

THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 1995

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

REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**Report**

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I lay upon the table of the House the seventh report on the Register of Members' Interests.

PETITION

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petition—

High School, Tannum Sands

From **Mrs Cunningham** (761 signatories) requesting that the House urgently consider alternate sites for the proposed State High School at Canoe Point, Tannum Sands.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT

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

Dairy Industry Act 1993—

Dairy Industry (Market Milk Prices) Amendment Order (No. 1) 1995, No. 274.

OFFICE OF SPEAKER**Statement of Recurrent Expenditure**

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (10.02 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the statement of recurrent expenditure in summary format for the Office of Speaker for 1994-95.

PAPER

The following paper was laid on the table—

Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for the Arts (Mr Foley)—

Queensland Election 1995—Statistical Returns.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Australian Tourist Commission**

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Youth) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: I wish to advise the House that I have arranged to meet with the Commonwealth Minister for Tourism to express my concerns over the management of the Australian Tourist Commission. Honourable members would be aware of my public comments about the commission and its advertising. The Asian advertising served as final proof to some sections of the industry of ATC management bias against Cairns in particular and Queensland in general.

Before my recent visit to the QTTC's highly successful Asian offices, I was handed a copy of an ATC annual operation plan for Japan for 1995-96 marked "Not for Circulation". In Issue 5, on page 4, the ATC states—

"Work will continue to persuade carriers particularly Qantas, to review existing scheduled services so that Cairns hub is de-emphasised, QF22 reverted to a night run and CNS services ex Tokyo switched to day runs. The unilaterally observed KIX/BNE/SYD pattern should be amended to incorporate KIX/SYD/BNE variations or BNE back to back."

Further, under the heading "Aviation Development", the stated aim of this plan is to "promote schedule rationalisation of existing services to Cairns and Brisbane". The specific objectives of the ATC plan include the rescheduling of current flights from Japan-Brisbane-Sydney to Japan-Sydney-Brisbane, reducing flights to Cairns, rationalising flights to Brisbane and converting current night flights into Cairns from Japan to day flights. It appears that the ATC sees Cairns as having a so-called accommodation problem—that is, very high occupancy—and it proposes to fix it by reducing the number of planes to Cairns by sending them to Sydney. What a strange way of addressing tourism growth, especially when the ATC is charged with promoting Australian tourism!

It would appear that ATC managers and senior executives believe that the answer to the QTC's and the Cairns Port Authority's great success in having more planes flying direct to Cairns from Asia and Japan is to de-emphasise the hub and to have them fly to Sydney's congested airport. Its other answer is to make the tourists fly during the day so that they arrive in Cairns during the night; in other words, forcing the tourists to lose a day in

Cairns by having them sitting in an aeroplane for at least seven daylight hours.

When competition with Asian and US holiday destinations is based on claims that Australia is too far and too costly, how will the ATC proposals help Australia? Without fail during my talks with airline executives and wholesale and retail travel executives in Asia, they said that a positive selling point was that Cairns was closer to most Asian departure points than Hawaii, without the extra burden of crossing the dateline. The ATC's answer to that is to fly people to Sydney with flight times—ex Hong Kong—of eight and a half hours, or fly them during the day so that they lose a day of their holidays.

No-one can understand why the ATC sees its role as being to de-emphasise the Cairns hub. I will be asking who gives the ATC staff the right—without consulting with the QTTC or the Queensland Government—to plan to reduce direct flights to Queensland.

A Government member: Or the local member.

Mr BURNS: Or the local member, who has never heard of it, either. Who gives the ATC the right to seek a rescheduling of other international flights to our State? What about Brisbane? The ATC proposal would see the Kansai-Brisbane-Sydney flight overfly Brisbane and go on to Sydney and then come back to Brisbane—in other words, see Queensland last. How would that help the Gold Coast, which is a major Japanese tourist destination? How would it help Brisbane or Sunshine Coast tourism? How many Japanese tourists would we lose from our well-known theme parks, beaches and shopping outlets with all that extra flying and airport waiting time added to their journey?

ATC managers have put forward these proposals as their airline operational plan for 1995-96—and I repeat: with no consultation with the QTTC. It has been suggested to me that the board may have rejected the plan, and that is the advice that I get now that I have raised the issue. However, I say that it has to go further than that and we have to challenge some of the management objectives of senior ATC management. The managers and marketers who devised that plan also devised the Asian advertising campaign that mostly promotes Sydney.

In its edition of 4 October, the well-respected trade magazine *Traveltrade* described the advertisements as "presenting no WA images, little footage of Victoria and only three segments of Queensland in the 30 second Asian commercial". But that is not all.

The ATC's management is represented in some Asian centres, where Queensland has its own QTTC offices, by general sales agents whose job is to represent Australia and Australian tourism. One agent representing the ATC and Australia has accepted an appointment to represent Victoria—and is paid to do so. A second is under consideration. How is that for a conflict of interest!

When someone calls that agent for advice about Australia, do we think that as the agent for Victoria he would give information about Queensland—Australia's premium tourism State—first, or would he do the job that he is paid to do by Victoria? How ATC's senior management can allow such a conflict to occur is beyond me. However, it reinforces my determination to stand fast in my demand that Queensland gets a fair go from the ATC. I certainly will not accept the attitude of ATC chief Jon Hutchison, who dismissed Australiawide complaints in the magazine *Traveltrade* by saying, "It's our money and we can do what we like with it."

I have another document which shows that the ATC bias is the worst-kept secret in the Australian tourism industry. An industry peak body, the Tourism Task Force, reported in August to its Victorian members of its efforts to "push for more southerly images in the ATC's generic advertising", which is described as "already an emerging trend". It is already an emerging trend all right! I wonder how they knew this in August when Queensland was not consulted on the campaign.

Recently, I launched another good Queensland wine, Preston Peak. Those in the know in the industry accept that there are some quite good wines now being produced north of the border. A Queenslander on holiday in Scotland picked up *A Taste of Australia*, a very colourful publication, from within a large circulation publication titled *Good Housekeeping*. She was very disappointed to find that there was no Queensland product featured, and rang the publisher only to be told that the copy for the magazine was supplied by the Australian Tourist Commission. Upon her arrival back in Australia, she phoned the Australian Tourist Commission and questioned it about the fact that Queensland was not included, only to be told that Queensland did not have any wineries.

I do not believe that Governments should interfere in the day-to-day running of the tourist industry. Our job is to help those thousands of tourism operators who have put their money and time into this industry. The less Government interference the better. I

want the ATC and the QTTC to work together for the benefit of tourism. We want to work with the ATC and we want it to work with us. The ATC cannot be allowed to play favourites; it must consult with all sections of the industry, Australiawide. The arrogance of its senior managers in dismissing the concerns of those who have put their own money into the industry as some form of parochialism cannot be allowed to continue.

The ATC board is dominated by southern interests with only one Queensland representative. I will not be asking the Federal Minister to interfere in the day-to-day running of the board or the industry but to take on board our concerns and demand that the ATC board ensure that its staff work with Queensland, not against us. I will be asking for greater Queensland representation on the board in future, because we are Australia's most successful tourism State.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Building Units and Group Titles Act

Hon. K. V. McELLIGOTT
(Thuringowa—Minister for Lands) (10.10 a.m.), by leave: I wish to advise the House of a new legislative approach to the management of building units and group titles in this State. This proposed new approach has received a very positive response from groups which have been consulted over it, including the legal fraternity and the home units industry.

Members may be aware that the Building Units and Group Titles Bill 1994 was passed by this Parliament but it has never been proclaimed. It has been widely recognised that there are a number of deficiencies in that Bill. I remind members that when the Building Units and Group Titles Act was passed in December last year, my predecessor made the point during the debate on this complex piece of legislation that—

"Closer scrutiny of the Bill for actual operative purposes will undoubtedly bring forth further matters that will have to be addressed."

Since taking up the Lands portfolio, I have consulted widely with the affected parties. As a result, the Government has decided to overhaul the laws relating to strata title by departing from a generic piece of legislation like BUGTA 1994. BUGTA 1994 will therefore be abandoned. The new arrangements will be accommodated by three Acts of Parliament. This new approach, which has been approved by Cabinet, will mean that

management and dispute resolution provisions will come under a new Community Land Management Act. Titling aspects will be handled under amendments to the existing Land Title Act, which I hope to present to the House before the end of this year. All planning elements will initially be dealt with under amendments to the present Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act and later will come under the proposed Planning, Environment and Development Assessment Act. This major rationalisation and update of strata titling legislation will give reassurances to owners and occupiers, such as older people moving into retirement villages, and will deliver workable regulations for developers of new and more diverse types of projects, including joint residential and shopping complexes, marinas, time-share apartments or whatever.

As I said, the three-part package will replace the Building Units and Group Titles Act 1994. However, in order to accommodate the immediate needs of the industry, I intend that any essential minor amendments will be made to the Building Units and Group Titles Act 1980 whilst the new legislative package is being developed. As much of the preparatory work and discussion is already well in advance, I hope to have the legislation in Parliament early in 1996.

The four years of consultation that preceded the BUGTA 1994 legislation have not been wasted, as the information and advice obtained will be utilised in the new package. This legislation will have an impact on the day-to-day living of a significant and growing number of Queenslanders. By dealing with the more technical aspects of titling and approvals in other legislation, we will retain in the proposed Community Land Management Act the day-to-day matters that impact upon unit dwellers and occupiers of group title arrangements. This approach has met with unanimous support from all sections of the industry, which found previous legislation to be complex and difficult to understand.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURAL REVIEW

Appointment and Terms of Reference

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH
(Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (10.13 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"(1) That a Select Committee, to be known as the Select Committee on

Procedural Review, be appointed to inquire into, and report by 30 March 1996 on the following matters:

- (a) the sessional orders which provide for the method of operation of the Estimates Committees with particular regard to:
 - (i) the number of estimates committees that are required;
 - (ii) the span of portfolio responsibilities for each committee;
 - (iii) the scheduling of the estimates hearings including the desirability of conducting concurrent hearings;
 - (iv) increased opportunities for the questioning of public servants;
 - (v) the desirability of question and answer time limits;
 - (vi) scope and extent of questioning; and
 - (vii) the documentation available to the estimates committees;
- (2) That the committee consist of 7 members of the Legislative Assembly of whom 3 shall be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition.
- (3) That Mr Speaker be ex officio a Member and Chairman of the committee.
- (4) That the following members be appointed to the committee: Messrs Beanland, Bredhauer, Fitzgerald, Lingard, Mackenroth, Welford.
- (5) That the committee have power to call for persons, documents and other things, to move from place to place, and to meet and transact business in public or private session notwithstanding any prorogation of the Parliament.
- (6) The Chairperson of the committee or the Deputy Chairperson when acting as Chairperson, shall have a deliberative vote and in the event of an equality of votes shall also have a casting vote.
- (7) That the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the Standing Orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the Standing Orders."

Motion agreed to.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC WORKS

Annual Report

Mr D'ARCY (Woodridge) (10.16 a.m.): Pursuant to the Parliamentary Committees Act 1995, I table the annual report of the Public Works Committee for 1994-95. The report provides the Parliament with details of the activities of the committee of the Forty-seventh Parliament during the last financial year. It also summarises recommendations made on a wide range of issues associated with capital works and details responses made by Ministers to the committee's recommendations.

I take this opportunity to recognise the work of the members of the previous committee: its Chair, Ms Judy Spence; the Deputy Chair, Mr Len Stephan; and members the Honourable Peter Beattie, Mr Bruce Davidson, Mr Graham Healy, Mr Terry Sullivan and the Honourable Margaret Woodgate. I commend the report to the House.

SCRUTINY OF NATIONAL SCHEME LEGISLATION AND THE DESIRABILITY OF UNIFORM SCRUTINY PRINCIPLES

Discussion Paper

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN (Caboolture) (10.17 a.m.): I lay on the table a discussion paper titled "The Scrutiny of National Scheme Legislation and the Desirability of Uniform Scrutiny Principles". This paper was drafted by a working party of representatives from each of the scrutiny committees nationally in response to the difficulties being encountered with national scheme legislation. The discussion paper was officially released at the fifth Australasian and Pacific conference on delegated legislation and second Australasian and Pacific conference on the scrutiny of Bills in Darwin on 6 July. It has been printed and distributed in each jurisdiction by the committee of that jurisdiction and has subsequently been tabled in a number of jurisdictions.

Due to the intervening election period and recent establishment of this committee, this paper is only now being tabled. Copies of the paper have already been widely distributed in Queensland pursuant to a resolution of the previous committee, and a copy has been sent to all members of the House. I take this opportunity to thank the Ministers and members who have tendered submissions.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**Labor Party State President**

Mr BORBIDGE (10.19 a.m.): I refer the Minister for Primary Industries to widespread concern within the Government—reflected in the Young report and by the Vice-president of the Australian Labor Party—over the conflict of interest in the Minister's dual positions as party president and a senior Minister, and I ask: will the Minister now heed these concerns and stand aside as President of the Labor Party at this weekend's State Council meeting?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I advise the Minister that, as this matter is not covered by his portfolio responsibilities, he is not obliged to answer the question.

Mr GIBBS: I will respond in the way that the question deserves to be answered. In the words of the great quiz champions of the world: "Bzzzt—pass!"

Workers' Compensation

Mr BORBIDGE: I will tell Alice! I direct a question to the Minister for Employment and Training—that is you, Wendy. I refer the Minister to the Premier's claim in Parliament yesterday that her workers' compensation package will restore the scheme to a fully funded basis. I ask the Minister: how does she reconcile those comments with actuarial advice from the Workers Compensation Board—which I now table—which shows that a premium increase even at the upper end of the range proposed would be adequate only with a restriction on common law access of 20 to 25 per cent? I further ask the Minister: who is telling the truth—the Workers Compensation Board actuaries or the Premier? Will the Minister now admit that, based on this report, her proposals are fatally flawed and could lead to a blow-out of a quarter of a billion dollars in three years?

Mrs EDMOND: I thank the honourable member for the question. I thought I was never going to get a go.

Mr Johnson: We're all waiting.

Mrs EDMOND: If honourable members opposite will quieten down, I will give them the answer. What I have always said in this House and every other time I have spoken about this issue—and one of the hardest problems I have had is to get members opposite and other people to understand the complexity of this issue—is that the Government had to do something about the high cost of common law claims at the bottom end of the scale. It took a

lot to convince a number of the players in the game of that.

Mr Borbidge: That report says that your package is not right.

Mrs EDMOND: The honourable member asked a question, I will give him an answer.

The cost of common law needs to be curtailed at the bottom end of the scale where the benefit flows not to the injured worker but to the professionals, and the Government is doing that in two ways. The first is by putting in the proposal an option so that injured workers with claims for smaller amounts for minor injuries will be encouraged to take increased statutory benefits rather than going on to common law; and the second factor is removing the cost indemnity law, which means that the Workers Compensation Board will not be paying out all the legal fees and the cost of common law at the bottom end of the scale will thus be considerably reduced.

I understand that one of the criticisms that the Government has been subjected to from the newly found friends of the workers opposite is that it did not fully implement the recommendations of the Workers Compensation Board last time. What was the one thing that the Government did not implement that the board wanted last time? It was to severely limit common law at the bottom end of the scale—to remove access.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mrs EDMOND: The member for Clayfield is the one who has run around saying that last time the Government did not fully implement the board's recommendations. The Government did not. It did not cut access to common law. The honourable member for Clayfield has been saying that the Opposition would not cut access to common law and then Opposition members turn around and ask why the Government did not do it three years ago. What a fraud! The member for Clayfield should tell the workers what a fraud he is. He is still attacking the workers and their rights.

Job Creation

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I ask the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development: can he inform the House how economic growth in Queensland over the past five years compares to that of other States and nationally?

Mr HAYWARD: I thank the honourable member for that important question, because by most recognised economic measures

Queensland has outperformed every other State in Australia.

Total employment in Queensland has increased by 14.5 per cent since 1989. That compares with a growth rate of 6.2 per cent nationally, 5.6 per cent in New South Wales, and 0.2 per cent in Victoria. Of the 624,000 jobs created nationally since 1989, about 30 per cent, or about 199,000, have been created in Queensland. Between 1989 and 1995, manufacturing jobs have increased by 10.7 per cent. Over that same period, 18,000 extra jobs have been created in this State—to be contrasted to New South Wales, where about 55,000 jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector, and in Victoria, where 58,000 jobs were lost.

Importantly, private capital investment in Queensland has increased by 18.8 per cent during this period, and that has to be contrasted with an increase of 2.8 per cent in New South Wales and a negative 14.8 per cent in Victoria.

As everybody knows, Queensland has the lowest payroll tax in Australia—5 per cent—and that compares with something between 6 per cent and 7 per cent in other States. Queensland has a significantly higher payroll tax threshold.

The most important thing that distinguishes Queensland from other States is that Queensland business pays on average 41 per cent less in total taxes than any other State. The significance of that is that when a business is making a decision whether to expand in Queensland or relocate from somewhere to Queensland, the obvious and most important thing it needs to consider is the recurrent costs, those day-to-day costs which in the end influence their bottom line most significantly.

That is the reason why companies such as the snack food giant Smiths made the decision to relocate from New South Wales to Queensland. In the end, it is the recurrent costs, the day-to-day running costs, which are so important.

What Opposition members really hate is the way this Government's policy has been so successful. The recently released June 1995 survey of business and economic performance and prospects in Australian States confirmed the policy of this Government. It stated—

"Over the next five years, Queensland is ranked as having the highest overall economic prospects of any Australian State."

Queensland is expected to have the "highest rate of job creation over the next five years." What is most important and what Opposition members hate the most is that this document further states—

". . . another feature of the survey results was the continued high ranking given to Queensland for the conduct of its economic policy."

This confirms for people in business that Queensland's Government has got it right. It has had it right for last five years, and the expectation is that over the next five years the Government will have it right as well.

Caloundra Police Station

Mrs SHELDON: In directing a question to the Minister for Police, I refer to the rape of a 22-year-old man who was fishing at Diamond Head in Caloundra on Monday night of this week, and I ask: why is it that when this man went to the so-called 24-hour Caloundra Police Station it was closed? Why was this man, who is now awaiting blood tests and receiving counselling, forced to go to the fire station to receive help, and does not this case highlight the Minister's failure to provide even basic police protection for Queensland residents?

Mr BRADDY: In relation to police stations which are manned or have people on duty for 24 hours or fewer hours, there is a system whereby if the officers are on duty—

Mrs Sheldon: You said it was a 24-hour police station.

Mr BRADDY: Frequently it is more important to answer a call out to do work than to sit behind a desk, and adequate notices are left so that people can contact alternative police stations.

Mrs Sheldon: 24 hours?

Mr BRADDY: 24-hour police stations.

On occasions when emergencies arise officers will go out to do work rather than sit behind a desk.

Mrs Sheldon: 4.30 p.m. it closes.

