushfire crisis in the south-east corner, the Treasurer in a ministerial statement on 15 November admitted that—

"Since 1989, the Rural Fire Division budget has increased by \$3.7m."

I put it to the House that this is a fairly paltry increase, given the number and the weight of independent reports that this Government has had advising a substantial increase in funding to the rural brigade service.

As a further example, in the program statements attached to the 1993-94 Budget papers, actual 1992-93 Goss Government spending is pegged at \$843,000 in current

grants and subsidies and \$913,000 in capital grants and subsidies. \$913,000 does not buy much equipment spread amongst some 1 600 rural fire brigades. According to the figures quoted in the Budget papers, that makes this Goss Government's total commitment to rural fire brigades in the 1992-93 financial year a relatively measly sum of \$1.7m spread out amongst some 1 600 brigades. The 1993-94 Queensland Fire Services annual report indicates that, of the total fire services budget, rural brigades received only 3 per cent of the total program budget. As part of the 1994-95 Budget, in response to the audit of bushfire strategies, the Government announced a \$1.7m provision for the acquisition of capital firefighting equipment as part of a belated response to the critical situation facing rural fire brigades. The point I am seeking to make is that this Government is not innocent when it comes to inadequate resourcing of our rural fire brigades.

There are worrying aspects of this legislation. In his second-reading speech, the Minister delivers what could only be described as a naked threat to councils throughout Queensland. At one point, the Minister says—

"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."

Further into his speech, the Minister delivers this—

"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."

This gloves-off threat goes against every indication the Minister has previously made to local councils in relation to maintaining the right to voluntarily raise fire levies from ratepayers. It also indicates that money collected may not remain in the local area; it can be taken and absorbed by the head office bureaucrats. I appreciate the fact that the Minister has given that undertaking. However, this legislation still allows this to happen.

It also implies that the Government will impose blanket levies right across-the-board, including hard-up rural areas as well as rural residential areas. This is despite the thrust of the PSMC report and the bushfire audit report specifically targeting rural residential areas. In a section of the PSMC report identifying major issues facing the rural fire brigade, the problems

with servicing rural residential developments are highlighted. The report states—

"This should include the raising of rural residential fire levies."

Similarly, in the Minister's statement to the House regarding the bushfire audit, he constantly refers to rural residential areas. In a *Courier-Mail* article of 10 December 1993, Mr Burns is reported as emphasising that—

"There was no plan to tax people in genuine rural areas, who were already well served by volunteer units."

The Minister's plan to impose blanket levies also ignores strategic risk mapping that is designed to identify particular areas of above average fire danger.

I cannot help but speculate that behind the Minister's threat of blanket levies is a desire by the Government to reduce capital input from consolidated revenue overall by increasing the take in levies. The Minister must provide an unconditional guarantee that the department will not halt or reduce the level of subsidies to rural fire brigades for the purchase of equipment.

One of the other problems identified by some of my people in the Beaudesert Shire is that once again there is an elected representative to act on the board or act on the group that will be set up to administer this proposal. Once again, we have imposed upon local councils another job. It is only a small job, but it is a small job added to the many, many other small jobs that are being imposed upon local councils. There will have to be a representative whose responsibility will be to act on this group or act on this board—once again, more time and more effort on the part of the local council.

I ask the Minister to look at this legislation. My shire council is concerned that it is not clear in the reports the exact nature of land to which such a levy can be applied. My council asks: is the Minister referring to land zoned rural residential or land perceived to be rural residential in the future? The council needs to see the full extent of the legislation before it makes any decision on whether it can impose such a fire levy. The description of "rural residential land" needs to be defined clearly before the council can consider what course it will take as a result of the legislative changes.

I ask the Minister to look into the work being undertaken by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service. Within my area of the Scenic Rim, much criticism has been levelled at the work being undertaken by those two agencies. It is claimed that they are not

undertaking burn-offs. If those divisions neglect the work that they should be doing—

Mr Littleproud: And maintaining firebreaks.

Mr LINGARD: And maintaining firebreaks. If those divisions neglect that work and put it back on the rural fire boards, there will be yet another imposition upon those local groups. There is no doubt that the audit of rural fire services was critical of both the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service because they were not maintaining firebreaks and were certainly not doing all the burning-off that most land-holders would regard as the responsibility of those agencies. These questions have been asked by people in my area. If possible, I seek some sort of guarantee from the Minister on those matters.

My local groups are asking: what is the Rural Fire Division's attitude to the administration of the proposed fire equipment levy; that is, whose responsibility will it be to ensure that the levy is paid into each brigade's own account for them and to have control and administration of their own funds and any interest therefrom? Will each brigade still have total control and responsibility over these moneys and their own purchasing of equipment? If not, who will? Who will benefit from the interest due? If the brigades do not have total control of their money, who will decide what and when they can purchase for their brigades?

Will the Rural Fire Division continue to subsidise any purchases made by the brigades and still support the smaller brigades, or will they use this opportunity to withdraw the subsidy? Can any guarantee be given that the Rural Fire Division will not absorb a large part of this levy or any other State Government funding in empire building or jobs for the boys? Will the percentage deducted by the council for the administration and collection charges of the fire brigade equipment levy by them be a fixed and permanent amount, or will this be where the bureaucracy takes money out of this levy? In the case of areas not covered by active rural fire brigades, what provision if any has been or will be made for the collection and administration of the fire equipment levy moneys to be collected from these areas?

In conclusion, I reiterate that I believe that there should have been more work by the brigades in chasing voluntary contributions. It is quite obvious that, as they prepare for this legislation to be implemented, they seem to have found renewed interest in chasing voluntary contributions for the boards. I only wish that they had done so before, because I am sure that, if they had, much more money would have been paid into the boards.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy) (12.41 p.m.): The previous speaker attacked the Government over its not addressing the inadequacies of the fire services, but I am afraid that he failed to mention that when the Goss Government came to power in 1989, it found that it was left with a \$60m-odd debt in the fire services area. Fire services in Queensland were in a very poor condition. We only have to refer to the 1988 Sally Leivesley report, which pointed out the inadequacies of the fire service and the very poor condition that it was in.

In fact, in her report, she summed up the situation when she said that Queensland had the equivalent of a village fire service, with ad hoc arrangements. She also said in her report that the management structure of Queensland fire services was at least 40 years behind international standards and some five to ten years behind the other Australian States. The Leivesley report confirmed what people from within the Fire Service had been saying for almost a decade. In fact, in the 1980 annual report of the Rural Fires Board of Queensland, the chairman at that time, the late George Healy said—

"Compared with our counterparts in other States, including the smaller population States of South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, the rural fire boards in Queensland rate very poorly in funds available."

That points out clearly to me and to other people in this place that the Queensland Fire Service has been in a poor condition for a long, long time. The then Government sat on its hands and did nothing to fix that. Its members, now in Opposition, are now complaining to the current Government, saying that it is not addressing the problems out there. We have a very difficult task; the service is very run down. We also have the responsibility of first trying to pay off the existing debt. I am sure that, when the debt is repaid, the budget will continue to be of the same order as it is now, which will mean that we will be able to address some of those problems.

The Explanatory Notes state—

"The objective of the legislation is to amend the Fire Service Act 1990 to allow local governments to make and levy separate or special rates or charges for the purpose of assisting the funding of rural fire brigades . . ."

I would like to make a few general comments on bushfires and rural urban properties and, later on, more specific comments about the Rockhampton Rural Fire Division.

An audit of bushfire strategies by Queensland Emergency Services, presented to State Parliament on 9 September by the Deputy Premier, identified three key issues—responsibility for fire management, especially at the rural/urban interface; resourcing and training for rural fire brigades; and administrative procedures. As the member for Fitzroy, I represent a large rural and mining-based electorate, and I intend to talk a little bit more about that later on. Because I have lived in the country, I have witnessed large bushfires, and I am well aware of the destruction and heartbreak that fire brings.

The two worst bushfires in Australia's history are the 1939 Black Friday fires in South Australia, and the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires in Victoria, when 76 lives were lost. More recently, we saw the outbreak of the devastating wildfires in New South Wales—and the member for Western Downs has already spoken about that—in which four people died and there was massive loss of property, wildlife and valuable forest.

I have a few statistics that should be of some interest to members. The number of properties lost in the Sydney fires amounted to 188. In the Ash Wednesday fires, 2 788 properties were destroyed. Bushfire insurance claims in the Sydney fires totalled 2 415, compared with 5 277 from the Ash Wednesday fires. A frightening statistic from the Sydney fires is that 25 per cent of residential properties were not insured. Of these, 14 per cent were primary residences. Twenty-six per cent of homes affected by bushfires did not have contents insurance and 4.26 per cent of houses destroyed were underinsured. These statistics highlight the apathy of people and the need for us as a Government and as a community to keep reminding people that things like bushfires do occur. It can happen to anybody; we need to be prepared. We should not just adopt that attitude of, "It won't happen to me."

Of concern to me is the rapid development of land surrounding and in close proximity to regional cities such as Rockhampton. Once sparsely populated land is now inhabited by an increasing number of people wanting a lifestyle that is different from that on offer in the urban environment. These urban fringe areas have a lot to offer those who appreciate the open spaces of country living, and I do not blame them, where they are close to the wildlife and other natural benefits. Many people living on these small properties put thousands of dollars into developing an interest. These interests are, of course, many and varied, but it means that homes, sheds, machinery and animals all become part of their assets. While these people will pour the dollars into developing and

perfecting their interest, they often appear uninterested in taking steps to protect what they have worked so hard for from one of the most destructive forces of nature—fire.

I am not being unreasonable when I suggest that, through no fault of their own, many of the people who move onto these small properties lack a real understanding of the requirements of good fire management practices. Those who do understand fire make attempts to protect their properties by establishing firebreaks around property boundaries, buildings and along roadways. This can be done by either ploughing the ground, slashing, burning off when conditions suit, keeping rubbish to a minimum, keeping roof gutters clean, and having fire fighting equipment clean and ready to go into operation. However, unfortunately, some people refuse to take any of these steps, particularly in relation to clearing techniques, as they oppose the loss of vegetation. If those people ever see a fire go through the country, and it is because of the vegetation that is around their house and because they have not taken the necessary steps, they will have a change of opinion because it will cost them everything that they own.

As many members would know, fire is devastating and final. After a storm or a flood, people can go back into their homes and make them livable, but a fire destroys everything. So I see a need to better educate people about fires and about living on rural blocks. As a priority, local groups must also become more interested in protecting their properties and the properties of their neighbours from fire. People should not worry just about their own property, they should worry about the properties alongside them. People need to talk to their neighbours to make sure that they have taken the right steps, because it is no good one property owner putting all his effort into taking the necessary steps and preparing himself if his next door neighbour has an arrogant approach to the matter.

We need to build on the strengths of local bush fire brigades. That is essential, as is being prepared to put resources into maintaining vehicles and equipment. The rural fire levy is one way of doing that. It is about self help. It is better to recognise the need to establish an effective fire service before there is a need to use it. So it is better to have ourselves prepared and to be able to put steps into operation when they are needed rather than to sit around after a disaster has occurred and complain that we should have had this and we should have had that. Unfortunately, because of the type of country we live in and because of the type of people we are, far too often people complain after the event

about services not being available to them. I am saying that we should prepare ourselves before the event.

Mrs Edmond: Always be prepared.

Mr PEARCE: Always be prepared. I totally agree. I have also been a great supporter of that motto.

Because it is difficult to maximise benefits through voluntary contributions, I support the amendments to the Fire Service Act. This will give local authorities discretionary powers to make and levy rates or charges to fund rural fire brigades. Funds collected within a particular district—and I believe this is important in rural areas—will, for the purpose of enhancing rural bush fire services, stay in that particular district. That is important. On that principle, rural property owners should be prepared to support funding programs that will see rural bush fire brigade units in their areas better equipped and volunteer firefighters better trained.

I turn now to discuss more closely the central Queensland area and the Rural Fire Division of Rockhampton. I pay tribute to the outstanding work—and I know the Deputy Premier is well aware of this—of firefighters, SES personnel and police volunteers in recent weeks for their efforts in dealing with the large number of bush fires. The district rural fire inspector, Bruce Ziebell, should be commended for the work he has done in that area. His commitment to his job in coordinating the fire services and all other necessary people has been outstanding. What impressed me was his ability to deal with the media and reassure the community that things are under control.

I express my concern about unconfirmed reports of a firebug operating in that area. I call on the public of the Rockhampton area, particularly the Mount Morgan area, to be on the lookout for any people acting in a suspicious manner. They should not think twice about it; they should get on the phone and report it to police. The police cannot get those people if they have nothing to work on. It is outrageous that some people are prepared to get out in the country and deliberately start fires. I believe that they are the scum of the earth. They put people's lives at risk and cost millions of dollars in lost property and the unnecessary use of resources. The sooner that we can catch people like that and put them where they belong, a lot better off we will be.

The Rockhampton Rural Fire Division encompasses the shires of Livingstone, Mount Morgan, Gladstone, Banana, Bauhinia, Fitzroy, Calliope, Miriam Vale, Duaringa and Emerald. In that area are a total of 165 rural brigades, which are resourced by more than 3 400 volunteers. The district also serves 178 fire wardens and 26

chief fire wardens. It is estimated that another 10 rural brigades will be formed within the next 12 months to cover those areas that are currently without a rural brigade or a fire warden system.

It has been a little difficult for people such as myself and Mr Ziebell, the rural district fire inspector, to actually obtain a record or get an understanding of what equipment rural brigades have. I believe that there is some concern amongst the people who look after rural brigades that if they identify their equipment or their needs, steps will be taken to remove to other locations any of their surplus equipment. I want to assure those people that that is certainly not on; that it is about identifying needs and doing what we can to make sure that all rural brigades are properly equipped to some standard. At the moment, there are different types of equipment. Some of it is recently acquired equipment, but some of it is 30 to 40 years old. One of the first things we have to do as a Government is deliver a standard that is equitable across the State. Therefore, the more information that is made available will make it a lot easier for the Government to provide the necessary equipment. There is a necessity to modernise that equipment. It is also important that we not only modernise the equipment but make sure that volunteers are properly trained to use it. The people who are involved with the rural fire services should adopt an attitude of "Let's work together, because we are out to achieve a fire service that can deliver when needed."

I have always supported the need for a fire levy, and I believe that it is the only way to go. It is certainly suitable to those areas with a reasonably high population and a density of dwellings. Those are the areas on the outskirts of places such as Rockhampton and Gracemere, where people are moving onto small blocks up to 60 hectares. They live there because they like the lifestyle, but they are not covered by urban fire brigades. Those people are a real concern to me. They are in real danger because of their lack of understanding. Many of those blocks of land cannot sustain any type of industry, so the owners of those properties usually have to work. When they are away working, their properties are left unattended, and there is nobody there to deal with a fire if it breaks out. So they rely on other people and other services to step in. Many of those people are not interested in contributing money to provide the necessary services. When a person goes off to work, in the back of his mind he wants to know that, even though he is not there to protect his property, he has made some contribution towards putting in place the type of equipment and trained people to deal with such a crisis. We must encourage people to treat the fire levy with the respect that it

deserves and be prepared to contribute to it. I believe that the proposed levy will actually increase funding to some of the urban brigades from 30 per cent to 80 per cent. That will be a massive injection of funds, considering that the amount that they receive at the moment is very limited.

Although properties on the fringes of places such as Gracemere, Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast will benefit because significant amounts of money will be poured into them, I am a bit concerned that if people in the more rural shires—where the population is more sparse and the properties are bigger—are required to contribute funds, it will take longer to get the necessary amount of money to buy the right equipment. Somewhere along the line we need to consider any subsidies that can be provided to people in rural shires, particularly those who live on bigger properties and already work very hard and have in place a lot of their own equipment. Perhaps the subsidies could be increased for those people to help them get the equipment they need, and perhaps we could reduce the subsidies for people in urban areas, who have the base to contribute more dollars, thereby levelling it out so that more dollars are available for people in rural areas.

Some brigades are able to attract large financial reserves. We must be careful not to allow them to become fat cats. We do not want them receiving lots of money and building up their bank accounts unnecessarily. The funds levied on people must be for the supply and operation of equipment; it is as simple as that. If funds are not needed, we should not ask people to contribute. But if asking them to continue to subsidise their local fire brigades means that a little more money will be left over to give to people in rural shires, that will be a positive step towards helping those people.

The Government is attempting to catch up on the mess that was left by the previous Government. As to some of the things that have been provided to rural fire services in this year's \$1.7m budget—two heavy rural fire tankers, 20 medium rural tankers, 13 light attack units and 15 trailer units will be supplied to rural bush fire brigades. From talking to people in rural Queensland who have been involved with the Fire Service—many of them for most of their lives—I know that they are very appreciative of the actions of this Government. They realise that we recognise the need there. They also realise that nothing has been done for the past two or three decades. And that is true; there is no argument about that. One has only to read Sally Leivesley's report to realise the conditions that Queensland fire services were in.

I support the Minister. I believe that he is doing a great job. As somebody who comes from the bush and knows what it is like to have a property burnt out and to go out and fight a fire with equipment that is below standard, I believe that we are heading in the right direction. I believe that in the years to come—and it will take time—we will have a viable Fire Service in Queensland.

Time expired.

Sitting suspended from 1.01 to 2.30 p.m.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (2.30 p.m.): Today, I wish to make a brief contribution to this debate, but in doing so, from the outset, I place on record the appreciation of everybody on this side of the House for the tremendous job that the professional and volunteer firefighters performed during the recent spate of fires here in Queensland. Obviously, many members would have been involved because of the nature of their electorate. I am certainly aware that the member for Nerang was very much hands-on in terms of his contribution in conjunction with his local community, and he certainly contributed by shining example.

Today, there is a recognition within the wider community for more resources, common fire management standards, better training and safety measures for fire brigade staff generally and a funding scheme to support emergency responsiveness for rural and urban fire services. The recent Queensland and New South Wales experiences in dealing with the major catastrophe in rural and urban fire management demonstrates that the Australian natural environment can be a harsh task-master. However, it is my view that the introduction of this Bill seems to be a reaction to bureaucratic and political failures to address this important issue without a well-planned and coordinated approach to emergency preparedness. It is to that concept that I wish to address my brief remarks today.

On numerous occasions the Goss Labor Government has expressed a need not to increase taxes in this State, yet it does not mind asking other entities to do so. I have referred to this growing tendency during previous debates, the most recent being the debate on the Environmental Protection Bill. In fact, this Bill is an illustration of the subrogation of local government councils to collect revenue on behalf of the State Government and a threat that where local councils do not address this specific issue, the Government may impose a levy anyway. Again, other speakers on this side of the House have mentioned the implicit threat that is contained within that statement.

This legislation appears to be relieving the State Government of its responsibility to provide for the security and safety of the community and fire brigades and may give rise to an inequitable taxing scheme. In relation to the taxing scheme, I refer the Honourable Minister to some concerns that have been expressed about the possibilities for retrospective application of the new tax and for it to cast the net far wider than what may be intended within this Bill. I wonder if this legislation really fosters community support for rural fire emergencies in Queensland or if it is a reflection of the Government's poor management approach to this recurring problem of rural bushfire threats.

The existing application of the provisions of this Bill will be all important. This is certainly of concern to me and to the people who have consulted with me. I suggest that there will need to be a degree of flexibility to determine fire rate levels depending on the specific requirements of local authorities and their funding arrangements. The rural levy will have a significant impact on the rural economy if it is applied universally to farmers and townspeople. Honourable members would appreciate that often farmers in outback Queensland provide significant personal resources to assist rural fire brigades during a bush crisis with little or no compensation. The result of this legislation will be to place greater hardships on individuals, families, farmers and businesses in the country and near country areas, thus the need for the levy to be applied sensitively.

There will certainly be a reaction from the rural communities who will see this legislation as providing further State funding for a service into which they may have limited input as to its management and resourcing. Certainly, there should be some measure of equity between State and local authority funding with the State Government having the major funding responsibility for rural fire services. However, the Bill before us today is primarily targeting residents in rural residential areas. These people will have to pay a substantial levy because of their personal interests in wanting to enjoy a better quality of life, and those people in particular will be seriously affected by the legislation.

The New South Wales and recent Queensland experiences clearly suggest that the fires were in most cases precipitated by unusual climatic and environmental factors that have a bearing on rural areas. The difficulty in managing fires near rural residential areas is obviously caused by the lifestyle enjoyed by residents who see a need to balance environmental factors with residential considerations. This legislation appears to target those people to justify improvements to rural fire

services when it may be more appropriate to develop environmental fire management strategies linked to local government planning processes that consider that type of lifestyle that is being sought more and more often by more people. That is not to say that those people should not contribute to the emergency resources of the community, and no-one on this side of the House has suggested that. However, this legislation should also consider environmental fire management strategies and local government management strategies whilst promoting quality of lifestyle for rural residential residents.

I would suggest to the Minister that it might have been appropriate for the Queensland Government to have drafted the Bill before us today when the New South Wales Government has finalised its extensive inquiry into their recent fire disaster. I believe the New South Wales inquiry may cast much light on far-reaching issues, for example, coordination between emergency services, integrated communication systems, increased prevention strategies, strategic management practices in the rural fire brigades and the most suitable equipment for handling such emergency situations, improved environmental fire management strategies, environmental caring for Australian fauna and flora, and we could add to that list the conclusions that may come out of the New South Wales inquiry. Even our recent rural and urban fire management strategies and resources should again be reviewed after the recent devastating fires that occurred in the south-east corner of Queensland.

I believe that there is a need for the Government to address the issue of emergency preparedness and particularly encouraging preventive strategies. Prevention is an issue highlighted regularly by fire experts in domestic and rural-type fire situations, yet this legislation does not go far enough to provide any incentives for citizens, farmers, businesses or local governments to have strategic plans and practices in place to manage emergency fire problems. Local authorities and their communities should be thoroughly involved in the planning process to improve environmental fire management practices, particularly in rural residential areas.

Rural fire brigades form an integral part of rural communities and should be provided with the resources and training necessary to achieve their objectives and support their personal safety. There is also a much broader role for urban fire brigades, as observed in the New South Wales experiences and our recent Queensland experiences, that is, to provide additional support to rural fire brigades during

major disasters. Even our depleted professional urban brigades attend rural fires outside their districts and leave the city resources dangerously low, particularly in the south-east corner of Queensland. That has been highlighted to me by people who have come to me, a member of the Opposition. Those people have said that once they vacated Brisbane during the times of those semirural fires, they certainly feared what might be occurring in the metropolitan area of Brisbane.

However, it must also be acknowledged that the situation in the New South Wales case may not have the same application in outback Queensland where rural residential properties do not generally exist. Different fire strategies may need to be applied in those areas due to the problems of distance, water resources, communications, geographical access and timing. Legislation must provide opportunities for rural authorities to have greater involvement in how rural fire resources are allocated and used in those communities. Based on those issues and others that will probably emerge from the New South Wales bushfire inquiry, I believe that the Bill before us has not canvassed fully the opportunities that could have been available as a result of the completion of that report. I do not believe that it has fully addressed the holistic issues necessary for a State emergency preparedness plan in rural and rural residential areas.

It is obvious that this Bill is a reaction to emerging problems that I believe need to be the subject of further consultation with local authorities, particularly those in rural areas, including: the taxing obligations of those local authorities, rural environmental fires and town planning management, greater coordination between urban and rural fire brigades, needs and resources to provide safety for themselves and the community and the need for greater emphasis on prevention strategies and its impact on rural residential areas that are affected by this legislation. These issues need to be addressed as a matter of priority by the Government and the Minister, and the Government should consider alternative revenue raising schemes to support rural fire management practices and resources. The coalition believes that these issues are critical for Queensland's community safety, and it would legislate on the grounds of providing resources and fire management strategies for rural and urban fire brigades using appropriate alternative taxing arrangements. Our approach would include more input by local government authorities and hold the State Government accountable for Statewide fire emergency preparedness.

Despite the comments I have made, I still believe that the Bill should be supported. The honourable the shadow Minister has certainly indicated the basis of the reservations relating to our support, and I am pleased, in turn, to support him.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (2.41 p.m.): This afternoon, as a member of the Deputy Premier's legislative committee, I rise to speak briefly in favour of the Fire Service Legislation Amendment Bill 1994. In doing so, I want to make an initial comment in relation to something the honourable member for Beaudesert said that I thought was pathetic and a cheap shot. He said that he thought that some of these volunteer firefighters had not worked hard enough to raise funds. Really, that comment is pathetic. These blokes have given up their own time to work incredibly hard protecting persons and property, and I do not believe that the member for Beaudesert's smart remark in this place about those volunteer firefighters not working hard enough to raise funds should be let go without some comment from members of the Government.

A Government member: A cheap shot from a cheap member.

Mr BEATTIE: I take that interjection. It was a cheap shot. I cannot understand why the honourable member for Beaudesert felt the need to say that.

I think those volunteer firefighters work incredibly hard. In light of the recent fires in this State, I believe that all members of this House, including the honourable member for Beaudesert, would want to join with me in paying tribute to those firefighters who have made significant sacrifices to protect property and persons. As I said, I was not prepared to let that comment of the member for Beaudesert go without a reply.

The recent fires spread as far north as Mackay which, I think, gives members some idea of the extent of the problem. Over the last two months in Queensland, there have been 682 major fires. That does not include grassfires, and gives some idea of the size of the problem. Indeed, on 7 November—which honourable members will recall was the crucial day—2 700 fire calls were received. Admittedly, there would have been some duplication, but that gives members some idea of the extent of the problem and the significant contribution that the volunteer firefighters had to make.

I was reading a publication by the Queensland Fire Service's Rural Fire Division entitled "A Volunteer Organisation's Role in Rural Fire Management". That publication

provides a small part of the history of rural fire brigades. It states—

"Following disastrous fires in central and southern Queensland in the mid-1920s, the need was seen to create a body to co-ordinate, oversee and administer rural fire control in Queensland. Investigations resulted in recommendations that a governing management body be created and legislation be proclaimed providing protection for responsible fire users and provisions for punitive measures to be taken against irresponsible users of fire."

Further on under the heading "Rural Fire Brigades", it states—

"Fire suppression is regarded as a very important feature of the role of the Division's 1,566 Rural Fire Brigades as they play a major role in fire control management. Membership of these Brigades approximates 48,530 persons"—

that is a very significant number of Queenslanders—

"making the Rural Fire Brigade movement the largest voluntary organisation in the State. These Brigades are regarded as efficient and effective within the constraints placed upon them by staffing and funding levels."