Mr BRADDY: I repeat that officers will go out to do work—this is the concept of a 24-hour police station. The officers will actually do the work rather than sit behind a desk. They then make adequate arrangements whereby notices are displayed advising where to direct phone calls and reports.

In relation to the other aspects of the honourable member's question, I have not received any advice at this time. I will have a

look into it and I will notify the honourable member.

Country Women's Association

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: I refer the Treasurer to comments by the member for Callide that question the motives of the Country Women's Association in its negotiations with the State Government over its payroll tax liability, and I ask: can the Treasurer inform the House whether the CWA gave any undertaking to the Government to defer any public campaign until after the State election?

Mr De LACY: It is a pretty outrageous proposition to imply that the CWA would conspire with the Government for political purposes, yet the reference that the honourable member made to comments by the member for Callide were contained in a most august column called the "Callide Column" in the *Central Telegraph*, signed by Di McCauley, MLA. Among other things, Mrs McCauley said—

"... I do think it's a pity that the hierarchy of the CWA waited so long to make their concerns public. They knew about the problem in February, but they didn't go public until after July! Could it have had something to do with the July State Election?"

In my view, that is an outrageous slur on all women who belong to the CWA in Queensland. The CWA has been looking after the interests of women and children in country Queensland for the best part of 70 years, and I have never heard anybody suggest that it would play politics. I think it is just dreadful that anybody would imply that. If Mrs McCauley has any integrity, she will apologise to all those women.

In the same column, Mrs McCauley seemed to imply that we have not made a decision in respect of exempting the CWA from payroll tax. Another column was drawn to my attention in another august journal, the *Cooktown Local News*, which said, "CWA under threat".

Mr Beattie: I don't get that.

Mr De LACY: No. It is not even in the library. The article states—

"As from July 1995 the Queensland Labor Government"—

and it seems as though members opposite have got a thing about Labor Governments—

"has decreed that the Queensland Country Women's Association must pay payroll tax."

I have made the point previously that the CWA has a liability because of the way the legislation is written. That legislation was not designed by the Queensland Labor Government; it was designed by a National Party Government. However, I gave a guarantee that the CWA would not pay payroll tax, and that guarantee is unequivocal. I give that assurance to Mrs McCauley and to the *Cooktown Local News*. I think that publication has demonstrated a political bias by running stories on 12 October after I had given a commitment in this House on 12 September and we had circularised a document to that effect to all CWA branches in Queensland on 20 September. It does not say much for the *Cooktown Local News* that it cannot accept the facts.

Workers' Compensation

Mr LINGARD: I refer the Minister for Employment and Training to the limited information that she has presented to the Parliament in relation to her plan to restore the workers' compensation scheme, and I ask: does her proposal also include a plan to make employers pay the first five days of compensation or income maintenance, which will be at great cost to jobs? Does it exclude access by workers to claims at common law in relation to stress and access to psychological overlay for whole-of-person impairment claims?

Mrs EDMOND: The package that we have prepared is an outline only. We are working on some of the finer details. However, I can say that we are considering including in that proposal an option of a five-day excess for employers. It seems to me only fair that those employers whose workers are having accidents should bear some of the increase in premiums rather than imposing the increase in premiums across-the-board. What the honourable member is suggesting is that we should increase premiums equally for every employer, even those who are working hard on workplace health and safety issues to reduce the number of accidents. This optional excess would be similar to the excess that is applied to every car insurance policy and other insurance policy. Employers have to assess whether it is worth their while to make improvements in health and safety in the workplace for their workers and cut down on the incidence of injuries—

Mrs McCauley interjected.

Mrs EDMOND: As I am sure Mrs McCauley would realise, this benefits the employers, and it also helps to eliminate the minor injuries that occur in the workplace. I think that is a positive step. It puts the onus on the employers to make the right moves.

Pumicestone Passage

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: I refer the Minister for Primary Industries to media reports about the decision to close Pumicestone Passage to commercial fishing, and I ask: can the Minister inform the House of the facts about the extent of prior consultation with commercial fishermen? What special arrangements is the Government considering to provide ex gratia payments to those fishermen?

Mr GIBBS: I thank the member for the question, because I know that he has been involved in this issue for quite some time.

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr GIBBS: No, he did not do that at all.

The member identified a number of relevant issues that need to be made very clear, particularly for the Leader of the Liberal Party who, in her customary manner, jumped in boots and all without even understanding the basics of what occurred yesterday. The Leader of the Liberal Party should be asked publicly whether or not she supports the closure of the Pumicestone Passage to commercial fishermen. I believe that she would be very surprised by the support for its closure, not only from the conservation movement, but more importantly—

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. Am I allowed to answer the question?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Of course not.

Mr GIBBS: The member would be surprised, because a large group of her constituency, that is, recreational fishermen and women, are in favour of what has taken place. So that the honourable member is aware of the processes that have occurred thus far, I shall outline the facts. This has been an ongoing process for some two years. During six months of that process there was some very close consultation with the Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Organisation and the 11 people who were professional fishermen in that area at that time. About 18 months ago, those 11 professional people decided to seek recourse to legal advice and brought in a legal practitioner to handle the case on their behalf.

At that stage there was some falling off in the negotiations.

I go to great pains to point out that the accusation made yesterday by one particular gentleman, namely, that no notice was given, is incorrect. Those people have known for the last two years that ultimately Pumicestone Passage would be closed to commercial fishing interests. They then acquired the services of Coopers and Lybrand to prepare a log of claims to be presented to the Government in terms of what they believed would be a fair and equitable compensation payment.

I am advised that the claim that was presented to the Government at that stage was grossly inflated, considering the income source that was available to those people from net fishing of the Pumicestone Passage. For example, from 1991 to 1994 their total average yearly return was in the vicinity of \$280,000. Half of that—an amount of \$140,000 each year—resulted from what was pulled directly from Pumicestone Passage itself, primarily in the form of mullet catches in nets. On average, \$140,000 per year amongst those professional fishermen amounts to \$14,000 a year for each of them. Of course, there is a variable in that depending on the time that they spent fishing and the areas that they netted. Some would earn more than \$14,000; some would earn considerably less. But it must be remembered that those people have multi-endorsement licences which allow them to net mullet virtually anywhere in the bay, and those multi-endorsement licences will continue to apply.

For the benefit of members on the other side of the House, I point out that mullet do not swim into the Pumicestone Passage only; a lot of them prefer to be in the sea. Consequently, using the very same equipment, those fishermen will be able to go from one side of the island—I will say this slowly so that the members opposite can absorb it—to the other and drop their nets. They will still be able to catch plenty of mullet. In order that those people are treated in a fair and equitable manner, Cabinet decided that a process of ex gratia payments would be negotiated for them, and I encourage them to take advantage of that offer as quickly as possible. I am keen to see those people assisted in the best way possible by this Government. I stress that it will be a negotiated process to ensure the best deal possible for all of them.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is debating the issue.

Mr GIBBS: I am making a point about a number of misinformed statements made yesterday by the Leader of the Liberal Party. Misinformation has been peddled in relation to the purchase of certain areas of land relevant to this entire package; yesterday they were described by the Leader of the Liberal Party as "small blocks of land scattered all over the place." For the honourable member's knowledge, I point out that the key areas to be purchased or reserved for public use include: 1,826 hectares of freehold land on Bribie Island, which is currently under pine plantation; 253 hectares of freehold land on the north bank of Glass Mountain Creek and Pumicestone Passage and located approximately three kilometres west of Donnybrook; 113 hectares of freehold land—

Mr Burns interjected.

Mr GIBBS: Yesterday, I made the point that I was absolutely thrilled with the way that the Minister has taken to the Tourism portfolio. He has just returned the compliment, and I am very honoured by that.

As I was saying, 113 hectares of land on the south bank of Glass Mountain Creek—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is debating the issue. He will conclude his answer. He has spent six minutes on it.

Mr GIBBS: I will conclude with three more points. The package also includes: 300 hectares of freehold land south of Golden Beach at the mouth of Halls Creek as it flows into Pumicestone Passage; 226 hectares of vacant Crown land behind Golden Beach at Caloundra, which incorporates tea-tree wetlands and is critical to the protection of water quality in the Pelican Lakes development; and, finally, another small parcel of 1,090 hectares of wildflower heathland or wallum country immediately north of Woorim on Bribie Island. They are the facts. Because of the shortage of time, I would be happy to enlighten the member further if she would like to have a private discussion with me.

Griffith University, Meadowbrook Site

Mr QUINN: I refer the Minister for Education to the report by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning to the Griffith University Site Selection Working Party, which I now table. That report indicates that the Meadowbrook site selected by the Government for the new campus cannot be supported because it is strongly at odds with the regional planning framework, relatively isolated, at odds with the social intent of the

university exercise, just too far from the railway station as the Logan Motorway is a major barrier, and has no adjacent facilities. I ask: why has the Government ignored the preferred site and selected the unsuitable Meadowbrook site in contradiction to this key Government report?

Mr HAMILL: I thought I adequately dealt with this matter and the honourable member for Merrimac yesterday. As he has popped his head up again, I may as well have another go. In the selection process for a new campus for Griffith University, a number of submissions were received. In fact, about 41 separate submissions were received. For the information of the member for Merrimac, I point out that they did not all point to the same site. In fact, some 20 sites were considered in the process. Even the member for Merrimac could probably conclude that, if 20 sites were under consideration, there may have been some differences of opinion across various agencies and people who put forward suggestions.

Mr Eider: That's asking too much.

Mr HAMILL: I probably am asking too much to expect the member for Merrimac to comprehend that point.

After that process, a working party comprising not only a representative from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning but also representatives from a number of other departments and, interestingly enough, including representatives of Griffith University—obviously, they have a point to make in respect of where their new campus will be located—concluded that the Meadowbrook site was the best site to meet the variety of criteria under consideration. I list those criteria again for the member for Merrimac, because I know that he does not really believe in his heart that the people of Logan City should have access to a university campus in their locality.

Mr Livingstone: The same as Ipswich.

Mr HAMILL: The very same attitude has been expressed by members of the Opposition in relation to the University of Queensland campus at Ipswich. Indeed, that attitude has been displayed by them time and time again when opposing the Government's commitment to widening people's access to higher education.

For the benefit of the member for Merrimac, let it be recorded that the site chosen at Meadowbrook is some 56 hectares—larger than the site which, judging from his question, the member would appear

to favour. The Meadowbrook site would not involve the resumption of surrounding houses, and I presume the member for Merrimac would be quite happy about that. The site is in close proximity—1.8 kilometres—to the Loganlea Railway Station and, I would have thought, is considerably better than a number of the sites that were supported by the Liberal and National Party Governments for university campuses in the past. It is conveniently located on the east-west transport access in Logan City. Furthermore, it is close to the Logan TAFE campus, which provides significant benefits for community amenity. It is also close to the Logan Hospital. It is the choice of the Logan City Council, Griffith University and the Queensland Government, and the people of Logan will benefit.

Eastlink

Mr PURCELL: I direct my question to the Minister for Minerals and Energy. There has been some debate recently about the proposed Eastlink transmission line. A Senate inquiry has been told that there has been very little consultation. I ask: can the Minister tell us about the consultation process his department has undertaken?

Mr McGRADY: I am aware of some of the concerns among people who could be affected by this transmission line. I point out that that concern is being caused quite deliberately by some—and I emphasise the word "some"—people in the protest groups. This transmission line is no different from many others of the same class that have been in place in the State for the past 20 years. There has been no outcry over the other transmission lines and, in fact, there is nothing to justify that type of outcry.

The difference with this line is that we have some people from some of the groups who are deliberately and consciously trying to frighten people, to make sure that they have some concerns about transmission lines. Extensive consultation about this proposal has taken place and any fair-minded person would have to acknowledge this fact. Thousands of people right around the affected area have participated in this consultation process. This process is continuing with the people in the area who are going to be directly affected by this proposal. At this stage of the consultation, we are discussing the concerns of those people such as land use, compensation and where the transmission line should go, and we are ensuring that it has the least possible impact.

I am told—and the Opposition should listen to this—that a number of people who want to try to find out the facts for themselves are being intimidated against taking part in any consultation. Some of the Powerlink team who have been involved in this project tell me that they are aware of at least one confirmed case, and others through hearsay, of land-holders pulling out of the consultation process because of stress and harassment by phone calls and threats night and day by some of the people involved in the protest groups. The people concerned have to live in this area and are loath to come forward about it. This intimidation has come from the very people who are saying hypocritically that no-one has been consulted. Obviously, by these standover tactics, they have no intention at all of letting anybody be involved in consultation.

Recently, I discovered that one lady, who is a prominent member of the protest group, even told one of the Powerlink employees that she would kill him—presumably for merely trying to do his job. The officer involved does not want to make a big issue of this, but could members imagine the outcry if those roles were reversed?

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory!

Mr McGRADY: I will repeat it again: we have a situation in this State in which a prominent protester has threatened to kill a public servant. If members opposite condone that action, shame on them. They ought to be ashamed of themselves.

I take such intimidation and threats extremely seriously, and I intend to take further action. I inform this House that, as far as this Government is concerned, there has been plenty of consultation. Consultation is still taking place and will continue to do so.

Griffith University Site Selection

Mr BEANLAND: I refer the Minister for Education to a report from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning to the Griffith University Site Selection Working Party, which states—

"In a similar situation regarding the location of a university site in the Western Corridor, the Government decided support for the Regional Framework was of such significance that the decision was made to locate the new university in the key regional centre of Ipswich."

I ask: why has the Government accepted its own regional planning advice on the Ipswich site and rejected it in the case of the new Griffith University campus? Are future decisions on university sites going to be made on a similar ad hoc basis? How can there be any confidence in the site selection process when key Government reports are ignored?

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr HAMILL: Mr Speaker, I am happy to deal with both inquiries if I may.

Mr SPEAKER: No, just answer the question.

Mr HAMILL: I will answer the question. With respect to the question that was posed by the member for Indooroopilly regarding the views expressed by officers of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning, I think I have addressed that matter adequately in answer to the earlier question asked of me by the member for Merrimac. However, let me reiterate one point, that is, that the site that was favoured by officers of that department would have meant—

Mr Mackenroth: That was their view, not mine.

Mr HAMILL: I take that interjection from the Minister. That site favoured by those officers would have meant a restricted site that would not have allowed Griffith University to expand in Logan without resuming adjoining housing.

We could have fallen into the same trap that the coalition laid for the site of the Griffith University on the Gold Coast, which I outlined yesterday. Over a period, they gnawed away at the university site made available on the Gold Coast such that now the Gold Coast campus of the Griffith University claims—as was claimed by the member for Southport yesterday—that the site is restrictive. The Government chose not to go down that path but instead chose a site that had all the attributes that I outlined previously in my answer to the question asked by the member for Merrimac. That site would allow for Griffith University to grow in order to service the Logan/Redlands/Beaudesert area.

With respect to the site that the Government has chosen to support the expansion of the University of Queensland in Ipswich, the honourable member for Indooroopilly would be very interested to know that that site has a number of similarities to the Meadowbrook site. Meadowbrook is 56 hectares in size; the Ipswich site is 57 hectares in size. The Ipswich City Council has donated a further 10-hectare site to add to the 57-

hectare site that we have earmarked for the University of Queensland. This site is like Meadowbrook in that it does not require any resumptions of any surrounding housing. It is also a site that is in close proximity—as is Meadowbrook—to the railway station, in close proximity to a TAFE college and in close proximity to a hospital.

I suggest that the Government has been absolutely consistent in selecting sites for new university campuses that will provide the maximum amenity to the community and the maximum access to the community.

Mr De Lacy: Do you think that Mr Beanland is saying that every time a departmental official makes a recommendation, we're honour bound to accept it—we've got no alternative?

Mr HAMILL: In response to the Treasurer, that may be how Mr Beanland perceives the process of government, but in each of these cases, the Government received a number of submissions containing a variety of views. As a responsible Government, it weighs up what is in the community interest and makes the right decision.

Pumicestone Passage

Mr PERRETT: I refer the Minister for Primary Industries to his announcement yesterday that commercial fishing would be banned in Pumicestone Passage from tomorrow, and I ask: when did he officially—and I repeat, officially—advise the fishermen who will lose their livelihoods of his decision? Simple question; simple answer.

Mr GIBBS: My instruction was that the people who were to be directly affected by this decision were to be officially advised on the day that I was to make the announcement, and that would have been yesterday.

Administrative Services Department Projects, Remote and Regional Areas

Mr DOLLIN: I ask the Minister for Administrative Services to outline the projects undertaken by the Administrative Services Department designed to service Queensland in remote and regional areas of the State.

Mr MILLINER: I thank the honourable member for that question, and I also acknowledge his very keen interest in promoting the delivery of services within provincial and country Queensland. The member has a very proud record of approaching me on a regular basis requesting

that services be provided in the Maryborough area.

The Administrative Services Department has done a number of things to provide services to provincial and rural Queensland. I will give a couple of examples: recently, Project Services, which is part of the Administrative Services Department, and which is responsible for providing technical advice on building matters such as architectural, engineering and quantity surveying matters, has now been located in regional parts of Queensland, so when that the department is engaging in projects in those parts of Queensland, that expertise is on the ground and can make decisions that affect the local community in consultation with the local community. That is a very important initiative by Administrative Services.

On a wider scale, the department has done a couple of other things to provide services to remote Queensland. Recently, Optus changed the transponder on its satellite which meant that people in remote parts of Queensland would not have been able to receive television signals. As a result, this Government was instrumental in providing those people in remote parts of Queensland with the ability to continue to receive television services. I am very pleased that the department was responsible for providing a system whereby some 2,600 domestic satellite decoders could be upgraded. That was carried out at a total cost of \$260,000.

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

ADDRESS IN REPLY **Fourth Allotted Day**

Debate resumed from 17 October (see p. 432).

Mrs BIRD (Whitsunday) (11 a.m.): Today, I take great pleasure in speaking to the motion moved for the adoption of the Address in Reply. In doing so, I would like to draw the attention of members to the electorate of Whitsunday, which is as diverse in geography and demographics as it is in industry. The electorate encompasses coalmining at Collinsville, horticultural, fishing and beef cattle industries in Bowen, the sugar industries of Proserpine, North Mackay and the northern beaches, and the tourist industry of the Whitsunday coast and, of course, the 74 islands of the Whitsundays. Mine is a particularly beautiful electorate. It is surrounded by national parks and, of course, has wonderful accessibility to the Great Barrier

Reef. Also, the early sugar industry has contributed to the cultural legacies of the Kanakas, the Maltese and the Italian communities, closely followed by the coming of our Irish, German and, of course, Chinese immigrants.

At this stage, I would like to take the opportunity to thank a number of people who assisted me in the recent campaign. From the Premier and Mike Kaiser to my local organisation, I would like to thank each and every one of those people. I would also like to thank every member of the Whitsunday community who has put trust in me for the next three years.

This last election was a particularly interesting one. Although it was a very busy time, it was interesting in terms of the people who stood for election. In 1989 when I stood, a member of one of the opposing parties told me that a woman would never win the seat of Whitsunday because of the agricultural industries there. The 1995 election was exciting in that nominations were lodged by four women and one man, who stood for the Democrats. The other exciting part about the election—and what made it a far nicer election for me—was that three of those women were indeed friends, and I may cop some flak from some of my own party members for what I am about to say.

Debbie Perske, the National Party candidate, is a local business woman. Anni Philp, who stood for the Green Party, is also well-known locally for her work with homeless and sexually abused students. The three of us are indeed friends, as Anni and Debbie were both constituents of mine. Therefore, it was with a great deal of pleasure that the three of us were able to find some common ground during the campaign. I hope that after things settle down a little, Debbie, Anni and I can get together and talk about things that are of mutual interest.

Debbie Perske, of course, is closely involved in the sugar industry, as the business she owns and works in supplies the sugar industry. Women in the sugar industry, as most people would be aware, do more than 50 per cent of the work. They work in the fields and they run the family. It is the women who are the sounding board for all conflicts and depressions within all families and they act as a taxi service for their children, as do women in many rural towns. They live with the constant fear of unemployment and conflict, particularly as in mining communities they are dealing with the potential for disasters. I have the greatest respect for these women and I think that most

people would understand that their lives are not easy and are sometimes very lonely. The women's canegrowers network was established during the drought to bring women together to see what they could do to support one another. That group has now gone on to bigger and better things and from it has come a lot of well-educated, well-informed and, indeed, very confident women of whom I am very proud.

Earlier in this debate the member for Mount Gravatt, Judy Spence, raised in this place a problem that she was experiencing in terms of harassment and intimidation by some men. I also abhor that sort of behaviour. Clearly, since that time the situation has deteriorated, assisted, of course, by the support of some women in this place. Those female members are saying that the comments are an overreaction, that the problem does not exist, and that in many cases they would welcome and invite such comments. I remind those members that sexism and harassment, like domestic violence, is fairly selective. Because it does not happen to some does not mean that it is not occurring. It is not wise to turn a blind eye simply because one cannot see it.

This behaviour is indeed an indication of deeper and far more serious problems. By accepting and encouraging these leers, sniggers and innuendoes, members are sending out very mixed messages as to how we as women want to be treated. On the one hand we are saying that discrimination in the form of molestation and physical and sexual attacks is totally unacceptable but, on the other hand, that a little bit is okay—that is, in the form of the sniggers, sneering and innuendo that go on in this place. It is not acceptable, but, as we have heard in this place, it is sometimes invited.

Is it any wonder, then, that men—even male judges—become confused? We need to make it clear: when we are offended we must say, "Do not do it." We must make males get the message that when we say "no", we do not mean "maybe" or "sometimes" or even "a little bit", not even in this place. Some male members also need to reflect on their inadequate reactions to change and consider what they are doing to at least attempt to adjust their thinking to accepting female members as equals. The future generation of young women deserves better. They do not want to be constantly seen as victims, but there is no way they would accept the sort of behaviour that some women in this place have to accept. If we are to be mentors to these young women, if we are to be a part of the old

girls' network, we must set an example and set standards now.

I want to spend some time talking about the electorate of Whitsunday. Many people would be aware that for some time Collinsville has been deteriorating since the previous Government closed the power station. Since that time, we have seen continuing losses of jobs in the mines. Obviously, morale within the community is fairly low. This Government has always committed itself to the reopening of that power station and we are now well on the way to seeing it opened. However, Collinsville will need more than the opening of the power station, it will need the development of other industries. Indeed, it was on this basis that I went to the former Minister, Jim Elder, to ask him to hold a Futures Workshop in the region. The Futures Workshop was to investigate possibilities to arrest the decline. It was also intended to get people's feelings on what could happen in the region. The workshop was a tremendous success. It produced many different options for the residents of Collinsville, and also encouraged other people to take up residence in Collinsville.

It was obvious from the energy and ideas generated at the Futures Workshop that the residents have a genuine love of the region and are concerned about the community. They were searching for a trigger for survival and growth. As a result of those meetings, a whole range of committees was formed, which will be formally used as banners to promote industry in the region. Committees were set up to promote aquaculture, agriculture, tourism—and fossicking tourism in particular—and community development. Of particular interest is fossicking tourism. The region has a number of fossicking areas that attract tourists. The region needs to link up with the other fossicking areas in Queensland in order to offer a comprehensive fossicking tour of Queensland for those who enjoy fossicking.

As to the coal industry—with the reopening of the power station and new mines, there seems to be potential for growth in this industry. However, the region is not depending totally on coalmining for the growth of Collinsville. I ask members to keep an eye on Collinsville to see what happens in respect of its growth; I suspect that we will see a lot of growth. Already tomato growers from Bowen, who were experiencing some salt intrusion in the soil in that area, have moved to the Collinsville region, and the product they are growing there is a far superior and disease-free product. As long as we can get water to the region, that industry will expand enormously. Also, there has been some

interest in citrus growing—an industry which seems to have great potential in the Collinsville region.

Of course, the significant industry in that area is coal production. The forecast is for a 20 per cent increase in Australia's coal exports, and the region wants to be a part of that growth. Tremendous opportunities for expansion exist in that industry. The prime reason behind the Government's decision to lift its program of new mines for the Bowen Basin is world demand. Abundant fossil fuel wealth is lying just below the surface in the region. Coal production is destined to lift Australian export earnings and maintain the country's standard of living.

In spite of this outlook, Collinsville has continued to wind down. Job losses and the closing of a second mine next year make things difficult. There is an element of urgency in relation to starting up other industries in the region. There is more to coalmining than just digging up coal—especially for miners. The issue is about more than just wages. Safety is also of paramount concern, especially in the alien environment found just below the surface. Potential tragedy is ever present. Air, lighting, fuel and other life-support facilities are essential. Without these, a climate for disaster can develop quickly. Coupled with these necessities is the knowledge that help and the surface are indeed a long way away. That is why the Mines Rescue Brigade is held in such respect by miners, their families and the operators of mines. These are the people who, when everyone is headed out of a mine to safety, are on their way in to help and offer every assistance they can. They risk their safety to assist fellow workers trapped by gas explosions, fire—even flood—and any other disaster that may occur. They learn first aid, rescue techniques and firefighting methods. However, most importantly, they learn about teamwork and the absolute necessity of being able to rely on fellow team members. Mines Rescue Brigade officers do not have a nice job, and regular practice and training are a constant reminder that their job is shadowed constantly by danger. It is comforting to know that the mines rescue workers are ready to offer top-class professional help if needed.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the tourist industry. Whitsunday has far and away the greatest potential for tourism growth in this State. It has 74 islands that are gazetted as national parks, and the region is surrounded to the north, south, east and west by national parks, including the largest national parks in Queensland. Rare and endangered species have been found in

those national parks. This is an attraction of the area to international visitors in particular. Interestingly, most of the visitors to our region arrive not by plane but by car. About 85 per cent arrive by car. The roads in and out of the region are of great importance, as is accommodation. Tourist industry input in this State has to be acknowledged. Interestingly, interstate visitors are spending short-break holidays of between one and three nights' duration. However, it is also relevant and important to note that holidays of four to seven nights' duration have grown at a trend of 4 per cent per year. With a doubling of direct flights into Australia—an increase of 14.5 per cent—Whitsunday has played a significant role in this growth. Queensland generated over \$360m in 1993-94 from conferences and conventions. The sum of \$115m was expended on accommodation, dining and shopping. That is the direction in which we are hoping to head in the Whitsundays. Not only are we going to depend on our national parks and beautiful natural environment but also we intend to host conventions.

It is probably timely to raise the subject of our inbound tourism market, as trends confirm the increase in Asian visitors to Queensland. Japan was responsible for about 37 per cent of the international market to Queensland in the 12-month period ending May 1995, with the Hong Kong, Malaysia and Taiwan markets also growing at greater than the national average. The highest growth rate in international visitors came from South Korea, and that is where we are directing our efforts. Those visitor numbers grew by 87 per cent. This is obviously a market that Whitsunday must tap into, and all local operators are directing their efforts to accommodating the needs of all Asian visitors to ensure that they return to their own countries with the impression of having had a happy holiday in the Whitsundays.

The Whitsundays did very well in the latest State tourism awards. They took out nearly a quarter of all the available categories. Whitsunday tourism operators and the Whitsunday Visitors and Convention Bureau picked up seven awards out of the 29 categories. No other individual area in Queensland has ever won so many awards. The Whitsunday Visitors and Convention Bureau outstripped the achievements of every other regional authority by taking out the tourism association awards. In other categories, a hands-on approach to teaching and learning helped sway the judges at the Queensland tourism awards towards the

Whitsunday College of the Great Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE. The institution is only three years old, but the college did extra well. The college director, Jean McCubben, said that staff always stayed abreast of industry training trends and the needs of workers in the tourist industry. Some of the students at the college actually spend time on the islands for work experience as part of their training program. Those students have flown ahead with respect to skills and quality of performance. Some of them are now going to Japan. We are very proud of our achievements with Whitsunday TAFE, but we are also proud of the achievements of the islands in respect of the awards that they received.

For the third year in a row, Hayman Island was selected as Queensland's best resort. The five-star Great Barrier Reef resort island also received the national best resort award as far back as 1993. The resort, which is owned by Ansett Australia, was reopened in 1987 after undergoing a mammoth 20-month development and facelift that set Ansett back about \$300m. Many people would recall Fantasea Cruises. It has also won previous awards and excels in many of the tours that it offers to the reef. For example, it always has a biologist on board, it always takes deep-sea divers, and it offers an educational experience as well as an enjoyable day out. The tourism awards went off very well for Whitsunday this year.

Wherever there are tourists and people having an enjoyable time, there is always the need for a rescue service. The Whitsunday Volunteer Marine Rescue, which was formed recently, this week signed contracts for the construction of a new 10-metre, purpose-built rescue boat for the area. The construction of the new boat, to be built by Cougar Cat on the Gold Coast, is to start immediately. It has been in the planning stage for several years. The new boat will eventually be equipped to handle medical evacuations and protracted search and rescue and will be capable of assisting police, ambulance and the State Emergency Service as required. The purchase of the new boat, costing in excess of \$165,000, has been made possible by a dollar-for-dollar subsidy from the State Government via the State Association of Air/Sea Rescue. A lot of work has also been done by the local organisation in attracting donations, particularly from the islands and some of the mainland resorts, and running raffles. Tourism operators have also assisted to make the project become a reality. I offer my thanks for the efforts of all of those people.

The sugar industry is the backbone of the region. In 1987 in Proserpine, about 943,000 tonnes of sugar were harvested. The average c.c.s. at that time was 13.3. In 1994, that figure was exceeded and 1.5 million tonnes were harvested. At that stage, we had a c.c.s. of 15.1. This year, the harvest is expected to yield 2 million tonnes, although some rain has recently fallen which may have an impact on that figure. To date, approximately 1.8 million tonnes have been harvested. The sugar industry has a multiplier effect, bringing about \$400m to the region. The industry is indeed the backbone of the region. Given the ongoing expansion in the industry and the current sugar prices, the harvest may be even larger next year. However, most people are confident that the current price will not be maintained next year.

Sugar producers in the Whitsunday region are now starting to engage in value-adding activities. The establishment of the refinery in Mackay is one particular example. Another example is offering tours of the mills and the farms. Agritourism is now starting to take off. It is saddening to visit some of the business establishments in the capital cities and discover that souvenirs such as bags of sugar and sugar sticks are being imported for sale in the local regions. We ought to be participating in the souvenir market at a greater level than is presently occurring. Comparatively speaking, that aspect of the industry probably reaps only a small amount of money, but it gives the sugar industry the publicity and profile that it deserves.

The Canegrowers organisation, particularly the Proserpine branch, has major input into decisions of national importance. It has input into a range of bodies including the National Farmers Federation, the Queensland Farmers Federation, the National Fires Board, the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee, the Australian Irrigation Council and the Workers Compensation Board—a major topic of discussion among canegrowers at present. Our chairman, Kelso Greenwood, is a member of the State council of Canegrowers and is also deputy chairman of the Sugar Research and Development Corporation. That body was established under Federal Government legislation and is responsible for developing an annual research and development program for funding of research projects of benefit to the sugar industry. In 1994, a \$9.44m program of research was approved. It is funded by a levy on production and a matching Government grant.

Research into canegrowing and breeding varieties is conducted by the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations. Growers fund research and development in the industry through the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations and the Sugar Research and Development Corporation. Proserpine growers contributed approximately \$337,000 to those organisations last season, and they also funded the Proserpine Cane Protection and Productivity Board. The Proserpine sugar mill makes a similar contribution to those organisations. Canegrowers Proserpine's mission is to provide representation, leadership and services at a local level while also promoting unity in the interests of its members.

The wealth of the Bowen region comes from the land and the sea. The region has become known as north Queensland's salad bowl because of its flourishing horticultural and small-crops industries. Many people associate the name of Bowen with delicious tomatoes and the Bowen mango. Bowen also supports the north Queensland beef industry with its Borthwicks processing plant at Merinda. During this year's export season, that meatworks hopes to process about 800 head a day. There are about 50,000 Bowen mango trees in the region.

Mr Schwarten: I hope you bring a box down next time.

Mrs BIRD: It is just about mango season!

We hope to soon see the development of value-adding ventures in the mango industry. The capsicum-growing industry, from which the Bowen region does very well, has already developed such measures. Through computerisation by a small number of processors, the capsicum industry is now able to select the best of the capsicums and slice, dice and then quick-freeze them for export. Those diced capsicums are then exported to Japan, which many people may find surprising. Our quantity of exports of diced capsicum to Japan supplies only 1 per cent of its pizza market. The Japanese are great pizza eaters. We look forward to expanding that industry. Bowen does not supply the full domestic market, but we look forward to being both able to export and to supply the domestic capsicum market.

Bowen is also a mecca for fishermen. It is becoming well known for sport fishing. If any member has ever fished for mackerel, they will understand that it is probably one of the greatest sport fishing challenges. Mackerel give quite a battle, and it is quite an

experience to get a good-sized mackerel on deck. Bowen's mild climate favours fishermen and women, but at times the prevailing south-easters can keep the boat fishermen onshore for days at time.

We are starting now to move into the live fish export market. That activity is starting to be favoured by the fishermen because of its ability to get live fish to the overseas market fairly quickly. Under that activity, there is one boat—a mother ship—which holds the stock on board with water flowing through the boat, and smaller boats supply that larger boat with live fish. The live fish are then transported in a large bin to the mainland, where they are sterilised and then shipped to Townsville or Cairns for export.

Bowen has many creeks which are good for hand fishing. We have had some experience with some rogues who tried to net the creeks, but the Department of Primary Industries has now moved in and has quickly isolated those people from the genuine fishermen. It is not surprising to catch some mackerel a few kilometres out just off the mouth of the river. Barramundi are also available there in ample supplies. The prized barramundi mostly bite at the end of the storms, and there have not been too many of those lately, so they are now in fairly short supply. Other species such as mangrove jack, trevally, bream, grunter and flathead are also to be found, but everyone wants to catch barramundi.

We are now looking to aquaculture within the Bowen region. Recently a firm named Coorama decided to expand into exporting prawns. The company plans to establish one of the largest prawn aquaculture operations in Queensland and associate it with the tourist industry through restaurants and educational services.

Bowen also has a salt works, and that is unique in Queensland.

Time expired.

Mr LINGARD (Beaudesert—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): I am delighted to join the debate on the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply to the Governor's Speech and I assure Her Excellency of the support of the residents of the electorate of Beaudesert. The matter which I wish to bring to the attention of all members of this Parliament is one which I believe has very serious implications for all members of Parliament. A lady has written to the Premier of Queensland, Mr Goss, criticising what is occurring on the Camira bypass. Mr Deputy Speaker, you know that

both you and I attended to listen to a deputation from this group of people. In writing to the Premier, this lady has criticised the Government, obviously; she has criticised the Department of Transport; and she has criticised a person who is doing the resumptions for the Department of Transport. That type of letter is similar to many which all of us receive as members of Parliament. However, in this case, the Premier distributed the letter to the Department of Transport, and a person from the Department of Transport has taken defamation action. Yesterday, this lady was served with a summons for \$10,000. In summary, this is a letter to the Premier criticising what the Government is doing at the Camira bypass, criticising the Department of Transport—

Mr FOLEY: I rise to a point of order. I ask, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you consider whether the honourable member is going into the area of sub judice. The honourable member has referred to a matter currently before the court. I ask the Chair to consider whether the honourable member is trespassing into an area of sub judice.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order! The honourable member for Beaudesert did say that the person in question has been served with a summons for defamation. In the mind of the Chair, that means that the matter is before the court. I will allow the honourable member to give an explanation and then I will call on the Clerk.

Mr LINGARD: There has certainly been no date set for any court action. This is a simply a summons for this person to decide whether she is going to pay the \$10,000.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will take the advice from the Clerk. There is no point of order. The member may continue.

Mr LINGARD: I have a concern for all members of Parliament now. What confidence can people now have in writing to members of Parliament? If we are to receive a letter from any member of the community which may contain statements which may be derogatory to a person, what do we do to that letter? Do we refer it on to the Minister? In this case, the letter has been put through the Department of Transport by the Premier, resulting in this defamation action.

What happens when a Minister or a Premier distributes this sort of letter? What happens with the mediation which a Minister or anyone can carry out when a person has a concern? Quite clearly, from here on where is the confidentiality? If in the next 20 days this person has to pay \$10,000, what do we as

members of Parliament do in the future when a letter is received which contains what might be considered a personal reference? What happens to the motion moved yesterday by the Leader of the House and agreed to by the House? I am talking about the protection of persons, which was the subject of yesterday's resolution. The second last paragraph of that resolution states—

"A document presented to the Legislative Assembly . . . shall not contain anything offensive in character;

and shall not contain any matter the publication of which would have the effect of:

- (i) unreasonably adversely affecting or injuring a person."

Let us look at the actual words that were used. Let us look at what might happen if a member of this Parliament said that a person in the community is a bully or uses bullying tactics. I use the word "bully" specifically because that is what this defamation action is about. Let us say that a person tomorrow writes to the Speaker and says, "I am not a bully; he is a bully." Let us say that the word used is "bully". What happens with the letter to the Speaker before it becomes part of *Hansard* and part of the record of this House?

I want to outline the particular incident which has brought this subject to the Parliament today. As the Deputy Speaker knows, there has been a great community reaction to the Camira bypass—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Could I suggest that during this debate the honourable member for Beaudesert not refer to the Deputy Speaker but to the member for Inala.