A little further on, the publication refers to rural residential development, which is, of course, one of the major reasons for this piece of legislation and states—

"The massive growth of rural residential development has changed the management of rural fire control in Queensland. In the past, rural properties were largely self sufficient in fire control terms and the Board supported the rural community by subsidising specialised fire equipment to ensure community protection should the need arise.

Present rural residential development adjoins most Queensland towns."

As I said, this is the heart of the problem—

"Owners of such properties tend to have little knowledge of fire, no equipment and do not maintain stock to keep grass down. They have an aversion to the use of fire as a hazard reduction tool. These communities perceive their fire protection requirements as largely consisting of structural (buildings) fire protection and form centralised Brigades equipped with water carrying appliances, high powered pumps, fire stations, callout systems etc.

Some Rural Fire Brigades may appear to be disjointed organisations with little expertise, however a closer acquaintance quite often reveals a thorough knowledge of the area by members, a significant depth of expertise in fire matters and a considerable amount of firefighting equipment. Many long serving members of these Brigades retain excellent historical fire records of their areas which can prove a valuable source of information for prospective inhabitants and land managers."

I thought it was important to share that information with other members to give them some perspective of the intent of this Bill.

This amending legislation gives local authorities the discretionary power to make and levy certain rates or charges for rural fire brigades in their areas. As members would be aware, local authorities in urban areas are already required to raise a levy to support their fire brigades.

I refer to the history of this legislation. In 1993, the parliamentary draftsman said that the Local Government Act, which was enacted at that time, allowed local authorities to collect funds for these purposes. However, Crown law found that technically that was not the case. As a result, there is a need for this Bill. That is why the Bill is retrospective to 1 July 1994. Some councils accepted the advice of the parliamentary draftsman at that time and, in fact, started to impose a levy, so to an extent that retrospective provision is important. Normally, the Government does not support retrospective provisions. However, it is important in this case because some local authorities had already started to collect the levy. Since there was clearly an intention at that time, no-one is adversely affected or surprised by that retrospectivity.

As I mentioned, that levy covers local authorities, particularly those areas that are not covered by an urban fire levy. It is certainly not a doubling up. If people are currently paying the levy, then they are not going to be forced to pay it again.

Despite what the honourable member for Beaudesert said, I say that this Government has demonstrated a strong commitment to upgrading rural fire brigades. As I said before, the recent fires in Queensland and earlier this year in Sydney—and I was in Sydney in January during those fires—give some idea why this Bill is necessary.

If members look at the funding arrangements, they will note that the budget for rural fire services, or for the Rural Fire Division, increased by 230 per cent to a record level of \$5.38m last year. So again, contrary to what the

honourable member for Beaudesert said, this Government has in fact tried to overcome decades of neglect prior to 1989 and has increased significantly the budget for fire services.

If members look at the levy provided for by the Bill, they will get some idea of how the Government supports these rural fire brigades. If rural fire volunteers got together and purchased a four-wheel drive pumper with a 650-litre capacity, they would be able to acquire a vehicle worth about \$28,500 for about \$5,000. If, for example, they were able to purchase a Mazda truck with a 2 000-litre capacity, it would be worth about \$42,000, but they would get it for \$6,500. There are significant Government subsidies to support the volunteer rural fire brigades, so it is not the case, as was suggested by the honourable member for Beaudesert, that those volunteers are without support. There is a clear acknowledgment of the contribution that they are making.

I conclude by saying that I look forward to this time next year when there is an improvement in communications for fire services. A short time ago, the Deputy Premier, Tom Burns, and I went to the ambulance headquarters at Spring Hill where the Deputy Premier launched a new communications unit for the Ambulance Service. In about a year, that new communications service link will include fire services. Although people will still dial 000, the fire and ambulance communications staff will be operating in the same room. That will improve communications and it will continue the modernisation strategy that was begun by this Minister. I congratulate him for tackling this problem, assisting these volunteers and giving them the support that they deserve.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (2.50 p.m.): The timing of this Bill is unfortunate. It is unfortunate because the issue of safety for our rural volunteer firefighters has become a political issue due to the disastrous fires which crippled parts of Queensland in the past few weeks. It is unfortunate because the State Government could have avoided much of the criticism which has been directed at it had it lived up to its rhetoric over the past five years.

I would like to put on record my thanks to the extremely brave volunteers who fought those fires, the rural fire brigades, the SES people—all of the emergency service operations that were pulled together—for the wonderful work they did in saving the property and lives of others. Unfortunately, as we know, they were putting their own lives at risk.

Over the past few years, many people, including myself, have warned the Government that rural fire brigades were underfunded, underresourced, dangerously underequipped and, in many cases, untrained. The Deputy Premier has a reputation for making great promises and failing to deliver on the details. Just ask Queensland's subcontractors or the HOME victims.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister spoke of the Government's strategy to upgrade rural fire brigades. He spoke of the Government's commitment to this cause and of how he had increased the budget for the rural division of the Queensland Fire Service. Unfortunately, his commitment and the Government's commitment once again fails to live up to the Deputy Premier's rhetoric. In only the sixth paragraph of his second-reading speech, the Minister shows how soft his commitment is. The Minister stated—

"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."

That is a cop out. What political cowardice by the Deputy Premier and by this Labor State Government! This is an almost unbelievable duckshove of responsibility by the Government. I say "almost" because, unfortunately, we have seen many similar duckshoves of responsibility by this Government in the past.

The Deputy Premier goes on later in his speech to say that those councils which do not set a levy will be hit anyway through a State Government levy. So the State Government's commitment to the rural volunteer firefighters of this State is so strong that it will only enforce it if it has to. Even then, it may not. Who can tell? That is why I intend to support the moving of an amendment to this Bill by the shadow Minister, Mr Littleproud, which will force the Government to act, while ensuring that funds raised in local authority areas are returned to that area for rural fire brigades. If it is genuine about ensuring that all rural fire brigades in this State are adequately resourced and funded, this amendment should be supported by the State Government.

The fires which ravaged Queensland in the past few weeks were probably at their worst in my own electorate of Caloundra on the Sunshine Coast. Thousands of people were evacuated, homes were lost and people's lives were threatened. In many cases, the only people who stood between tragedy and safety were voluntary rural fire brigade members and volunteer members of the SES. These are men and women who, through civic duty, put their

lives on the line for their local communities. Some of those men are in hospital today recovering from burns they received when trapped after their \$700 vehicle broke down on Bells Creek Road and they were hit by a fireball which destroyed their inadequate vehicle and, unfortunately, seared the men inside. These men had no two-way radios and had to use a private mobile phone to call for help. Without that private mobile phone, who knows what would have happened to those men.

I am angry that this Government is pretending in this House today that it has done everything possible to provide proper firefighting equipment, vehicles and training for our rural fire brigade officers. I am angry because I know that there are men in hospital suffering from severe burns because the overalls that they were given by the State Government were little more protective than paper towels when it came to a dangerous situation. I am angry because the protective helmets given to them were so inadequate that the skin on their ears was burnt off. I am angry because this State Government has used the tragedy of these fires to cast stones, as it has done so often before, and blame everyone else for the problems that these firefighters have faced.

One has to ask: how long must this go on? For five years this Labor State Government has been in power, and still it blames former Governments for everything that has gone wrong. I would think the Deputy Premier would be too embarrassed to try to blame the former Government for everything that has gone wrong with the rural fire brigade funding, but he is so used to making the excuse that I believe it now comes out like a recording whenever he opens his mouth. And if it is not the former Governments that are to blame, it is the local councils. That is right, blame the councils for failing to ignore this Government's laws, and levy rural and rural/residential home-owners. "Blame someone and everyone, but certainly do not blame us" is the motto of this Government and, obviously, this Minister.

Let me tell this House a few of the facts. Fires which threatened towns throughout the Sunshine Coast hinterland highlighted the pathetic support given to the rural fire brigades by the State Government. Rural fire brigades in Queensland are the poor cousins of the bush fire brigades across the country. The Boreen Point Rural Fire Brigade uses a vehicle which rolled out of the factory in the early 1950s, and volunteers are left having to pay for its constant upkeep. Although 36 new utilities are available for rural fire brigades this year, 165 rural brigades have vehicles which are more than 20 years old, with one unit near Roma using a 1942 vehicle. Of

those 36 new vehicles, only 12 are being used to replace existing clapped-out brigade vehicles, with the rest going to augment the fleets of some of the bigger rural fire brigades.

The State Government gives only \$1 for each \$3 raised by rural fire brigades, to a maximum of \$3,000. It was interesting that, when I visited these very brave men of the rural fire brigades in hospital, the sister in charge of the ward said, "Something must be done about this. Will you see that it is? These men should not have to raise their funds by chook raffles and the like, which they tell me is their constant method of endeavouring to get funding." What is worse is that these rural firefighters have to pay for the fuel that they use to travel to and from the fires.

Now more than ever, Queensland needs an effective fire service. People's lives and homes are at risk. We certainly do not want a repetition of the horrific Sydney fires. That situation could have arisen in this State recently, given the dryness and the very high winds. When these factors are combined with very high undergrowth, such a situation could have recurred. We certainly do not want that horror—something which the work of the rural firefighters has prevented.

On Saturday morning, I drove from Brisbane to Landsborough. The amount of destruction that had occurred along that area, in particular from the Beerburrum turn-off through to Landsborough and deep into Maleny, was extraordinary. That any group of men could stop this from happening on their own and went into these extremely dangerous situations shows the extent of their valour.

I would like to quote a rural fire brigade officer of 30 years' standing who said—

"The situation here in Queensland frightens me. You could have an Ash Wednesday here."

These are not my words; they are the words of a man who has fought fires as a volunteer for 20 years in three different States. Yet this experienced firefighter is frightened and so are his fellow volunteers. Another very experienced firefighter told me that the current level of funding and resources given to rural fire brigades in this State is equivalent to what was given to them in Victoria in 1944. With the upgrade that has occurred in Victoria over those years compared with this State, which is much bigger and which has much greater potential to blow up, as we have seen recently, I think it is an indictment to compare the discrepancy in the resources and funding of the Queensland and Victorian brigades.

With the explosion in rural/residential development on the outskirts of most major towns and cities, rural fire brigades are now being forced to protect homes from wildfires threatening semi-urban areas. These rural fire brigades, made up of brave and hard-working volunteers, need all of the Government funding that they can get to upgrade their equipment to meet this new challenge. A lot of the rural fire brigades lost a lot of their equipment in the last fires. They will have to have that replaced, let alone having their resources increased to a reasonable level. Yet most rural fire brigades have been set up to battle the odd grassfire. That is what they were set up for in Queensland a long time ago.

The State Government allocates a really pathetic amount to bush fire brigades, which are now being forced to carry more and more of a burden due to the rural/residential boom. There have been three major reviews by the State Government into the operation of rural fire brigades since 1989. All three reports, including the latest by the Public Sector Management Commission, found that the volunteer rural fire brigades were extremely efficient and in desperate need of more State Government funding. Committees and committees and reviews and reviews—all more excuses, and we certainly do not get very far down the track.

While many councils have attempted to help through levies and donations, the major effort must come from the State Government. An increase of only \$1.7m in the 1994-95 State Budget was really just a drop in the bucket compared with what is needed Statewide for rural fire brigades. As I said, both in Victoria and in New South Wales, much more funding is provided for rural fire brigades. It is time the Queensland State Government offered the same commitment to protecting property and the lives of volunteer firefighters.

It is important that the Government consider providing adequate compensation for the men who were injured, for the people who lost their homes and certainly for the damage that has occurred. I have written to the relevant Ministers about this issue—Mr Burns; the Premier; and Anne Warner, the Minister for Family Services—to see what assistance can be offered to those people. Apart from some firefighters being seriously injured, many people do not realise that the rural firefighters and the volunteer SES people all lose wages when they go out to fight fires. Those people have said to me that that is part of their commitment. However, I believe we in the community should realise the commitment that they are making and consider some way in which they can be compensated in this regard.

I return to the so-called intention of this Bill, to give councils discretionary powers to introduce fire levies. I believe that is a bad joke. The State Labor Government has used this process before. One can tell the way those opposite think: "Let us make the councils cop all the abuse." It is just a plain abrogation of responsibility by this Government. I agree that there should be rural fire levies, but I believe that those levies must be introduced uniformly across the State under the direction of the State Government. The State Government must also pour direct funding into every rural fire brigade across the State to ensure that their equipment, training and resources are up to scratch.

The State Government—that is, those members who sit opposite and who allegedly run this State—must take responsibility for protecting its citizens from fire. No longer should it hide behind local authorities. The Government is the ultimate authority when it comes to protecting Queenslanders through the provision of firefighting equipment, and it must not be allowed to run away from that responsibility. That is why I support the amendment put forward by the shadow Minister. In it, as members will read, the State Government has a responsibility to ensure that uniform levies are introduced across the State and returned to the areas which raise the money. It is very important that the State Government give a directive to local authorities, that the local authorities then impose the levy, that it be collected by them and that it be distributed by the local authorities, because they know the areas in which a rural fire brigade is working and where the money is needed. I have a great fear that if the Government imposes the levy, collects it and it comes back to some administrative body here, then much of that money will go into that administration. But if in fact a local council imposes the levy at the direction of the Government and also sets the rate of the levy, then we will know that our rural fire brigades will be adequately looked after.

Mr Pearce: Some don't need to be levied.

Mrs SHELDON: Obviously, this Government will make only those councils which have rural residential and rural fire brigades operating in their areas impose that levy. If it is left to the discretion of the councils, some will impose it and some will not, because it is a political initiative, and that is what the mob opposite is ducking. It does not want to take the responsibility for imposing that levy, so it ducks behind the councils and says, "Your job, mate, you put it on. Nothing to do with us. We are the Government. We do not know." It certainly is true that this Government does not know!

Never again should Queensland firefighting volunteers have to fight fires in the conditions under which they have been forced to operate in the last few weeks. I wonder how many Government members visited one of the bunkers from which firefighters were operating and saw volunteers coming in all hours of the day and night exhausted, being fed by the Salvation Army—not by Family Services—lying down on the ground, sleeping for three or four hours and going out again? That is the commitment that those men and women made.

Mr Nunn interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Is the member saying that they were not making that commitment?

Mr Nunn: I was fighting bushfires when you were only 5 feet 1 inch.

Mrs SHELDON: What is this—a history of the life of the member?

Mr Nunn interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: If that is the case, the member should certainly be supporting what I am saying.

The rhetoric and the empty promises must end, and it is time for this Labor Government to take a stand and come through with the goods before it is too late. I particularly hope that the Deputy Premier will support our amendment. I believe it is only fair and just. If our amendment is passed, we will know that rural fire brigades will have the funding that they certainly need.

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN (Caboolture) (3.05 p.m.): I rise to support the Bill, and I am pleased to be able to do so. I would like to canvass a couple of issues in relation to the substantive purpose of this Bill, which is the ability to impose a levy for rural brigades. The rural residential areas of Caboolture Shire, the shire in which most of my electorate is contained, are by and large connected to town water, and as such the people living in those estates are already paying the urban fire levy. It must be made clear to them that, in respect of this particular levy, not only will their levy not be reduced to the lower level for the rural brigade levies, but they will not be required to pay two levies, both the urban levy and the rural residential levy that is to be implemented.

In the aftermath of the October fires, as distinct from the November fires that we have just had, at least one resident from a rural residential area in Caboolture Shire approached me very interested at the prospect of being able to start a volunteer organisation to serve that rural residential area, despite the fact that it is covered by the brigade from Caboolture. The rural brigade people in Caboolture Shire have

highlighted to me the same sorts of issues which have been highlighted to other members and which have been canvassed already in this debate. In particular, they have pointed out that they do have some pressing needs. They would like more access to training. They would certainly like standardised communications to be provided. They are concerned about the waiting time for equipment.

Although everybody would like to be given everything for free, the fact of the matter is that the people who serve on rural brigades see theirs as a volunteer situation. Rather than be given everything for nothing, they just want to see their waiting time for equipment reduced. I understand that that is to occur. The rural brigades in my area are meeting today at Woodford to discuss issues that are common to all of them.

I would like to acknowledge the fact that the rural fires officer in charge in our area, Glen Mills, has recently established his office in Caboolture—just in time for two reasonably large fires to occupy his attention!

Dr Watson: Are you suggesting a correlation?

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: I am not suggesting that there is a correlation.

I am told by people who were around to see both that the fires experienced this month in south-east Queensland are at least the largest since 1967 and probably even larger than those fires. The Caboolture electorate suffered greatly. Plantation forest timber resources valued at somewhere between \$35m and \$50m have been lost from the region. That loss extended to the electorates of the member for Caloundra and the member for Nicklin, who made a speech on the fires in the Adjournment debate last week.

Mercifully, there was no loss of life in my area and minimal property damage, although when we talk about minimal property damage, we must understand that no loss is sustainable to the people who suffer it. In one notable instance, a farmer in my area who lost his sheds and equipment will have a great deal of trouble handling his choko harvest, which is due to occur now. Not only did he lose some of his crop and some of his hens from the egg operation that he has, but his ability to operate has become much more difficult.

During the November fires, I spent a couple of nights with the officers of the Queensland Fire Service. I want to thank them for the courtesy that they extended to me and for giving me the opportunity to travel with them and gain an overview of what was occurring. From their point of view, it was probably self-preservation. They

did not want a feral politician running around in the middle of the fires. If they had to worry about a politician, they wanted him in the back seat of their vehicle so that they knew where he was at all times and could keep him out of trouble. I thank them for their courtesy and for the overview and understanding that they were able to give me of what was occurring in my electorate at that time.

Because they were very large fires, I wish to pay tribute to all the people in my electorate who fought them. I wish to pay tribute to the Queensland Fire Service officers and the rural brigade people, the State Emergency Service, the police, the prisoners from Numinbah who came out to beat fires with bags for us, the Department of Environment and Heritage, CSR Softwoods, the Caboolture Shire Council, and as has been mentioned previously, the Salvation Army, who did a wonderful job in making sure that all those people were fed. These were fires of considerable intensity. At the time of the Sydney fires, I remember reading about spot fires appearing 2 kilometres and 3 kilometres ahead of the main front. The fires that occurred in my electorate in this instance jumped Pumicestone Passage. Witnesses say that the fire jumped that expanse of water where the passage was about a kilometre wide.

One of the needs highlighted as a result of these fires is the development of an integrated fire management plan for Bribie Island. Both I and the residents of Bribie Island, and people elsewhere, who were under considerable threat have paid tribute to the people who fought some pretty fierce fires on Bribie Island to ensure that there was a minimal loss of property. I stand to be corrected, but I believe a shed at the aquaculture centre was damaged and a garage and a rather expensive motor car were destroyed at Woorim. However, apart from that there was limited property damage.

The integrated fire management plan for Bribie Island has been in the making for some considerable time—some would say as long as four years. As things would happen, the draft of this final plan was prepared and distributed to the stakeholders on 19 October and was due to be adopted at a meeting that was scheduled for 8 November. Of course, we were in the middle of that fire emergency when the meeting was to be held, so it was never held. However, I can tell the residents of Bribie Island and honourable members here that a meeting has been convened for this coming Thursday at Bribie Island where all of those people will debrief following that fire. If there is any need for changes to be made to that integrated fire management plan, they will be made at that meeting. I am assured by the lead agency in this

matter, the Department of Lands, that that plan will be adopted later this month.

Not every resident in any area has the same idea about the best way to combat the fire danger, and Bribie Island is no different from most. A notable example in my electorate is when, a couple of years ago, the people living in Sixth Avenue at Woorim wrote to the Department of Lands requesting that the Department of Lands not clear a fire break on the Crown land behind their properties. I believe that those approaches were made because fire breaks were being sought in a number of other areas on Bribie Island at that time. The residents sought and were given permission by the Department of Lands to maintain the areas behind their properties in a fashion that was obviously going to reduce the fuel available, such as thick growth, but allow more of a bush outlook from the back of their properties than just a broad expanse of cleared area. Those residents were given permission to do that. Even though during the recent fires the Queensland Fire Service had no opportunity to go and back-burn in that area, people from the Lands Department tell me that those residents had maintained that area, which helped to save their houses. Yesterday, my office received a letter from a woman living in another part of the island seeking the opportunity to do the same thing. I have passed that information on to the Department of Lands and hope that it will be able to accommodate her desires.

There is one thing that has concerned me about the fire services. On 11 November, I was passing the fire station at Caboolture at about five minutes to 6—6 o'clock is the shift change-over time—and I went in to personally congratulate the officers coming on duty and going off duty on their role in protecting our community during these fires. To say that I copped an earful is saying it very quickly indeed. A number of these officers had been to a meeting earlier that day to hear about negotiations in relation to their pay and conditions. To say that they were angry is an understatement. I do not pretend to fully understand the issues relating to those negotiations, but I can say that, as their local member I was concerned to learn that they feel betrayed by the Government. I am aware that there is more than one party involved in these negotiations, but let me say that we as a Government are copping the blame. As the local member, I will probably suffer the brunt of any backlash. Maybe we need to have a closer look at that and do something so that at least the officers will understand what is going on and not feel that they are being betrayed by us.

Mr Burns: Was that the enterprise bargaining agreement that's been agreed to by the union on their behalf?

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: The union has agreed with these conditions on their behalf, but they are blaming the Government for it, and that is something that we may need to have a look at.

Mr Burns: The union says they got a good deal. What, do we get the blame for the good deal?

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: The officers to whom I spoke certainly do not believe that the union has come up with a good deal for them.

I will deal with one final thing that does not relate to the fire services aspect of the Bill but to the amendments to the Acts Interpretation Act. Obviously, these amendments have nothing to do with the Bill. I noticed the earlier exchange between the Opposition spokesman and the Minister in relation to these amendments. I cannot understand why these amendments are attached to this Bill. They could have been incorporated in the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. 2), which is on the notice paper now, or they could have been incorporated in the Acts Interpretation (State Commercial Activities) Amendment Bill, which is No. 3 on the notice paper today. Perhaps their inclusion in this amendment Bill is not appropriate.

Proposed new 14A (2) of the Acts Interpretation Act is actually a very good provision. With the purposive approach that is now taken to statutory interpretation, this provision makes it very clear that if the purpose of an Act states something that in itself does not create criminal liability, then criminal liability must be expressly stated. I know the Minister is not necessarily in a position to argue the case on this, however, I do have some concern that proposed new section 14A (3) may allow the Acts Interpretation Act to override some elements of common law—for example, natural justice. While that will only ever finally be settled by a court, it probably could have been a little better stated or best left out altogether.

I am fully supportive of the intent of this Bill. The people of the Caboolture Shire and the Caboolture electorate are also fully supportive of it. While the fires that we have just experienced are not the reason for this Bill being introduced—it was already in train—I think that fortuitously the experiences that we have had in our communities are going to mean that the community will fully support the imposition of this new levy. I support the Bill before the House.

Dr WATSON (Moggill) (3.19 p.m.): Perhaps I am one of the very few Brisbane

members in this place to actually have a rural or a volunteer fire brigade in their electorate.

A Government member: Where?

Dr WATSON: In Brisbane. One brigade in particular that has served for a long time and I guess will continue to serve for a long time is the brigade headed at the moment by John Smith in the Brookfield and Upper Brookfield area. That brigade does a great job. It plays an important role in my electorate. Recently, as part of the Police Community Consultative Committee Program, an open day held at the Brookfield showground covered a great number of topics, one of which was the importance of fire prevention and ensuring that the people who live in the rural parts of my electorate did the right thing to ensure that fires did not get out of control.

The nature of my electorate is changing. I think the member for Clayfield mentioned the development of rural residential areas and the impact they are having on the provision of fire services. I can tell honourable members from first-hand knowledge that they are having an impact and blurring the distinction between where city fire services end and rural fire services begin. Most of the people in the rural residential development on the fringe of my electorate are unaware, for example, of whether they should phone the Kenmore Fire Station or the rural fire brigade. I have raised this problem previously with the Minister, and I believe that he is looking into it at the moment.

I believe that the electorate of Moggill is very vulnerable to bushfires. The rural residential lifestyle that covers much of the electorate lends itself to the risk of bushfire. In addition, large tracts of State forest run through the electorate from Brisbane Forest Park and Mount Coot-tha right across the D'Aguilar Ranges and virtually to the Warrego Highway. Many residential blocks back onto those areas. In the Chapel Hill and Kenmore Hills area, much of the residential area backs onto Brisbane Forest Park and other State forests.

I was concerned about this when I saw the Sydney bushfires on television last Christmas. I could just imagine that, with the strong westerlies from the hinterland, my electorate would be subject to precisely the same kinds of risks as in Sydney. I took the opportunity to put down some information, which I had printed and sitting in Australia Post at the end of September and the beginning of October, when the bushfire season started earlier than usual. Fortunately, it did not affect my area very much.

In early October, I distributed a brochure called "40 Hints on Bushfire Protection". In putting together that publication, I used part of

the information that was available through the Rural Fire Division. I know that I am going to steal the Minister's thunder, but I already had this as part of my speech. Mr Bob Barchard, the deputy commissioner, looked at the information, which I took from some very significant pamphlets that are available in the Rural Fire Division of the Minister's department. I believe the Minister has some of those pamphlets with him, and he will probably show them to members later. The problem is that, although the pamphlets are very nice and very well put together, they are not distributed sufficiently in the community. That was one of the things that I noticed.

Mr Bredhauer: What did you do?

Dr WATSON: I put together a pamphlet and distributed it. That is one of the things that good members do. It is purely a community service to my electorate.

Mr Pearce: Did the photo improve the pamphlet?

Dr WATSON: The people of my electorate have a pretty good member. I cannot help it if I got the right genes from my mother and father.

I received some feedback from the electorate that I would like to share with honourable members. This was unsolicited comment in the sense that this person, a medical practitioner, was responding to the pamphlet. He said—

"Dear David

I have read your brochure '40 Hints on Bushfire Protection' and found this a worthwhile publication, particularly for people living in the western suburbs of Brisbane.

Recently I removed the plastic gutter guard from my home after discovering they are flammable, and in fact tested one of the sections to prove they do burn quite readily. I checked with a hardware store to find that all the gutter guards are made with a similar material. The gutters have therefore been covered with a fine wire netting which easily fits into the gutters."

I was not aware of that, although the Minister might be. It was interesting to obtain that response to my publication, particularly when there is a lot of advertising about gutter guards and things like that. According to the information distributed by the Rural Fire Division, one of the things that causes combustion in houses is leaves and other material in gutters. By cleaning out a roof gutter and installing a gutter guard, one might be replacing it with material that is just as combustible, or even more so, than leaves. This is of concern.

It is true that bushfires are really an integral part of Australian life. It also seems to me that, with bushfires, there is a common element in our history. Public attention really only turns to this when major fires occur. The member for Fitzroy mentioned that when large numbers of people are affected, such as with the bushfires in Sydney, they get public attention. It is this periodicity of fires that tends to be a major problem, because they come, we concentrate on them, and then we tend to forget about them until they come again.

In putting together that brochure, I discovered that during this century large areas of south-eastern Australia burnt in 1919, 1926, 1939, 1952, 1957, 1968, 1975, 1982 and, of course, earlier this year, 1994. In Victoria, it has been assessed that, in terms of this century's history, potentially bad fire seasons occur about once every three years, bad fires every six or seven years, and very bad fires every 13 years. It seems that the ever-increasing area burnt in successive bushfires seems to be telling us that something is seriously wrong with our fire prevention strategy and that the balance between prevention and suppression seems to be out of kilter.

The member for Caboolture said that people who were around in 1967 and 1994 said that the 1994 fires in his electorate were significantly worse. That seems to be a recurring feature this century. The problem of this infrequency was highlighted in the 1994 Sydney fires. In that case, many firefighters and others in emergency services had never experienced such extreme conditions, and they were either too young or not involved with similar previous events.

The member for Caboolture also talked about fire jumping. At Como in the southern suburbs of Sydney, around 70 houses and two lives were lost when fire jumped 800 metres across a waterway. So I believe what the member for Caboolture said, that around the Pumicestone Passage there may have been large jumps in fires. It has been well documented in California that, when there is a fire front, spot fires and things like that are occurring three kilometres away.

Mr Burns: Further than that, such as on the hot north coast.

Dr WATSON: As the Minister says, even further than that. Because these things occur irregularly, although often enough, our memory puts them to one side, but the memory comes back again once a fire recurs.

A particular mentality seems to have developed in eastern Australia, particularly in the cities, that fire suppression is particularly

important. In some respects that has become overemphasised. I believe that Blainey said that Australia was justifiably referred to in pre-European settlements as a burning continent. The landscape of Australia and the floristic make-up of pre-European settlement in Australia reflects an intense fire history.

I think if one considers the history of Australia one will find that there was unlikely to be the fuel build-up in forests and other places as there is today. In my own area, the city council has put VPOs across a large part of the rural residential area. Although that may seem to be justified, that blanket banning results in a negative consequence, that is, the fuel build-up in those areas. I must admit that I, myself, am guilty. In the rural residential areas the growth of trees and shrubs is so great that one cannot spend all of one's time going to the dump and the tendency is to dump the material down the back. If a person has a few acres, it is easier to dump those cuttings down the back where they will rot.

Mr Littleproud: Don't give too much away.

Dr WATSON: Oh no.

Mr Burns: We'll have Bob Barchard out there to see you tomorrow.

Dr WATSON: People tend to do that across areas. The same occurs in the State forest. Enough emphasis is not placed on burning the undergrowth and the fuel build-up is becoming quite substantial. We see the decline in the maintenance of the strategic fire trails in the national parks. These days we see people wanting to rely on helicopters for moving firefighters around rather than using the firebreaks that have been the traditional way of ensuring that fires do not get out of control. Those factors make it tougher.

As I said earlier, I have a fair few constituents who live on the borders of a State forest, whether it be Brisbane Forest Park or others. Recently, I have written to the Minister for Lands with respect to Brisbane Forest Park and he has referred it to the Honourable Ed Casey, the Minister for Primary Industries, for his consideration. I raise it here because the Minister could perhaps use his advisers in the Cabinet to ask the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Primary Industries in the areas for which he is responsible to ensure that proper—

Mr Burns interjected.

Dr WATSON: Well, perhaps he could use his good graces to ensure that the proper amount of back burning is carried out in the appropriate areas.

Of course, there are three major variables in fires. The first is the ambient temperature; the higher temperature the more likely the problem of fire. The second is the wind speed. We cannot do anything about either of those two; they are in the hands of God. The third major variable is the fuel characteristics of the area. That is something we can control.

Mr Pearce: What about the humidity?

Dr WATSON: I would have thought that humidity was covered by the first point, ambient temperature. The ambient temperature, the wind speed, the humidity—if the honourable member likes—are outside of our control. I am not suggesting that we can control those; they will always be part of nature. In that case we depend upon the grace of God to ensure that they do not get too far out of control. We can control the fuel characteristics of the land. I urge the Minister and his department to use their influence within the bureaucracy and within the Cabinet to ensure that we address that problem and, therefore, help mitigate the fire dangers in areas such as my electorate and throughout the rest of Queensland.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (3.34 p.m.): In joining the debate on the Fire Service Legislation Amendment Bill, I wish to make some remarks regarding the fire services. I place on record my support for the rural fire brigades—and that is basically what we are talking about today, the rural fire brigades—and say what a great job they are doing. We must also recognise their limitations and the expectation of the general community for fire protection.

While we have been talking about the rural fire brigades, the majority of members here have been speaking about the rural residential areas and the need for those areas to be protected by efficient fire brigades. I refer to the experience of the events of the past couple of months in Queensland and in the southern States, but particularly Queensland, and the periods of very fire high risk. When we had those roaring southerlies and south-westerly winds combined with extremely low humidity levels and very high temperatures for that time of the year, we knew a disaster was going to happen and, of course, it did.

I will turn my attention to the rural fire brigades. I agree that it is very difficult for some of them to raise a lot of funds and to buy the necessary equipment—they are always short of equipment—to conduct adequate training and to be prepared to fight fires. Those are the functions that they perform. The fundraising activities of the rural fire brigades have had some positive points. They can bring a community

together. In many of those rural residential areas, the people——

Mr Burns: They become social clubs.

Mr FITZGERALD: They do become social clubs, as the Minister says, and they have acted as such. In a lot of those new rural residential areas the people did not know each other. They have moved into the area and they are not experienced with fire or with living in that sort of community. Unfortunately, the social side does take over in some cases. While it is a rural fire brigade, firefighting should be its primary function. There may be other areas from which those people can get their social life. It is very difficult for some of those people to raise funds all the time. Some of them are passionate about the amount of money that they realise they need. Some areas have great needs for fire service equipment and they have to raise a lot of money.

Of course, we have a problem with the amount of training that the people in rural fire brigades actually get on the job. Many of the people who move to those areas and join the rural fire brigades have had very little experience with firefighting. They are very keen. They realise the danger of fire. In the main they have not come off the land. Recently in my electorate a bad fire got away. A mate of mine said to me, "Quite frankly, the so-and-so boys up the back, who were country lads, with a wet bag and a box of matches would have controlled that fire better than one of the rural fire brigades." Some people were rather critical of the fire brigade's handling of that particular fire. I had to agree that those who understand the dampness of the night time, when to light and when to back burn can do a lot with a box of matches and a wet bag. It is a very experienced person who would do it, and that person would also need a good, fast horse, or some other means of getting around the country. We have all seen those types of wildfire.

Some of the brigades can muster 50 people to fight a fire, but 50 people are not enough if a big flame is coming at them. They have to use nature and let the fire go in certain areas. They need to protect the property that has to be protected——

Mr Burns: That is our problem today. You can't let the fire go because people have houses spotted through. Where you would normally let the fire go through, you have a situation where you are in danger to protect houses.

Mr FITZGERALD: The important job is to protect the houses and to protect the other buildings. The firefighters need more experience. Those rural firemen definitely need more experience. Of course, one problem is that, when there is a bad fire, all the other

brigades come to assist when they are called upon to do so. That creates a risk: they are leaving their area exposed because, owing to the combination of extremely low humidity, high temperatures and winds, it is a high fire danger everywhere. It is not much good being 40 kilometres, 50 kilometres or even 20 kilometres away from one's own area fighting another fire, unless a crew has been left behind and can be moved out quickly.

If the rural fire brigades happen to back burn at night or try to put out the fires at night—that is the best time to get control of them—the chaps who have jobs and are working have to work all night and then go back home to get some sleep so they can go to work the next day. So the brigades run out of crews and do not know what back-up crew they have. That is different to a permanent fire brigade, which has the next shift coming on and which can keep fighting a fire. The rural fire brigades are at a distinct disadvantage in that regard.

I suggest to the Minister that eventually, in the future, instead of rural fire brigades covering rural residential areas, we will see auxiliary fire brigades covering those areas. I think that the people will be demanding that level of service. Rural residential areas are now being subdivided into one-acre blocks or two-acre blocks. Even though those very small blocks have a reticulated water supply of a constant flow design, they require a higher level of fire protection. I forecast that, eventually, the Fire Services Minister of the day will be introducing legislation or regulations to ensure that some of those areas are provided with an auxiliary brigade, if they demand it. That means that the firemen and women who are members of these auxiliary brigades will get paid for undergoing training. There is an expectation that they will not miss training.

Of course, property owners will have to pay a much higher fire levy, and that is to be expected. It is the same situation as that relating to the auxiliary brigades which cover rural towns such as those in my electorate. They provide a service at a much cheaper price than is paid in those areas that have a permanent brigade. Gatton has a very good auxiliary brigade. I do not know when the turn-out time for a fire at Gatton was more than two minutes. That is how long it took for the second fireman to get to the station. My office is located opposite that station, and I can say that generally the second officer arrives at the station in about a minute and a half. We could not get a better turn-out than that for an auxiliary brigade. That is brilliant. Even if one permanent fire officer is always present at the station, he still has to wait for the first auxiliary member to turn up before attending to the fire. The Gatton auxiliary fire brigade is an excellent

brigade, and it is supplying that service at a good price. A small country town such as Gatton could not afford to pay for permanent firefighters.

I am saying that, eventually, the rural residential areas such as those that exist in my electorate will demand an auxiliary brigade, particularly those blocks that have a constant flow of water. Some areas are now receiving Water Board coverage, and many of the rural residential areas in my electorate are now being provided with water. The rural residential development in the electorate of Lockyer is phenomenal. It extends from Greenbank. I have about 1 500 voters who live in Greenbank. In that area of the electorate, there are no stores, shops, garages, schools—nothing. It is just blocks of land that have fences, big dogs and houses that are located well back from the road. During the day, the majority of the owners of those properties are away working. Most of them are working in Logan City. It is an unusual part of my electorate. From there, all the way up to the Laidley Shire, the development has been phenomenal. I prefer to use the word "subdivision". That subdivision spreads right up to the bottom of the range in the Gatton area. Because of this development and the population growth in those areas, I now represent one of the ten most populous electorates in this State. I am just saying that this area needs to be covered by a fire service.

Another point that I want to raise is the levy. I support a levy being imposed on rural residential property owners. I can understand those people who do not live in rural residential areas—such as those fellows who live on large blocks at the top of the range where fire is one of their tools of trade; it is a natural phenomenon—not wanting to pay a rural fire brigade levy.

Mr Burns: They shouldn't have to

Mr FITZGERALD: I agree with the Minister. They should not have to. I think it would be very foolish of a council to demand that everybody pay this levy. I know that those people have every right to react. However, the problem is that the force of numbers might go against those property owners. Councils are elected by people, the majority of whom live on rural residential blocks, and they might not even listen to the property owners who live on those larger blocks. To give an example, of the most recent rate notices issued by the Laidley Shire Council, I understand that 500 were issued to primary producers; 1 100 to people in urban areas, that is, Forest Hill, Laidley, and a little bit of Regency Downs; and 3 500 to people in rural residential areas. Not every rural residential block is inhabited, but in town someone would be living on virtually every block. However, I would suggest that a reasonable percentage of those

rural residential blocks have a house on them, because they are already subdivided. Somebody is going to sell them. That area is not set aside to be subdivided; separate rate notices have been issued. That gives members an idea of what happens in a rural shire. People might say that Laidley is a farming area, but I say that, when one looks at the numbers, one sees that it is a rural residential shire. It has to be. It has a farming base, and other shires are going the same way. I know that more subdivision is taking place in the Boonah Shire, which is a very nice area.

The other matter that I want to raise is the training of rural firefighters. They are very keen men and women, but they have not had the experience of fire. They are not always people from the land; they are people who have moved out from the cities and the towns, and they are not used to fighting fires. That is one of the problems that I know the Fire Commissioner is experiencing. Those rural firefighters have to learn the skills of back-burning. It is very obvious to me that they also have to learn about public relations in regard to back-burning. I refer to the recent experience in the Grantham/Helidon area where a fire occurred and the fire brigade turned out and undertook some back-burning. Some landowners were not very happy about what happened. Those landowners were under stress because there was fire burning all around them. They could see that their properties could possibly get burnt. Firemen were turning out as volunteers and doing the best that they could possibly do. They were putting in long hours. They believed that they had to go in and do some back-burning. People disagreed with the policy of the firemen who were present. That is a recipe for a decent brawl. There is a fire coming through, there is long grass and a few houses around. The firemen are working like anything, and an agitated landowner says, "I do not want you back-burning here now because it is my judgment that it should not take place." That is a recipe for a brawl.

The Act gives firemen certain powers, and the moment those firemen suggest that they have those powers and they are there to do their job, it is like waving a red rag in front of a bull. The fire brigade has to have the confidence of the local people, and that can take a long time to establish. Generally, somebody who has had his or her property saved by a fire brigade heaps praise on the firefighters because that property has been saved. Unfortunately, anyone who has had a loss generally has the opposite to say and they see shortcomings in the system. So I think it is going to take a lot of work for these firefighters to educate people. I would like to see more money and encouragement given to training. I

believe that the firefighters should be moving away from the fundraising side of those organisations. They should have auxiliary clubs to raise funds for them. Basically, I think that the firemen should be trained in firefighting and should put their effort into that.

In some rural areas, a lot of farmers and graziers are not in the rural fire brigades. They are different types of people and they do not mix with people from urban areas. Those farmers and graziers have more experience with fire, but they are too damn busy. They say, "We have not got the time for the fundraising, but we will always turn out." Of course, they lose that organisational ability that a fire brigade develops naturally. Once a fire brigade has fought a couple of fires, it has gained that experience and it is able to organise. It develops a chain of command, and provided that chain of command is exercised properly, it should be able to manage a fire a lot better.

Those are some of the remarks that I wish to make in this debate. I would just like to say that I support the rural fire brigades in the electorate of Lockyer.

Mr Mackenroth: I could have answered. I have experience with this.

Mr FITZGERALD: That is one thing that the Minister, being a former Minister for Fire Services, and I share. In 1989, I introduced fire services legislation into this House. So I had some understanding of the legislation at the time. I know that the former Minister for Fire Services on the Government side actually introduced new legislation, but a lot of the previous legislation was adopted. There were some changes, particularly with regard to the Fire Boards in the areas where we had auxiliary brigades. That is all that I wish to contribute to the debate at this time.

Mrs BIRD (Whitsunday) (3.50 p.m.): This afternoon, I want to speak very briefly to the Fire Service Legislation Amendment Bill 1994. I would like to commence with a couple of points concerning the contribution of the member for Beaudesert, Mr Lingard, who commented about the lack of funding for the Rural Fire Division of the Queensland Fire Service.

All too frequently within the debates in this place, Mr Lingard raises the position of funding for various services. I think we are all fairly used to that. What he sees as a lack of funding can only be left to people's imagination. The honourable member need only have gone as far as the Minister's second-reading speech to have a look at the facts. The Minister said that, when the Rural Fires Board became an operational division in the Queensland Fire Service, it was clear that it had suffered from decades of neglect. He went on to talk about the budget of the rural division,

which he said had been increased by 230 per cent to a record level of \$5.38m. I would have thought that that was a fairly substantial increase, considering that that was the third year of record budgeting. I think there is more to that, but no doubt the Minister will expand on that.

Also, I want to place on record my support for a couple of the things that were said by the member for Kurwongbah, who drew our attention to the resources that are planned in terms of machinery and equipment for rural fire brigades. It was during the honourable member's contribution that I thought it would be important for me to highlight some of the things that have happened in my electorate of Whitsunday.

In the first week of November, I handed over the keys to a state-of-the-art truck made by Isuzu—and it was probably one of the first of its type in north Queensland—to the Bowen Fire Station. At that handing-over ceremony was the Assistant Fire Commissioner, former Victorian, Mr Reg Christiansen, of Townsville, and Mrs Christiansen; the Acting District Commissioner, Mr Barry Johnson; representatives of the ambulance and police services; and the Isuzu agent from Bowen, Mr Kev McDermott. The volunteers and the auxiliary fire officers were all there for the ceremony.

The new Isuzu unit was fitted out in South Australia and was described as being of a first-class standard; it was built to the specifications of the Queensland Fire Service. Most importantly, one of the highlights of the truck is that it can carry 1 200 litres of water and can pump 4 000 litres per minute. In the dry areas, it is important to put out fires before they really take hold.

Glen Skinner took the keys from me and took me through the process of what occurs when a call comes in to attend a fire. We went through the process of dressing for the fire, getting into the fire truck and actually going out to a grassfire. It was very interesting. Honourable members would gain a lot of respect for those who work in fire brigades and auxiliary brigades if they did what I did. Just donning the equipment was an experience in itself. The equipment, in particular that which is carried on the back, is huge and very heavy. Mr Lingard made a point earlier about women not being in the brigade. I think it is important to note that some of this equipment is incredibly thick, hot and very heavy on the back. I think that such work is only for women who are extremely fit, and there is no reason why such women cannot do that work. I understand that we do have some women in the auxiliaries.

Being on the truck as it was being driven was also interesting. There is a special way to drive one of these trucks, particularly when it is

carrying 1 200 litres of water. The cornering is very important, and the driver has to be very careful not to touch the sides with another vehicle. Interestingly, it allowed me to see what can happen on the way to a fire. The delivery of that truck was fairly important, and it was not missed by Harry Bruce, our local cartoonist, who thought that there must have been a burning political issue somewhere and drew a cartoon accordingly. We spent most of the day at the Bowen Fire Station.

That afternoon we had some informal discussions. It was decided that there was a desperate need for signage on houses and on roads to farms and country residences. That was considered to be a high priority. The problem with signs on homes is that the numbers are just not clear enough. Sometimes it is just the extent of the fire that indicates how fire services should get to a fire to put it out. So I think one of the issues that we need to be looking at is some sort of compulsory signage for the front of houses. We decided that on the first weekend in December we would appeal to the electorate of Whitsunday to spend half an hour looking around the house to find the best place for a street number. Also, we would encourage people, if they have an elderly lady or disabled person next door, to ensure that they, too, have their house number in a very prominent place.

Most of the fires that we deal with in our area are bushfires or, to a lesser degree, cane fires that have escaped. The firefighters find difficulty when they take the road that they think leads to the fire only to find that that was not the right road at all. They then need to turn those big vehicles around and come back to the highway. We are also calling for country people to put some sort of sign out the front of their allotments so that people can see which road they need to go down to get to their farms.

One of the issues that came up, in particular from the Proserpine region, was that the trash blanketing of cane fires is an important issue in environmental and economic terms for farmers. But it has caused some small problems in areas where there are fires close to the farms or where farm fires may get away. When the trash dries out, the fires can very quickly take hold. They have enormous intensity and escape into the residential areas close by. This year, I must admit that farmers have been very vigilant in watching their fires. We had burning off only by consent, and the farmers cooperated very well with that, although we do have our fair share of firebugs as well. I think that we should come down on those, as one of the farmers said, like a tonne of bricks, try to sort out who is lighting these fires and stop them.

I wanted to very quickly say that I support the Bill. I think that the attitude of the local authorities to this Bill is important. I go back to what Mr Lingard said about that local authorities. I understood him to say that it was extra work for the local authorities to be on the board. All I can say to Mr Lingard is: just try to keep them off the boards. They will want to be involved in whatever is happening in relation to those boards. I support the Bill.

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs) (3.59 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions. The other day as I was coming home to Queensland, I noticed that the sky was blue over the bay and over the trees. I looked at the trees, thought about country life and said, "It is a wonderful place." However, the bush is a bloody hard place to live in. Some of the people who have shifted out of the suburbs into the countryside have to realise that it is a difficult place. It is not just a matter of living amongst the trees, cutting a bit of grass here and there and hoping that everything will go all right.

Most people in such places do not have town water, they have tank water. When they go away and leave the properties during the day, there is no-one at home at all. In many cases, they like to have trees right over and plant things right beside the house. Because they are living in the country, they store fuel, extra cars and so on in sheds. That is a changing circumstance for our firefighters.

Our countryside is the type of place where a drought can destroy crops one year and a flood can wash away one's house the next year. We are prone to those types of life-threatening circumstances. As we saw recently, fires can strike without warning. Anyone who believes that any Government could fund a fully paid-up service to cover that sort of threat over 1.7 million square kilometres of bush is kidding themselves. We cannot do without those volunteers. It is just not possible. We have 50 000 volunteers who put their lives and property on the line when a fire strikes. Without them, we would be in trouble.

They are a particularly special type of volunteer. When the fire chief and I hold ceremonies to recognise the firemen and women from the Fire Service who have died, we tend to remember a couple of cases at Southport at the beginning of the year. It was not so very long ago that we lost a firefighter on the Sunshine Coast. One young man—or young compared with me, anyway—is fighting for his life right now after an horrendous accident during a

recent fire. It is part of what is happening in the community.

As I interjected on the member for Lockyer, the firefighting system has changed. One used to be able to let a bushfire run and one ran and waited in a place where one could turn it or possibly back-burn to it. However, one cannot back-burn in many places now because there are houses in the places through which one wants to back-burn. People have to stand and fight and try to save a property at a time when normally they should not be there, when they should be on their bike and out of it. Those community volunteers who turn out for us would turn out even if we did not call them rural firefighters. They would be out there fighting those fires; they would be volunteering just the same. All we are trying to do is help to put in place some sort of organisation for them. This Bill is all about trying to help improve their circumstances.

We have groups of six and eight people who get together and decide to become a rural fire brigade. They do not have a vehicle; they have never lived in the bush; they have never fought a bushfire. From that point, Bob Barchard and his team have to do something about training them. The member for Lockyer referred to training. We must have a train-the-trainer scheme. There are 50 000 volunteers out there. It should be remembered that they are working at a trade somewhere, so they are not available during the day for full-time people to train them or to be brought in for a few days at a time. We have to train someone from the fire brigade, and that man or woman trains the rural brigade. There are a lot of women in the service.

Members opposite criticised some of the gear that is provided to rural firefighters. The member for Caloundra suggested that the fire-retardant overalls supplied by this Government—which are used by every rural fire brigade in Australia—should not be used; that urban gear should be used. As the member for Whitsunday said, the member for Caloundra should go to the local fire station, put on the helmet, put on the gear that they use fighting a house fire, when there is very little movement, and then run up and down a bushfire line for a while.

Mr Stoneman: You'll cook.

Mr BURNS: A person will die; they will fall over.

Mr Stoneman: A bloke nearly did that in a fire at my place last summer.

Mr BURNS: It is a problem. It is not wise to say that all of the incidents that occur do so because of lack of training, because some of the people injured in that really bad recent accident

were trained fire fighters, people who had been in the business for a while. Sure, there was one poor fellow—the bloke who is badly burnt—who had only just joined up.

We can produce all these pamphlets and all this material that the honourable member for Moggill spoke about, but we must understand our culture. I have spent two weeks of the last three weeks in England and Ireland looking at fire services. In Scotland, they talked about the huge bushfires they have. At one stage a few years ago, they had one running across a 70-kilometre front. I do not think we have had one that has had a 70-kilometre front. The people in Scotland suggested that we have to investigate the Japanese culture, because the Japanese do not light fires. The Australian culture is open air barbecues. If people in Australia want to get rid of a bit of rubbish, they just throw a match on it and get rid of it that way. In Japan, because of the paper-type houses, the small wooden houses and the high-rise units, the kids are taught right from day one not to light fires and not to play with matches. That culture means that compared with most other highly populated cities in the world they have very few fire call-outs. Our culture is the opposite. We get out in the bush, we camp, we start fires, we barbecue—we do all of those things that are part of the Australian way of life, and that is why we have so many problems.

I want to talk about some of the matters that have been raised during this debate. The first is rural fire brigades and their levies. I thank the honourable member for Western Downs, Brian Littleproud, for the way in which he has approached the Bill. I will not accept his amendment, not because I do not think there is some merit in it but for another reason. At this stage, this legislation is being implemented. Next year, we will amend the whole of the emergency services legislation. This legislation will give me a chance to trial the commonsense and the ability of councils and rural fire brigades to get together.

The way I see the levy operating is this: the rural fire brigades and the councils will sit down and the rural fire brigades will say, "This year, we need a certain amount of money." They will have an argument about it; there is no doubt about that. If the brigades do not want any funds when they come in, that is the end of it. The council will not have to strike a levy just for the sake of it. It will say, "No levy this year." But if the brigades want funds and they reach agreement on the brigade area—and they do have areas for each brigade—and on which blocks—and they will outline a description of the types of blocks such as rural residential, etc.—and how much, then at that stage the council will strike the levy and the money that is collected will go direct to that rural fire brigade. It will be its money to spend.

If some brigades want funds and some do not, we will levy only for those that need it. The councils may have to levy only in certain areas. They do not have to levy the whole of the council area, because some rural fire brigades will want it and some will not. If necessary, councils and brigades can decide different levies for different areas. In other words, it can be \$5 a block in a certain area and \$25 somewhere else. I am trying to leave this up to the commonsense of local councils and local volunteers. Sometimes when we talk about the legislation and we start to talk about all the dangers we see, we forget that there is a lot of commonsense in rural fire brigades and in local governments. The councils will sit down and say, "Do you really need this? Does this really need to be done?" and they will think about it fairly seriously before they do it.

If by the time I introduce the emergency services legislation next year we have problems, as I said, we will fix them up then. It will not be long. It is 12 months from now till then.

Mr FitzGerald: You had better get them in early in the year. You mightn't have a chance at the end of the year.

Mr BURNS: I am trying to get in early. I will be here later in the year, too.

Mr FitzGerald: Yeah, but over the wrong side.

Mr BURNS: No, I will not. I will lay the member six to four, and he can halve the odds in his mouth.

If for some strange reason the council refuses after discussions and consultation with its local brigade to strike a levy—

Mr FitzGerald: I thought you had given up SP booking ages ago.

Mr BURNS: I have not. Anything that is a lay-down misere like that, I could not fail to bet on.

I want to clear up this doubt about what I will do and what I will not do. If for some strange reason a council refuses after discussions and consultation with its local brigade to strike a levy—the brigade wants some money and the council refuses—I will try to resolve the matter. If I cannot, then next year when I introduce the emergency services legislation I will make provision for a levy to be set by the Minister. That will be for a certain brigade area only, not an across-the-board levy.