Mr LINGARD: The member for Inala was the person who attended the Camira bypass community protest. During that protest, I was approached by many people who were most concerned because they had bought their properties after having visited the Department of Transport and being told that no bypass was envisaged there. That was a fair comment from the Department of Transport, because the Government had made no firm decision or comment. So unfortunately some people had bought properties that are affected by the Camira bypass. This lady and her family were one of the families affected, so she wrote a letter to Mr Goss and sent copies to Mrs Sheldon and Mr Borbidge. Members should not forget that this letter is going to perhaps cost her \$10,000 in 20 days. The letter commences this way—

"Dear Mr Goss

I am bringing to your attention the still existing situation of families torn apart by your resumption of acreaged properties for Forrest Lake and Springfield Developers on the Camira Bypass.

Do you really know the truth of what goes on and what happens to these people?"

There are no problems at this stage. The letter continues—

"Your representative"—

who I will call Mr X—

"who bullies and uses standover tactics to humiliate and degrade the owners in his way."

That is the comment which could cost this lady \$10,000 because the Premier has distributed this letter to the Department of Transport. She continues—

"Many of these people were self employed. Not one property owner wanted to move from the area. I hope you understand that."

That is fair comment, but, again, a comment which forms part of the defamation action. She continues—

"It would be impossible for your spokes person to know the proper worth of all houses and the value of business conducted on properties."

That is the second comment that forms part of the defamation action. The lady continues—

"Another family is now a divided family, with terrible stress caused by your Government for well over a year now. You yourself said 'no person should be disadvantaged'. What a load of hogwash! You want people to vote for you. Goodness me! These people signed up for another property expecting you to do the right thing in paying them their rightful worth. Now they pay \$2000 per month to the Commonwealth Bank and have a whole . . ."

I will not go any further because the member for Inala will clearly know whom I am talking about. She continues—

"These people have not asked for a million dollars only what they should rightfully get."

Those words form the third part of the defamation action. She continues—

"Mr X disputes lots of things he knows very little about."

She continues—

"I am begging you to payout the money to these property owners, without argument, on the proposed by pass road. These people should not have to go to court or expect part payments to satisfy Government greed, all for the sake of non Australian developers."

She was referring clearly to the Springfield developers. She stated—

"I am urging you please to do the right thing."

I would have thought that that was a fair letter to the Premier of Queensland about the Camira bypass, but it is a letter that has caused her to now be involved in a \$10,000 defamation action.

Solicitors Quinlan, Miller and Treston wrote to that lady. Their letter stated—

"We have received instructions to act on behalf of"—

Mr X—

"in relation to the above letter which you forwarded to Mr Wayne Goss . . . on 10 August 95.

Your letter contains a number of comments which can be considered to be highly defamatory of our client. Your accusations that our client bullies property owners and uses stand-over tactics to humiliate and degrade them have the potential to affect our client's reputation in his profession and his standing in the community. By publishing such material to the Premier"—

a simple letter to the Premier—

". . . you have in fact caused that material to be distributed within the Department of Queensland Transport . . ."

How the heavens are we ever going to carry out our job as members of Parliament if that comment is taken to the extreme? How can I be assured that any letter of mine to the Premier which might contain the word "bully" will not result in that sort of action? I will read that portion of the letter again. It stated—

"By publishing such material to the Premier . . . you have in fact caused that material to be distributed within the Department of Queensland Transport and ultimately published to a number of our client's colleagues and superiors.

. . .

In view of the serious nature of this matter, our client requires you to effect an appropriate retraction immediately. Your

retraction should outline that comments which you have made in relation to our client cannot be reasonably substantiated . . ."

I will read that portion again. The solicitors' letter stated—

"Your retraction should outline that comments which you have made in relation to our client cannot be reasonably substantiated and you should apologise forthwith."

That is fair enough. Maybe at that stage they were giving that lady a chance. The lady wrote back to the legal firm and stated—

"The statement contained in my letter to Mr Goss of 10th August last, 'Your representative . . . bullies and uses stand over tactics', cannot be reasonably substantiated and accordingly is withdrawn."

That is her apology. She stated that they could not be reasonably substantiated and were accordingly withdrawn. She did not seek legal opinion—an older lady would not expect to—so she added the following comment—

"My statement was designed to convey the fact that . . . is not a compassionate person."

I am not quite sure what her interpretation of that comment was. She certainly advises me that she tried to say that she was not saying that the man was a bully, but she was trying to say that the man was not a compassionate person. Her letter further stated—

"Please ensure that the retraction in the above terms is forwarded to Messrs Goss, Sheldon & Mr Borbidge."

That was her apology. Immediately she received a letter from the solicitors, which stated—

"We refer to your letter dated the 5th of September 1995. Our client"—

that is, Mr X from the Transport Department—

"has had an opportunity to peruse same and has instructed us that he considers the retraction contained in that letter to be entirely unsatisfactory for the following reasons:-

1. Your purported retraction does not properly retract the comments you made in respect of our client which we illustrated to you, ie, 'Your representative . . . who bullies and uses standover tactics to humiliate and degrade the owners in his way.' Not only does our client require you to properly retract that comment but he

also requires you to retract other comments contained in your letter which can be considered defamatory.

. . .

In an effort to resolve this matter as soon as possible, the following steps should be undertaken:-

- (a) You should provide our client with a full and proper retraction of the entire letter you forwarded to Mr Goss . . ."

The next communication the lady received, which was received two days ago, was a summons for \$10,600. That summons stated—

"If you admit the claim you may pay the total amount to the Plaintiff, his Solicitor, or to this Court.

If you dispute the Plaintiff's Claim or if you have a counter-claim you must file an Entry of Appearance and Defence and/or any counter-claim with the Registrar.

If no action is taken by you within twenty clear days from the date of summons, judgment may be given against you."

The summons lists the costs involved, including the claim of \$10,000, professional costs, service and travelling costs. So that lady is now up for \$10,600.

My plea to Premier is to intervene in this most ridiculous situation. It is a ridiculous situation because, as the solicitors said, the Premier distributed the letter to the Department of Transport—as clearly all Ministers would distribute letters—and from that we have this defamation action.

Mr Santoro: If the Premier has distributed the material and it is published, do you think that he is liable to action also?

Mr LINGARD: Regardless of the member for Clayfield's comment, there is certainly a need for the Premier to intervene and resolve this situation. Clearly, if the lady is responsible for \$10,000 and it is paid, one can imagine what might happen to us as members of Parliament in the future.

I turn now to the Aboriginal health strategy. Alcohol and substance abuse is one of the most pressing issues confronting Aboriginal communities today. It is an issue that has far-reaching consequences for Aboriginal people and one that should be central to the Government's health agenda. But is it? Apparently it is not in Queensland. The Goss Government has failed completely to address this issue in its new health strategy. The Government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Health Policy Implementation Strategy is remarkable for its distinct lack of attention to the drug and alcohol issue. This omission—along with the conduct of the consultation process—has caused an absolute furore within the Aboriginal community. Leading the charge against the Government is the Aboriginal Coordinating Council—a peak body representing the 15 Aboriginal communities around the State.

The ACC is so angry at the Goss Government's failure to implement drug and alcohol programs that a group of Aboriginal health workers are taking their quest for funding support overseas. The group's fundraising mission to the United States in November has been underwritten by the World Health Organisation. What a damning indictment on this Government! What an international embarrassment for Queensland! What a shameful response from this Government to the health needs of the Aboriginal community. Both the Premier and the Health Minister have been approached to rectify the matter and to implement grassroots consultation over Aboriginal health programs. The Government's response to this request has been less than accommodating. I will quote Lloyd Fourmile, Chairman of the Aboriginal Coordinating Council, who stated—

"Mr Les Baird of the ACC has made every effort to resolve this crisis by negotiating with the Queensland Government, but his voice has fallen on deaf ears. He has come to the conclusion that the Government has no intention of going any further than simply paying lip service to our health crisis. Just what does it take for the Government to live up to its election promises? Does the Government want us to seek offshore funding? Does the Government have such a cash crisis that more Aborigines must die for their mistakes?"

The Aboriginal community sees through the Premier and this Government. It realises that there is a huge chasm between what it says it will do and what it does. The Aboriginal community has found out—to its cost—that when the Goss Government consults, it consults when it likes, how it likes, and to its own agenda, and that as long as everybody else agrees with the predetermined Government position everyone is a winner.

In a letter dated 13 September, the aforementioned Mr Les Baird wrote to the Premier. The letter was a stinging reprimand for the Goss Government's handling of Aboriginal health policy implementation. In it

Mr Baird questioned why the Government's so-called consultation process only partially included the Aboriginal and Islander State Tripartite Forum, which is the peak advisory body on health issues to the Health Minister. Mr Baird quite astutely asked: what is the use of such a body if its advice is not sought on such a matter? Similarly, the ACC is critical of the fact that it was only given an eleventh-hour opportunity to comment on the health strategy, and that the Government made no attempt to consult with existing community programs, the Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Education Program and the Torres Strait health sector.

Hackles have also been raised over funding for the training of existing health workers, which the Government claims received minimal or no training despite the efforts of existing and successful ATSI training and support programs. The ACC also questions the cost effectiveness, the impact evaluation and the long-term future of the Government's proposed pilot projects. From a project management point of view, it says that the projects are too many and too big and will be impossible to monitor effectively.

In his letter, Mr Baird asked the Premier—

"Could the proposed approximate \$3.5m be spent and get a better return for each dollar? Or is the taxpayers' money going to be wasted reinventing the wheel to duplicate services? Is the Government building another big black bureaucracy?"

The Government intends to develop, at taxpayers' expense of \$250,000, a curriculum development pilot that will duplicate its current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program, which the Aboriginal community has claimed is the best in the country. It is sheer bureaucratic lunacy, and it is funding that could be spent on more important health issues such as alcoholism and drug abuse projects.

The heart of the ACC's concern is that the Government's plethora of programs will be a white elephant and that they will serve as a publicity platform for the Goss Government without achieving anything substantial. Clearly, the Government should go back to the drawing board. It should institute something approximating genuine consultation rather than the Clayton's and subversive process that it is employing currently.

For the new health strategies and service approaches to be effective, the consultation and development stages must be inclusive rather than superficial. The ACC as a

representative body put forward a number of commonsense recommendations in an attempt to make the Government more responsive to the health requirements of the Aboriginal community. Broadly, those recommendations included the establishment of an ATSI forum to discuss existing health programs and to prioritise funding to existing services on a community-needs basis; Aboriginal community control and participation in health services development and provision; focusing the health effort into eight key development areas rather than 24 over a two-year period; revising the Government's implementation strategy by the State Tripartite Forum Committee; and distributing the funding to grassroots community health services.

Mr Baird states in his letter—

"Community input, participation and implementation is the only culturally appropriate initiative that will have an impact on re-addressing this situation. Community-controlled initiatives without Government intervention and control is the key. We have been frustrated at implementing our beliefs and appropriate mechanisms for far too long because of the bureaucratic belief, 'We know best' attitude."

Having thrown down the gauntlet, the Goss Government failed to meet the challenge. Instead of a Government that listens, the Aboriginal community saw more of the Goss style of old: they were beaten over the head with the Government's policy. The reply from the Premier's office rejected outright the need for further consultation and the Director-General of Health, Dick Persson, offered to personally discuss issues with Mr Baird if he considered this to be important. In turn, the ACC and Mr Baird, totally incensed at the Government's offhand treatment of their urgent concerns, wrote back to the Premier, and in that letter they stated—

"Your reply is of even greater concern and it now appears that the Aboriginal Coordinating Council's urgent concerns regarding the ATSI health policy implementation strategy are of little concern to you or your Government. It appears we are given the run-around by your senior Health officials."

The correspondence again slams the consultation process by saying that Queensland Health consulted ATSI people up to a certain point. It states that the bureaucratic doors closed on community consultation when a consultant was engaged to fully develop the 24 projects for the

implementation strategy. The ACC says that the projects and the implementation strategy needed to have a bottom-up plan taking into account what Aboriginal and Islander people want, not what the Goss Government thinks they want. The ACC again criticised the Government's failure to respond to the original questions put to it, particularly questions about how the proposed pilot projects would link into existing projects.

To conclude on this topic—having just completed a brief visit to Aboriginal communities in far-north Queensland, I can understand their frustration with a Government that purports to have Aboriginal and Islander interests at heart. The Aboriginal and Islander communities do not want to be the Premier's political pawns; they want a voice and they want to be heard. This Labor Government, to its discredit, is not listening.

In the final few minutes, I would like to make some comments about the Public Trust Office. Not many people realise that the last financial report of the Public Trustee showed that there was a \$40m cash credit in the common fund. That fund, according to the last financial report, was making at least \$12m a year. Obviously, there is at least \$50m sitting in the common fund of the Public Trustee. There is most definitely a concern among the people working with the Public Trustee that this Government will grab that \$50m, just as the Carr Government did on Tuesday when it delivered its Budget and grabbed \$39m not from what it called the common fund, but from what it called the surplus fund.

No doubt, the Auditor-General's survey will and the PSMC report did try to separate the common fund into money that belongs to clients and money that belongs to the funds of the office. There is no doubt whatsoever that this Government is trying to grab that money from the Public Trustee. There is most definitely a political agenda. There is also no doubt that there are concerns about the Public Trust Office. Certainly, there is concern about the social services liabilities and there is most definitely a concern about the rates of return to clients. However, we have to remember that those matters are controlled by regulation. Anyone who has ever dealt with the Public Trustee knows how exasperating it can be when money is held for six months and charges are made for that. However, we have to ask this Government, "Are you genuine about maintaining a Public Trustee that provides protective management to the public of Queensland?" Is the Government concerned and prepared to maintain a Public Trustee that will provide a service to all people

in Queensland? The people of the Public Trust Office believe that the Government does not want to provide those functions that do not give a viable return. How can the Public Trustee offer a viable service when it is dealing with older people who are worried about conveyancing and enduring powers of attorney? How can those people in the Public Trust Office possibly be expected to make a financial return because of the number of hours and the amount of work that they must spend in dealing with older people?

Already, the Government has removed the conveyancing service from the Public Trustee. Quite clearly, there is a problem with powers of attorney and enduring powers of attorney and the amount of assets that must be taken from a person if that person grants power of attorney to the Public Trustee. It is also quite obvious that there are concerns about the provisions of the Trade Practices Act and the conflict that might be generated by the recommendations of the Hilmer report.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield) (11.58 a.m.) Firstly, I reaffirm my allegiance to Her Gracious Majesty and urge the continuation of our present system of Government, especially the supremacy of Parliament over the tyranny of a divided and morally bankrupt Labor Party, which thinks it can dictate to the people of this House as it does to its own members and to the public service.

Secondly, I want to place on record my appreciation of the honour the voters of Clayfield have once again bestowed upon me by allowing me to represent them in this House for another term. I pledge to my constituents my loyal representation of their interests in this Parliament and beyond. In doing so, I undertake to seek to represent them in a non-political and always constructive manner, wherever possible giving this discredited Government the opportunity to quietly abandon its dastardly plans and visions before it inflicts pain, frustration and suffering on the lives of my constituents and those of their loved ones. However, if the Goss Government ever wants a fight as I seek to defend the rights and liberties of my constituents, it will get one.

Thirdly, I also wish to thank my family and many friends, both within the Liberal Party and beyond, for their magnificent assistance and loyalty—qualities that ensured my re-election to this place a few months ago.

Those who assisted me are too many to name, but at the risk of causing offence by omission I particularly wish to say a special thankyou to my wife Letitia, Peter Lang, Clive

Prescott and Anna Henderson for the hundreds of hours which they dedicated to my campaign. I also thank Derek Hume, Barry Aubrey, Peter Nicholls, Leo Giddens and Dan Morgan for their extraordinary help during an exciting and demanding campaign. To all the others who assisted with pamphlet drops, worked at railway stations and information booths and performed all the tedious campaign chores, let me say that I very much value all the work that they did. I remember it all and I say a sincere "thankyou".

I look forward to the contribution of my 16-month-old son, Andrew, to my future campaign efforts within my electorate. He did not see a lot of his father during the first seven months of this year, but I guess that's politics.

May I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and, in his absence, Mr Speaker, on your elections as Deputy Speaker and Speaker. I ask for and am confident of your fair and efficient presiding over proceedings within this place.

Over the past three years the Labor Party has unleashed a torrent of half-baked and retrograde proposals which my constituents protested against. Tollways, police station closures, the reduction in Government services, massive increases in Government charges, the ongoing crises in hospitals, fire and ambulance services, ill-conceived politically correct legislation and rapidly increasing crime rates are the hallmarks of the second Goss Labor Government. It should have come as no surprise, then, that the anger, frustration and impatience of the voters exploded on election day.

On 15 July my share of the two-party preferred vote increased by over 10 per cent to reach 64.16 per cent. Labor's share of the vote decreased from 45.92 per cent to only 35.83 per cent. Having regard to the pathetic performance of the Labor Party since 15 July, I predict that that will drop lower—much lower.

An interesting trend in my electorate, and that of many others, was the preference flow of minor parties, especially the Australian Democrats. Over the past decade most commentators have assumed that Democrat preferences favour Labor by a margin of two to one. In fact, it was a common argument in the week after the election that the people who deserted Labor really did not vote for the conservative parties. That well-known Labor apologist at the University of Queensland, Dr Paul Reynolds, released a study less than two weeks after election day claiming that most persons deserting Labor directed their vote to a fringe party rather than the coalition. I

received 65.01 per cent of all Democrat preferences in my electorate. In other words, two out of three Democrat voters who chose to distribute their preferences voted for the Liberal Party.

This was not unique to Clayfield. In Springwood, the Democrat-cum-Independent candidate, Peter Collins, gained an impressive 3,342 primary votes. How were his preferences distributed? Honourable members opposite may be interested in knowing that, after eliminating all other candidates and distributing their preferences, when it came time for Collins' preference distribution 702 went to Molly Robson, the doomed Labor member, and 3,196 went to Luke Woolmer, the victorious Liberal candidate. That was a margin of more than four to one. This helps to "fill out" what the commentators did not say, which was that the voters who cast their ballot for a third party candidate overwhelmingly gave their second preferences to the Liberal or National Party candidate. That says a lot about the mood in the community. It makes a mockery of the line, run shortly after the election, that there was a protest vote and that people really did not want to vote against Wayne Goss and Labor.

In fact, the voters were much more deliberate and calculating than that. The overwhelming mood in the electorate was to punish Labor for its policies and for the arrogance shown by this Government. There was a distinct feeling that Labor had failed ordinary Queenslanders, that service delivery was coming apart at the seams and that a change of administration and direction was needed. Most Queenslanders have had a gutful of Labor, and, in fact, I would suggest that many people who voted Labor actually held their nose. Now these people obviously feel betrayed by Labor's post-election antics and are now indicating that they would vote conservative if another election was held.