I cannot believe the statement that Mrs Sheldon made that she wants a Statewide levy, an all-encompassing levy of the same value on everybody across the State. I am sure that the people in Boulia and Birdsville would not think that they should be treated like Beenleigh or a

Brisbane suburb. I just cannot believe it. I am sure that Mrs Sheldon has not really thought that statement through. She went on to say that she was going to support Mr Littleproud's proposed amendment, but he does not want everybody in the State to be levied. Mrs Sheldon will be in a bit of difficulty when it comes around to standing by what she said in both of those cases. The funds that are raised from this levy will go to the rural fire services to be used in their local areas.

The next issue related to subsidies. We are not going to alter the subsidy situation. The first medium fire appliance is valued at about \$40,000. We provide it to the brigade for \$6,500. We will continue to do that. The first light appliance is valued at \$28,000. We provide it to the brigade for \$5,000. We will continue to do that. The second appliance of any type is provided on a dollar-for-dollar basis, and we will continue to do that. The part that there could be some question about is the one dollar for three arrangement. There is not a lot of money in that fund. At present, we help them to buy petrol, and other things, through a one-for-three subsidy. This is where they are going to spend the levy money on their operational running, and at that stage we will sit down and talk with the representatives from rural fire brigades to decide whether that should still be used for that purpose or whether we can use it for another purpose. As I said, there is not millions of dollars in it; I think just under \$200,000 is spent on it in any one year.

So those sorts of fundraising activities attract a \$1 subsidy for each \$3 raised to a maximum of \$3,000 for each brigade. This year, the total funds for that subsidy were \$170,000. All of that does not always get taken up. So it is an area we have to look at. The funding provided for protective equipment is \$300,000, and we will continue to provide that. Protective equipment consists of overalls, gloves, goggles, smoke canisters and helmets, which are provided on a scheduled basis at no cost to the brigades. Communication equipment is provided to brigades on a subsidy level of 75 per cent. The brigades contribute 25 per cent. This year, that funding level was about \$200,000. It is an area where we have done quite well.

I think the area that will cause us a bit of concern is how do the local government people and the rural fire brigade people determine what is a rural residential block of land. Bob Barchard gave me examples such as Mount Nebo and parts of Samford which are classed as mountain retreat—I have never heard of that sort of subdivision before.

Mr Littleproud: Sounds like a real estate advertisement.

Mr BURNS: Yes, it does. Others are termed rural B, light industrial rural, non-urban, village residential, special rural, open spaces rural and, of course, I call them blockies, but I do not think "blockies" appears in it. We will probably have to use valuations and zonings. However, councils will have to use commonsense. As honourable members know, I have an amendment to move during the Committee stage which suggests that councils can only strike these levies on rural residential blocks. When I became the Minister in October last year I gave that promise. I did that before the bushfires in New South Wales and before the bushfires here. I said we would have to do something about land zoned rural residential, because it was an area that had annoyed me as a member of Parliament over a period of time. At the time I said, "I'm not interested in the farmer; I'm not interested in the grazier out in the bush; I'm only interested in those people who are spread out from the city itself."

I do not know if people know how the urban levy works, but it works something like this. Each year, the urban fire brigades go into a consultation process of their own. They have a look at reticulated water. If the water is at a certain pressure—and Bob Barchard tells me it has to be the correct pressure, because if it is not and we put our pumps on it, we can suck the water back out of the houses—then they will extend that into the urban area and the residents pay an urban levy. Outside of that, where there is non-reticulated water, we then have a look at rural fire brigades and the problems there.

I am not going to be able to lay down a definition of "rural residential"; I am not going to try. As I said, I am going to leave it to the councils themselves and the rural fire brigades, knowing in my own mind that next year we will be amending the emergency services legislation. If we have some troubles, we will tidy that up then.

This is not instantaneous. Nobody should go out there thinking that the rural fire brigades will get money out of this either next week or next month. Even if a council starts tomorrow under the provisions of the amendments that the Minister for Local Government has proposed which will allow councils to strike a levy outside of the normal budget session, it will be three months or four months before a council will start. It will still take till probably February or March next year before the money starts to come in. No-one should think that there is any instantaneous answer here or that money will become available instantly.

Mr Littleproud raised the question of the Rural Fire Brigade Association. I met with that association this morning. I do not know that it is a

good idea for the Fire Service to subsidise the organisation representing the people who are supposed to be critical of that service. However, two years ago we agreed to give them a start, to try to help them. We said that we would pay them \$8 per brigade, which turned out to be about \$12,000. This morning I told that association that I would raise that \$8 to \$10. I also said that we would help the association with its newsletter and we would have a look at other things to assist if we could. But, really, the association has to start to look at the brigades becoming affiliated and getting set up as an organisation. I do not think it is a really good idea to depend upon the Fire Service to continue helping the association in that way.

We are trying to get some services into the Aboriginal communities. Nowadays, with the \$1m watch-houses, schools and other facilities that these communities have, it is crazy for us not to provide any type of fire service as well. Anyway, it is another skill that Aboriginals and Islanders in those communities can learn and it is another valuable asset they can add to their communities.

We recognise the fact that, in the past, we have missed the opportunity to draw on community groups. Also, we are now trying to facilitate the use of women in the Fire Service. As the honourable member said, it is true that women make up part of the ACT and New South Wales fire services. Last year, when we sent people off to fight fires in New South Wales there was a substantial component of women in the groups. After their return, a function was held to honour them. We talked to the women in the group about the fires and it was obvious that they had enjoyed their visit and were keen to be fire people themselves.

Funds raised by the rural fire levy will be distributed by the local government to the local rural fire brigades. I have answered the matter of subsidies. I think I have answered most of those other matters as well.

A difficult experience at Roma was raised. Both the captain and the auxiliary fire person have been spoken to. It is obvious that the auxiliary fire person there is not very popular with the rest of the firefighters. I do not know how one would work that sort of thing in a fire system. The captain has a responsibility, too. He is the manager of the station; he has to in some way ensure some harmony.

Mr Littleproud: Could I make a suggestion? Perhaps in that sort of circumstance, the regional director, the regional commander plus the fire chief might have the right to put someone off if there is no team work.

Mr BURNS: Industrially it is pretty difficult. He was not found to be guilty of any offence. He

cannot be sacked because the blokes do not like him.

Mr Littleproud: But he is not exactly losing his livelihood.

Mr BURNS: No. That is the case with auxiliaries. Anyway, it is not an issue today. I just thought I should answer that for the member.

The member for Kurwongbah quite rightly drew attention to the Caloundra mayor playing a bit of politics with the issue. I do not think he was very smart and I think that he will have to account to his own electorate on that. That mayor kept saying that this was a State Government responsibility. As Mrs Sheldon said today, we could introduce a levy right across the State but it would be the same levy. I have spoken to many rural fire brigade people. Some of them say that they want only \$5 a year; some say \$10 a year; some say \$25 a year; others are saying \$50 a year. Many rural people will say that they do not need one of those little pumpers. Those people use the council grader and a bulldozer from a nearby property and all the people from the region rally around. Quite truthfully, those people do not need any money from us at all. They do not ask for our subsidies. They do not have a shed with fire service gear stuck in it, but they are able to handle fires in their area. To talk about uniform fire levies right across that whole rural community flies in the face of commonsense. The system has to be flexible and sensible, and I do not think her proposal was very sensible at all.

Mr Lingard said active fundraising is going on at present and it has been quite successful because of the recent fires. The trouble is you need it before the fires. It is always easy after the fire is over to walk down the street and say give some money to the fire brigade, but it does not pay for the fire-engine or the water or the petrol or the tyres or the things that had to be used before the fires. He questioned us over our five-year period. I have to say that it is not the best rural fire service in the world but it will be, and it will be because we are moving along to do something about it. We have started to address it; we are doing something about the gear. In 1990 we provided the first new trucks ever in the rural fire service—the first ever. For the first time people are getting these overalls given to them for free—never done before. Those sorts of things are happening. Only so much can be done each year, but it will be done. As a result of the bushfire audit which received favourable consideration from the Cabinet, we are going to do better and we will continue to do better. Bob Barchard used to be a fire chief in the eighties and he is here now. I said to him, "What is the difference?" He said, "It's chalk and cheese

compared with today." I think that is right and I think any firefighter will tell you that. Everything is changing and it is changing for the better.

Mr Lingard said that I would force councils to collect a levy—no way in the world. There is no requirement that councils be forced to collect a levy. He said that if rural fire brigades do not want a levy, I will force the councils to collect it. That is not true. If the rural fire brigades in the Beaudesert area do not want a levy, then there will be no levy struck and no requirement to strike a levy at all.

Mrs Sheldon spoke about gear changes and things like that. I would like to make a couple of points that might help her. She also spoke about insurance. Everybody should read the material produced by the Rural Fire Division, which is distributed to people in rural fire areas, otherwise they can obtain it through their local members. That material includes information on fires in the home and smoke detectors. Members should stamp their names on those pamphlets and hand them out to people in their electorates, as the member for Moggill did.

We provide workers' compensation for all our firefighters. We also provide compulsory third-party insurance on unregistered vehicles that are roadworthy. We provide comprehensive insurance on the vehicles that are used, and we provide compensation for damage to private equipment. Recently, I read a story about a pump at Pimpama that was not working. The article stated that people had to raise money to buy a new one. I asked Mr Barchard, "Why has that happened?" He said that it took 24 hours to repair it, that a new pump was purchased six months ago; that instead of worrying about repairing the old one, they got a new one. We are not in the business of trying to make people who put their hands in their own pockets put their hands further into their pockets. As I said, someone needs to read the pamphlets and the material that is available. Assistance is available to those people right across-the-board.

As to the lack of radios—we have increased to 75 per cent the subsidy on new mobile hand-held or base-station radios. The member for Beaudesert was critical of the new idea of getting together all the rural brigades in a council area. We have to get an operational arrangement together. I believe it would be true to say that all the people who had a proper, organised, combined team during the last fires found it a lot easier to fight fires than doing it individually on their own. Getting people together and training them is the way to go. The honourable member can say that there is another voluntary management level in there, but it is voluntary, and it is theirs. They are running it in their areas.

Sometimes it really does not matter if they do not have a fire-engine or a pumper, because five other pumpers in the area will come to help, unless there is a really bad situation when the whole shire bursts into flames, and then they would be in real difficulty and people would have to be brought in from elsewhere. As I said, money has been provided in this Budget for training extra people. We are training the trainers now. The last of the interviews were conducted by Ron Attwood from my office.

As to the issue of volunteers undertaking dangerous work—as I said, they will undertake dangerous work whether or not we call them rural fire brigade people. I invite members to go to any of those fires and see how many people are there helping their mates, who have come along on the back of a four-wheel drive and decided to help. We must understand that that is their way of getting some training. I would like to see many people in rural residential areas enrolling in rural fire brigades, boosting some of the numbers, going to training sessions and learning all about it.

We have community policemen in Brisbane and other parts of Australia. In Britain they have community fire people who go around the community saying, "Clean up. You've got leaves in your gutter and trees next to your house. I'll give you seven days." If that person has not done that within the seven days, another officer comes back. The first fellow goes out into the community as their mate and says, "You ought not to do this or that." He tries to get people to do something about the problems, and it works. In Birmingham, where they have introduced such a system, they have reduced the number of call-outs.

It is far better for us to start an education program with this material and have fewer fires to attend than to have a better set of equipment to fight fires. It would be far better for me as the relevant Minister, for the State Government and for every member to have no bushfires or urban fires next year. No-one profits from them. They represent a tremendous loss.

Jon Sullivan spoke about his own area, reticulated water, urban levies and delays in the provision of equipment. If one wants to buy a new Mazda or Isuzu fire pumper, one does not go down to the local Holden dealer and pick one off the floor. Those vehicles have to be ordered, and they have to be made specifically for that purpose. There is quite a delay—at least a minimum of four months—before the chassis and the gear can be provided. There are some delays in the process and the provision of gear.

I take on board the comment about the goggles that were supposed to have melted.

Some fire officers have told me that if a person's goggles melted on his face, he would not be alive to tell about it. I do not know whether or not that is true, but I will check all those things. If there are complaints about the gear, the best thing to do is have a look at it.

The honourable member for Fitzroy spoke about the lack of insurance taken out in rural residential areas. Fire is a natural disaster. As the honourable member would know, our natural disaster legislation does not cover things for which people can obtain insurance. People are supposed to take the necessary steps. As I said at the outset, people must understand that the first responsibility for seeing that one's house does not burn or one's kids do not get hurt in a fire is up to the householder. The honourable member also talked about the Leivesley report. His support is welcomed.

Peter Beattie spoke about the communications system and the work done by our firefighters. I thank him also for his support. Santo Santoro claimed that the service levy is a tax. It is a user-pays charge. I make no bones about that. In London, the fire service lays down a standard right across the UK, and it sends out inspectors to see that it works. Councils sit with the local fire chiefs and decide on the amount of money needed to provide a base service or any improved service on that. That is the way they fund fire services right across the UK. That is basically what we are doing here with rural fires. We say that the rural fire board and the local council should get together, talk it through and decide what money is needed. This is not a knee-jerk reaction to the New South Wales problem. As anyone would know, I was talking about these things well before the problems in New South Wales arose.

I say to Mrs Sheldon that I believe that the idea of a uniform levy across all rural properties and every property in this State is wrong.

Mrs Sheldon: That's not what I said.

Mr BURNS: Yes, it is. I wrote down what the member said.

Mrs Sheldon: With all due respect, I have checked with Hansard.

Mr BURNS: I think the member might have done a bit of doctoring. I heard her talk about a uniform fire levy. She said that the Government ought to have the guts to do that. I am going to be out in the bush reminding people what she said. That is her policy.

Mrs Sheldon: If you want to tell lies, go ahead.

Mr BURNS: I will only report the member's lies—no-one else's lies.

Dr David Watson used his commonsense in his electorate and used the material available from the rural fire brigade board. Other members should follow his lead in this area. Local people would be pleased to receive information about how to protect themselves from rural fires. Members read stories about people hopping out of their cars and running down the track. On a couple of occasions in New South Wales cars did burst into flames and explode. But the advice in most cases is "Stay in your car". Whilst there is some doubt about that after the New South Wales fires, in the worst circumstances there is always some danger. The RACQ has distributed some very good material which says that, in the event of a fire, people should stay in their vehicles as much as possible. The biggest problems are the hot air that people will suck down their lungs, as well as the fierce heat and the burning. People should park their cars and wait, or drive through the fire and get out on the other side, or park their cars with the back of the car to the fire as it comes through so that the heat is minimised. A lot of these things are in those pamphlets. Most people forget about them.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. T. J. Burns (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Rural Communities and Consumer Affairs) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr LITTLEPROUD (4.31 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 5, lines 9 to 17, proposed section 128A—

omit, insert—

'Local government may make and levy certain rates or charges and contribute amounts raised to rural fire brigades

'128A.(1) This section applies if a rural fire brigade asks its local government to make and levy rates or charges for the area (the "brigade's area") for which the brigade is in charge of fire fighting and fire prevention.

'(2) The local government may determine what land in the rural fire brigade area to be rural residential land and only that land may be levied.

'(3) The local government may make and levy the following rates or charges for the brigade's area—

(a) a special rate or charge under section 567 of the *Local Government Act 1993*;

(b) a separate rate or charge under section 568 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

'(4) The amounts raised must be contributed to the rural fire brigade.'

Clause 7 states—

"Local government may make and levy certain rates or charges and contribute amounts raised to rural fire brigades".

It then goes on to specify what that means. I agree with the Minister. The way that the Bill has been approached in the House today has been constructive. We are trying to put in place something that needs to be put in place. We have had some informal discussions about where we are going. I am aware that the Minister is very keen to honour his promise that ordinary rural land will not be levied. He has a proposal to ensure that that will not happen. I believe that the amendment that I have moved covers that, but it does one more thing: it allows the process of asking for a levy to be driven by the bush fire brigades themselves. Unless the Minister accepts this amendment, the right to impose a voluntary levy rests with the local government. The people who represent bush fire brigades in my electorate and other areas have indicated to me that they would like it to be up to the local bush fire brigades themselves to go to the council and say, "We would like you to put on a levy." The wording that I have moved would allow that to happen. At the same time it looks after the Minister's promise that he wants to make sure that only land that is regarded as being rural residential land—and he spoke about that in his reply to the second-reading debate—is actually the land that is levied. If an area is made up of a combination of what is termed rural residential land and rural land, then it would be up to the council to say, "That is the fire brigade area but only rural residential land within that fire brigade area will be levied." That amendment honours the Minister's promises and looks after the wishes of the fire brigade. They would drive the process; they would have a sense of ownership of it. I propose that this amendment be accepted by the Minister and the Committee.

Mrs SHELDON: I would like to speak on this clause and raise issues and concerns that have certainly been brought to my attention by the rural fire brigades and by the people working in them. Firstly, the Minister certainly misquoted me deliberately. My words were: obviously, this Government will make only those councils which are rural residential and have rural fire brigades operating in their areas impose that levy. The

concern that was raised to me was raised by the rural fire brigades and by the urban fire brigades. In fact, as the Minister would know, by ministerial direction everyone living in an urban residential rated area has an obligation to pay an urban levy. That standard has been set. In fact, it was directly imposed by the Minister of the day that urban dwellers would be liable for that levy to pay for the fire service.

Now, in my own area, and this happened in a lot of areas where there are high urban build-ups and also urban residential areas, the urban fire brigades that we paid for were out fighting rural fires. In fact, one of the senior officers said to me, "If there was a major fire in urban areas on the coast at the moment, we would not be able to fight it. We've only got two units on the entire coast that aren't out working the rural fires in one area or another." It is only fair that rural residential people pay their levy and that our rural fire brigades are provided with adequate resources. Otherwise, it is grossly iniquitous and unfair. I think the Minister would have to agree with that.

When one looks at the situation that occurred in the area of the Sunshine Coast where a major State asset, our State forests, suffered losses to the tune of \$30m—that is a great loss of a State asset—one has to ask: why did the State Government not declare a state of disaster at that time? When the manager of the Forest Service is saying that the fire that we had before this one, which was not all that long ago, was the worst plantation fire in Queensland's history, and that this was the second worst plantation fire in Australia's history—he said that it was the worst fire since Ash Wednesday—then it really makes a mockery of what we are trying to do with rural fire brigades that are inadequately resourced.

My concern is twofold. Firstly, the levy should be imposed because that is the only fair way to go about it. Urban people are levied, but in many areas people living on rural residential land are not levied. I still have a concern that if it is left up to the councils they may or may not impose that levy, so we would still have inequity there. The cost to the State and not just to the local area—in this case, \$30m worth of pine forest—does raise the question of when we declare a state of disaster that would not only unleash funds for compensation but would also bring in the Army and free up Federal funding that could alleviate the State's problem.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the clause—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 48—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bennett, Bird, Braddy, Briskey, Budd, Burns, Campbell, Clark, Comben, D'Arcy, Davies, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond,

Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Goss W. K., Hayward, Hollis, Mackenroth, McElligott, McGrady, Milliner, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Power, Purcell, Pyke, Robertson, Robson, Rose, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Sullivan T. B., Szczerbanik, Warner, Welford, Wells, Woodgate *Tellers*: Livingstone, Pitt

NOES, 33—Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Goss J. N., Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Stoneman, Turner, Veivers, Watson *Tellers*: Laming, Springborg

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Mr BURNS (4.42 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 5, after line 17—

insert—

'(2) However, a local government may only make and levy a special rate or charge under subsection (1) (a) on land that it considers is rural residential land.

'(3) Subsection (2) applies only to a rate or charge made on or after 22 November 1994.'"

What I am saying in relation to this amendment is that, when I started on this issue in October last year, I said at the time that this levy should be on rural residential blocks but not on any rural blocks—not on the typical farming block. So to make certain that it cannot happen, I am moving that a local government may make a levy only on land that is considered rural residential.

I want to make the point again clearly from a local government point of view: there is no definition of "rural residential land". It is up to the local government itself, in conjunction with rural fire brigades in the area, to look at the area and to determine on what area the levy should be struck. There are so many different versions of rural residential land. I am also making it clear that a lot of councils have decided already to declare levies, and some on land that is zoned other than rural residential. So this subclause applies only to a rate charge made on or after 22 November, which is today.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

Mr LITTLEPROUD (4.44 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 6, lines 2 to 5, proposed subsection (7)—

omit, insert—

'(7) To remove any doubt, it is declared that a local government may make and levy a special rate or charge under subsection (1) for a rural fire brigade service.' "

The Bill, as it presently stands, is rather broad in its terminology. It states—

"To remove any doubt, it is declared that a local government may make and levy a special rate or charge under subsection (1) for a service."

The clause goes on. I am of the opinion that this Bill is all about fire services. I think that the Minister for Local Government is taking a bit of a lend of this Assembly when, through this legislation, he grants permission to the local council the opportunity not only to levy a fire service but also all other services, facilities and activities that the council wants. If the Minister for Local Government wants to do that, he should introduce his own Bill and not ask the Deputy Premier and Minister for Emergency Services to do it.

I think that, in safeguarding the rights of the people in Queensland, I have every right to propose my amendment, which reads—

"To remove any doubt, it is declared that a local government may make and levy a special rate or charge under subsection (1) for a rural fire brigade service."

I am being quite specific about it, and I commend it to the Committee.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10—

Mr LITTLEPROUD (4.46 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 6, lines 9 to 12, proposed subsection (2)—

omit, insert—

'(2) To remove any doubt, it is declared that a local government may make and levy a separate rate or charge for a rural fire brigade service.' "

This amendment relates to the same amendment which was proposed to clause 9. It is just a different part of the Bill. Once again, the Bill refers to a service provided by the local authority. I believe that it should be more specific and state—

". . . for the bush fire brigade service."

Amendment negatived.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—

Mr LITTLEPROUD (4.47 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 6, lines 16 to 18, proposed subsection (6)—

omit, insert—

'(6) To remove any doubt, it is declared that a local government may make and levy a utility charge for a rural fire brigade service.' "

This amendment deals with the same thing. Once again, it changes the words "for a service" to "for a rural fire brigade." It is the same sentiment.

Mr BURNS: The same answer.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr BURNS (4.47 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 6, after line 18—

insert—

'Insertion of new s 791A

11A. After section 791—

insert—

'Rates or charges made or levied for 1994-95 for contribution to rural fire brigades

'791A.(1) In this section—

"rate or charge" means—

- (a) a separate rate or charge; or
- (b) a special rate or charge.

'(2) Despite section 560 (Making of rates and charges), a rate or charge may be made for the 1994-95 financial year by resolution at a meeting other than a local government's budget meeting for the financial year if the amounts raised are for contribution to rural fire brigades operating in the local government's area.

'(3) This section expires on 30 June 1995.' "

This amendment is headed "Rates or charges made or levied for 1994-95 for contribution to rural fire brigades". It states—

". . . a rate or a charge may be made for the 1994-95 financial year by resolution at a meeting other than a local government's budget meeting for the financial year if the amounts raised are for contribution to rural fire brigades operating in the local government's area."

(3) The section expires on 30 June 1995."

As I said before, I want to make it clear, and I think that it is fair to the councils that we make it clear, that this gives them the opportunity to introduce a levy now, but no-one will get any money for three or four months. No-one should start to attack the councils on the basis that they have been slow or hanging back if nothing happens for a period, because there has to be a leeway between this Bill being passed and some action from the councils themselves.

New clause 11A, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 12 and 13, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Burns, by leave, read a third time.

FINANCIAL AGREEMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 19 October (see p. 9674).

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (4.50 p.m.): In his final days in office, the former Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Hawke, found himself in trouble when he proposed the return of important Commonwealth powers and financial responsibilities to the States. For Queenslanders, it is disappointing that the former Federal Labor Leader did not last a little longer, or we might be supporting a far more positive financial arrangement in this House today.

This new financial agreement between the Commonwealth, States and Territories was signed by the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers at the meeting of the Council of Australian Governments on 25 February 1994. This new agreement is a significant step forward in the evolution of the financial relationship between the States and Territories and the Commonwealth. However, as I have indicated, it was not the type of positive evolutionary step that we might have expected under the rhetoric of Bob Hawke.

The purpose of this Bill is obtain Parliament's approval of the new financial agreement, which largely reflects the Keating vision for Australia. It is a vision reinforcing the status quo. It cements in place the existing intergovernmental arrangements on public sector borrowings and the role and operation of the Loan Council. Its key elements are those agreed to by the Loan Council at its meeting in June 1992. The Loan Council will continue under this agreement. It will be a coordinating

body to review financial strategies in the various jurisdictions and seek change where necessary.

Obligations in relation to past financial agreement borrowings have been specified, along with the formal Loan Council membership of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. A new fund, the Debt Retirement Reserve Trust Account, will be established to provide a more efficient debt redemption framework. In future, the redemption of Commonwealth securities previously issued on behalf of the States and the Northern Territory will be administered through the trust account. The Debt Retirement Reserve Trust Account will replace the previous arrangements for debt repayments through the National Debt Sinking Fund for the States and through the Northern Territory Debt Sinking Fund for the Northern Territory.

The new agreement removes the Commonwealth's explicit power to borrow on behalf of the States, which existed in the previous agreement. Since 1987-88, the Commonwealth has not borrowed on behalf of the States; the States have conducted their own borrowings through their respective central borrowing authorities. In 1990, the Loan Council decided that States would progressively take responsibility for debt previously raised for them by the Commonwealth. The States now have full responsibilities for financing and managing their own debt, and so their fiscal and debt management strategies will come under greater scrutiny from the community and financial markets. This is not the only type of scrutiny required in the public interest in Australia today.

Today, like never before, we need increased scrutiny of Commonwealth spending and Commonwealth fund raising. Sadly, in the Federal sphere the trend is for less and less scrutiny. Under the centralist policies of the Keating Labor Government, the capacity of States to provide infrastructure and services is constantly being undermined by real reductions in their share of taxes. It is little wonder that in Queensland our less than honest State Labor Government chooses to paper over these problems through the implementation of hidden taxes such as user pays fees and charges. These secretive revenue raising measures and the blatant implementation of new taxes, such as this week's green tax, would not be necessary if our State were not being hogtied by the necessity of supporting an ever-increasing Federal and State bureaucracy.

The new agreement removes previous restrictions on the State's borrowing by the issue of securities here and overseas. State borrowings are already in effect recognised and

rated by financial markets as sovereign issues. Future Commonwealth and State borrowings will no longer need to be approved under the provisions of the agreement. For many years, the Commonwealth's annual borrowing program has been the only one formally approved within the ambit of the agreement, because only the Budget sector borrowings of the Commonwealth occur directly rather than through a central borrowing authority.

From last financial year, Commonwealth, State and Territory borrowings were subject to Loan Council monitoring under deficit-based arrangements, which include the reporting of infrastructure financing and major operating leases. The Loan Council endorsed the arrangements at its meetings in December 1992 and July 1993. In the past, monitoring arrangements were made through a global borrowing approach. The change is designed to guarantee that public sector borrowing in Australia is sound and that the borrowings of Governments at all levels occur as part of a sustainable fiscal strategy.

Members of this House and Queenslanders in general are lucky in that they have not witnessed the wilfully destructive and financially flagrant policies of Labor Governments interstate. Our only bad experience of financial mismanagement has come at the hands of the former Federal Treasurer, Paul Keating, who crash-landed Queensland and the rest of the country into the worst recession in 60 years, and at the hands of our State Treasurer, who failed to seize our State's natural advantage so that we could lead the nation into recovery.

Nevertheless, the new Commonwealth/State arrangements contained in this Bill are designed to help the community better understand the budgetary process in Queensland and across the country and to provide increased scrutiny by financial markets. Under section 105A (4) of the Commonwealth Constitution, the parties to the financial agreement can vary or rescind it. Since an agreement was first signed in 1927, seven variations have occurred, most recently in 1976. This time, all parties to the agreement decided that the old version would be rescinded and replaced by way of complementary legislation in the Commonwealth and all State and Territory Parliaments.

At the beginning of my address, I referred to the unfulfilled promises of the former Prime Minister. Mr Hawke held out to the States the prospect of a new deal that would revitalise agreements between the States and Territories and the Commonwealth. For years, the agreement has had the States approaching the

Council of Governments like starving orphans summoned to meet Fagin. The States have absolutely no clout when it comes to demanding a better deal and, while they slowly starve, the Commonwealth bureaucracy grows fatter and lazier each year.

Only under the direction of Paul Keating could the former Treasurer, John Dawkins, retire and find himself a Commonwealth sinecure, earning \$600 a day with his own office, support staff and overseas trips. Only the Commonwealth under Keating could afford \$300,000 a year for Mr Dawkins' services as a special investment representative. But his VIP lifestyle is more than just another clear example of jobs for the Labor boys; it reflects the fat, lazy and profligate tendencies of a Government that is not accountable. The Keating Government simply exploits its capacity to squeeze more and more revenue out of taxpayers without having to provide adequate funding for services, particularly those provided by States.

Mr Fenlon interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Does the honourable member disagree with this? Does he think that Mr Keating does a good job for this State in providing adequate funding?

Mr Fenlon: A very, very fine job.

Mrs SHELDON: I am sure that the Treasurer would be interested to hear that comment from the honourable member, because obviously that means that the Treasurer is getting sufficient money and need not worry about the Commonwealth increasing his cut.

The States do fulfil an important role in this country, but the comparative wealth of the Commonwealth is now so disproportionate and its plans for expansion so grandiose that the essential value of the States is gradually being lost. Australians in regional Queensland have very different needs from Australians in Sydney or in Tasmania. Canberra-based bureaucracies have little knowledge of these needs and almost no capacity to deliver efficient services outside the metropolitan centres of the south east. I am sure that the Treasurer would agree with me. The services and infrastructure of State Governments and local authorities is what makes the difference.

We should not be surprised that Queenslanders get angry as the power-seeking Commonwealth bureaucrats duplicate State and even local government services as part of their campaign for centralism. State Governments have been too slow and too disorganised to put their case effectively, but they are much closer to the people and so they suffer more than their share of the public ire when problems arise. A

good example is education, which is an essential service best provided from the State level.

State Governments provide the teachers, the policies and the facilities, while the Commonwealth has no such obligations. But in recent years, the number of Commonwealth boffins accommodated on the public payroll under the guise of providing education services has skyrocketed. Their prime role has been to duplicate the duties of other public servants paid by the States. Waste and needless expense is imposed on taxpayers by the duplications that emerge, largely because of the inadequacies of both the old and the new financial and administrative agreements between the States and the Commonwealth.

What we get for all this duplication is rarely positive. If honourable members consider the recent squabble over university places, they would get a clear picture of the extent of intergovernment cooperation that really does exist in this country under Keating. Or consider the decision of Senator Faulkner to intervene in the Port Hinchinbrook development. His action is merely the culmination of one army of environment bureaucrats at the Federal level seeking to crush what they consider to be incompetent decisions by their State counterparts.

If work is finally stopped and the Oyster Point project collapses, the net result is likely to be far more harmful to the environment than if the Queensland decision was allowed to stand. The Queensland bureaucrats have their share of the blame, because they did not cross the t's and dot the i's—and so, may I add, do the respective Ministers. With damage done and no reparation made, Oyster Point may go the way of Magnetic Quays—another ugly scar created by Governments and bureaucrats who do not adequately look to the necessity of the time. We see such a scar on Magnetic Island. It looks like we are going to have another one at Port Hinchinbrook. These are scars on the face of north Queensland. This waste occurs because, in financial terms, the Commonwealth has the whip hand and the States, including Queensland, are too weak and disorganised to adequately fight and present their case. It is perhaps only a measure of the desperation of the former Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, in his last days as Prime Minister that he chose to offer the States a new deal at all. Nevertheless, Queensland and the other States cannot continue to stand by while the Commonwealth drain on public resources gets heavier and heavier. Obviously, the Premier and the Treasurer of this State feel that they cannot afford to place Queensland finances at risk by criticising the Keating agenda. They would prefer

to keep fighting with the other States over the crumbs than to be excluded from the chookyard.

The fact is that as the year 2000 and the centenary of federation in 2001 get closer, Australians are thinking about the way government works in this country. It is time States such as Queensland banded together so that their role will be clearly understood and properly resourced. Otherwise, the work of States may be too readily overlooked as Australians consider their future and the need for more efficiency and less red tape. The Opposition will not oppose this Bill.

Hon K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (5.02 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their silent concurrence with this Bill. I thank the member for Caloundra for her penetrating insights into the Bill.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 10 and Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr De Lacy, by leave, read a third time.

ACTS INTERPRETATION (STATE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 15 November (see p. 10312).

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (5.04 p.m.): This Bill is designed to make it easier for State Government departments to indulge in commercial activity. Although I support the prospect of cutting red tape and of making departments more efficient, it concerns me that this Government is using the old Labor trick of pushing Government into competition with private enterprise. This particularly concerns me when we have the Treasurer running around claiming that Queensland is an Asian tiger economy when some of the figures indicate that, unlike the Asian tigers, most of the investment growth in Queensland is coming from the Government itself and not the private sector.

While I for one would love Queensland's economy to match those of the Asian tigers, the Treasurer is forgetting or intentionally omitting some of the facts about the fragility of investment growth in Queensland which puts the entire base of private sector recovery in doubt. I refer,

of course, to the lack of private sector investment growth in Queensland and the predominance of public sector investment growth by this Labor State Government. Let us refer to the Access Economics September investment monitor, which showed that while the national average real growth for private fixed capital expenditure was 8 per cent, with Western Australia recording 23 per cent, Queensland recorded only 3 per cent—below average private fixed capital expenditure; in fact, well below the national average and so far behind Western Australia that we are hardly in the same race.

Mr De Lacy: Those figures are wrong.

Mrs SHELDON: In fact, as I have raised previously, of the \$95 billion in private investment currently proposed around Australia, less than 6 per cent will land in Queensland. Some may say, "So what?", but the fact is that this Labor State Government has attempted to substitute genuine private sector investment growth with public sector investment. In other words, the State Government is using taxpayers' funds to drive investment while chronically failing to give incentive for private sector investment.

This Bill provides the Labor State Government with a fast-track to pouring taxpayers' funds into commercial activities without any scrutiny by the State Parliament. In fact, the Queensland Government already spends the highest percentage of gross State product on public expenditure—4.5 per cent compared with 3 per cent across the rest of the States. One only has to look at the Treasurer's own figures from the June quarter State accounts, which show just how much investment growth in this State relied on Government injection. In the June quarter State accounts, private investment, stated in the areas of non-dwelling construction and equipment, for the 1993-94 financial year amounted to 0.4 per cent of gross State product or GSP. The total for Government gross fixed capital expenditure through the areas of public enterprises, Government financial consumption and general government contributed 1.5 percentage points to GSP. That is almost four times the amount of private investment expenditure in Queensland and highlights the real and dangerous flaw in the so-called Queensland model touted by the Treasurer. This is a flaw which was recognised in the cover story in *Business Review Weekly* yesterday. The BRW article stated—

"Rather than being sharpened, the economic contrast between Queensland and the other States is beginning to blur as Western Australia records occasional higher peak growth percentages and debt-ridden Victoria muscles its way out of the rust belt.

For Queensland, it is beginning to look like it was much easier to get to the top than it will be to stay there."

The article goes on to state, as I have stated many times in this House, that Queensland's economic performance in the areas of investment have been based on population growth fuelling the housing industry and on the aforementioned Government sector spending. The article also states—

"Overall private investment in Queensland continues to be underpinned by dwelling investment, which rose 9.5 per cent last year and accounts for about 40 per cent of private investment."

These are the figures that I am supposed to be getting wrong.

Mr De Lacy: You have got them wrong.

Mrs SHELDON: Evidently, everyone is wrong, except the Treasurer. These are independent people I am quoting. This is an article from BRW, which no Government member would even know existed let alone read.

A national study of economic trends involving representatives of Queensland Treasury has found that economic management in Queensland has fallen behind Victoria, that Western Australia has better prospects over the coming five years and that in key areas our State rates last or second last. The survey of business and economic performance and prospects for Australian States by Price Waterhouse and the University of New South Wales found that, for the first time since the survey began, Queensland has been outperformed as the State with the best conduct of economic policy and management.

The Opposition has warned the Labor Government that it must do more to help local businesses capitalise on the current recovery. The comparatively strong economic position inherited by Labor is being lost. Thanks to Labor, we are no longer the leading State. For years, the Opposition has been concerned that Labor is content to let population growth drive the economy. This direct reliance is creating an imbalance that is showing up in the results of this and other studies.

The panel of 41 experts moderated GDP growth forecasts by population growth, and in doing so they noted that the major factor in GDP growth prospects in Queensland, immediate and long term, is population growth. Not surprisingly, the panel has downgraded the Treasurer's forecast of 5.4 per cent economic growth in Queensland to 5 per cent. Graphs published in the report show clearly that per capita GDP

growth prospects in Queensland lag behind the other States, while our predicted long-term productivity gains are lower than other States except Tasmania. The ratings by the panel of the impact of State Government policies on business conditions in each State revealed several areas in which Queensland's Labor Government was not performing. In terms of the overall business climate and regional potential, Labor in Queensland has been outperformed by Victoria and Western Australia.

While most other State Governments have had a big impact on reducing labour costs, Queensland is judged to have had no impact. On communications, energy availability and cost, the Goss Government trails Victoria and New South Wales, and in industrial relations Labor in Queensland is last. On taxes and the financial burden of Government, we are no better than Victoria or Tasmania, and all are outperformed by Western Australia. The report is the latest in a series of less than rosy assessments pooh-poohed by the Queensland Treasurer. Mr De Lacy keeps shooting the messenger and twisting statistics to mislead Queenslanders about the real state of the economy. This time, the message comes courtesy of Treasury itself.

I feel the need to again remind the Treasurer and this House of the vulnerability of Queensland's reliance on the investment boom in housing. The recent BIS Shrapnel report showed that the Queensland housing sector would drop 16 per cent next year—the biggest drop in the country—and follows the report by the Indicative Planning Council that Queensland's housing commencements would drop by 11 per cent this financial year and 19 per cent in 1995-96.

It seems to be a case of, "I hate to tell you, but I told you so." Well before the last Budget in May, I warned the Treasurer that he had adopted a narrow-minded reliance on the housing sector for economic growth to the detriment of other important areas. In my reply to the Budget, I stated—

"Dwelling construction, which has driven the Queensland economy for the last four years, is expected to drop from 13.4 per cent to 1.7 per cent. There is nothing in this Budget which gives Queensland business a push along or any real help in taking advantage of the upturn."

The latest Treasury figures show that for 1993-94 housing—0.7 per cent—came just behind Government spending—0.8 per cent—and general consumption as the major contributor to State economic growth. Housing contributed seven times as much to the State's economy as equipment, which is the major

prerequisite for growth in infrastructure and industry. We see the State Government relying on public sector investment and private sector investment through the housing industry as almost the entire basis for investment growth in Queensland.

This Government must now look to pushing more and more public money into the economy to prop up investment as housing falls off due to high interest rates and oversupply. That is what this Bill is all about. This Bill gives State Government departments a fast track to pouring taxpayer funds into commercial activities. Not only does it contribute to the Treasurer's stretching of the truth when it comes to genuine private sector investment, it also means that the State Government is out there actively competing against private sector operators. Once again, this Government promotes itself and its departments to the detriment of the private sector, and particularly small and middle businesses.

I wish to point out that improvements to the efficiency of Government departments which come about due to this Bill are welcomed by the coalition, but once again it is the form of how this Government will use this amendment rather than the substance of the legislation which is the problem. We just cannot trust this State Government to do the right thing any more, no matter how innocent or well meaning it may sound. The lack of parliamentary scrutiny on Government spending in this area also concerns me, but I feel the coalition, despite my serious doubts about the motives behind this amendment, cannot oppose the Bill. Let it be known, though, that we will keep a close eye on the State Labor Government and its actions when it comes to competing with private enterprise, spending taxpayers' funds on commercial activities and propping up its failure to give incentives to the private sector through the spending of taxpayers' funds to improve investment figures.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (5.14 p.m.): In speaking to the legislation before the House, I note that the Treasurer introduced this legislation, which is to amend the Acts Interpretation Act, but I do notice from the *Queensland Government Gazette* of Friday, 8 February 1994, that the Acts Interpretation Act is actually the responsibility for the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts. However, I can well understand that the amendments before the House are of concern to the Treasurer because we are talking about allowing the Government enterprises to undertake commercial activities.

Mr De Lacy interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: Yes, that is true.

The Opposition recognises that this legislation is relatively straightforward in its objective of confirming the authority of State Government departments to undertake commercial activities. In that regard, it will have our support because under existing legislation it appears that there are justified concerns as to whether the Executive Government of our State has the power to dabble in such activities. However, we are concerned that such legislation has the potential to send the wrong message to business and investors both within our State and those who may contemplate moving here. We are also concerned that the Bill may represent a rather nondescript means of allowing the Government to greatly expand its commercialisation efforts to the detriment of the private sector.

This Government has been meddling with corporatisation and commercialisation of Government services since it came to office five years ago. Obviously, as part of this process the doubts which have brought about the need for this Bill were not perceived initially, so it would appear to be sound business sense to have such doubts removed. However, one can only wonder what form of activity uncovered this doubt and what the relevant circumstances were. Perhaps the Treasurer might be able to enlighten the House further in that regard. It could be embarrassing if departments and business units engaged in commercial activities face a technical hitch in making legally enforceable contracts in such areas.

The examples of commercial activities quoted in the second-reading speech, namely, the sale of educational material to South East Asia by the Education Department and the provision of international client services by the DPI, would appear to be among the less controversial of the State's commercial activities.

There are other areas, such as the Q-Link transport operation, which would be in the more controversial nature of the commercial activities undertaken by this Government. This is primarily because in overhauling rail freight services this administration took the goods off the trains and put them on the backs of trucks and went in direct competition with road transport operators. What was supposed to be a rail freight operation became a road freight operation, backed by all the benefits that the Government's buying power could muster.

Mr Campbell: Hear, hear!

Mr FITZGERALD: I notice the "Hear, hear" from the member for Bundaberg. The result was that some local transport operators in various regions were hard hit. I wonder whether

the member for Bundaberg supports that. Despite this, the State persevered with a system which in many cases sees goods taken by a circuitous route to reach a given destination. Only a Government could run a transport system this way. This represents the crux of the problem with this legislation.

What areas of commercial activity will the State seek to involve itself in at the expense of private enterprise? The Bill defines commercial activities as including: commercial activities that are not within the ordinary function of the State, commercial activities of a competitive nature and activities declared by regulation to be commercial activities. It enables commercial activities to be carried out nationally and internationally. It virtually means open slather for the State involving itself in commercial activities which, by their very nature, must have some impact on private enterprise. Members are well aware that competition is no stranger to the private sector, but the question is: will it be fair competition? I have already mentioned the Q-Link example, and I can assure honourable members that the next coalition Government will be taking action in that area. My advice to the Government would be to tread cautiously in these moves towards greater commercial orientation of departments and business units.

The two dominant criteria for such action must be, firstly, whether such an activity is being provided or whether it is capable of being provided by the private sector; secondly, what are the benefits to taxpayers of State involvement in such an activity; and, thirdly, will income derived be able to be used to reduce taxes or to cut back fees and charges? It is one thing to sell educational material developed by the State to South East Asian countries. However, it would be quite different if Goprint, for example, was to expand its efforts to capture a larger slice of the local printing market or if the advanced driver training centre at Mount Cotton were to move into the more general driver training industry.

I invite the Government to give an indication of how it sees this Bill applying and in what areas of commercial activity it will apply. The Opposition viewpoint is that its primary emphasis should be on marketing skills and technology developed by the State to other jurisdictions or industries nationally or internationally.

Mr Milliner: That's what it's for. I will talk to you later on and tell you about it.

Mr FITZGERALD: The Opposition has some concerns and I am placing those concerns on the record. We know about State butcher shops and all those things in the past. I am just

saying that we have some concerns about this Government's corporatisation policy.

DPI's international client services are such an example, as I have just referred to. One only hopes that such activities are not pursued at the expense of cutting back services to Queensland producers, which has been the case under this Government.

Another potential impact of this legislation—and the Government can advise us if it thinks the Opposition is reading too much into this Bill—is in the preparation for the post-Hilmer era of national competition policy. Most honourable members would be aware that the Hilmer report has major implications for many of the service industries which Governments at all levels have traditionally supplied as part of the public sector role.

Depending on the outcome of current Federal and State deliberations over this report, the provision of such services could literally be turned on its head. Indications are that it will herald major changes in many of our service industries, such as electricity and transport, particularly rail, and could extend to essential services, such as water supplies and sewage treatment. For example, unless State Governments exempt certain industries or services, we could see the likes of Mount Isa Mines running its own trains on the State rail network. I wonder what the Treasury thinks of that. I do not mean this as a criticism, but the Minister's second-reading speech was as bland as it was brief about the potential of this legislation and what role it might fulfil in the future. The Opposition is convinced that there is more to it than the Government is admitting at this stage. I again invite the Minister to elaborate on the potential extent of the application of this Bill.

I mentioned earlier that the Bill does send the wrong message to the private sector, which will be wary of its implications. After all, it potentially means that private enterprise is copping it on both sides from the Government. We have recently seen the Government move to introduce a totally new range of green taxes to be applied to literally every business or industry across the State. Now, as well as imposing the regulatory cost structures on business, the Government seemingly will be able to pick and choose where it wants to compete directly with the private sector.

Investors get the wrong message when they see developments such as that proposed at Oyster Point sidetracked and possibly hijacked by intergovernment bungling and chest thumping. Will this Bill allow the Government to go into its own tourism resort development

projects? As stated earlier, there is a very fine line to be trod by the Government on this issue, because the day when Governments see the need to compete commercially with private enterprise in activities which are not ordinarily the function of the State is the day when they are getting too big.

We must remember that Governments are elected to serve the people. People pay their taxes in order to finance Governments to fulfil this role and provide essential services. We have already seen the Government embrace the user-pays philosophy as a means of topping up revenue to help balance the books. Indeed, "user-pays" has become the catchcry of this Government in the 1990s, and it seems that commercialisation will be an extension of it. The user-pays philosophy is being pursued with such a vengeance that one is left to wonder what the previous existing tax base provided for in the overall scheme of Government bureaucracy. Surely the potential of commercialisation is to place another layer of income onto that already being reaped from user-pays charges and corporatisation.

In the mid to late eighties, Queensland was the boom State of the Commonwealth. While Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia languished under the failed economic baggage of Labor administrations, Queensland was striding ahead. If honourable members do not believe me, they should just have a look at the figures on jobs growth in comparison with those of the current Government.

In the last five years of the National Party Government, Queensland generated twice as many male jobs as in the first five years of the current Government. In all, a total of 833 800 male persons were employed at September 1994, in seasonally adjusted terms, compared with 777 300 in December 1989. This was an increase of 56 500 jobs. That sounds good, but when contrasted with the same period under the previous National Party Government, we find that double the number of male jobs were actually created—some 126 000 jobs. This means that, in the last half of the past decade, the late 1980s, twice the number of male jobs were generated compared with the figure for the first part of the 1990s under this Government.

Only this week, a report compiled by Price Waterhouse based on assessments by economists around the nation concluded that Victoria was the No. 1 State for economic management. For the first time in the three years that this report has been compiled, Queensland has been knocked off the No. 1 perch—knocked off by a coalition Government that had to re-form

and rebuild the ills and wreckage of a failed Labor regime.

Price Waterhouse's report also found that, while Queensland's performance would remain strong, Western Australia was the State with the most potential over the next five years. Surely there is a message here to which this Government can relate—one that we cannot afford to ignore. The once Labor rust bucket State of Victoria is getting its act in order. The damage and havoc created by failed Labor administrations in Western Australia is being replaced under a conservative Government by one that, arguably, has the most potential for economic growth over the next five years.

For the last five years, this Government has largely taken Queensland's predominant position for granted. Clearly, the rest of the field has caught us up, and while we remain strong, the future will be a lot harder, requiring more resolve and foresight in our economic planning. Whether increased commercialisation in the Government sector is a plus or a minus in this regard, it is in the hands of the Government. The Government must tread warily to ensure it does not further squander the economic potential of our State in the pursuit of ideals that are a turn-off to the real engine room of our economy, that is, the private sector.

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (5.26 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions and support for this Bill. The Leader of the Liberal Party raised many issues, none of which had anything to do with the Bill. This morning, I invited her to ask a question about the BEFG report. Obviously, she knew that she was on such flimsy ground that she was not prepared to ask a question. She should ask me a question tomorrow.

One point raised by the member for Lockyer was that the conclusion to the BEFG report said that, in relation to outstanding performance and management, Queensland continues to dominate in the overall rating. That was an assessment of financial management and economic performance. When put together, Queensland is still the stand-out performer. But as is usually her wont, she will read through it looking for a single negative, and then she will beat it up out of all proportion and pretend—

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr De LACY: It is not a big one. I am talking about the interpretation and the final conclusion they come to, namely, that "Queensland continues to dominate in the overall rating." The honourable member can take that whichever way she likes. I do not think that

any of the other things the member spoke about are relevant.

A couple of issues raised by the member for Lockyer had some relevance to the Bill. The reason this is being included as an amendment to the Acts Interpretation Act is that we had to find a home for it. It is one of those funny pieces of legislation that need to be introduced. The Parliamentary Counsel tells me that it is probably more appropriately located in the Constitution Act, but that is being rewritten and consolidated. Once that occurs, we will remove it from the Acts Interpretation Act and put it into the Constitution Act. That is the reason there is this unusual arrangement. It is really the Attorney-General's responsibility for this Act, but the particular issue is a responsibility of the Treasurer. All it seeks to do is remove any doubt about Executive Government's capacity to carry out commercial activities—nothing more.

Commercialisation is a policy of the Queensland Government, and that could be the subject of another debate. Let me put to rest the honourable member's concerns. To the extent that the State Government involves itself, commercialisation means that it will do it on the basis of a level playing field. In other words, all the advantages and disadvantages associated with Government ownership of Government operations will be removed. That is something that we are very strict about. To the extent that the private sector is concerned about Government involvement, it need not be unless it is frightened to compete. The private sector should never be frightened to compete. Generally, we are not expanding our commercialisation into the private sector. There are some areas where we have always been involved to a greater or lesser extent.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr De LACY: Exactly. That is what corporatisation is all about.

Mr FitzGerald: That's what you're doing. It's a Government owned enterprise flogging the daylight out of private enterprise.

Mr De LACY: If the honourable member understood what corporatisation was all about, he would know that this is simply ensuring that that does not happen; that the Government is not subsidising a Government owned enterprise. That is what it is all about. Opposition members oppose this all the time. It is about ensuring that all of the business units operate in a commercial way—that there is no Government subsidy competing with the private sector. Members opposite are always against that. They have always subsidised the railways. They sit there with all the wisdom of Solomon now, yet for the last 100 years, and certainly the 32 years that

they were in Government, they were subsidising them and competing with the private sector. Now that we are trying to put them onto a commercial basis, withdraw the subsidy and make them compete or die, members of the Opposition still oppose it and stand up and lecture us about it. I invite them to ask me a question tomorrow either about the Access Economics report or the BEFG report and I will answer it. I thank honourable members for their support for this legislation.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr De Lacy, by leave, read a third time.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 15 November (see p. 10312).

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (5.33 p.m.): The reason for this Bill is to clean up some of the loose ends left when the Government proceeded with amendments to the Stamp Act and other Acts back in June and August. At the time we were told, "The major purpose is to facilitate the introduction of CHESSE", the new Clearing House Electronic Subregister System.

In fact, the changes were sought merely to ensure that the Treasury would continue to receive revenue from the introduction of CHESSE, which is a computer-based settlement procedure for marketable securities. In the past, there was a paper-based system and the Government's source of revenue was linked by legislation to the paper trail generated by each sale. The changes were necessary so that Government revenue raising would not suffer because of improved technology. The old Stamp Act allowed duty to be charged only when a transfer document was physically stamped. Now that electronic transactions will occur through CHESSE, the Treasurer has made changes to protect his share of the cake.

This legislation demonstrates that the Government has left changes undone. Significantly, under the legislation as amended, building societies would be prevented from having their securities approved through the

CHESSE process. This omission merely reflects the true intention of the original legislative changes, which was not really about facilitating electronic trading, but about protecting Government income. It is not surprising that, when the Government is focussed on protecting its own interests, it should go slow on changes considered necessary to the wellbeing of building societies and their investors. But, sadly, it is also not surprising that this arrogant Government should try to paint its self-serving intentions in a different light.

This Government goes to extreme lengths to paint itself as a low tax friend of the business community. Impartial observers say otherwise. One timely example is among the findings of the *Survey of Business and Economic Performance and Prospects for Australian States*, which was released by Price Waterhouse and the University of New South Wales today. That study, which is based on the views of a panel of 41 experts across Australia and includes representatives of the Queensland Treasury, considered the impact of State Governments on the local tax burden. Far from being an outstanding performer on tax, which is the constant claim of Treasurer De Lacy, this study found that the State Government had done nothing. The finding of the report was that the tax performance of the Queensland Government was static. According to the experts, including representatives of the Treasury itself, the performance of this Government ranks with Victoria and Tasmania. The same experts put Western Australia streets in front.