I would respectfully suggest to honourable members opposite that the tide is out for Labor. Its credibility is gone; its aura of invincibility is gone; its total reliance on Wayne Goss has been proven to be misplaced; its factional underbelly has been exposed. The factional genie is out of the bottle and the venomous character assassination, which the Labor Party is renowned for, is running overtime. Already we have seen how the so-called "Independents" have been targeted by the factional Mafia bosses and relegated to the political dustbin. Fortunately some, but by no means all, factional non-performers were dumped. Poor old Geoff Smith got his tap on the shoulder and jumped before he was

pushed by the AWU. Who replaced Geoff? None other than Ken Davies!

It was interesting to read Malcolm Mackerras' post-election analysis of Mr Davies' performance. He said—

"Within a few days, Davies was rewarded with an elevation to the Ministry. The man who had been a mere backbencher since 1989 is now the Minister for Emergency Services and Consumer Affairs in the Goss Government. However, if Davies has a bouquet from his party, he gets a brickbat from me. His seat provided a massive 9.4 per cent two party preferred swing to the Liberals, as can be seen by comparing the pre-election and post-election pendulums. Notice how Mundingburra declined from a 9.5 to a 0.1 per cent swing required to lose. That was the eighth biggest swing against Labor in the whole election."

I will return shortly to the electoral performance of other Goss Ministers.

Then there is poor old Dean Wells. Mr Wells was another member of the Independent faction. Apparently, he was hopeful to the end that the Premier would prop him up, but he did not count on the fact that his pathetic handling of the Criminal Code Bill and associated legislation had given his non-aligned factional mate, Matt Foley, the opportunity to rev up his ongoing lobbying to become Attorney-General.

Mr T. B. Sullivan interjected.

Mr SANTORO: The honourable member for Chermside dares to compare the Independents in the Labor Party with the Opposition member for Gladstone! The good voters of Gladstone rejected the Labor member for a candidate who is infinitely saner and far more astute and ethically inclined than Labor Party members in this place will ever be.

Mr FitzGerald: The member for Chermside only got 6 per cent.

Mr SANTORO: That is the record of the honourable member for Chermside! In fact, if we have a look at the document to which the honourable member for Lockyer is referring, we will see that the seat which the honourable member for Chermside previously described as "safe Labor" is all of a sudden—

Mr FitzGerald: Marginal!

Mr SANTORO: I was going to say "fairly safe", but the member is right—it is marginal. I note that last night the honourable member for Chermside had a go at several members,

including me, the member for Aspley and the alderman for McDowall, Jim Wilding. The member for Chermside tried to insinuate that somehow or other we had done something wrong. He threw our names into his speech, but he never delivered. The honourable member attacked an individual, and I will not comment on the rights or wrongs of what he said.

Everything the member said about Zenia Belcher is absolutely right: she is an outstanding lady who is sincere, hard working and dedicated to the Liberal Party. She pegged him back 6 per cent. What the honourable member for Chermside will not tell the House is that during the campaign he abused her, intimidated her and treated her like a second-rate citizen.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: I rise to a point of order. The member for Clayfield is lying when he makes that accusation. That is not true and he knows it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order! The honourable member for Chermside will withdraw the term that he used in reference to the honourable member for Clayfield.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: I withdraw. He is misleading the House by making false and untrue statements.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Chermside finds the words—

Mr SANTORO: Even though the honourable member has not asked that I withdraw, I will withdraw unconditionally. However, I remind the honourable member for Chermside that every time he mentions my name in this place in a dishonest way, I will rise and defend myself.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: Look at me when you say that.

Mr SANTORO: I will look at the member through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, because I have respect for the Chair. However, as I look at him I will say this: I will obtain a signed statement from Mrs Zenia Belcher—and table it in the Parliament—detailing what the member did to her during the campaign. I will then distribute copies of that statement in the electorate of Chermside at the appropriate time. My prediction to the honourable member for Chermside is that he will not be here next time around. Let me remind the member—again through you, Mr Deputy Speaker—that every time he gets up in this place and tells an untruth, he will cop it and cop it badly. In the

very near future, I will table a document in this Parliament.

Poor old Dean Wells—after his pathetic handling of the Criminal Code and associated legislation—had given his non-aligned factional mate Matt Foley the opportunity to rev up his ongoing lobbying to become Attorney-General. So Dean, too, got the tap on the shoulder and jumped before he was pushed. That was the independent members—or what was left of them. However, of course, there was the farce of the Socialist Left and Labor Left infighting. Interestingly, when one turned on the *7.30 Report* one heard how Paul Braddy reportedly described the poor member for Mount Gravatt as lazy and, therefore, unsuitable for Cabinet. I do not agree with that; I do not believe that the honourable member for Mount Gravatt is lazy or unsuitable for Cabinet. I would have voted for her ahead of some of the other drongos in Cabinet.

It is interesting, too, how the Premier personally vetoed the member for Cook. Apparently he is too far to the left for Wayne—or could it be that the member for Cook would stand up to his principals and not say "Yes" to every dictate of the Premier, the Office of the Cabinet and the AWU? On this matter, I give the last word to Alice Cavanagh, Vice-President of the Labor Party, who wrote to supporters on 3 August—and she has written to them since—saying—

"Unfortunately, we as a Party have failed our first test. We were unable to put together a Cabinet which included the widest possible range of Party views and opinions. Instead the dominant powerbrokers"—

honourable members should read here "Bob Gibbs, Paul Braddy, Terry Mackenroth and Jim Elder"—

"chose to belittle and denigrate the dissenters"—

read here "the Socialist Left faction"—

"They used threats, intimidation and exclusion to force rigid containment. In short, they opted for business as usual."

Alice hit the nail on the head when she said, "We cannot afford to continue to fail." I am sure that the enduring monument to this Government will be its continual failure. Alice Cavanagh also opined—

"Our decision makers demonstrate their belief that the superiority of their own view-point must remain intact. This

continues to completely overshadow even the most basic instinct of self preservation."

I am sure that most people would agree that Wayne Goss and his factional allies have not learned a single solitary thing from 15 July, and that they are deep in Charles Bronson "death wish" territory.

However, I wish to return to discussing the 1995 election and, in particular, what it says about the legitimacy and capacity of Labor to govern for the next three years and the electoral system which returned it to the Treasury benches—for the time being at least.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. Under Standing Order 141—this is tedious and repetitious. We have listened to this for days and days now.

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

Mr SANTORO: The only member whom honourable members on this side of the Chamber think indulges in tedious repetition is the honourable member for Rockhampton. I do not think that he really likes what I am saying—something for which I can forgive him, because it is not good news for him.

The 1995 State election was a watershed in modern Queensland politics. It was not the realigning election that many Labor apologists predicted; it was an absolute devastation. However, the election was important in another respect, that is, it was a throwback to the old days when the Labor Party won Government but not a majority of votes. This Government is the natural successor to the Forgan Smith, Hanlon and Gair Labor regimes. Not only were those Governments arrogant, lacking reforming zeal and dominated by the AWU and factional powerbrokers; they also profited from electoral systems that entrenched Labor in power.

In an article titled "An Evaluation of the Electoral Reforms" contained in a book prophetically called *Keeping Them Honest*, published by the University of Queensland Press in 1992, Malcolm Mackerras made some interesting comments on the Queensland electoral system prior to the 1992 State election.

Government members interjected.

Mr SANTORO: Government members should listen carefully.

Firstly, Mackerras made this obvious point—

"Labor was out of power from August 1957 to December 1989, a period of just

exceeding thirty-two years, a record period of opposition for a major political party. It is not surprising that the Labor Party sought to explain its repeated defeats in terms of a gerrymander operating against it."

So much for the propaganda. But what about the reality? Mackerras then said—

"At no election has Labor ever failed to win office when it won a majority of the aggregate two-party preferred vote. Moreover, whenever its primary vote exceeded fifty per cent, it was able to win more than sixty per cent of the seats."

In no election between 1957 and 1986 did the Labor Party win more than 50 per cent of the two-party preferred vote. For the benefit of the House, I will inform honourable members what the two-party preferred vote for Labor was in successive elections from 1960. It was as follows: 1960, 44 per cent; 1963, 46.4 per cent; 1966, 47.7 per cent; 1969, 47.7 per cent; 1972, 49.2 per cent; 1974, 38.5 per cent; 1977, 45.4 per cent; 1980, 45.3 per cent; 1983, 46.6 per cent; and, 1986, 45.9 per cent. It can be accepted without need of further comment that the Labor Party was in Opposition for 32 years in this State because the majority of voters did not want it. In spite of this, time after time it and its apologists constantly harped that it was robbed of Government and that somehow the conservative Governments of this State were illegitimate. Surprise! When Labor won 54.2 per cent of the two-party preferred vote in 1989, it romped home with 54 seats and a majority of 19 over the coalition. At that time, no-one said that with 54.2 per cent of the vote Labor should not govern. Around came 1992 and a new electoral system. Labor again won Government, but with a swing of 0.4 per cent against it. Labor's share of the vote dropped to 53.8 per cent and the coalition's share increased to 46.2 per cent. Again, Labor won 54 seats, retaining its 19-seat majority. Again, nobody said that Labor should not govern when it obtained more than 53 per cent of the vote.

This leads me to the recent 1995 election, which will go down in history as the most unfair election in Queensland since 1950, when Ned Hanlon introduced the zonal system and rorted the general election. Labor recorded a 7.1 per cent swing against it, dropping from 53.8 per cent to 46.7 per cent of the vote. The coalition vote increased from 46.2 per cent to 53.3 per cent—almost as high as the Labor vote in 1992, when under this electoral system it had a majority of 19 seats. In the past, such

a position would have had the pundits in a lather, complaining bitterly about the iniquity of gerrymandered electoral boundaries. Did the "electoral fairness" industry not maintain the rage Australiawide during the 1980s with claims that Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen governed Queensland with only 39 per cent of the vote? However, there was not a similar outpouring of passion and protest when the "Gossmander" saw Labor retain power in Queensland with only 43 per cent of the vote.

I wish to return to discussing the performance of individual Labor Party candidates at the last election. Commenting on the performance of those Labor candidates, Mackerras, in an article in the *Australian* of 21 August, made one of the few sensible assessments of the election result. He stated—

"The party as a whole and every one of its candidates"—

with the exception of 10 whom he named—

"should be ashamed. They remain in office for one reason only—sheer good luck."

In spite of all of this, the Labor Party here and elsewhere has the gall to challenge in the High Court the Western Australian electoral system as being unfair. I make no comment on the system in Western Australia, but I can tell the voters of Queensland that we have an electoral system that allows a party that achieves less than 47 per cent of the vote to be in Government and a coalition with more than 53 per cent of the electorate supporting it to be deprived of its mandate to govern. This third Goss Labor Government is illegitimate. It does not have a mandate to govern or the internal unity to produce the goods.

An analysis of how Ministers in the former Goss Labor Government performed on election day highlights the illegitimacy of this Government. I wish to speak about the Ministers, who are the public face of the Government. They are the standard-bearers, the people who fly the flag, and the people in respect of whom most of the Government's performance is judged. Of the 18 Ministers who served at the end of the former Government, two—Ed Casey and Anne Warner—did not recontest their seats. In addition, Paul Braddy switched from Rockhampton to Kedron. If one discounts those electorates and concentrates on the 15 outgoing Ministers who did recontest their seats, it is interesting to note how they performed.

Honourable members should recall that the overall swing against the Labor Party was 7.1 per cent. These figures may be just slightly askew—and only slightly—because the final Electoral Commission figures were received this morning. However, their substance and their overwhelming force do not change. Of the 15, four recorded swings against them of less than 7.1 per cent. The best performer was by far the member for Mount Isa, who had a swing against him of only 1.2 per cent. In fact, he and the member for Hervey Bay were the only Labor candidates in Queensland to achieve that feat. The other performers were Warren Pitt, who received a 3.7 per cent swing against him and lost his seat; Jim Elder, with a 5.9 per cent swing against him; and Terry Mackenroth, with a 6.9 per cent downturn. The rest of the Labor ministerial team were decisively—

Mr Radke: The swing is against them.

Mr SANTORO: Absolutely—these are swings against those Ministers. I am now going to have a look at the real performers in the Labor Party. The Premier himself recorded an 8.4 per cent swing, and his deputy, the honourable member for—

Mr FitzGerald: Against him?

Mr SANTORO: Against him. These are all swings against the sitting Ministers. I want to make that clear.

The Premier's deputy, the honourable member for "foot in mouth disease", received an even higher rebuff of 8.5 per cent. The Treasurer managed to reduce—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order! The Chair has called the House to order.

Mr SANTORO: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the honourable member whether he used the term "foot in mouth disease" in reference to an honourable member of this House.

Mr SANTORO: I did.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the honourable member to withdraw the term.

Mr SANTORO: Certainly; I will withdraw the term.

The Treasurer managed to reduce his majority from 11.2 per cent to 2.4 per cent—a swing even greater than the previous two swings of 8.8 per cent. His electorate surplus is now almost in the red! The Rhodes scholar from Ipswich obviously needs to start counting, for the people of Ipswich turned on him savagely. His majority plunged from 17.8 per

cent to 6.5 per cent—a swing of 11.3 per cent. In fact, he was one of the three Labor Ministers who got double-digit downturns. The hapless Dean Wells received a 9 per cent rebuff, and even this looked good compared with that star ministerial performer Glen "I'm in Labor Unity" Milliner, who received a 10.6 per cent downturn in support. The newly installed Attorney-General and Minister for almost everything else, Matt Foley, was down by 8.8 per cent; and Ken Hayward was down by 8.1 per cent. Poor old Geoff Smith had his margin trimmed from 11.2 per cent to 1.8 per cent—a 9.4 per cent turnaround. Finally, Molly Robson paid the ultimate price for the ill-fated southern tollway, recording a mind-boggling 19.5 per cent swing, and managing to turn Springwood from a Labor majority of 8.7 per cent to a Liberal majority of 10.8 per cent.

In short, where the Executive members of this Government—and we are talking about the public face of the Labor Party—faced the people, they turned against them comprehensively. Only the relatively good performances of backbench members in seats such as Hervey Bay, Currumbin, Sunnybank and Maryborough—and I give credit to the honourable member for Sunnybank, who has been craving for that little bit of attention—saved this Government. If the fate of Goss and his 17 Ministers was solely dependent on their own acceptance by the people, this Government would have been overwhelmingly rejected, both in terms of seats and votes.

As I have said, this Government has no credibility. In comparison, Mackerras also pointed out that every Labor candidate in a National/Liberal seat copped a drubbing. No sitting coalition member received a swing against them on 15 July. The election was not an example of a high protest vote but rather a comprehensive rejection of this Government, its style, its policies, its Cabinet Ministers and its continued fitness to govern. Jim Soorley, Labor Lord Mayor of Brisbane, wrote to the Premier on 27 July saying—

"The reality is that the State Government was perceived as vindictive and intolerant by people inside and outside the party."

Mr Soorley even outlined the fears held by party members by stating—

"All were afraid that they would be stood over and oppressed if you had a significant win."

"Continue to fail", "stood over and oppressed", "threats, intimidation and exclusion"—these are not comments by coalition members or

commentators but high-ranking Labor politicians and administrators, and they have been made since 15 July about this Government. Soorley publicly worried that Labor would implode. His fears are proving more and more realistic with the passing of each day.

Labor is no longer fit to remain on the Treasury benches, and I am convinced that the shambles which calls itself the third Goss Labor Government—and slowly but surely it will cease to be referred to as "the Goss Labor Government"—will not be a burden on this State for much longer.

Before I conclude, I wish to refer to another matter of considerable public interest, that is, the affairs of the Queensland Professional Credit Union, which have now reached the stage at which serious intervention is necessary. Here is a credit union with solid support by State public servants, some of whose directors have been involved in matters relating to suspicious superannuation deals. The credit union board has appeared before the Senate committee on superannuation and now finds itself before the Senate committee of privileges accused of victimising Senate witnesses.

Members may recall that I addressed some of these issues on 12 April 1994 in this House, and it now appears that the situation has deepened. The previous matter that I dealt with was the unusual withdrawal of funds from the QPOA superannuation fund in 1987, which named Mr Rutherford, Mr Martindale, Ms Kinder and Mr Daly as beneficiaries of this fund. This credit union board's saga of incompetence includes extremely serious allegations of Commonwealth and Queensland taxation evasion, and all of this in a credit union supported by the savings of public servants who are all PAYE taxpayers and are not able to play tricks such as evade income tax on long service leave and annual leave. That is what the QPCU board has done. I understand that it has paid the general manager, Mr Gordon Rutherford, his long service leave and annual leave without one cent of income tax being deducted, and as well Mr Rutherford has not retired but rather continued his service.

Some members of the QPCU are concerned and have lodged motions, but I am advised that the Queensland Professional Credit Union has taken legal advice and disallowed 12 duly lodged notices of motion for the forthcoming AGM on 26 October 1995. The board of the QPCU obtained legal advice as to the admissibility of notices of motion.

This is the reaction of a siege mentality, not a friendly society of shareholders. What is the Queensland Office of Financial Supervision doing? Absolutely nothing, I have been advised. Previously, QOFS has been approached by the shareholders, and they were treated shabbily and dismissed without any competent inquiry. To add insult to injury, QOFS breached the confidentiality of the shareholders.

The report of the chairperson of the QPCU, Mr Cec Lee, to the AGM to be held on 26 October 1995 is a joke. Mr Lee says that there is nothing that might emerge in the affairs of the credit union that will unduly burden its progress. Does this not contradict good corporate governance, when it is obvious that this credit union has several matters pending that could well influence the credibility of such an organisation? Allow me to tell members what is likely to occur. The board of the QPCU has a potential tax evasion problem, as it was the board which approved the payment for Mr Rutherford as an employer contribution. The amount transferred was approximately \$77,000, which when grossed up incurs a tax liability of \$72,000 plus interest penalties accruing at almost \$1,000 per month. A penalty of \$25,000 could be imposed for failing to comply with the group tax provisions and payroll tax of some \$10,000. All up, this could be in excess of \$130,000.

What assurance do the members of the credit union have that the board of the QPCU will deal with this matter competently, when the motions for the AGM are not even accepted? I wish to table for the information of honourable members and others who have a public interest in this matter those particular motions. Will the Treasurer give an assurance that the board members and the general manager, Mr Rutherford, are held responsible for the moneys outstanding as mentioned above and that the persons responsible will pay from their own personal funds? Will the Treasurer please inform the House of his actions to date and the proposals he might have to persuade the QOFS to attend to the requests of members of this credit union? Otherwise, it could be said that the Financial Institutions Code of 1992, set up by the Treasurer, is a Clayton's code—a code you have when you do not really have one, or at least one that is not very effective. Will the Treasurer also give a commitment to the House that the QPCU board, through QOFS, will be compelled to allow proper and informative debate on motions set forth by its shareholders on time at the AGM on 26 October 1995?

I call on the Minister for Industrial Relations to investigate the conversions in relation to superannuation. I have tabled documents which I believe the Minister and the Treasurer should take a very close look at. This is an issue which relates to accountability and to the operation of certain Government departments. The Ministers and members of the Government should take sufficient interest to ensure that the concerns of the members of that union are addressed. I thank the House for its indulgence.

Hon V. P. LESTER (Keppel) (12.29 p.m.): I thank the people of Keppel for returning me with such an extraordinarily increased majority. I now hold that seat with a 10 per cent margin or better. However, I will have to keep working as hard as I possibly can—just as I have over the last three years. It is evident that the people generally want a member who will stand up and fight for them. An analysis of the election results obtained by coalition members and by Labor members reveals that those who did best were the ones who stood up and fought for their constituents. Generally, those members who merely went along with the run of things did not do so well. At present many people in the community are hurting. When those people visit their local member, that member has to give their representations the highest level of attention.

The electorate of Keppel is in a growth area. It takes in the north-eastern part of Rockhampton; it continues up through the Glendale area to The Caves; it then moves through the Nerimbera area, Cawarral and Mount Chalmers through to the Capricorn Coast. I believe that over time this is going to be the real growth area in Rockhampton and along the Capricorn Coast. There are massive developments in the Norman Road and Parkhurst areas, moving out to The Caves. The Capricorn Coast area is going ahead at approximately 4 per cent a year.

The area has some up-market concepts, such as the magnesite plant; the University of Central Queensland; the Koorana Crocodile Farm; the Capricorn Cabins; the Dreamtime Centre, which is just outside my electorate, but is particularly well run by the Aboriginal community; the Capricorn Resort; and the two meatworks, which have had an indifferent production year. I believe that the three State members in the area are doing their best to put the people first. Of course, we are not always going to get on all the time, but I think between the three of us the people are being reasonably well served.

The Central Queensland University has really been the success story in central Queensland in the last decade.

Mr Campbell: The good citizens of Bundaberg.

Mr LESTER: That is all part of it. I am not going to knock Bundaberg, and no doubt the member will speak very appropriately on the subject. I noticed on a video link-up promotion that the member for Bundaberg was there doing his job, as he should have been. I will be specific. That occasion was for the renaming of the university, calling it the University of Central Queensland. I am not just making comments without knowing what I am talking about.

We are going to lose Professor Jeff Wilson who, to be fair, has been the driving force behind the enormous expansion of the Central Queensland University. He comes across initially as an unassuming person, a very polite person who always seems to have time to talk to people, yet he is a real dynamo when it comes to getting the job done and doing the necessary lobbying. He is probably the greatest lobbyist I have ever seen. People do not realise that he is lobbying them until they are finished with him—or until he is finished with them, might be a more appropriate way of putting it.

That university has seen enormous expansion in engineering, nurse training, business, and right across all faculties. We wish Professor Wilson all the very best when he leaves us next year for yet another university that is expanding, one in Victoria. If his replacement is as good, then we will continue to do very well. The expansion has not centred around only Professor Wilson. The Chancellor, Stan Jones, has worked very well, as have others, including the students union, which at this university is very responsible. I believe that under the students union stewardship it will do very well. Certainly, the president of the students union is pursuing the causes of the university and the students.

The sports complex at the university needs to be promoted. Without going into all the detail, members of the public will now be able to use the heated swimming pool. The university has involved the public as much as possible, and that has probably contributed to its success. The public are invited to lots of lectures and functions run by the university.

Mr Schwarten: That university is the biggest industry in Rockhampton.

Mr LESTER: That is without doubt; there is no question about that.

People who are educated at that university go out into the community and employ others. This morning, in the share market section of the paper I read the comments by Gordon Barrett, an economist with Henderson Charlton. I will not say what he was talking about in particular, but he was commenting on various shares. I recall attending one of the graduation ceremonies at the university, and I remember his name coming up. He now obviously has a very good position with that company. Only a few years ago, I paid him to cement my driveway. He has gone a fair way up the ladder since then—from cementing driveways to holding a business degree and giving advice on the stock market. I expect his next role will be to make sure he gives the right advice.

Mr FitzGerald: You must have paid him well.

Mr LESTER: I think I paid him fairly well; he did a good job. That is what life is all about: a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

Mr Foley: Except in Western Australia.

Mr LESTER: I am concentrating on the electorate of Keppel, and I think we would all do very much better if we commented on our own electorates—and Mr Foley's results prove that.

The Koorana Crocodile Farm run by the Lever family is yet another rather unique tourist attraction in Australia. Mr Lever and his wife Lillian have been all over the world promoting crocodile skin products. They certainly have a thriving business, but it has very heavy overheads. They do an enormous amount of work to promote central Queensland. I wish them continued success in the future.

The owners of the Capricorn Caverns, like the Lever family from the Crocodile Farm, have recently won very important business and tourist awards. Ann Augustine and her family have really transformed the caves—Olson's Caves, as they were known—in central Queensland to a very up-market place to visit. I read in recent days that people can do real exploring in these caves. They do not just have normal tours through the cave areas; visitors can now go right down into the bowels of the caves. It is a more adventurous type of ecotourism that will be a little more exciting. Tourists are now looking for different things, and the Capricorn Caverns operation is proving that.

I want to compliment the people who run the Dreamtime Centre, which I think is in Mr Schwarten's electorate.

Mr Schwarten: Very proud to have it there, too.

Mr LESTER: So the member opposite ought to be.

Mr Schwarten: And so are you.

Mr LESTER: I am, yes. It is probably one of the best organisations that I have ever seen. The person in charge is a former Army major, and God help anyone in that place who steps out of line. I can remember the occasion of the opening of the extension to that complex. It was time to start the function and our Federal member of Parliament was late. Somebody said, "You can't start yet, the Federal member of Parliament is late." He said, "The Federal member knows what time it is due to start. She should be here." He started without her. That is obviously the way that he runs the business and that is probably the reason that they are now doing so well and that a lot of conventions are now being held in their convention centre.

Mr Schwarten: Booked out to till Christmas.

Mr LESTER: Yes, that is right.

I turn now to the Capricorn Resort. I know that some members opposite might not be keen on that resort, but they should not comment because a senior Cabinet Minister had a holiday there recently. Recently, that resort has improved its performance and I believe that it is good value. The guests are well looked after and the prices they pay are not quite so high as those at the Mirage resort, yet the swimming pool is almost as big, the golf courses are probably better, the accommodation might not be quite as good but is just about as good, and the food is roughly the same standard. The guests receive all that for approximately a third of the cost of the Mirage resort.

I turn now to the meatworks. All I can say is that it is up to everybody—bosses and workers—to show goodwill. The meat industry is under enormous pressure: the Americans are dumping meat onto the Japanese market and onto our market. Cuts of beef can now be bought in Rockhampton for \$2.90 a kilogram which, reportedly, are better and cheaper than the cuts we can usually buy in Rockhampton. The meat industry has a huge problem. That comment applies also to the grain industry, because American grain is now being dumped in our markets. For different reasons, the wool industry is also not running too well.

I turn now to some other areas of concern to me, one of which is policing. I do not want

to be overcritical, but at one point during the past couple of weeks, the Police Service in Yeppoon was down to three police officers out of an establishment of 12. During the campaign prior to the 1989 election, Mr Mackenroth, the then shadow Police Minister, visited Yeppoon and promised a 24-hour police service, which would have required about 18 police officers, to be functioning very soon after the election if the Labor Party was elected. That figure is a far cry from the three that we were down to recently as a result of sickness, resignations, holidays, training courses and people being transferred and not replaced. That is an unsafe and very sorry situation that cannot be excused.

A number of very serious complaints have been made of hooligan behaviour outside nightclubs, particularly on Saturday nights. The Police Service seems to be placing too much emphasis on the need for organisations to employ their own security guards. I remind the Police Service that it has a duty of care and should not be imposing the costs of security officers on organisations. If an argument takes place on a street outside a nightclub and a security officer is involved and hurts somebody, then that officer will discover that he—or sometimes she—is in all sorts of trouble. So police officers, who have more powers than security officers, are needed.

I suggest to the Government that it is a very wrong decision to shift our Emergency Response Unit. Some very capable people are being sent to Cairns and Brisbane, and we are being left without sufficient staff for that unit. Five officers are involved plus some who work part time. Recently, that unit has been responsible for a number of drug busts. One bust seized drugs valued at \$7.5m, and another seized drugs valued at \$5m. I think that it would have been clear merely from an economic viewpoint that it would be sensible to keep the emergency response officers in the area.

On a number of occasions the emergency response officers have been needed. To transport them into the area can take—in the very best conditions—at least five hours. However, I am told that sometimes when they are rung in Brisbane they are involved in other jobs and therefore they are not available straightaway. I foresee very severe problems resulting from the lack of drug surveillance officers in the area. It is their nose-to-the-ground attitude that has helped to break a number of drug rings recently.

Mr Schwarten: There was a very successful operation the other day.

Mr LESTER: That is right, so the officers need to be kept in the area. I really do not fathom what is going on. Those officers have kept their noses to the ground and over the past couple of years they have seized drugs with a total value of \$14m. If they are removed, their noses will not be to the ground and local police officers do not have the necessary training in surveillance and combat. When one examines the training requirements of a drug unit, one finds that those officers need to spend X number of hours firing pistols. The ordinary policeman fires only a few rounds a year. I know whom I would prefer to have defending me. Ordinary police officers have their role to play, and we need specialist police officers locally to cover emergencies. The distance between Cairns and Brisbane is too great for it not to be covered by a specialist service.

I turn now to health. I thank the Minister for Health, Peter Beattie, for visiting Rockhampton recently and taking the time to visit me and a number of my constituents. One of the problems that I discussed with him has been resolved positively: a young lad who had a problem is going to be operated on next Tuesday.

Mr Foley: A very caring Minister.

Mr LESTER: He did treat me very well; I have to say that. A great number of other issues need to be dealt with. At times, some Ministers have not treated me as caringly. In fact, one of them is not here any more. It was nice to be looked after, treated courteously and given due credit in front of my constituents for what I have tried to do. The constituents were pleased with the Minister and with me. I think we can achieve what is needed without having one heck of a brawl about it all the time. Really, it is the people who matter.

The Rockhampton Base Hospital still has a number of problems. The Minister visited that hospital so he is aware of them, and I ask him to work on them. I would still like to see the Yeppoon Hospital able to operate in a much more independent manner. I might be a bit old fashioned in my thinking, but I would love to see the time return when one could get one's appendix or tonsils removed or have a hernia operation at the Yeppoon Hospital. I think that would be a great step forward. Currently, a rumour is circulating that more and more specialist services will be based in Brisbane. I hope that that rumour is incorrect and that, because we are an important regional area, we in Rockhampton will be given our specialist services. I think too many services can be based in Brisbane.

Mr Schwarten: It's a shame we can't get the specialists to come there, through.

Mr LESTER: That is a problem, and I suppose it is due to the fact that, as the specialists and other people who work in that hospital tell me, that hospital needs more up-to-date equipment. The Minister has indicated that he is working on that problem. If we can make the hospital more attractive for specialists to work in, I believe that they will come. That has to be our priority and we have to work particularly hard at that. I reiterate to the Parliament the issues confronting people in the Birubi area. I will not say in this Parliament what all of those problems are, but I am concerned about them, and work needs to be done to solve them.

I turn to Fire Services, and I point out that we have not been given an assurance that we will retain our permanent officer at Emu Park. Councillor Owens and I have had a meeting with Mr Grassi and he indicated that he will not give a guarantee that Emu Park will not become a volunteer fire service. Mr Grassi indicated also that one or two other larger areas are covered by volunteer fire services.

I have to say that we fought for a long time to get an ambulance service at Emu Park. Initially, that service relied on volunteers. However, it was always difficult to keep the volunteer officers because we did not have a permanent ambulance officer to continually update their training. Now that a permanent ambulance officer is stationed at the Fire Service building—I agree that is the sensible thing to do—we are getting more honorary ambulance officers and there is now somebody there to train them.

Although Mr Grassi is a keen fireman and a good man who does his best, we are not going to lie down on this issue of having a permanent firefighter stationed at Emu Park. We believe that, shall I say, a "general" is needed to continue to give the training to the volunteer officers. I hope that the Government takes note of the fact that we will not wear it and that there will be World War III if any effort is made to take that officer away from us. We will not let up. If we have to, we will march in the streets. Generally there seems to be quite a problem with the staffing levels of the Fire Service, and I ask the relevant Minister to address that matter. We have had some extraordinarily good performances by our emergency services—the firefighters and the ambulance officers—in competitions overseas. They are doing particularly well. Recently, a little effort was made in Rockhampton to recognise those people.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr LESTER: I do not think that we are arguing too much about that. I have done all the research on the Thozet Road location, and the member has not heard much comment from me about it. Probably, the logical thing to do is what is going to be done, and that is to construct a combined Ambulance Service and Fire Service building out near the Dreamtime Centre. It is a more central location—only a couple of minutes away from Thozet Road and near The Caves. That is all to occur in the future. However, the sooner it all happens, the better—and then we can argue about whether or not there is a need for a facility at Thozet Road. That would be the way to go. However, we need very efficient fire and ambulance services. Particularly with the construction of the road further north, we need to make sure that we are well positioned to meet current demand, as well as the demands of the future.

While I am speaking about this matter, I must say that at some point the North Rockhampton Police Station should be moved into that new area. I could never quite work out why we have two stations that are located within a stone's throw of each other. However, I would not suggest that we shift the station at Lakes Creek, because it is needed very much.

I have been receiving a lot of comment from business people about workers' compensation. They do not want to get yet another bill but, if things continue to go on as they are, it would seem that there is going to be no limit to workers' compensation premiums. To some extent, the Government has itself to blame because some little time ago it meddled with the Act. Now, it is seeing the consequences of that meddling. At least when I was the Minister responsible for workers' compensation I did keep the fund in credit. At that time Queensland had the lowest premiums in Australia, and I believe that injured people received a reasonably good payout from the fund. If the Government meddles with the system and tries to improve the benefits, it is in all sorts of strife. Too often the bearers of the cost are the people who have the quietest voices. In this particular case, they are the small-business people.

I am grateful for the work that has been done on the Emu Park Road. I was given a commitment that substantial work would be done on that road between Rockhampton and Emu Park. Already, the work has progressed east from Nerimbera and work will be undertaken up to the railway line crossing before too long. Currently, an emergency program of extending the road shoulders is

being carried out on those narrow parts of the road. I think one has to be reasonable about what one pushes for. Obviously, my constituents and I are happy with the work that has been done, bearing in mind that work will be done on the Yeppoon Road near The Oaks service station. That part of the road will be widened and a passing lane will be added, which is very, very necessary. There are terrible traffic jams on that road. Ultimately, we will have to construct a four-lane highway to Yeppoon, or at least provide more passing lanes, because the road is just becoming so busy.

However, good roads do not necessarily stop accidents. We have had an horrific accident on the new section of road. One could not fault the road; it is perfect. Yet five people were killed and one person suffered an horrific injury on that road. That has caused one heck of a lot of grief, claiming three people from the Capricorn Coast Rugby Union Club. We are still not absolutely certain as to what happened. I am not going to make any observations in Parliament about what really went on. I think I know what went on, but I could be wrong and it would be unwise for me to talk about it. All I can say to people is, "For God's sake, be careful when you are driving and forever be ready because you never know, even if you are a careful driver, when somebody may go careering towards you. You have to know what to do."

Another issue relates to the schools in my electorate. Generally speaking, I am reasonably happy with the progress of education standards in the Keppel electorate. We have had a lot of work done at the Yeppoon State High School and there is work being done at the North Rockhampton State High School. Of course, the Frenchville school is forever going to remain a problem. It is a particularly well-run school, and that is probably part of its problem. A lot of people want to send their children to it. However, because of the increase in population, we really have to move the school to a new site in German Street before too long so that we can ease the enormous congestion at that school. In recent times, I have had a meeting with the P & C and, after I got officers from the Administrative Services Department and the Education Department to the area, certain commitments have been given. Between us, we gave them a little bit of a needle and told them that they have to perform a bit better, and I think they have. They just get a little bit forgetful at times. So we are reasonably happy in that regard.

Time expired.

Sitting suspended from 12.59 to 2.30 p.m.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (2.30 p.m.): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to say, on behalf of my constituents in Gympie, that we recognise the Queen and that we are proud to be Her Majesty's loyal subjects. I also pay due recognition to the office of Governor of this State and I assure the Governor of my support and that of my constituents in the development of policies that will lead to the betterment of this great State.

As you are very well aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, we have just had an election. Some of the comments made about the election are interesting. A fellow by the name of Bill Eaton, who is a true believer in the Labor Party, was quoted in the *Courier-Mail* as saying—

"The Labor Party is in danger of losing its direction. It is torn between these types who want a brothel on this corner, homosexuals over there, a casino on that corner with an abortion clinic, and those who still want to lock up their daughters."

Mr McElligott: Where is this happening?

Mr STEPHAN: Bill Eaton is a colleague of the Minister. Surely the Minister would not disown him. He certainly was one of the more respected Labor members of this Parliament. A better member defeated him, but that is the way it goes in politics. Mr Rowell is an outstanding member of this Parliament.

Another newspaper article quoted the comments of six members of the Labor Party about the recent election. The member for Chermside, Terry Sullivan, said, "People had only one scorecard to mark and that was ours." Margaret Woodgate, a new Minister, was quoted as saying, "It's been worse." According to Wendy Edmond, the election result was a "loss for women". Dean Wells was quoted as saying, "Goss stopped worse rot." Gordon Nuttall's comment was, "I worked very hard." It appears from those comments that Government members are trying to think of excuses rather than reasons as to why they did not do very well at the last election.

Bill Hayden, a Federal Labor leader, has almost seen the light. He told the media why he walked away from democratic socialism. He said that he would not have believed it himself that, after 35 years as a Labor MP, he would take this kind of action. He had been deeply committed to the faith of democratic socialism, believing that the bigger Governments were, the better for the people, and that competition

was wasteful and destructive to human dignity. Mr Hayden has walked away from that. He now realises that that is terribly impractical. I do not know whether Government members took any notice of him or tried to guide his hand.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: Is that the same Mr Hayden that the Federal coalition criticised the other day?

Mr STEPHAN: It could be the same Mr Hayden. He was the Federal Labor Party leader. He has seen the light regarding democratic socialism. Government members cannot walk away from that.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: They criticised the Queen's senior representative.

Mr STEPHAN: Members of the Federal coalition questioned certain expenditure. I do not believe that they openly criticised the Governor-General.

A recent article in the *Courier-Mail* about Bob Gibbs was headed "Handling the Hate Factor". Government members obviously do not want to work together. They try to smile at one another at times, but deep down there is an intense hatred of one faction for another. That seems to be the overriding factor driving this Government on.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: Have you been visiting some of those farms outside Gympie?

Mr STEPHAN: No. I do not have any plants, or palms, or anything of that nature. I can see that members of the Government are having trouble coming to grips with the situation in which they find themselves at present. It will be very interesting to see what happens over the next couple of months.