Is it any wonder, when the Queensland Government is obsessed with maximising revenue through direct taxation as well as hidden fees and charges, that Price Waterhouse forecasts Western Australia will have better prospects than Queensland over the coming five-year period? Building societies are an important part of our financial sector and warrant the protection provided by this amendment. The coalition will not oppose the Bill.

Mr CONNOR (Nerang) (5.36 p.m.): I rise to speak on the financial institutions legislation. The Explanatory Notes state—

"The objectives of the Bill are to give effect to the agreed interface between the Financial Institutions Legislation and the Corporations Law."

It also states—

"The Australian Stock Exchange Limited has developed a system (CHESSE) for the electronic settlement of securities transactions and the electronic registration of transfers of securities."

This legislation deals with corporations law and on that basis I would like to go through a couple of issues affecting corporations law, especially how it affects the Queensland economy generally. Two key indicators have just been released showing problems for Queensland small business and the Queensland economy. The Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants' September quarter *Small Business Review* shows Melbourne well ahead of Brisbane in current performance and Brisbane dropping 5 per cent in the expectation of growth in the next 12 months. At the same time, Price Waterhouse brought down its six-monthly economic review of Australian States finding that Queensland, for the first time, has lost its position as the best-managed State to Victoria.

Earlier, the Treasurer provoked me into debating. He asked me whether I had read the Price Waterhouse document, which I have, and I have it with me.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nerang started off by saying that the Bill was about the application of corporations law to financial institutions regulating the financial institutions legislation. That was fine. He then spoke about CHES. But now he is starting to debate the Queensland economy. I suggest that this amendment is very specific and I am going to insist that the member for Nerang cannot talk about the Queensland economy, unless he can talk about the application of corporations law to financial institutions legislation. I have to insist on that. I am sorry, but the amendment is very narrow. I cannot allow broad debate on the Queensland economy to such a narrow amendment—maybe next time.

Mr CONNOR: With respect, I was organising, Mr Speaker, to speak on the previous legislation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I know and appreciate that. It is not my fault that the honourable member was not sitting in his correct seat for me to call him to speak. I am not allowed that latitude, I am sorry—maybe another time.

Mr CONNOR: Mr Speaker, as you are aware, corporations are companies—businesses—in which case I would like, at least, to speak on a few issues in relation to businesses.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No. I am sorry, but I cannot allow the member that latitude. The honourable member will resume his seat. I am wasting the time of the House. It is a very narrow amendment. When it is so narrow I will not allow the debate to be broadened. The honourable member will have to try another tack another time.

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (5.40 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their support for this legislation.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr De Lacy, by leave, read a third time.

TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 15 November (see p. 10313).

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (5.41 p.m.): The prime thrust of this legislation is to kill the dying trade involving speculation in mortgages in Queensland. The trade is commonly referred to as a second mortgage market, but members should be aware that I am not referring to the common practice of the householder drawing against a second mortgage against his or her existing dwelling. The second mortgage to which I refer involves the on-selling of a mortgage to a third-party investor, who purchases the cash flow created by the original debt.

These days, there is not much liquidity in the second mortgage market. As I said at the beginning of my speech, this is a dying market which is not hugely attractive to investors. It is not as flexible as other markets, and so there is only a handful of licensed dealers working in the mortgage market in Queensland.

This Bill will remove the trustee approved status of second mortgages. Trustee approved status provides an indicator of financial security to an investor. Members would be aware that many investments are rated by agencies such as Moody's and Standard and Poors. In the absence of a rating, trustee approved status has provided a certain level of security. Nevertheless, rated securities trade better. This is because the clear indication of risk provided by a rating attracts more investors and provides a more liquid market.

As a result of this Bill, the second mortgage market will be neither rated nor approved. The attractiveness to investors will deteriorate further and, eventually, the few traders will be forced to

trade other securities as well. That will not create too many problems as licensing requirements for the second mortgage market are similar to those required elsewhere. It should be a straightforward change for traders to transfer to new areas.

Although traders and speculators who have preferred this area of investment may rue its passing, the loss of this market will serve to improve the overall dynamic efficiency of finance markets. The simple fact is that, compared with other markets, this area of mortgage trading is not efficient.

The trustee approved status of the market is not the only prop to be removed as a result of this Bill. At the moment, mortgages have a stamp duty advantage. Although stamp duty applies to all securities, some mortgages are exempt from some stamp duty. Once this amending legislation is passed, that advantage will be lost.

It is important to remember that the cost to mortgagees in Queensland will not change. The mortgage market is driven by people's desire to buy a house while the secondary market is driven by speculation. However, there are other factors to bear in mind when considering the decision to remove the advantage in relation to stamp duties. There is a possibility that trade in this area may continue even if it is at a low level. If so, the State Government is laughing all the way to the bank because, by abolishing the previous tax advantage the Labor Government will have created for itself a new stream of revenue—and remember, there are no new taxes.

There is one final point that I wish to make: among those currently trading in mortgages, there is a belief that the Government could have given greater consideration to an alternative. I ask why, instead of removing the legislation that governs mortgage markets, the Government did not consider an alternative structure to attract other mortgage traders from other States into Queensland.

We should remember that this Government made a big play over its plans to attract offshore banking units and regional headquarters to Queensland. Although the mortgage market is not a big one, the Government's actions in this case require a more effective explanation than the few words offered by the Treasurer. It may be, and I would like him to comment on this in his reply, that the alternative proposed by the traders does not stand up. The Treasurer should explain whether this possibility was considered; and, if so, why it was rejected. The coalition does not oppose this Bill.

Mr CONNOR (Nerang) (5.45 p.m.): This piece of legislation deals with wide-ranging issues relating to the Queensland economy,

such as the secondary mortgage market, cooperative housing societies, the Townsville casino site and land tax. On that basis, I would like to refer to a couple of issues that have come to light in the last couple of days. Firstly, two key indicators have been released showing problems for Queensland's small business and economy. The Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants' September quarter *Small Business Review* shows Melbourne well ahead of Brisbane in current performance, and Brisbane dropping 5 per cent in the expectations of growth for the next 12 months. At the same time, Price Waterhouse brought down a six-monthly economic review of Australian States, finding that, for the first time, Queensland had lost its position to Victoria as the best-managed State.

Because the Treasurer provoked me earlier in relation to whether I had read the actual survey by Price Waterhouse, I say that I did. I would like to quote a few sections that I think are very relevant. Firstly, the summary states—

"This report is the sixth in a six-monthly series that surveys economists' perceptions about business and economic performance and prospects for the Australian states. A panel of 41 experts has been established and 35 replied to this survey."

It goes on further to state—

"For the first time since the surveys began"—

and this is a direct quote—

"Queensland has been outperformed as the state with the best conduct of economic policy and management. Not only has Victoria been rated number one but its score is the highest ever achieved."

The article goes on further to state—

"The marked improvement in expected prospects over performance for Victoria is due to improving business confidence and the impact of state government reforms. On the other hand, the deterioration in Queensland's rating is due to the impact of the drought and world growth fluctuations."

It states further—

"Moreover, some of the relative worsening of Queensland's position has been attributed to the absolute improvement in other states."

So Price Waterhouse is saying that Queensland cannot keep up with other States. The micro-economic reform process and other macro issues are simply not keeping up with the performance that the other States are achieving.

What we see also—and this falls into line with what I have said—is that Queensland is now the only State that has had an increase in business bankruptcies. The recently released business bankruptcy figures show that Queensland is the only State where these bankruptcy figures are increasing. Those figures have increased by 15 per cent from 704 to 810.

The other issue that I mentioned earlier was the CPA quarterly summary of small-business issues. The CPA also had quite a few interesting comments to make on other issues. I might add that, even with the unparalleled financial strength inherited by the Queensland Goss Government, the CPA had this to say—

"The CPA small business health index comprises changes in performance of a number of industry sectors as measured by the ABS and the relativity between labour costs and interest rates and includes small business information surveyed by AGB McNair."

The report stated—

"For the September 1994 quarter, businesses in Melbourne once again reported the greatest improvement performance, growing by 11%, nearly doubling that of Sydney (6%) and well ahead of Brisbane (8%)."

It further went on to say—

"Both Sydney and Melbourne businesses report high expectations of growth for the next 12 months, each at 16%, while those in Brisbane report an expectation of 11% improvement, down from the 16% reported at June."

So while the other States are going forward, Queensland is going backwards.

I have a few other aspects to refer to about those business bankruptcy figures. As I said before, in terms of bankruptcy figures, Queensland is the only State that went backwards. Every other State has shown significant decreases in their business bankruptcies. Both Western Australia and Victoria have shown dramatic reductions in business bankruptcy rates. Western Australia has shown the best drop, going from 475 to 360, a 24 per cent fall; the next best was Victoria, which went from 1 576 to 1 270, a 19 per cent fall; and New South Wales declined from 1 380 to 1 294, a 6 per cent fall.

I would also like to refer to another related matter mentioned by Price Waterhouse in its report. In dealing with GDP, many economic commentators and the Treasurer deal with it in absolute terms. The Treasurer does not take into

consideration that Queensland is unlike other States in that it has substantial interstate migration and, as a result, a substantial increase in population over and above that of the Australian average.

As a result of that, when one compares GDP growth, one should be comparing it on a per capita basis. That is exactly what Price Waterhouse did. It came up with some very significant results. On a per capita basis, the comparison showed that Queensland was performing extremely badly. Not only that, when Queensland was looked at from the point of view of projections for the 1994-95 financial year and also for the next five years, it performed last on a GDP growth forecast on a per capita basis. Then Price Waterhouse went further and examined the predicted long-term productivity gains. Again, with the exception of Tasmania, Queensland came last. So it is very convenient for the Treasurer to quote absolute GDP growth, but he knows that it is mainly being driven by population growth and that it is only as a result of that that we are getting the performance.

I would like to quote from the Price Waterhouse report, which stated—

". . . the implication of Figure 4"—

and that is the figure that deals with GDP growth per capita—

"is that the major factor in Queensland's growth forecasts in Tables 2 and 3 is population growth."

Further on, it states—

"Expected productivity gains for the next five years are shown in Figure 5"—

and I mentioned that before. It goes on to state—

"Some differences are beginning to emerge between the larger states with New South Wales leading Victoria and Queensland."

Basically, all we have to understand is that productivity also gives us the wage rises. We now also live in a productivity-based pay increase environment. Also, we live in an enterprise agreement environment. On that basis, if we do not get the productivity increases, then we will not get the flow-on wage rises. That is one of the significant aspects of this forecast, as determined by Price Waterhouse. As a result of the low GDP growth forecast for the next financial year and for the next five years and also the resultant low productivity gains, Queensland can expect to have substantially lower growth in wage increases because of the environment in which we live where productivity gains are basically the only increases that we will get.

Queensland already has the lowest average wage in Australia. What this is basically saying is that we will stay there and that our position will get worse. That has significant repercussions for the union movement in Queensland and for every worker and every wage and salary earner in Queensland as well.

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns—Treasurer) (5.54 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their support for this legislation. Some issuers have expressed concern about the sunsetting, or the termination, of the secondary mortgage market legislation, because they have to change the way they do things. What this will do, of course, is eventually lead to a national market for marketable securities. But that means that those who have been operating under the auspices of this legislation now must move into a market-based system. We expect that they will all be able to do that.

It goes without saying that, should that not be possible, then I would be prepared to consider an extension at some time in the past. I would not expect that that would be necessary, but obviously—

Mrs Sheldon: I know you live in the past, but I think you mean some time in the future.

Mr De LACY: Sorry, I meant to say "some time in the future". I usually only look to the future. I do not know why I would have said that. However, I would not expect that it would be necessary. I think everybody appreciates that it is time for these issuers to get credit ratings, or to make arrangements to get ratings, and then operate on a more open system unprotected by specific State Government legislation. Everybody accepts that. Certainly, we would not want to do that in a way that caused somebody who was operating in Queensland to be disadvantaged.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 35, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr De Lacy, by leave, read a third time.

Sitting suspended from 5.58 to 7.30 p.m.

JUDICIAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 27 October (see p. 10027).

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (7.31 p.m.): The Opposition supports the legislation, which we vigorously recommended to the Government on 19 November last year when the Opposition opposed the Minister's disallowance motion. This issue has come about because the Government has continued to give special consideration to Appeal Court judges and not treat the remuneration of the Appeal Court judges in exactly the same manner as it treats the remuneration of other trial judges of the Supreme Court of Queensland.

The situation has occurred because of the very special treatment that Appeal Court judges received over trial judges of the Supreme Court. That favourable treatment, which I will spend a few minutes in detailing, would not have occurred had the Government not been so clever by half and this Bill would not have had to be introduced.

The situation arose last year because, under section 102 of the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991, the Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal is required to accept as law a determination made by the Governor in Council under that section as to the remuneration to be paid to the President and judges of the Appeal Court. That arrangement was made by the Governor in Council, that is, the Government outside the regulations. The decision-making power of the Governor in Council in this instance is a statutory rule under the Statutory Instruments Act, not subordinate legislation, such as a regulation, and therefore is not required to be tabled in the House under the Statutory Instruments Act. As that decision did not need to be tabled in the House it was kept a secret from the Parliament and from the people of Queensland and not subject to disallowance or public scrutiny.

To overcome that decision by Executive Government, Parliament now must legislate. The Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal was set up in 1967 by an Act of this Parliament to inquire into, report on and determine the remuneration of judges of the Supreme, District and Magistrates Courts, and that includes the Appeal Court. In 1957, the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957 laid down, as the Act says, pensions and long service leave for judges of the Supreme and District Courts.

With the formation of the Appeal Court of the Supreme Court in 1991 under the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991, transitional provisions under section 102, which applied only to judges appointed on or before 30 June 1992, cover remuneration to be paid to the President

of the Court of Appeal and other Appeal Court judges.

Having laid out the framework, I want to take a moment or two to consider the outcome of that special arrangement by the Labor Party for those original Court of Appeal judges appointed prior to 30 June 1992. I emphasise that that applies only to judges of the Appeal Court who were appointed prior to 30 June 1992. The Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal report dated 31 August 1993—the fourteenth report of that tribunal, which the Attorney-General was forced to disallow in the Parliament—sets out a number of worthwhile points that we should spend a moment considering because it highlights the very points that I make.

To start with, the tribunal pointed out that it was aware that on 24 October 1991, His Excellency the Governor, acting by and with the advice of the Executive Council, approved a number of appointments to the Supreme Court of Queensland and the Court of Appeal, and in addition made a number of determinations in relation to the Court of Appeal and at the same time created the new position of Senior Judge Administrator. It is noted that part of the decision relates to the salaries of members of the Court of Appeal and to that of the Chief Justice and members of the Supreme Court.

It is further noted that under clause 5 of that determination by the Governor in Council relating to the remuneration of the President of the Court of Appeal, the salary and allowances of the President of the Court of Appeal are to be increased at intervals of not more than one year. That in itself is slightly different from the normal arrangements. The first of such increases was to occur not later than 1 July 1992. The next point in the determination is particularly pertinent. The minimum increase on each occasion is to be proportional to the increase during the period since the previous increase in the Consumer Price Index (All Groups) for the City of Brisbane as published by the Australian Statistician. That does away with the discretionary power of the Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal to set down remuneration at the minimum levels. That determination states that it must increase the remuneration of the President of the Court of Appeal and that of other judges of the Court of Appeal at least in terms of the CPI. That is outside the norm.

The tribunal drew attention to and emphasised the fact that those determinations significantly restrain its discretion in terms of section 13 of its Act. The tribunal noted further that, in the case of New South Wales, which is the only other jurisdiction that has a separate Court of Appeal, there is no difference in salaries

between the Appeal Court judges and the Supreme Court trial division judges. That position differs markedly from the determination of the Governor in Council, that is, the determination of the Government when setting up the Court of Appeal.

Although it is unusual in today's salary determination climate to have automatic adjustments in accordance with the consumer price index, because of the interrelationship between the Appeal Court judges and Supreme Court judges' salaries imposed by the above determination, the tribunal was bound by that decision and thus was forced to adopt automatic consumer price index adjustments as a minimum.

It is further noted that the Governor, acting by and with the advice of the Executive Council, made a number of determinations in relation to pension entitlements, long service leave and other expenses in relation to judges of the Court of Appeal. It is noted that some of those differ from those applicable to members of the Supreme Court and District Court. I will spend a moment or two going through the differences that are of real significance.

Until we received the document from which I am reading, members of Parliament were denied that information. On a number of occasions, members of the Opposition asked the relevant Ministers for the information. It was a matter of some contention by the Opposition that the information should be made public. Each time the matter was raised, we were vigorously attacked by the Government for raising the matter. However, if one were to look at the Judges (Pension and Long Leave) Act 1957, one would see that much of that information for District and Supreme Court trial judges is contained in that Act, as it should be.

The Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, which was set up in 1967, works from that Act. That is the way it should be. The process should be open and accountable for the public to see. It is totally wrong that the Government can, particularly in relation to Appeal Court judges, set salaries, allowances and other remuneration allowances in that manner. It is a total breakdown of the separation of powers.

Let us consider what the judges receive under the Judges (Pension and Long Leave) Act. Those judges become entitled to six months' long service leave after seven years of service, whereas judges of the Appeal Court are entitled to 1.2 months per year. Those judges are entitled to six months after five years' service, compared with the six months after seven years' service to which trial judges of the Supreme Court and District Court are entitled.

I turn to normal retirement pensions. Again, the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act states that, after 60 years of age and 10 years of service, judges are entitled to 60 per cent of their salary, whereas judges of the Appeal Court are eligible after 55 years of age and 10 years of service. They receive a similar amount, that is, 60 per cent of the salary of the office.

The retirement due to ill health pension arrangements under the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act provide that the entitlement is 45 per cent of the judge's salary, whereas the Appeal Court judges receive a pension equal to 60 per cent of the salary of the office. Again, we see a significant benefit there—a difference.

I turn to the pension to a spouse on the death of a judge in office. The maximum entitlement after 10 years of service is 30 per cent of the judge's salary. That pension ceases if the spouse remarries. A spouse of an Appeal Court judge is entitled to receive a pension equal to 40 per cent of the judge's salary of office. No mention is made of years of service.

As to pensions to spouses on the death of a retired judge—under the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act, there is a rate equal to 50 per cent of the judge's notional pension, that is, a maximum of 30 per cent of the judge's salary; whereas under the secret Governor in Council arrangement by this Government, judges of appeal receive two-thirds of the pension which would have been payable to the judge, that is, a maximum of 40 per cent of the judge's salary of office. If one has a look at another section, one sees a special provision made for judges of appeal for a commutation of pension. Under the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act, there is no provision for conversion to a lump sum, whereas for judges of the Appeal Court up to 50 per cent of the pension may be converted to a lump sum.

As to accrued entitlements—for a retired judge who serves for a period in judicial office of the Commonwealth or a State or Territory and receives a salary, if the salary is equal to or more than the pension, the pension is not payable. In any other cases, the pension is reduced by the amount of the salary. However, with an Appeal Court judge a pension in accordance with this determination is to continue to be paid or provided if the judge of appeal or retired judge is appointed to a different judicial office in Queensland or elsewhere.

As I pointed out, there are grave discrepancies between the two. The report states—

"The Tribunal is of the opinion that there is a lack of equity in the conditions provided to members of the Appeal Court in

relationship to pensions and long leave as compared with other members of the Supreme Court and District Court.

The Tribunal does not have the power under the Act to make a determination on pensions or long service leave to overcome these inequities but it strongly recommends conditions be made uniform across all members of the Supreme Court and District Court."

I want to make the position quite clear. Every component of a judge's remuneration should be contained—as was correctly done with trial judges of the Supreme Court and District Court—in an Act of Parliament. It should be aboveboard for the world to see. It should be tabled in the Parliament, debated and passed by the Parliament. No special arrangements or special considerations should be provided.

Under the secret arrangement that has been made, it is apparent that this Government has irretrievably smashed the separation of powers principle between the Executive Government and the judiciary. One of the requirements is that remuneration be distinctly removed from the Government of the day and that remuneration be made public for all to see, as occurred for many years until this case.

Here we have two classes of judges in the Supreme Court, Appeal Court judges and trial court judges, with remuneration details of Appeal Court judges being kept in secret prior to the Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal report being published. However, the report seems to indicate that there are still other matters being swept under the carpet. I hope that when he replies the Minister will enlighten the House as to what other special arrangements outside of these provisions have been made but not been covered in the Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal report. There can be no good reason for this situation to prevail.

Members would recall that during the Estimates debate a few details about Appeal Court judges' international travel entitlements were prised from the Minister. So much for the separation of powers and keeping the judiciary at arm's length! This Government, by the decision of the Governor in Council on 24 October 1991, put its hand in the pocket of the justices of the Appeal Court. I call again on the Minister to table full details of these arrangements.

The Goss Labor Government is good on rhetoric, but its actions show that it has utterly corrupted the principle of the separation of powers. There can be no other interpretation of this situation. Moreover, as the tribunal points out, New South Wales does not have two levels of Supreme Court judges as we do in

Queensland, but that is a matter for the Government. If the Government wants to have that, so be it. It is a matter for the Government to bring in legislation to provide for that. However, the Government should not do it in the deceitful manner in which this has been done. Currently, it is impossible to know whether the special conditions which apply to the original Appeal Court judges will apply to future Appeal Court judges, or whether they will be subject to the same remuneration as our present trial court judges. I am well aware of section 101 of the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991, which states that it applies only until 30 June 1992.

Opposition members have raised this issue on many occasions, and on each occasion they have unfortunately been subjected to hostility. This has been a contentious issue. It is counter to all the recommendations of the Fitzgerald report. We hear a lot about Mr Fitzgerald's recommendations. Here is a matter which can clearly be dealt with in an appropriate and proper manner. We hear a lot about open and accountable Government, but that has not been in evidence in this case. It is outrageous to drag the judiciary into a situation such as this. This matter has not been handled in an appropriate manner.

There is an important principle at stake here. We have heard the Attorney-General and the Premier talk at great length about the principle of the separation of powers. The Government cannot uphold that principle if it is making secret arrangements in relation to the salaries and conditions of the judiciary, because that is one of the points that is of paramount importance in relation to the independence of the judiciary. Of course, members of the judiciary can be dismissed only through an address by the Parliament to the Governor. That provision exists for very good reasons—so that judges do not have to suffer the influence of the Executive Government of the day. The same must apply to the salaries and conditions of judges. That matter can be easily cleaned up through an Act of Parliament.

This shameful situation has come about because of the deliberate and deceitful actions of this Government—a Government that has taken every opportunity to mislead and deceive the people of Queensland.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (7.47 p.m.): I wish to support the Opposition spokesman for Justice and Attorney-General. I will not canvass the whole argument that he raised. I have raised it in this House on numerous occasions, and I do not wish to reiterate it. I find it puzzling that this Government is committed to not separating the Executive from the judiciary with regard to a

secret deal with some judges of the Court of Appeal who were appointed before 30 June in the year of appointment. Those judges were given special packages that were not seen by anybody else. The packages are not open to public scrutiny. Those packages were obviously designed to entice people of calibre to the bench. I have no qualms whatsoever with the Government saying, "We need good judges, therefore we will offer them a special package." However, that package must be available for the general public to scrutinise.

I canvassed this issue with the previous Minister for Justice, and he could not answer me. I claimed that it was a secret deal. The Minister said that it was not a secret deal. I asked whether we could obtain a copy of the secret deal, particularly for Justice Fitzgerald, and the answer was in the negative. The packages were a secret deal. The previous Minister admitted that there was a secret deal for those judges who were originally appointed to the Appeal Court. The previous Minister admitted in this Chamber that because a deal had been done he could not tell anyone the details of the packages.

The honourable member for Indooroopilly spoke earlier about judges having to face public scrutiny when the amount of travel that they rightfully undertook as judges was published in the local paper.

Mr Beattie: What's wrong with that?

Mr FITZGERALD: There is nothing wrong with that. I am merely stating that they had to face public scrutiny on that occasion. Everyone knows exactly what the salary of judges is and they know what the packages are, but not for Justice Fitzgerald. He was appointed to the Court of Appeal. I have delivered a speech on this topic previously, and I will not go through it again. Members should refer to the previous debate on this topic. The then Minister for Justice, Mr Milliner, admitted that he could not tell us the details of that package because that is the legislation. It is a fundamental principle that the public should know what judges are paid.

Members of Parliament are the same. The public has every right to know what our full salary is and what perks we receive. Of course, we now have to table all the information on every trip we do, and things like that. Members of the public have a right to know that information and they should be able to obtain it. The taxpayers are funding all of this; they are paying the bills. The Executive Government should not be able to do a deal with judges that the Parliament and the general public knows nothing about. It is absolute hypocrisy for the Government to say that it believes in the separation of powers. There is no way in the world the Government can

get away with that. I know that the general public has accepted that up until now. One might even occasionally find an article or two in the paper on this subject.

I am not being vindictive towards these judges, but I do not know how on earth the first appointees to the Court of Appeal, those appointed before 30 June in that year when the legislation was passed, live with this. The tribunal sets the salaries and allowances of all the judges, yet it could not decrease the salaries of those judges appointed before 30 June of that year. The tribunal could not decrease those salaries, it could only increase them—and we never knew what the level was. We know the salaries and allowances of all the other judges. Every time this legislation is opened up for debate, I will stand up and remind the Parliament that this Government is not in favour of the separation of powers.

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (7.52 p.m.), in reply: The salary of a judge of the Court of Appeal recommended by the Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal in the disallowed report was \$170,400. That was recommended by the tribunal to take into account the previous general allowances and the jurisprudential allowances. This is a published document; every member of the House should read it. Apart from that, I thank members for their indication of support.

It is regrettable that the honourable member for Indooroopilly took the opportunity to attack the Court of Appeal in respect of matters which he himself said were largely statutorily endorsed. Unfortunately, he is a person of no credibility whatsoever. I commend the Bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. D. M. Wells (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 21, as read, agreed to.

Clause 22—

Mr BEANLAND (7.54 p.m.): This clause amends the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991. I rise under this particular section to refute the pitiful summing-up of the Minister. I have not attacked the judges of the Court of Appeal or of the Supreme Court of Queensland. The Supreme Court of Queensland Act has put those judges in an intolerable situation because the Minister did not have the fortitude to come into this Chamber and pass legislation to rightfully give those judges the appropriate remuneration which the Government of the day

wished them to receive. Instead of that, this Minister weaseled and sneaked away under the cover of a statutory rule under the Statutory Instruments Act that did not have to be tabled in this Parliament—not a regulation that was liable to disallowance in this Parliament. He sneaked away under that statutory rule, through the Governor in Council, and put through the remuneration for those judges of Court of Appeal who found themselves in this situation.

The member for Lockyer is perfectly correct. Over a long time, both Mr FitzGerald, myself and a number of other members on this side of the Chamber have raised this matter over and over again. On many occasions, this Minister and other Ministers have refused to provide us with this information. We now get some of that information out of this Minister through the Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, but not all of it. I have already appealed to the Minister to supply the rest of the information this evening. No sort of pitiful whining that we have heard to date will overcome the fact that he has not answered the question. I want to make it perfectly clear that neither today nor at any other time have the member for Lockyer or I attacked the judges of the Court of Appeal. That is a standard answer from a Government that does not want to face up to its responsibilities to this Parliament and to the people of Queensland.

Mr WELLS: This is the very Bill which the honourable member says that I am not prepared to introduce. He seems to lack any concept of reality.

Mr BEANLAND: I must rise to respond to that statement. This particular Bill does not set out the salaries, allowances and remuneration of the judges of the Court of Appeal. In fact, clause 23 of this Bill talks about judicial entitlements of the first judges of the Court of Appeal. I will not take the Chamber's time to spell that out. It says that, in making the determination, the tribunal is to give effect to the determination of the Governor in Council under section 102 (1).

I go back to the points that both the member for Lockyer and I have raised over and over again. This legislation does not spell out those figures. The first time these figures have been spelt out are in the Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal report. I must thank the tribunal for that. It has done something that the Minister does not have the guts or the courage to do.

Mr WELLS: What this honourable member is purporting to tell us is that the Parliament ought to be spelling out the salary of Supreme Court judges and judges of the trial division. Nothing could be further from the adherence to the doctrine of the separation of powers which is

represented in this Bill. This Bill gives that power, the power of judicial salary determination, to an independent tribunal. If the honourable member feels that these things should be spelled out in an Act of Parliament, what that means is that the honourable member wants the judiciary's salaries to be determined by the legislative arm of Government, and that puts the judiciary in the dangerous position of the erosion of their independence. I commend the Bill and this clause to the Committee.

Mr FITZGERALD: I will have to pursue the argument a little bit further. The tribunal is in place to set the salaries and allowances of judges of the Supreme Court, including the judges of the Court of Appeal. An amendment to the Supreme Court Act said that the salaries of those judges that were appointed before a certain date, if their salary and allowances were in excess of that that is determined by the tribunal, could not be decreased. I can assure the Honourable the Minister that those allowances—perks, whatever he wishes to call them—are secret. The salaries and allowances of all other judges are public because the tribunal publishes the amount that may be paid. It is a minimum amount. We do not know whether the salaries and allowances of those three judges of the Court of Appeal are under the tribunal's determinations yet or are whether they are still well in excess of it. That was a decision of this Parliament put through by this Minister's Government. We object to that. We divided against it in the past. We are telling the Minister that the tribunal does not adjust the salaries of those three judges who are appointed before 30 June of that year. The Minister is waltzing away from the problem. Will the Minister answer this or will he not answer it? Has the Government set salaries for certain judges and is the tribunal now setting the salaries for the rest of the judges?

Mr WELLS: The effect of this Bill is that salaries will be determined by the Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal and they will be published in this document that will be subject to disallowance by the Assembly.

Mr FITZGERALD: I ask the Minister to give this Committee an assurance that all the judges receive the salaries and allowances as determined by the tribunal. Do all the judges of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal receive the salaries and the allowances, and no more than that, determined by that tribunal? That is all I want to know.

Mr WELLS: The effect of this Bill is to give the Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal the power to determine the salaries and allowances of all judges.

Mr BEANLAND: The Parliament initially passed a number of Bills, including the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957, which was the framework for trial court judges and District Court judges. The Judges (Salaries and Allowances) Act 1967 sets up the Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, which judges on these matters and decides on these issues.

The point is that the initial judicial entitlements to the first judges of the Appeal Court, as set out in the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991, did not allow the tribunal to do that for those original appointments. I spelt that out very clearly. The tribunal is now complaining that it was not able to do this initially. The tribunal also pointed out that, because of that Governor in Council order which this Government put through without an amendment to the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act, by which the judges are covered, the tribunal was faced with the jurisprudence allowance problem. Of course, there was still the problem of the consumer price index under that Governor in Council decision. The tribunal does not have a problem in relation to other trial court judges, and those matters are covered by this Act.

It is all very well for the Minister to say these things; he can say what he likes. But the point is that, initially, the Parliament set out the framework. Now, some of the responsibility is being transferred—and I will not go through all that again—but there are still some problems with the Governor in Council decision, as the tribunal pointed out, and this Government has not overcome all those problems, particularly in relation to the consumer price index and those other special provisions that relate to Appeal Court judges as set down by that Governor in Council decision. It is quite clear that the initial decision, which was made under the Supreme Court of Queensland Act, was a secret deal—a special arrangement for those Appeal Court judges. Most of those arrangements are now being transferred.

I refer to the tribunal report dated 31 August 1993. After the initial period, the matter was then handed over to the tribunal. The tribunal then ran foul of that original decision which the Government made because of the section that covered jurisprudence allowances. The Government has overcome that problem with this amendment, but nevertheless it does not get away from the fact that, initially, they were not covered. There is still no framework set down in the legislation; it is set down in that Governor in Council order, which remains.

Mr WELLS: It has always been the case that the tribunal has had the power to determine the salaries and allowances, if any, of judges of all

categories. This Bill allows the tribunal, if the tribunal wishes, to pursue the course of action that it sought to pursue in the fourteenth report of the Judges Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. That is what this Bill does. The honourable member is just talking a lot of wind.

Clause 22, as read, agreed to.

Clause 23—

Mr BEANLAND (8.05 p.m.): This clause amends section 102 subsection (4). Subsections (4) to (6) have been renumbered as (5) to (7), and a new section has been included instead of Part 6. Subsection (4) has been included to give the tribunal power to make this decision, but it still has not overcome those other problems that the tribunal faced in relation to the Governor in Council decision. This clause states in part—

"... the Tribunal also makes a determination amalgamating the salary, general allowance and jurisprudential allowance of the other Judges of the Court"—

and—

"... the amalgamation for the Judge of Appeal is to the same proportional extent as the amalgamation for the other Judges of the Court."

So we are overcoming the jurisprudence allowance and general allowance for Appeal Court judges. But there is no way that the Government can overcome subsection (4), which relates to the Governor in Council. Part 6 states that the section applies only to a judge of the Appeal Court appointed on or before 30 June 1992.

I posed the question previously as to whether the current improved conditions, which were covered under that Governor in Council order for the original Appeal Court judges—and that relates to pensions and long service leave—are going to relate to future Appeal Court judges, or are future Appeal Court judges going to receive the same as trial court judges? Members on this side of the Chamber cannot answer that because we do not have access to that Governor in Council decision, which this Government secretly put through and which retains this information.

Mr WELLS: I do not know what the honourable member is asking. The section states that if salary and allowances are amalgamated for one set of judges, then they are amalgamated for all the judges. It also provides that an amalgamation can occur only if the amalgamation applies to all judges. It is as simple as that.

Clause 23, as read, agreed to.

Clause 24, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Wells, by leave, read a third time.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Honourable members, before we move to the next business, I acknowledge the presence of the Mayor of Redcliffe in the public gallery.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 15 November (see p. 10316).

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (8.09 p.m.): The Opposition will not be opposing this legislation. In his second-reading speech, the Minister stated that the provisions of the Bill have been fully discussed with the Local Government Association, which supports the proposal as an improvement on the existing law. I assure the House that the Opposition would tread very, very carefully if it ever wanted to oppose the Local Government Association on any major issue. As a matter of principle, the Opposition has great confidence in the association's wealth of knowledge in relation to local government.

As a Parliament, we have the responsibility to ensure that nobody takes away from the general public their privacy and their rights as property owners. I believe that the Bill is couched in terms that do protect home owners, particularly residential home owners, to a degree or standard that this House would expect. Inspectors may enter onto properties for very good reasons as outlined in the Bill; for example, if there is an urgent matter, such as a health problem. An example was given of a dog that had to be apprehended, and it had run under a house. The local government dog catcher could possibly go straight in and take the dog without having to go to a court or take other steps necessary to obtain right of entry to that property. The Opposition believes that this is reasonable. The Bill has not been in force for very long, but this refinement became necessary, and the Opposition supports the Government—

Mr Mackenroth: I am a man who is prepared to listen.

Mr FITZGERALD: I agree with that. The Minister just said that he is a man who is going to listen. I am sure that in the future, when it comes to local government, he is going to have an opportunity to listen to people in relation to other matters. It is a foolish Government that does not listen to the people. I am sure that the Government will find out that, if it thumbs its nose at what the local people want, it will suffer the consequences of that action. Although I do not wish to canvass any other issues—I know it would not be proper for me to do so—I think the Minister will find that the people of the Moreton area will have their say on the amalgamation issue. I hope that the Minister is going to listen. If he does not listen, I am afraid that he and his colleagues will have to suffer the consequences.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (8.12 p.m.): I rise tonight to support the Local Government Amendment Bill 1994, which introduces a number of additional rights of entry to properties for local authorities. If honourable members examine the provisions they will find that they are based on commonsense.

Section 661 (2) currently requires the consent of an owner and occupier or an order to be obtained as a condition of entry to a property. Under this provision that condition will not apply if urgent action is necessary for a local government purpose. New subclause (b) provides that that condition does not apply if reasonable notice has been given by the local government of its intention to enter the land or structure to carry out the work, for example, entry for the purpose of the clearing of overgrown allotments required under a local law. I think that that is reasonable.

New section 661 (3) provides a restriction on entry to a structure or part of a structure used for residential purposes. I think that that is obviously important as a protection for people against break and enter offences. Clearly, that is an important provision. We are not talking about entering dwellings or structures used for residential purposes, so that protects people's rights.

Section 665 (2) requires the consent of the owner and occupier or a court order as a condition of entry. Under this amendment, neither of those conditions apply if—and this is the major provision—entry is made for routine operations such as to inspect, operate, change, maintain, remove, repair or replace local government facilities. That is commonsense. Subclause (b) provides that neither of those conditions apply if urgent action is necessary for local government purposes. That is simply a rewrite of an old clause.

Four new clauses provide access that did not exist before. They relate to, firstly,

investigations about offences; secondly, monitoring authorisations and notices and processing applications; thirdly, approved inspection programs; and, fourthly, the special provision for local laws about dogs in Division 10. That provision gives the power to local authorities to seize dogs. It is not limited by other sections of the chapter. The provisions dealing with damage to property and compensation under Division 9 apply. How this works is basically this: the local authority concerned must draw up a model law provision. That has to be approved. As part of that model law process, as members would know from the Local Government Act, the local authorities must advertise in the local community. Therefore, that gives the local community the opportunity to object to any model laws relating to dealing with dogs or seizing dogs. Although Division 10 is being passed tonight, model local laws will need to be developed and as part of that process there will be a need for advertising. So, the community still has opportunity for input.

In addition, if the provisions drafted by a local authority are totally unreasonable, then this Minister can knock them back. That is the second check and balance. The third check and balance is that this provision has a sunset clause of two years. At the end of that time, if there are any difficulties they can be looked at again.

I think the provisions are reasonable. They do not encroach in an unreasonable way on people's rights. They allow local authorities to act in an appropriate way to carry out their statutory responsibilities. All of those amendments deal with safety and the provision of services.

I conclude my remarks by turning to Schedule 2, Other Amendments. A range of miscellaneous provisions is listed in that Schedule. Clauses 12 and 13 clarify that local governments may make and levy a differential general rate on rateable land in the area. I make the point, as I have on other occasions when discussing local government, that I get a little annoyed when I find local authorities wanting to buck pass to the State Government for their rating policies. I am sick of it. In my electorate a number of Valuer-General assessments for blocks of land have increased significantly. For example, in Wilston, which is in my electorate, there has been a significant recent movement in values. The same applies to Spring Hill and New Farm. The Valuer-General has looked at market values and has made certain determinations. Those determinations can be argued and, indeed, I do not accept all the Valuer-General's assessments, even in Wilston, but they are used by the Brisbane City Council for the determination of rates. However, under the system of differential rating that the Goss

Government gave local authorities, local authorities have considerable powers to make a determination which does not have to reflect the latest Valuer-General's assessment.

As we all know the Brisbane City Council has an averaging scheme that averages rate valuations over the past three years. If the Brisbane City Council, or any other local authority, wants to make a determination on rates based on the latest Valuer-General's assessment, that is its decision. Local authorities make decisions on the rateable rate that will apply. That is not a matter that is the responsibility of the State Government or the Valuer-General; they are simply using that as a yardstick to determine their rates. If they want to maintain rates in a particular area at a certain level, then they should have the courage, or the guts, to take the responsibility for that decision. They should not put the burden back onto the State Government. Frankly, I get a little tired of the buck-passing exercise—

Mr Laming: They should use a differential rating.

Mr BEATTIE: They have differential rating. That is exactly right. The member is correct. They should, in fact, use the differential rating scheme that this Parliament has given local authorities instead of passing the buck and blaming the State Government for their rating policies. They make the decision about the rates. They are the ones who get the income; the State Government does not get that income. They get it; therefore, they should take that responsibility.

The whole theme of the approach of the Labor Party towards local authorities has been this: they rise and fall on their own decisions. We have given them the power that they have wanted. We have respected their independence, but they rise and fall on their own decisions. Let us have an end to the buck-passing and let us see local authorities accept the responsibility for their own rating policies.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning) (8.19 p.m.), in reply: I thank the Opposition for its support for this amending legislation. This legislation is really only a simple amendment but it will certainly make the operations of council officers a lot easier. We discussed at length with councils to come up with a compromise with what is in the present legislation in relation to inspections of premises. We are prepared to see how this works. When I introduced the Local Government Act at this time last year, we stated then that we would look at the whole legislation to see how it works and operates and that we would amend it as we go along if that is needed. We will continue to do

that. I thank the Opposition and Mr Beattie for their support.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 8 and Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Mackenroth, by leave, read a third time.

AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS (QUEENSLAND) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 27 October (see p. 10025).

Mr PERRETT (Barambah) (8.22 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Bill 1994, let me say that the Opposition will not oppose the passage of this Bill. This is the third and final step in a process of handing over vitally important functions to the Commonwealth Government. The Opposition notes that it was the Minister who originally sought and received agreement for the establishment of this Commonwealth registration scheme.

A couple of years ago when the Minister took the first step down this track to Canberra—which, I might add, has been quite complex—the Opposition objected strenuously. The Opposition believed very strongly in maintaining the power over many of these issues in Queensland and, in past years, the scheme as it had operated in Queensland had worked well. However, it has been pointed out that there could be some cost savings to producers, which the Opposition welcomes, and as all the other States had agreed to the scheme, Queensland really had no option. Plenty of farmers have horror stories to tell about their dealings with Canberra on a wide range of issues. Farmers will always ask, "Where are the benefits?", and the Opposition will keep a close watch on the outcome of this legislation.

Agricultural and veterinary chemicals are vitally important to our rural industries. Quite frankly, rural industries cannot survive without them, particularly in Queensland. The climate that we have in this State lends itself very well to the proliferation of many species of insects and other parasites that have to be controlled or they will wipe out a crop. Likewise, many insects cause quite immeasurable amounts of damage to

our livestock industries. Having said that, the rural industries in Australia have spent a lot of money to create a clean, green image. It was only last year that I was at the Brisbane Markets when the Minister himself launched a clean, green campaign for Queensland's agricultural produce. Of course, the Brisbane Markets was an ideal place at which to launch that campaign because of the fruit and vegetables that are sold and marketed there. It is very important that those markets present that clean, green image.

It has been very disappointing to learn over these past few days about the damage that has come about as a result of the contamination of meat from cattle that had been fed on cotton trash. I think this has to be a lesson because, right now, an export market to Australia worth in excess of \$3 billion a year is at risk. In recent times, we have heard too often about the scares from residues of chemicals such as DDT, dieldrin, arsenic and the like. I might say that these chemicals were all very good chemicals in their day. They were used legally at the time because they were promoted as being a great antidote for the various parasites that they were developed to control. Farmers were ignorant of what might lie ahead. Of course, in this day and age, with the pressure that is brought about by export competition between various nations, particularly in the meat industry where the United States continues to put pressure on the Australian industry at every opportunity, we know that any hint of residue contamination by any chemical at all in these products will give that country an excuse to score trade points against us. I guess what we are talking about is responsible usage.

I think farmers are becoming much more knowledgeable in their use of agricultural chemicals. They are much more responsible in the way in which they use it, not only because of the risk of contamination of foodstuffs but also because of the risk of damage to the environment. I think that that is very important as well because indiscriminate use of any agricultural chemicals could lead to damage to the environment, and none of us can condone that.

I think that, in recent times, we have learned a lot about the application of chemicals and the danger that is present in the avenues about which I have spoken, particularly in contamination of foodstuffs and damage to the environment. So I hope that the National Registration Authority, which will be set up to administer a code of practice not only in registration of chemicals but also in their usage, will be a worthwhile organisation. We hope that never again will we see the situation arising that we are seeing at present through the use of the chemical Helix in the cotton industry. Of course,

farmers with starving cattle had fed the cotton trash to their animals. ICI has said that Helix was never meant to be ingested by livestock. I think that, because ICI has said that, farmers would ask, "Why were we not told?" I am sure that cotton trash would have been the last thing that they would have wanted to use if they had known the outcome of such use.

This legislation provides for checks and balances that will ensure that the interests of the agricultural sector and consumers in Queensland are addressed. Before closing, I would like to say a little bit about labelling. I know that the labelling of chemicals is a matter that has concerned producers for a long, long time. I believe that the NRA will ensure that only properly labelled, approved chemicals are offered for sale in Queensland. I hope that the labelling of these chemicals is certainly of a standard that will always identify what they are. In the past, as a farmer myself, I have purchased chemicals that were packaged in tins. When those tins contained particular chemicals, they rusted very quickly. Of course, quite often the labelling was a paper label wrapped around the tin. What happens when chemicals are being mixed and water is being splashed around in filling tanks and the like is that as soon as this paper gets wet, it disintegrates and comes off the tin. Of course, that chemical is no longer properly identified. It is very interesting to note that, in recent times, some chemicals have been banned in Queensland, and they have been handed in by farmers from throughout the State. The Department of Primary Industries is currently holding in its stores chemicals that are not identified. I can only assume that that is because those particular chemicals have not been properly labelled.

I think I have covered everything that I wanted to say. As I said, the Opposition is prepared to support the passage of this Bill through the House. We will be watching the outcome very closely to ensure that farmers in this State are not going to be disadvantaged in any way. I think it is important that we do cut costs. If this Bill will help in that regard, we are all for it. I believe also that we must ensure that the registration of chemicals for a particular use will not be delayed for too long. Once it is known that a chemical is safe for a particular use, we would hope that the registration process takes place quickly and that the chemical is on the market for use in the particular circumstances for which it has been developed. The Opposition supports the Bill.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (8.31 p.m.): In speaking to the legislation before the House, I wish to point out that, although this is very important legislation, it is fairly simple. In fact, the

main object of the legislation is to hand over to a Commonwealth authority, the National Registration Authority, the responsibility for registering agricultural and veterinary products and chemicals.

I note that the State will still maintain its rights and responsibilities for controlling the use of chemicals. None of those responsibilities are given away to the Commonwealth, except for registration. As the Opposition spokesman, Mr Perrett, pointed out, chemicals are extremely important to the agricultural and veterinary industries. Farmers and veterinarians are fighting a constant war with pests, and more and more pests are developing resistance to the armoury that is available to farmers. The chemists are trying to win the war.

Developing chemicals for agricultural use comes at an enormous cost. We humans eat the food that we produce and there is no way in the world that we would wish to contaminate ourselves. The general public insists that we have good, wholesome food. As the old saying goes, we are what we eat. That is why the cost of developing these chemicals is extremely high. Quite often, a company will develop a product and, before that product has finished its life or before the company has made a reasonable return on the product, pests will develop a resistance to it. So we then have to go through the whole process of screening new chemicals. It is not only a matter of finding a chemical; we have to make sure that it has no side effects. We are all very conscious of cancer-causing agents, or carcinogenic substances. However, there are many other side effects.

In the development of chemicals there are lots of flukes from time to time. One of the chemicals that we used to stop grass growing in some broadleaf crops such as soya beans and cotton was known as Trifluralin. This chemical is a very strong, yellow substance. When we used it, the boom sprays would produce a gold substance. I found out that the discovery of the chemical was a fluke. When somebody was trying to establish a dye, this yellow substance was developed. For some reason, it was not going to be used, so it was tested for other uses. It was discovered that, if it was sprayed on the ground, grass would not come up for two to six months. All of the rates were worked out. Whenever we got this chemical on our clothes, it was as though we were covered in dye. It made a very good dye. That gives us an idea of some of the flukes that have led to the development of chemicals for agricultural use.

The general public is greatly concerned about whether these chemicals are safe. Quite often, because I represent an agricultural area,

people contact me when somebody uses a boom spray. They ask, "What are they spraying? Is it safe? They are spraying crops. Is it safe for our health?" Sometimes they can smell the vapours. Someone might see an aeroplane flying around. Some people are very concerned about aerial spraying. In their own minds, they believe it is unsafe to have aircraft flying around spraying poisons—and they are poisons! They want to know whether they are safe.

The number of clauses in the Bill is actually very small. The Schedule, which is the major part of the Bill, contains the amendments to the Act. It states—

"A person must not use a chemical product until it is a registered chemical product."

The maximum penalty is 40 penalty units—about \$2,400. That is a reasonable penalty. However, it is a maximum, and a magistrate can decide whether the breach is minor. That is the penalty for using a chemical product that is not registered. It is straight out; there are no ifs or buts; that is what it is.

Then the Bill states that it is a defence for the defendant to prove that the product was a registered chemical product at some time in the two years immediately before its use by the defendant. And there are some other provisions. In other words, if it was registered, if it was bought as a registered product and it is subsequently taken off the market, unless there are grave reasons, that product can still be used for up to two years. So it is registered.

Another point is the use of registered chemical products in contravention of labels. A person must not use a registered chemical product in a way that contravenes an instruction on the approved label for containers for the product. The maximum penalty is just over \$2,400.

As to the use of a registered chemical product taken from an unlabelled container—a person must not use a registered chemical product taken from a container unless the approved label for containers for the product was attached to the container immediately before the product was taken from the container. There are a few more subsections. The maximum penalty is 400 penalty units.

There is another point, that being that the legislation states that a person does not contravene an instruction by using a chemical product at a concentration less than the concentration stated, unless the instruction states that the product must be used at a stated concentration or at a concentration not less than the rate stated. Sometimes there is a fear that

farmers may try to save money by using chemicals at half strength. Quite often, some insects will survive a chemical treatment. As a result, they can then breed up a resistance to a particular chemical. So the test is that we must use the chemical at a certain strength because insects are likely to develop a resistance to that chemical, otherwise the purpose will be defeated and the maximum life of the chemical—the number of years that a product may be used—will be reduced.

There is also a provision in relation to claims about unregistered chemicals. A person must not make a claim about the use of an unregistered chemical. So if we go around, as the snake oil men go around, and try to sell a chemical by saying, "This will do this. It is a chemical. Use it. It is not registered because it cannot get registered", there is a maximum penalty of a \$2,400 fine. I think they deserve it, too.

The Bill states that a person does not contravene an instruction by using a chemical product more than once for the same plant or stock with the period between the use and the next being longer than the period stated, unless the instruction states that a period must not be longer than the period stated. In other words, the label can state how often we shall spray, how often we cannot spray and how short the intervening period will be. The chemicals for use on fruit and vegetables often state a withholding period. I think that is fair enough. They stipulate the safe time in which to eat a product. We all eat fruit that has been sprayed with a product to stop fruit fly, but there must be a withholding period so that the maggots and the eggs—the eggs preferably—in the fruit are killed. After that period, it is quite safe to use it, because the chemical dissipates.

I would like to assure the general public that chemists are very cautious. If they thought the withholding period was a day or two, they would put seven days on it. They always have provisions so that, if somebody erred, they would have to deliberately err to make a mistake. I think that is very reasonable. We must convey to the general public that the product that they buy is rendered pure and wholesome to the best of our ability. From time to time, some chemicals that were on the market were eventually banned because some side effects became known or because for social reasons or environmental reasons people wanted those chemicals taken off the market.

DDT is the best example. That product was used worldwide. It saved millions and millions of lives because it was very effective against the malaria-bearing mosquitoes. However, the

product builds up in the fatty systems of animals, including man, and continues to be passed from one carnivorous animal, including fish, to the next one. It gradually builds up. DDT really worked against the eggshells of quite a few birds. For example, it was becoming a real problem for the American bald eagle. It also affected many other birds and was found in the Antarctic. DDT was banned. America decided to ban it. If we in Australia wanted to supply products to America, we had to ban DDT in Australia; otherwise, our cattle would carry it.

However, I am not aware of anyone being poisoned by DDT. Factory workers worked in factories where DDT dust was made after the war. The product was invented in Switzerland. I think that Ciba-Geigy developed it. Production began straight after the war. Huge quantities were made. Factory workers worked barehanded, breathing in the vapours and the dust all the time. When a cancer check was carried out, DDT was not found to be carcinogenic. The rate at which cancer developed in those workers was no greater than the rate at which cancer developed in members of the general public. The fatty cells of the workers were absolutely loaded with the product. There is no doubt about that. However, DDT did not affect human beings at all.

When it was in a liquid form, an emulsion, if a child or anyone else drank DDT, that person was treated straightaway for toleroid poisoning. If one drank kerosene, one was treated for the hydrocarbon carriers that the DDT was suspended in, not the DDT. They are very dangerous to the lungs. The hydrocarbons that one would drink burned the lungs, which was very dangerous and harmful.

The general public should be assured that the chemical industry undergoes constant monitoring. Before a product is marketed, it is very, very thoroughly screened. Farmers have a great responsibility to use products according to their labels. A margin for error is allowed for in the mixing of chemicals. The instructions always provide a good safety margin. From time to time, fruit and vegetables that go to the markets are checked. The annual reports show the amount of produce on the market that has been found to be contaminated. That information is published, so sometimes one will read in the newspapers where the contamination comes from. Those procedures are all necessary.