In the past couple of months, Mr Kaiser seems to have had some sort of influence over Government activities. I am not sure whether the Government told him where he went wrong or asked him what direction it should take. Mr Kaiser says that Labor is a democratic party; however, a balance must be struck. Government members did not fare too well in the last election.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: We've just won the election—we've just won.

Mr STEPHAN: The election just won with 47 per cent of the popular vote! Is the member telling me that the Government has the popular support of Queenslanders? The Government did not win a thing! Government members are sitting on that side of the House by default.

Mr Livingstone: Fifty per cent of the seats! In 50 per cent of the seats you failed.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Bredhauer): Order! The House will come to order. I call the member for Gympie.

Mr STEPHAN: I point out to the Government members who are interjecting that if the Government had got 53 per cent of the vote and did not win the election, they would be protesting. They would be saying, "We've been robbed".

Mr Livingstone: Your third-worst result since 1957.

Mr STEPHAN: Fifty-three per cent is the third-worst result? If the Government gave us our rightful place in this Chamber, we could live with that, but it would not be game to do that. Government members are already talking about adjusting boundaries. I suppose there are very good reasons for such thoughts to be going through their minds.

Mr Beattie has been one of the Government's better performers. He and I were both members of the Public Works Committee during the last Parliament, so I know his capabilities. Mr Beattie has said that it is going to take five years to fix the problems in the Health Department. Over the last six years the Government has made a fairly substantial disaster out of Health. Under the previous National Party Government, the health system operated very efficiently. In just six years this Labor Government has been able to ruin the health system. At least before 1989 the Health Department was able to provide services. In Gympie, unless people needed specialised treatment, they could be attended to at the local hospital. People are now being told, "No, we don't offer that service. You have to go to Nambour or Brisbane." That is the policy direction in which this Government is heading. However, it is not the direction in which my constituents want to head.

Mr Ardill: That's rubbish!

Mr STEPHAN: It is not rubbish. The honourable member must have a short memory if he cannot remember that that was the position.

The Government is stealing Opposition policies. I refer particularly to the actions of the Minister for Health, Mr Beattie. That is all right; the Opposition does not mind sharing its policies, but out of courtesy the Government should admit that it is stealing them. The Government is finally realising that the Opposition's policies are far better than anything that this Government has put forward.

I will highlight a couple of other problems that Queensland is facing at present. I refer to unemployment. Unfortunately, the recently released unemployment figures for the Wide Bay/Burnett region were almost the highest of all unemployment figures in this State. I am very disappointed about that. Anyone visiting the business houses in the main street of Gympie would learn that there is great concern in the community about unemployment and the extra charges that the Government is imposing on business. As a result, business confidence is non-existent.

Mr Nunn: You pay to get into the street in Gympie. You've got to have a ticket.

Mr STEPHAN: What is the honourable member trying to say?

Mr Nunn: That's what's wrong with the town.

Mr STEPHAN: Is the honourable member trying to suggest that people in Gympie cannot drive their cars in the street? The honourable member is wrong. There certainly is concern on the streets of Gympie. If the Government got its hands out of the pockets of businesses and allowed them to get on with their work—something which they are able to do very efficiently when permitted to—businesses would be better off.

Let me consider and compare some figures. In 1989, there were 94,000 unemployed in this State. In September 1995, the figure was 157,000. I suppose that the Government is pleased that there has been a 67 per cent increase in unemployment in this State over the past six years! I point out that those figures do not take into account the unemployed people in programs such as Newstart and Jobsearch, who are not making a contribution to the economy. Those people are being trained or reskilled. In Gympie alone, 2,700 people are participating in such schemes. However, those people have not been included in the unemployment statistics. Given those high numbers of unemployed people, I do not doubt the problems being faced by many business houses throughout this State.

I turn now to workers' compensation, about which members have spoken this morning and yesterday. This Government has an inability to manage money. It spends more than it raises through fees and charges. The Government is making it more difficult for business operators to pay their workers' compensation premiums. For example, last week a fellow told me that he is paying a premium of \$16,000 per year. That premium increased to \$27,000 in one year—

representing about 15 per cent of his total payroll. He also operates a business in Tasmania, where he pays only 6 per cent in premiums—as opposed to 15 per cent in Queensland. That is a tremendous difference. That money is being transferred from his pocket into Government coffers.

Mr Schwarten: Government coffers—he's obsessed with them!

Mr STEPHAN: The member for Rockhampton might laugh.

Mr Schwarten: I'm not laughing at what you said, I'm laughing at you.

Mr STEPHAN: The honourable member can laugh at me all he likes; he is also laughing at his constituents and others who are making a contribution to this State. It is a pity that he does not recognise these problems.

I realise that roads are not solely the responsibility of the State Government, but our roads are another sad story. The Government has decreased significantly the amount of funding for road maintenance. I refer to the roads for which the Department of Main Roads is responsible and, in particular, the roads north of Nambour. Although roadworks are being undertaken at Eumundi and Yandina, one has to look very hard to find any other roadworks between there and Maryborough, and that is not good enough. In many instances, the State Government is assisted by a fifty-fifty subsidy paid by local authorities towards road maintenance.

Mr Schwarten: There have been more roadworks done in your area in the last five years than in the previous 30.

Mr STEPHAN: I dispute that. More roadworks might have been done in some parts of Brisbane, but there certainly have not been more roadworks undertaken in country areas of this State. The Government cannot twist the figures and pat itself on the back.

Other sectors of Government responsibility are of concern to me, including primary industries. For example, I refer to the Government's lack of contribution towards funding for research. An article in my possession states—

"Governments have for a number of years been cutting back on the amount of money that is made available to carry out research projects.

The rural industries have suffered cutbacks and have been told by governments that research must be industry funded."

That gives members an idea of the Government's interest in primary industries. Clearly, it is not prepared to support them. The article states further—

"The specific purpose levies collected from the fruit and vegetable growers in Queensland has risen from \$440,000 in 1990 to \$1.296 million this year."

That money is paid by fruit and vegetable growers, who know that they will get no support from this Government. It is a pity that the Government is not seeing its way clear to give industries assistance so that they have adequate research facilities to keep up with developments in the rest of the world. The Government must realise that Queensland is competing with many other parts of the world, including America, which subsidises its primary production and exports its products to our country in direct competition with our producers. I am not saying that we should be offering the same levels of subsidies as those offered to producers by the American Government.

Mr Johnson: Like pork from Canada.

Mr STEPHAN: Pork is another example. For instance, 30 per cent of the pineapples consumed in Queensland are imported. Such practices hardly offer support to our primary producers, and it is no wonder that they are becoming very concerned about their viability.

I turn now to forestry issues. This Government seems to believe that it can lock up the forests yet still have enough timber to harvest for the domestic market. A couple of years ago, \$2 billion worth of hardwood was imported to this country. This year, \$3 billion worth of hardwood will be imported. That timber is supplied from South East Asia and neighbouring Asian countries, which can ill afford to harvest that quantity of timber, let alone export it to Australia. As some commentators have stated, it is outrageous that the growing of one crop which Australia cannot produce in sufficient quantities to meet the domestic demand should be subject to so much uncertainty. That uncertainty has been created by the policies of this Government. Timber production is a slow process, but given 10 or 15 years it could be a viable proposition for some. However, no-one will run the risk of investing a million dollars in the industry—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr STEPHAN: Were such people given encouragement, timber production certainly would be a viable proposition, but no-one will plant a crop against the background of the proposed tree-clearing guidelines and other

restrictive regulations. With a stroke of the pen, the Government could declare that a certain plantation will not be allowed to be harvested. In my view the Government is adopting the wrong approach in that regard.

The Government is neglecting to take into account the ability of the forest to regenerate. I have stated in this House previously that the natural life cycle of a forest is birth, growth, death, decay and then rebirth. If the Government does not allow certain trees to be harvested, it is interfering with the natural processes of a forest. In the meantime, new growth is being prevented from coming through and the current shortfall in the domestic market will continue. Were the Government to treat cattle in the same way as it is attempting to treat timber, no cattle producers would remain in this country. There would be many mature-aged cattle but no producers.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr STEPHAN: Producers are not sending cattle to the meatworks at present; that is the problem. In respect of the forestry industry, once again the Government is following the wrong path.

I turn now to subcontractors. Unfortunately, a large number of subcontractors are experiencing difficulties in obtaining payment for work carried out. The State Government is one of the major contributors to that problem. It is failing to pay moneys owing to contractors, who in turn are unable to pay subbies. I would be very interested to find out how many building companies have gone into receivership in Queensland in the past couple of years. I pose another interesting question: how many firms have been working on State Government projects at the time of going into receivership? How many subcontractors and suppliers have been left unpaid as a result of the closure of those companies?

The attitude being adopted by the Government in this regard is not good enough. It is not good enough to say to the subbies that they have to carry the can when their operations are collapsing around them. In my electorate in the past couple of years, particularly in the last 18 months, there have been many examples of such collapses. It is a sad indictment on a Government—regardless of which Government might have been involved—that this has been allowed to occur. The subbies themselves are not the only ones to suffer; their families are also suffering. We cannot ignore this problem, and insufficient emphasis is being placed on rectifying it.

In recent times, the Eastlink project has been a major subject of discussion. Opposition members have highlighted the major disruption that the project is causing to landowners in its path. In the past couple of months, an unbelievable case has come to my attention. A constituent of mine has a number of SEQEB installations running through his property. He intended to go away for a while, but he wanted to ensure that SEQEB workers could still access his property. At the same time, he sought to ensure that his cattle were secured and that the gates would not be left open. My constituent approached SEQEB and said that he would buy a lock to put on his gate, to which he would give SEQEB a key. He was astonished to be advised that he would be required to pay a charge of \$30 for SEQEB to supply a lock to which both he and SEQEB could have a key. My constituent asks: why does he have to pay SEQEB \$30 to allow its workers to access his property when he could purchase a lock for a much lower price and give a key to SEQEB?

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr STEPHAN: That is exactly what this person asked: why should he have to pay a fee to provide access to his own property, when all that is required is a lock that both the owner and SEQEB can utilise? I have written to the Minister for Minerals and Energy outlining this case, and I will be interested to hear his response.

I want to comment on the recently established Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and the first issue of *Alert Digest* tabled earlier this week. The continued appearance of Henry VIII clauses in legislation never ceases to amaze me. The *Alert Digest* deals with legislation dating back to 1964, and the use of such clauses has been common since that time. The former Subordinate Legislation Committee frowned very heavily on the use of Henry VIII clauses, but that practice continues. I am disappointed that that is the case. I note that one section of the document states—

"The Committee refers the continuing breaches of the fundamental legislative principles (the use of Henry VIII clauses) to the attention of Parliament."

The document notes further that the use of Henry VIII clauses is the subject of a report to be presented to Parliament by the committee in 1996. I hope that the members of this House will take note of that report.

I note also that the committee has sought advice from the relevant Minister as to whether persons are detrimentally affected by the retrospective application of another piece of

legislation examined in this edition of *Alert Digest*.

Time expired.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Bredhauer): Order! I call the member for Mansfield. I remind honourable members that as this is the member's first speech in the Parliament, it would be appreciated if he could be extended the customary courtesies.

Mr CARROLL (Mansfield) (3 p.m.): In my first address to this House as member for Mansfield, I pledge my loyalty and that of my constituents to Her Majesty, the Queen, and the State of Queensland.

I congratulate the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on their re-election.

The south side metropolitan seat of Mansfield was first contested in 1972. Now occupying some 88 square kilometres, this seat includes the suburbs of Upper Mount Gravatt, Mansfield, Mount Gravatt East, Wishart, Mackenzie, Rochedale North and Burbank, along with parts of Eight Mile Plains, Macgregor, Mount Gravatt, Chandler, Belmont, Carindale and Capalaba West. It has greatly diverse styles of housing ranging from compact, rented, mobile homes, and four large van parks, through all sorts of strata-titled units and solid post-war homes to many million-dollar residences on the east side acreage properties.

The first member for Mansfield, a distinguished World War II serviceman, Bill Kaus, held the seat for the Liberal Party for five terms, and then the National Party member, Mr Sherrin, represented Mansfield with distinction for one term until the change of Government in 1989. I am grateful to the substantial majority of the nearly 26,000 voters in Mansfield for trusting me to represent their interests in this House from 15 July onwards.

Born in Brisbane of working class parents, I was fortunate while growing up with my two younger sisters and younger brother to reside in various parts of Queensland from Boonah in the south to Thursday Island in the far north. I have fond memories of those times with my hard-working parents, Val and Jack Carroll, in a happy family. Sadly, my father died in 1981, but I enjoy the support of a wide family network, especially grandmother, Alma Low, up at Yandina, a mentor/uncle in John Low, and my favourite uncle, a Catholic priest, Father Pat Carroll, up in Townsville.

One of my earliest recollections is of time spent with my grandfather, Ted Low, assisting in local campaign work for his brother, the then Country Party member for Cooroora, the late

David Alan Low, who served in this House for some 27 years until he retired in 1974—a remarkable term when one notes that for the first 20 years of that term he was also Chairman of the Maroochy Shire Council.

My father's grandparents, Matthew and Ellen Carroll, emigrated from Ireland in 1866 to become two of the first European landowners in Nambour, while my mother's great grandparents, James and Christina Low, had emigrated from Scotland in 1853 to become two of the first settlers in the Maroochy River district just a little to the north.

My own studies of family and Queensland history make me very proud to be a Queenslander and anxious to ensure that this State continues to be a place which rewards strong, hard-working families. I shall oppose social experiments and any other departure from our strong Christian heritage. The churches were a significant influence in the development of our customs and we need to ensure that we not only maintain but strengthen that heritage.

I began working part time when I was 10 years old and learnt much in all sorts of work from shop assistant to pineapple picking and bee-keeping. I managed to study at the University of Queensland by courtesy of a Commonwealth scholarship and spent vacations working in a smallgoods factory, then labouring in the heat on the Fairbairn Dam project in central Queensland during another break. I went on to graduate with pass degrees in commerce and law, and then gained admission as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Queensland in 1976 and the High Court of Australia in 1977.

I was privileged to train as an articled law clerk with Messrs Flower and Hart, one of this State's oldest and most respected law firms. Then, having an aptitude for family law, I enjoyed 18 years general practice at Upper Mount Gravatt as a partner in the firm Bennett, Carroll and Gibbons. I feel confident that my experience of people gained through the 8,000 divorce cases and many other legal matters which I handled has rendered me able to understand the hopes and aspirations of people from all levels of society.

I am sure that is why I felt comfortable doorknocking more than 8,500 homes and businesses in the past year. We need to firmly keep our feet on the pavements of our electorates if we hope to provide our constituents with equal opportunities and justice through Government that is sufficiently responsive. Parliamentary democracy, with its present sound constitutional structure, is the

best system to allow expression of the hopes and aspirations of free people.

Liberalism, with its emphasis on the individual and enterprise, is the political philosophy best suited to handle new, changing and challenging social and economic conditions. I believe that competitive enterprise, the free choice of consumers in the market place and individual effort will maximise economic growth, personal satisfaction and national prosperity.

I enjoy a close working relationship with my coalition colleagues and acknowledge the significant help of their Mansfield branch members, especially Mr Ken Wilson, in my recent successful election campaign. On any view, this essential partnership will strengthen as we sharpen focus on our mutual vision for a prosperous Queensland that nurtures private enterprise and its workers, especially in small businesses and primary industries. The engine room of this State's economy must be quickly restored.

I have no doubt that State institutions should be restricted to only those endeavours which historically have been left to the public sector, especially those that meet community service needs. I take a dim view of some senior public servants creating cosy private businesses for themselves under the guise of semi-Government enterprise.

There are some rare, justifiable exceptions for competition to private enterprise under the mantle of State institutions such as reformatory industry for prisoners. Society cannot afford to continue rewarding criminals with short stays in expensive motels. Criminals should bear the full cost of their crimes. As the only lawyer on the coalition benches, I have positive views for reform in these matters.

Even while coalition members continue to sit for a little longer on the Opposition side of the House, I want to work closely with my parliamentary colleagues on the Government side to bluntly address the seriously high crime wave buffeting Queensland. I look forward to serving on the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee. I pay tribute to the excellent work done by its predecessor, the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee.

There is no doubt that a thorough reform of this State's laws in relation to the compensation payable to victims of crime, penalties and sentences and corrective services is overdue. The kid gloves have to be thrown away. Queensland urgently needs laws that will better provide awards for victims of crime through the court system in relation to

certain offences, regardless of who imposes that conviction. That system must ensure that it is the criminal who pays, not the rest of this State's law abiding, tax-paying silent majority.

Such a system must force prisoners to work something like six days per week for 12 hours per day not only to pay the compensation bill but also the cost of maintaining the prisoner. In case it is not obvious, Mr and Mrs Average Working Queenslander are tired of working those hours themselves while being taxed heavily by all levels of Government, while daily battling barricades of red tape, threats of green levies, green audits and the lopsided workplace laws. When they arrive home from all that, they find their home burgled or a family member the victim of some disgusting crime. Any offender caught then seems to receive legal aid, occupy expensive accommodation, dodges any obligation to meet any part of the criminal compensation award and then is out on the street in no time grinning at the hapless victim. Often the prisoner receives a pension and much more help than the victim, though the latter, along with you and me, bear all these costs. This rot must stop!

There also needs to be real consultation with agencies such as the Australian Institute of Criminology, the CJC, the Litigation Reform Commission, and victims-of-crime groups who need to know that they will be heard.

Active participation in the life and government of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia and my local South Gate Wesleyan Methodist Church has given me a personal burden to promote proper and useful education.

As a member of the National Board of Administration of that Church and Chairman of the Board of Managers of its Melbourne theological college, I do as much as I can to promote the growth of conservative evangelical Christian education in this country. That includes several years' work with the Brisbane broadcasting company Family Radio Limited, which is still fighting repression by the Australian Broadcasting Authority. A full-time Christian broadcasting licence for Brisbane is long overdue. Family Radio could begin running a licensed station next week, with its 20 years' experience and the wide support that it enjoys from Brisbane churches. On that note, I acknowledge the wonderful community work done by many churches and church schools in the electorate of Mansfield. There is a concentration of larger evangelical churches in my electorate, giving it the reputation of being the centre of Queensland's bible belt.

Serving as chairman of the first community council at the Mount Gravatt TAFE College raised my awareness of the valuable role of our tertiary education institutions. These are incubators for the practical tertiary training essential to restarting small industry in Queensland. I recently witnessed the commencement of a new training partnership at the Moreton TAFE College—previously known as Mount Gravatt—when the Toyota motor company handed to the college two new cars, along with other more valuable equipment and technical knowledge. I pay tribute to the exceptional initiative and decades of hard work by Ray Best, the director of the college, and his devoted staff. Rare geniuses like these people must be recognised and supported. Moreton college—which, as I said, was previously known as Mount Gravatt TAFE College—has a remarkable record for progress in various fields, especially automotive technology, computer-aided drafting, fashion and hospitality training.