I turn to the meat scare that arose because of the Helix contamination from the cotton trash. It is great that we have up-front recognition of a problem when it occurs. Our customers know straightaway what is found. People have an assurance that if a problem is found in the future, all of the customers are told about it at the same

time. It will cost us millions, but people know straightaway and they have a right to know. Once a supplier is found to be deceiving its customers and hiding a problem, those customers lose absolute confidence in that supplier. We cannot afford to do that. We must be open and accountable.

In my electorate, I receive quite a few complaints from concerned people who wonder what is going on but are not assured that those checks and balances are in place. I know that farmers or aerial operators cannot possibly afford to lose their licence for using an unregistered product or using it in a way in which it is not allowed to be used. I support the legislation. I know that the House will pass it. The legislation does not make any major changes to the application of the product; it still stays the responsibility of the State Government. That is where it should be. The registration now goes to a Commonwealth body.

Hon. E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (8.46 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable members for Barambah and Lockyer for their contributions to the debate and for their support of the Bill.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 37 and Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Casey, by leave, read a third time.

AGRICULTURAL STANDARDS BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 27 October (see p. 10026).

Mr PERRETT (Barambah) (8.48 p.m.): The Opposition will not oppose the passage of the Bill. It is based in large part on national agreements, so again this Parliament is relatively powerless to make significant changes. I will say, however, that I am concerned about the extent to which the Government has walked away from realistic regulation and policing in important areas of agricultural standards. It is a fact that, in the past five years, the strength of the Minister's Standards Branch has been steadily run down.

When the Minister replies to the debate, he might like to tell the House how many standards inspectors he employs now in comparison with

the number that he employed five years ago. On this side of the House, we are not in favour of overregulation, but I make the point that there must be a certain level of regulation to ensure the future of our great food-producing industries. We also need a certain level of regulation to ensure the quality of the food that our consumers buy. This legislation makes it certain that only minimum standards will be applied and enforced in the future.

As with so much legislation presented to Parliament by this Labor Government, the significance is very much in what has been left to regulation. Those standards will be the making or breaking of industries and individual farmers affected. I can promise the Minister that we will be looking closely at each and every standard prepared under the Act when it is presented to the Parliament.

I am pleased to see that there will still be some minimal controls on the quality of seed through a certification program. It is very important to farmers that they obtain pure seed and that they achieve a high germination. Seeds are very expensive, and justifiably so in many cases. The development of many of our hybrid varieties, which have improved yield and quality, costs companies a great deal of money to develop. I understand that some of the companies are finding it almost unprofitable in the face of the current drought and are seriously considering their future in this country, particularly foreign-owned companies. It is important that there is a certification program which ensures purity and high germination of seeds which are put on the market. It is also pleasing to see that the Minister proposes to allow industry a say through representation on an advisory committee. We will have to see how that works out in practice and which industry people are allowed to have a say. However, on the surface, there is some promise there.

As to labelling laws—again, we will have to wait and see. Labelling is fine, provided there is a real commitment by Government and industry to the policing of standards. It is no use having labelling laws in place, particularly with feed mixes and the like, if there is not some check on the actual produce that is being mixed to ensure that the labelling standards are being met. There has been a long history in Australia of labelling covering up more than it reveals, and we have to look no further than the food labelling experience to see evidence of that. The Bill provides that labelling must be in accordance with a standard, but until and unless a standard is prepared and approved by the Parliament, there will be no effective controls. I believe that that is a serious weakness, and farmers have a real cause for concern.

The subject of HGPs or hormonal growth promotants is a vexed one. We are very much in the hands of our customers on that one. I acknowledge the difficulties that the industry and any regulatory regime must face up to. However, as we have learned with the current chemical contamination scare, the customer is always right. We must endeavour to meet standards which are laid down by our customers in order to keep those particular markets. On the subject of HGPs, I believe that the industry is doing just that. I would simply stress that before standards are agreed to or issued in this regard, the Government must consult fully with the producer groups involved. The stakes are simply too high—valuable world markets—for us to risk getting it wrong.

One of the reasons advanced for bringing in this legislation is the new realities in place in the wake of mutual recognition. We on this side of the House were never in any doubt that mutual recognition was not in the best interests of primary production. We have the proof here in the Explanatory Notes to the Bill. The notes detail how a whole range of farm groups wanted to retain existing arrangements for registration, surveillance and inspection.

There has been a great deal of concern right across industry about the changes contained in this Bill. Farm groups have brought their concerns to the Opposition, and they have also expressed total dismay at the way in which mutual recognition has undercut their ability to do anything about it. As we forecast at the time Labor rammed mutual recognition into law, we are now all stuck with the lowest common denominator. Labor wanted mutual recognition, and it has compromised some previously very high standards in Queensland as a result. Now we have the final surrender. We are throwing our hands in the air and walking away. The Opposition supports the Bill.

Hon E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (8.55 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable member for Barambah for his contribution to the Bill. I was a bit worried for a moment. I thought that I might have to provide a water augmentation scheme for him. However, I am pleased that the member recovered and was able to get along quite okay. I thank him for indicating the Opposition's support for the Bill.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 75, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Casey, by leave, read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH
(Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (8.57 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Proposed Second Highway Crossing, Toowoomba Range

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North) (8.57 p.m.): During a speech that I made in this House last month on Appropriation Bill (No. 2), I referred to the proposed second highway crossing of the Toowoomba range. This proposed crossing has created widespread interest and great concern for residents living on or near the proposed route, which is likely to be further defined from the current zone of interest after 15 December.

Last Saturday in Toowoomba, Maunsell Pty Ltd, consulting engineers for Queensland Transport, conducted a special interest group seminar at which specific groups were allowed to make submissions to the consultants and raise their concerns about the project. The seminar was also attended by me, as well as the member for Lockyer, the member for Crows Nest and the member for Gregory in his capacity as shadow Minister for Transport. Representation came from the Withcott Progress Association, the Northern Action Group, the Gowrie Concern Group, the Troys Road Action Group, the Postmans Ridge Action Group, the Western Action Group and the South-East Graziers Association. Those groups represent the thousands of residents and landholders who are currently located within the Queensland Transport zone of interest.

During their submissions all groups indicated that a new range highway was needed in the future but that major concerns about the current proposal are evident. Most groups are also of the opinion that the much-lauded consultation process is nothing more than a public relations exercise; that the decision as to where the highway will go has already been made and that their input into the process will be a complete waste of time. I have to congratulate and applaud the extensive and thorough work that has been done by some of these groups, who have put a lot of time and effort into their proposals in order to convince Queensland Transport and its consultants to think again on possible alternatives for the project or, at the very

least, consider possible amendments to the current zone of interest.

The concerns of groups such as those highlighted at last Saturday's seminar were brought to a head a few weeks ago, when Queensland Transport produced a publication titled "Toowoomba Region Transport Network Study—Environmental Impact Assessment—A Community Update". The brochure, which apparently was distributed to over 40 000 households across the whole of the City of Toowoomba and in some areas outside the city but not all households in the zone of interest, is the official Queensland Transport response. The brochure is full of very nice motherhood statements, but has failed to impress me or many other residents as an example of extensive research into the project. I table a copy of the brochure.

What the brochure did not indicate was the possible alignments that had obviously been considered for where the highway would go. This information appeared in the *Toowoomba Chronicle* on 5 November, after a copy of another map had obviously been leaked from the department and found its way into the hands of one of the concerned groups. That map was described by Queensland Transport as unauthorised information. I table a copy of the newspaper report. Some of the lines on the unauthorised map pass right through residential areas, prime farming land, environmentally sensitive areas and cattle and horse studs. It is no wonder that concerned residents groups are highly critical and extremely cynical of the whole consultation process when this sort of thing happens.

Today's *Toowoomba Chronicle* quotes Queensland Transport district manager, Mr Gil Heaton, as saying that if necessary the time for consultation on the bypass route would be extended beyond 15 December to ensure that the correct route was finally chosen. This is perhaps another admission that many of the concerns raised by the various groups do in fact have some merit.

One of the major concerns, particularly in the area at the northern end of my electorate, is fog and low cloud. I table a photograph similar to one of many that have been presented as part of the submissions by the concerned groups that indicate the sort of conditions that prevail on a consistent basis in the areas of Mount Kynoch, Blue Mountains Heights Estate and the suburb of Harlaxton, which is the area within the zone of interest where in fact a new highway would cross the Toowoomba range either above or below the existing highway between Toowoomba and Crows Nest.

This phenomena is unique to the area and will pose a major problem for vehicular traffic, particularly heavy transports on a new highway. The problems of noise, the impact on heritage sites, the environment, geological queries and, most importantly, the lifestyle of all residents, are yet to be answered by the department.

Up until quite recently, these groups thought that they did not have a friend in the world who would listen to their concerns. Let me say that they certainly have the four National Party members through whose electorates the proposed highway is likely to pass to listen to their concerns and, together with the member for Gregory, the shadow Minister for Transport, we will do all we can to promote their concerns to the Government.

My message to Queensland Transport is simple: if this project is between 15 and 20 years away, as has been mooted, let us go back to the drawing board. We should remove all existing zones of interest and start again. Any project that is 15 to 20 years down the track and is of major proportions, such as this one is, deserves a much greater study plan and a more complete process of consultation with the public. Residents can be assured that the four National Party members will give them plenty of assistance.

Time expired.

Liberal Party Activity in Moreton Area

Ms POWER (Mansfield) (9.02 p.m.): I recently received a report on the Liberals' activity in the Federal electorate of Moreton, an electorate that encompasses my State electorate of Mansfield.

Mr J. H. Sullivan: A short piece of paper!

Ms POWER: It certainly was a short piece of paper. It was interesting to find out that the Liberals have no money—but that was not surprising. Because they have no money, they have decided on a letter campaign. They must think that we are a bit silly. It is not very hard to work that out, particularly when I received back a letter that I have circulated in the electorate with a few grammatical errors fixed up. That is a perfect example of how direct mail is sent. Another example is that somebody to whom I responded writes once again to say that they do not like the response that I have provided. Alternatively, they write anonymous letters to the local paper purporting to have spoken to my electorate office, but of course there is no way one can prove the truth of that.

I suggest that, if that is the Liberal Party's campaign tactic, it had better try a little bit harder, because it has not got me shaking in my boots. I

suggest to the Liberals that their problem is a lot deeper. Once upon a time, Lane and Austin changed their colours. Do honourable members remember those self-serving Liberals who decided they liked ministerial leather so much that they jumped into the camp of the National Party? That is going to happen again, because all of these seats that the Liberal Party has identified as great Liberal seats that they are going to win back in a flurry in this State are being taken up by National Party members who themselves are self-serving and have in fact joined the Liberal Party so that they can get endorsement in the hope of winning a few seats.

What will happen when they are elected? They will do a Lane and an Austin and walk into the National Party with their riding boots on.

Mr Johnson: You won't be here.

Ms POWER: I will be here. Anyway, I am coming to the honourable member. The demise of the Liberals is not surprising; they have no credibility. The old saying is still true—a vote for the Liberals is a vote for the Nationals. National Party members are running in all of these key seats that the Liberal Party people think they are going to win. Everybody knows that. However, they are very defensive about this. They write letters to the *Courier-Mail* defending their great stand on becoming members of the Liberal Party. Of course, they state that they are going to be great heroes for the Liberal Party. Unfortunately, they forget to mention what electorates they will be running in when they make these great speeches—and the people of Queensland have seen through that.

Of course, the Liberal Party and the National Party spokespersons have another big problem. They go to an electorate and spruik some great idea that they have. In an electorate such as mine they would say that they do not support link roads and they do not support highways, but of course then the shadow Minister goes to his own electorate, either Aspley or Gregory, and talks about great road constructions. Of course, we all remember when the members for Warwick and Gregory came into the southern Brisbane electorates saying that there should be no dumps in the area, but of course Mr Gunn had already said that Mount Gravatt was a really good place to put a radioactive dump. We can go through the publications over and over again and find contradictions. The shadow Ministers have often made comments in one electorate that they contradict when they go into another electorate. These things will be exposed and people will see the Liberals for what they are.

The electors of Queensland should be warned. They should beware the Liberals that once upon a time were Nationals. They should

beware Nationals that may want to be Liberals. Something sinister is occurring. The people of Queensland will see through it. They will see that the Liberals have more to worry about than just dollars and cents, that they have a real problem when it comes to policies. The Liberal Party does not want to pull its policies off the shelf for people to see because the party will then be seen for what it is. They have learnt nothing in Opposition, and they have nothing to offer the people of Queensland.

Ms Spence: The only thing they have to offer is a campaign based on personal attacks.

Ms POWER: I take the interjection from the member for Mount Gravatt, because they certainly have gone along that track. The Liberals have a problem not just in the State of Queensland. The Federal Liberal and National coalition has a real problem, and until the Queensland Liberals can get their act together, they certainly have no chance of winning federally, either. The sheet of paper that was distributed in the Federal seat of Moreton only outlined the Liberals' money problems and identified that both the State and the Federal Labor Governments will have no problems if that is the platform they are going to campaign on.

Time expired.

Proposed Second Highway Crossing, Toowoomba Range

Mr COOPER (Crows Nest) (9.07 p.m.): I rise to support the member for Toowoomba North, Mr Graham Healy, and the coalition spokesman for Transport, the member for Gregory, Mr Vaughan Johnson. At the outset, I should say that the coalition recognises the need for roads, highways and bypass roads, particularly in rapid growth areas such as Toowoomba and its environs. We recognise the need for all forms of Government services as a result of this growth and we recognise the growing pains that accompany it. All of us in this place also have a responsibility to manage that growth, and the pain, with understanding and sensitivity.

The people must be heard, but to be heard they must be listened to by Government and not treated with ignore and contempt. A Government has the role of being socially responsible; of protecting people's lifestyles, and of protecting the environment. The proposed Toowoomba bypass road, which is planned for some 15 years hence, affects the districts of Withcott, Postmans Ridge, Prince Henry Heights, Mount Lofty, the Harlaxton Estate, Blue Mountains Estate, Cranley, Rockville, Cottswold Hills, Wellcamp, Charlton, Gowrie and many others.

Protest groups have been formed to represent the residents, and these groups have presented well-constructed cases. They have performed responsibly and credibly, but this does not belie their extreme concern at having their lifestyles and that most prized possession, the family home, destroyed or adversely affected. These people purchased their land and homes very deliberately for the lifestyles they wanted. They got there first and, as such, should have first right of refusal where the proposed highway is concerned.

We in the National Party have listened carefully to their concerns and their answer is clear. They do not want the highway and have presented very good reasons for not wanting it. As such, we on this side of the House call upon the Goss Labor Government to halt any further progress on the proposed route and go back to the drawing board.

Time is available, and time must be taken to get it right. We are planning for the next 50 years at least and, as such, a complete rethink is warranted and justified. I repeat that the current proposal must be scrapped and a new plan devised. Many valid reasons have been given by these people, and they include the need for Governments—both State and Federal, as they both control the purse strings—to be socially responsible for their actions. This means that to proceed with the current proposed route and ignoring the will of the people would be socially irresponsible. The environment, both actual and visual, would be desecrated. Areas of rainforest and waterfalls would be destroyed and the visual effect of a scar, particularly around the scenically beautiful escarpment of the Great Dividing Range, would be ugly to the eye and disastrous in the extreme. Wildlife of all descriptions would suffer enormously.

The amphitheatre effect and the noise of multiple heavy trucks would be much greater than normal noise levels. In fact, the noise would be horrific. No quantity of noise baffles would lessen the sound reverberating along its length, and the pollution from those heavy trucks would linger in the valley. Heritage railway arches would doubtless be destroyed; rich farmlands and horse and cattle stud operations would be severely disrupted to the point of being rendered not viable—not to mention the effect on dams and water bores, both private and public. I shall table shortly a letter—one of the many—pointing out the effect of the highway through just one stud property known as Markham Stud.

Fog is another major reason the proposed highway should not come through the escarpment. Any Government proceeding to put lives at risk would be utterly irresponsible. Local

knowledge must be respected and acted upon. All of their reasons are valid and based on experience. As such, the Minister, Mr Hamill, must intervene. He must call a moratorium on the project and convince his colleagues—State and Federal—that the project is over and a new route must be found.

Consultation levels have not been of a standard desirable for a major project of this kind. The Department of Transport and Maunsells, the engineers and project managers, are in a cleft stick; they are bound by a restrictive and inflexible zone of interest. It is the Government that has to act and act now. It must act decisively to halt the project in its tracks and start over again.

The letter that I shall table is from the clients of Markham Stud, who indicate how that route will affect those particular areas. All areas will be affected. I have never felt more certain in my time here that the needs of the people and the rights of the people must be respected and acted upon. As I said, we are looking at 50 years down the track. If we cannot spend at least another year in planning and planning properly and taking their views into account—remembering that they got there first, and we do not want to see their lifestyle destroyed—then the Government and all of us as political and people's representatives must put the people first. It is high time we did that. We have seen far too much arrogance on the part of this Government.

Time expired.

Banks

Mr ARDILL (Archerfield) (9.13 p.m.): The people of Queensland are badly served by the major trading banks. Firstly, there was the mass closure of Westpac banks in country towns, which deprived many citizens of full banking facilities for the first time in Queensland's history. So much for competition in the age of amalgamation! Others of the major four banks have reduced their smaller offices. Today, the member for Cook told members that the Commonwealth Bank in Weipa is going to close, depriving the people of a large area of Cape York of any banking service whatsoever.

Despite huge profits in recent years, the banks have seen fit to increase interest rates on lending while still paying very poor returns on term deposits and savings—in some cases, the lowest interest rates since prior to World War II. They saw fit, during the greedy eighties, to advance huge sums to so-called entrepreneurs, such as Bond and Skase, with no obvious chance of repayment or even of obtaining any return, and ordinary customers are still paying the price of the banks' largesse and extravagance. The banks are now being criticised for their

failure to provide essential finance for industry and commerce, which is essential for our continuing recovery from recession.

A recent criticism was of the banks' inability to face up to providing finance for retirement villages, which could be seen as a fail-safe area of lending in today's situation of voluntary early retirement and superannuation. This criticism came from a member of the banking fraternity at a national convention in Sydney, and I shall table the press report. It would seem that, after having their fingers burned by the high-fliers when prudence should have dictated caution in their approach, the banks are now failing to take opportunities to do business in any but the most traditional areas. Or is their revisited philosophy so hidebound that they are unwilling to advance a loan unless the funding is for a property where a mortgage is so watertight that they can turn out the mortgagor, as they have been doing with drought-affected farmers—which is another indication of the lack of benefit to the community of the bankers' operations and policies? Where was the sense of removing drought-ravaged farming families from their places of residence to put in other victims who could not hope to improve the situation in the worst drought in recorded history?

The latest profits of the four major banks stand at: NAB, \$1,070m; Westpac, \$705m; Commonwealth, \$682m; and ANZ, \$380m. The respective forecasts for the next financial year are: \$1,700m, \$1,000m, \$835m and \$650m. Despite these huge profits, the Commonwealth Bank now intends to tax ordinary depositors \$2 for keeping an account without any transaction. This is petty pilfering of small accounts, which could be whittled away to nothing over a period of months. The fee of \$1.50 per withdrawal over the counter is sheer bank robbery, but the \$2 fee for nothing defies description. With continuing escalating profits from \$682m per annum up to \$835m next year, these charges just cannot be justified.

The Commonwealth Bank has always provided excellent service in the 50 years that I have been a customer, but this year the queues have become longer—right out the door in some banks. The time taken for transactions has increased to a major degree with faulty or inefficient computers, the reporting to customers on their cheque accounts has become more desultory and remote, and personal attention has dropped. And now charges are to be imposed for no service! If that is the result of privatisation—and it has occurred only since privatisation—I want none of it, nor do most of the Commonwealth Bank's ordinary customers.

The idiot suggestion by our Federal Government that privatisation should be extended to services such as water and sewerage is mind boggling in view of what has happened to services that have already been privatised. Truly, the Commonwealth Government in Canberra has lost its way. It should come back to the real world of people, instead of remote philosophies.

Proposed Second Highway Crossing, Toowoomba Range

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory) (9.17 p.m.): At a meeting in Toowoomba last Saturday, which was attended by the member for Crows Nest, Russell Cooper, the member for Toowoomba North, Graham Healy, the member for Lockyer, Tony FitzGerald, and me, together with officials from the Department of Transport and the consulting group of Maunsells, we witnessed concerned groups give a very precise and detailed account of their respective localities, and each submission reeked of no consultation by this Government and the Department of Transport.

I remind this House of what consultation means. Consultation means "the act of consulting; conference; a meeting"—to discuss a plan or something—"an application for (professional) advice". That is something that this Government knows nothing about. The Government and the Department of Transport do not understand what the consultation process means.

However, the environmental impact assessment document, which was supposedly circulated to 40 000 residents in the region, has not been sighted. I ask the Minister: who sent out that document? This is the agenda to which we have become accustomed in the past five years under Labor.

The choice of the route in question has been based on commercial consideration only and very little else. Department of Transport officials have been ridiculed in public, but the onus is on the socialist Labor Government of Wayne Goss and, in this instance, David Hamill, the Minister for Transport, who are hell-bent on delivering a policy of misery and uncertainty, and real estate values are plummeting because of this Government's policy of "people don't count". All the people in the region in question are hardworking, honest families who have worked hard to achieve the ultimate goal—the family home—but more likely than not they will be told to move on. But when? They do not know when.

Flora and fauna are also in question here. Where is the Minister for the Environment?

Those people are living in a fragile environment because of a Government that does not practise what it preaches—a Government that came to power on a platform of accountability and consultation. I remind the House that they do not make prime farming land any more, and the member for Mansfield knows that full well.

In May 1991, the Deputy Premier, when announcing the Government's position statement on conservation of prime agricultural land, said—

"The Government considers that good quality agricultural land is a finite national and state resource that must be conserved and managed for the longer term. As a general aim, the exercise of town planning powers should be used to protect such land from those developments that lead to its alienation or diminished productivity."

They were the Deputy Premier's own words. People and the environment which they live in and which they care about are the lifeblood of this State and nation. This is applicable to the people of Toowoomba North, Lockyer, Crows Nest and Cunningham. I can assure this House that the people living in that vicinity will be looked after following the next State election because we will enter into consultation with them. Those people could live in limbo for the next 15 to 20 years while they wait and wonder when the powers in authority now will deliver the death blow. I urge the Minister for Transport, David Hamill—he is the Minister responsible—to take control of the situation and show understanding and compassion to those people because in this instance they are the ones whose rights must be respected and who must be protected.

The proposal will render the real estate values of the Toowoomba region, the Highfields region, the region below the range and west of Toowoomba virtually worthless. It is placing the farming communities in the proximity west of Toowoomba in a state of uncertainty; they do not know what the value of their farms will be. They are currently confronted with an ongoing drought. Tonight, both the member for Toowoomba North and the member for Crows Nest have referred to the position of those people. I urge this Government to show compassion and understanding by bringing into reality the worth of these people by making sure that they are consulted and that this proposal goes back to the drawing board and that we see commonsense prevail in this ludicrous decision by this Government.

Airport Motorway; Claims by Member for Clayfield

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN (Chermside) (9.22 p.m.): I thank the member for Clayfield for raising in this House this morning the issue of the airport motorway and other roads. I was at a family funeral and did not hear his dismal attempt to weave a web of deceit and conspiracy, but I am happy to speak about it now. I thank him for the opportunity to put on the record some of the facts about the issues, which will show the member for Clayfield for what he is: a self-serving, self-promoting egoist who is desperately plotting the leadership of the Liberal Party and who will do anything to get there.

The member for Clayfield tabled three documents purporting to show some sort of conspiracy. Those documents and others will show that, in common with other good Government MLAs, I am effective in getting things done for the people of Queensland. We get a job done and we are not interested—unlike the media junkie from Clayfield—in grabbing the headline or time on talk-back radio.

The first claim was that I knew about the airport motorway. That is absolutely true: I knew, he knew, dozens of Department of Transport officials knew. Why? Because officials from Thiess were talking freely around the northern suburbs about it. I had a branch member come up to me and say, "Hey, what about the above-the-railway option?" However, that was portrayed as something that was well and truly into the future, like, "We are going to have a space station at some time."

But I was actually alerted to something in September 1993. What alerted me to that was a letter that went out to the residents of Woolloowin and Kalinga under the name of Santo Santoro, MLA, about the transport corridor in Woolloowin and Kalinga. The letter raised a whole series of issues about future works and what would be done. The map shows a route going from Herston to Junction Road with some other links, and it talks about a corridor. I thought, "Something has to be happening here." So I made some overt and subtle inquiries and started to find out that in fact there was something more substantial on the record. I did what any good MLA—sorry, any good Government MLA—would do: I started speaking to the departmental officials and Ministers to find out what was going on.

I saw publicly available road traffic statistics which showed that there was an increasing problem, and I gained some insight into the fact that there was an airport motorway proposal. In working hard to try to find out what was going on, I then became aware of certain options, or certain things that would cause problems in the area. Again, instead of going for the headline, instead

of going for the letter to the electorate setting out how good I am, or what was going on, I actually started to work hard to find out the facts, because I did not know the facts. I worked hard to get the facts, then pursued my cause through the department to the Minister.

What we read there is a whole range of things. The member says that, before the last State election, he was pursuing road issues in the area. Then in September 1993, he raised these questions, which alerted me and some of my colleagues to the fact that something was amiss. He then goes on to make claims referring to these other fantastic documents, which have received minimal attention in the media. He says that on 24 February there were certain notes about my concerns. Of course there were, and if I have concerns, I am going to raise them with the Minister. However, as the member claimed falsely, it did not mean that I supported the airport motorway. I accepted that there was a need for a facility in the area. I did not accept the need for the airport motorway. The member for Clayfield knows that but, of course, will tell only half the truth.

There is then the document of 28 April 1994, which shows that I agreed with the Minister's recommendation. The member did not have to obtain this document through FOI; on page 3 of the *Courier-Mail* it showed that I had agreed with the Minister's Nundah bypass recommendation.

However, the best thing is about the Leckie Road Connection. Mr Santoro is now saying, "We have to get out there and stop it." On 23 September, Mr Santoro appended to the letter that he sent out to the electorate not only a map—and I will table this—but also a letter from Kevin Kerr, the district manager of the metropolitan north district office. In the

second-last paragraph of this letter, which Mr Santoro spread throughout the electorate, it stated—

"However, during the 1993/94 financial year, this Department intends progressing preconstruction activities on the proposed link from Junction Road west to Gympie Road."

On 15 July, Mr Santoro knew that this development was going ahead. There was not one word of opposition, and now he claims to say that he opposes it. What a fraud!

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order!

Mr Campbell interjected.

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

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.28 p.m.