At about the same time as my introduction to the TAFE college system, I was appointed in 1989 as a member of the first Mount Gravatt Showgrounds Trust and soon afterwards I was elected chairman. Pursuant to a 1988 Act of this Parliament, the trust is to develop and manage the Mount Gravatt Showgrounds for showground, park and recreation purposes. I am sure that most honourable members would remember the 15 years of public fuss and extensive litigation, ending with the decision of the Privy Council which recognised the existence of the trust now preserved by that Act.

I pay tribute to Arthur Scurr, MBE, his family and friends for their wisdom and perseverance in battling to see the correct result. Mr Scurr recently completed six years of very effective service on the trust. During that period, we have reshaped the grounds and added valuable improvements.

I recognise the long tradition of the annual Mount Gravatt Show. It is the only "country show in the city" held on the last weekend in July each year at the showgrounds. I am sure that the hardworking Show Society, with president Bob Goss and his team, will continue to adapt to changing interests in the district and that the show will always be a local feature.

The new Mount Gravatt Memorial Show Hall at the grounds is the renovated stock and station agents building that were moved from the Cannon Hill saleyards. I recognise the valuable financial assistance provided for the

project by the Mount Gravatt Senior Citizens, who meet there weekly; the previous members of the Mount Gravatt Memorial Hall Association; and the State Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing, as it was known last year. The Showground Trust has recently embarked upon another exciting project to move the Evans Deakin building from the Construction Training Centre site at Salisbury over to our showgrounds. My fellow trustees, along with our many other volunteers, contractors, local donors and community stakeholders, are proud of these projects that recycle solid, grand old buildings to serve as community centres.

I was pleased to see the showground trust, in partnership with the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Youth, committed to youth development in the Mount Gravatt district, much of which is in the Mansfield electorate. I pay tribute to the vision of the Minister and his advisers, such as Lance Haines and Peter Johnston, who recognise the role of a Youth Development Worker at Mount Gravatt to serve the unmet needs of our valuable youth.

Already the trust has a track record of assisting the Friends From Care organisation and others in youth development work on Brisbane's south side. The Brisbane City Council Youth Arts Program provided previously "written-off" young people with life-changing training and encouragement. My earlier years as a coach of young footballers and cricketers has shown me that investment of time and effort by understanding people will ensure that our future can be safe in the hands of these young people we mould.

Working as a family lawyer, I have seen the tragic effect of suicide in troubled families, but suicide by young people is costing Queensland dearly. I want to improve suicide prevention and support services for youth and their families. Although many Scouting, Girl Guides, sporting and church youth groups in the Mansfield electorate are occupying, training and encouraging young people, a district youth development worker is essential.

Public health issues stood head and shoulders above the many local issues in the Mansfield electorate this year. The QE II Hospital at Nathan must be reopened and have its equipment restored as a district hospital, possibly having emphasis in maternity cases. It should never have been closed. I note that the hardworking local Hospital Auxiliary has raised about \$1.2m for medical equipment there. I can tell the House that the people in the five electorates surrounding this valuable hospital—Mansfield,

Mount Gravatt, Archerfield, Sunnybank and Springwood—are unhappy with the present facade of health services there. They will be carefully watching for application of the new QE II policy announced by the Health Minister, Mr Beattie, on Monday.

It is a pity that so much time and money was wasted in the last four years while confusion reigned before our coalition policy was adopted. The ambulance officers told to divert past that hospital, the sick and injured who could be more comfortably treated there nearer to home, and those on surgery waiting lists have not happily stood by while QE II lay under-utilised and novices tinkered with a crumbling health system.

I shall take honourable members back to education for a moment to share some clear messages from my constituents. Firstly, the parents and teachers of the six State primary schools in the Mansfield electorate and three others across the road on its boundaries demand immediate reform of the Language Other Than English Program and the changes to Student Performance Standards. They are breaking under the strain of these, overlaid upon normal teaching, interrupted by both neutralised disciplinary power and integration of pupils with special needs unmet.

I welcome the announcement by the Minister for Education yesterday in this House in response to pressure from the coalition that there will be some extra help for disabled children being pushed into State primary schools. There is a clear cry for additional review so that teachers can get back to training disciplined, able pupils in the basic three R's with appropriate help for struggling students.

Secondly, the two State high schools and Seton College in Mansfield can certainly utilise funds earmarked for community centres by the Premier shortly before the election. Rochedale High School particularly can use some of that money to complete its large assembly hall. I think it feels forgotten down there on the southern boundary of our electorate.

As with the proven prototype at Mansfield High, such a facility is in high demand as a community centre for sport, recreation, public worship and teaching purposes outside school usage. The parents and teachers at Rochedale High claim that the Koala Secretariat grants unfairly favoured schools in the Springwood electorate with nearly \$1m earlier this year ignoring Mansfield electorate schools.

Thirdly, the parents and teachers of Seton College, run by the Catholic Education Office

for junior high school students needing extra help, and at the two State special schools in the Mansfield electorate oppose the de-institutionalisation programs in Education, Health and Family Services for the social cost is too high. I am convinced that the program must be reviewed forthwith. We shall always need these facilities. On this point, I note that a petition containing almost 12,000 signatures was presented to this Parliament this week calling for a halt to headlong de-institutionalisation which is tipping profoundly handicapped people out into the community, causing havoc among our citizens, including blind citizens. This same deinstitutionalisation is also apparently justifying the early release of dangerous criminals from other institutions—the gaols.

I pledge my backing for the many people supporting retention of full-time institutions, particularly those who care for people with disabilities, such as the Basil Stafford home. There is no way that all adults with disabilities can be dumped into the community, even with the novel support systems that have proven unworkable in other Australian States and overseas. My experience as president of the Queensland Foundation for Blind People Inc. for several years, and consultation with other working folk with disabilities leaves me in no doubt about these issues. Furthermore, we must do more for people with disabilities in relation to post-school options. Last month, I tabled in this Parliament a petition from concerned parents and friends of young people with disabilities at the Eight Mile Plains Special School.

Let me colour in a little more of the picture of Mansfield. There is a 35-hectare technology park at Eight Mile Plains, the popular Garden City shopping centre and the adjacent Upper Mount Gravatt regional business centre. We have the smartly refurbished Mount Gravatt Plaza shopping centre, five suburban shopping centres, and the usual corner stores and petrol stations. Further up on Old Cleveland Road, which is the northern boundary, the electorate includes the historic Belmont Rifle Range, now owned by the Queensland Government, where many thousands of sporting shooters, service personnel and competitors train regularly. This world-class venue sees international and national competitors almost monthly, sponsored by the Queensland Rifle Association and the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia.

Right next door at the Sleeman Sports Complex, the Brisbane City Council is proceeding with improvements catering for

tourists in an ecotourism park. Down toward the southern boundary of the electorate, the residents of Wishart, Burbank and North Rochedale struggle with this city's landfill dump at Rochedale, while others are left uncertain about whether or not the nightmarish South Coast Motorway plan has really been abandoned.

In Chandler, Burbank, MacKenzie and Rochedale on the east side, anxiety is rising over the ROSS policy. In Rochedale and Eight Mile Plains, competition brews between those who want to preserve the unique flower growing, chicken production and market gardening patch of fertile land with artesian water on the one hand, and on the other hand those who think a higher use will be its subdivision and sale for close residential development. The Departments of Environment and Heritage and Primary Industries will have to become more interested in that significant issue for that part of this city.

The passage of increasingly heavier traffic around the clock along the Griffith Arterial Road and concern about alterations to traffic flow from the new Port Road to the north, the Capalaba bypass to the north east, the Southern Bypass to the south, and the South Coast Motorway have kept agitated home owners on the alert. Their anxiety was not eased with the announcement on 13 September that the Daisy Hill Forest would be saved from "that road". Queensland Transport bought 28 properties in the path of the tollway before the election, has bought 27 more since, has reached agreement on the price it will pay for another nine, and continues to negotiate for more. All of us should be troubled by what appears to be an Executive Government that creates its own self-perpetuating work. Queensland Transport executives refuse to eradicate uncertainty about their plans, but happily dish out public funds to silence people who say the uncertainty has ruined property values. The Government land bank grows while civil servants create work for themselves.

I mentioned the south side business centre at Upper Mount Gravatt, which has been planned for some 20 years as one of the four regional business centres for this city. That concept was embraced by all SEQ 2001 and Brisbane 2011 reports, yet for five years the Department of Local Government and the Brisbane City Council have deliberately forgotten to work on a proper development plan for that important precinct. Until a year ago, when my election campaign began, the Brisbane City Council was left without correction to divert its limited resources to

playing with easier projects like local area plans outside my electorate. The strong, active Southside District Chamber of Commerce and I are pleased to see that the cumbersome ship seems to be changing course. We have recently been assured that some interest and some funds for this long neglected Upper Mount Gravatt plan have now been allocated. My constituents look forward to final public consultation on the new plan early next year. We have a sizeable light industrial estate in the electorate in the suburb of Mansfield that needs this large commercial centre nearby.

Membership of the legal profession these days is no fun, as the Premier has reminded us recently. However, I am proud of my profession and look forward to representing it in this House. I am tired of seeing it regularly dragged out as the whipping boy where others are to blame. We often forget all the pro bono work, the free consultations and community work done by many esteemed lawyers in this State. I will have more to say on that in the future.

At the home turn now, I want to make a couple of personal remarks. My strong Christian faith is very important to me. I know that I am among a clear majority of the honourable members who share that strength, so I am not unique. I could not let this occasion pass, however, without honouring God, the one who hears our prayers at the beginning of each day's business here—that is not a formality only. As the PNG Consul, Mr Tom Palume, said to us at the parliamentary prayer breakfast yesterday, God has a plan for us and we should be keen to serve him. With all my human failings I am encouraged by many friends in our Christian churches, particularly in the electorate, and my interaction with people of all other faiths in that electorate, such as the Jewish people, the Sikhs and Moslems, who share conservative family values and the worship of the one God with us.

I look forward to a constructive working relationship with all honourable members. We have all come here with basically the same altruistic objectives. I trust honourable members now know a little more about where I am coming from. It is that background that leads me to again congratulate the member for Cleveland on the motives declared in his speech in this House about the deplorable standard of some material aired on television for young viewers.

Finally, I thank my election campaign committee, especially director, Gail Chiconi, who I am pleased is in the gallery today,

treasurer, David Greig, Don Cameron, Liberal Leader, Mrs Sheldon, Santo Santoro, Jarred Oberhart and Jim Barron, among others. They were joined by several hundred people in three local Liberal Party branches of Mansfield, Burbank, and Wishart/Sunnybank Young Liberals. Two other Liberal councillors, Graham Quirk and Graeme McDougall, whose wards intersect in my electorate, also cheerfully provided other invaluable assistance. The staff and partners of my law firm, especially secretary Tanya Morgan, were always most helpful, but my secret weapons were my family. My sons Andy and Tony now have a stronger work ethic, while my daughter, Joanne, who is also a solicitor, and her husband Guy not only worked long hours on the campaign but also took over other commercial interests for me. My wife Joan continues to be a great mate, social organiser and hard worker. I thank her for her faith in me and support in this new career.

Mr CONNOR (Nerang) (3.29 p.m.): Queensland's most senior law officer, the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, is charged with culpable negligence in his handling of workers' compensation. As the Minister formerly responsible for workers' compensation, this culpable negligence should be seen for exactly what it is, a serious offence, an offence that will affect every worker in Queensland. Not only will it increase the cost of employing people in Queensland and hence limit the economic growth of this State, but also the common law rights of every Queenslanders will be limited as a result of this man's action or lack of action. Matt Foley's name, if he is guilty of these charges, will go down in infamy as the man who cost the ordinary workers of Queensland their most basic of rights: the proper and full protection of the courts against wrongdoing.

This man, if shown to be guilty—and I intend to do that today—should be judged accordingly. He is charged with knowingly allowing workers' compensation to run down, become overly expensive and undermine the basic tenets of a sound workers' compensation scheme—and I quote from the Minister's own words during the debate on the Workers' Compensation Amendment Bill in November last year—

". . . the three great principles that underpin our workers' compensation system here in Queensland. Firstly, we are the only State that retains for injured workers unlimited access to the common law right to sue for negligence. Secondly, this State has the lowest average premiums of any Australian State or

territory. Thirdly, all the liabilities are fully funded."

Those were the words of the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, who was then the Minister responsible for workers' compensation. What were the Minister's own words in regard to the three great principles that underpin our workers' compensation system? Let me take them one at a time. The first principle was: "All liabilities are fully funded." Those were the Minister's own words. That first principle is now long since dead. In the Government's optimistic estimates, it will be at least another five years before the Workers Compensation Fund again becomes fully funded. For 32 years under the previous National Party Government, the fund was fully funded. After five years of Labor—and, as always, after many, many warnings—the scheme is no longer fully funded. The Government simply cannot help itself. As I will demonstrate later in my speech, in 1990, following the major changes that it instituted to workers' compensation, the Government was warned that this exact problem would occur.

I turn now to Mr Foley's second great principle of workers' compensation, namely: that Queensland has "the lowest average premium of any Australian State or Territory." For decades, workers' compensation premiums have been very low. After being routed by successive Labor Governments, other States have deemed it necessary to increase substantially workers' compensation premiums. Even with escalating premiums in other States, as a result of the Goss Labor Government, this Minister and the substantial increase in average premiums, Queensland will be unable to compete with other States and will no longer have the lowest workers' compensation premiums of any State. Yesterday, the Premier stated that we can expect premiums in this State to be about the average of the States' premiums. But that does not include the surcharge. The issue of the merit rebate is still in question, as is the additional cost of the first five days of any claim being incurred by the employer. So the first two of Mr Foley's three great principles are no longer correct.

As for the third principle—until the Premier stepped in, the Minister who is now responsible for workers' compensation, Wendy Edmond, made a clear statement of fact on the *7.30 Report* that both premiums would increase and access to common law claims would be reduced. Only as a result of direct intervention by the Premier was Mr Foley's third great principle not publicly, or directly, dumped. Members still do not even know the

finer points of that deal. However, I believe that in some roundabout way the rights of the individual worker have been eroded substantially. I know that there will be limitations. As Mrs Edmond said, for injuries such as a sprained thumb, a broken toe, or something of that order, people would lose their indemnity against costs incurred in court. Whichever way one looks at it, that represents an undermining of the common law right of every Queensland worker until—

Mrs Edmond: And you're telling me that the employers will oppose any restriction to common law? Is that what you are saying?

Mr CONNOR: I did not hear what the Minister said.

Mrs Edmond: Are you saying that the employers have asked you to come in here and oppose any restriction to common law? Is that what you are saying?

Mr CONNOR: No, I have not said that. For the last six years, the Minister's Government has been responsible for this legislation. The Opposition, when it was in Government, did not get the Workers Compensation Fund into this position; the Government did that. The Minister's predecessor, Mr Foley, got it into that position.

Mrs Edmond: I'm just asking you, because the employers are saying you've sold them down the drain.

Mr CONNOR: We did not sell them down the drain. The Government has reached the exclusive conclusion that the only way in which it can fix the Workers Compensation Fund is to raise the premiums—the amount that the employer has to pay—or limit common law rights.

Mrs Edmond: I said both.

Mr CONNOR: That is right; the Minister said both. Now she has cut the employers loose and, as a result, industry in Queensland will be absolutely devastated.

I am not blaming this Minister; she is the sucker who had to take over the responsibility of the Workers Compensation Fund. I am not blaming her; I am blaming the Minister who usually sits near her. He is the one who is culpable. I only wish he was present in the Chamber so that he could take his medicine. I would take interjections from him as well. I invite the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General into the Chamber to debate this issue. If he has the courage, he will come into the Chamber.

The Minister for Employment and Training also forgets one other important matter: as a

result of ripping off the fund over the last six years to the tune of \$130m—and these are the QCCI's figures—if that money was repaid as at 1 July, the fund would not be in the red. On the Minister's figure of \$118m, it would not be in the red. Therefore, one of the basic tenets that Mr Foley maintained as the basis of our system, that is, a fully funded Workers Compensation Fund, would not be a problem. The Minister could also consider—but I know that this is all too hard—calling a moratorium during which the Government would not continue to rip off the funds from the workers' compensation pool. That would make it a lot easier for the Minister to balance the books.

Mrs Edmond: It would save \$5m a year.

Mr CONNOR: Whether it is \$5m or \$10m a year, the fact is that, over the last six years, the Government has ripped off \$131m. That is according to the QCCI's figure.

Mrs Edmond: Rubbish!

Mr CONNOR: So the QCCI is talking rubbish? I will let the QCCI know that it is talking rubbish.

Mrs Edmond: Seventy-five over five.

Mr CONNOR: The Minister could consider paying back that amount.

The Minister should throw in a little bit of interest for having the use of that money. She should also not forget that the public service has had the advantage of using that fund without paying for it. The public service simply repaid the cost of the statutory claims at the end of the year. What about its share of workplace health and safety payments and all the other things that have been pulled out of the pool? The public service has not paid its share. The Minister should also consider repaying some of that money, too. But that is all too hard, because in some way or another that might affect the bottom line of the Consolidated Fund.

Instead, the Minister is determined to make sure that the employers of Queensland directly, and the workers of Queensland indirectly, pay for the mistakes of the former Minister and the Government. The Minister is going to force employers to make a sacrifice and make those payments. The employees will make those payments indirectly by losing jobs. Granted, those jobs will be on the fringes; but as a direct result of lumping together the whole cost of getting the fund back on track by imposing higher workers' compensation premiums, there will be a dramatic undermining of the viability of employing people in Queensland. That will be

demonstrated over the next year or two by a skyrocketing unemployment rate in Queensland as industry deserts Queensland and heads for areas that perhaps—as a result of conservative Governments—are greener pastures.

I return to what Mr Foley did while he was the Minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Fund. He is further charged with having actively gone about ensuring that the information about the undermining of the Workers Compensation Fund and the unfunded liability of \$118m as of 1 July did not come out before the last State election so that the Queensland taxpayers and workers could be the judge. On this issue, the jury can consist only of the people of Queensland—the Queensland workers and the victims. How would this Minister for Justice plead? Of course, he would plead not guilty. He has said that no-one could have predicted the enormous surge in common law claims.

The Premier is saying the same thing. In some ways, it would be probably more worrying if the Government were telling the truth, because that would show a level of incompetence that we certainly cannot afford in Queensland. But if, as I suspect, it is not, then that shows a wilful attempt at covering up what is going on in Queensland before the State election. What evidence is there to show that the Minister should be found guilty of culpable negligence in relation to workers' compensation? Firstly, we know—and the Government has admitted—that as at 1 July, it was \$118m actuarially underfunded.

Secondly, we know that while the former Minister was in charge of this portfolio the average rate of workers' compensation went from 1.4 per cent to 1.7 per cent. What else do we have in the prima facie case against the Minister of the Crown? We know that, as a result of increases in both statutory and common law claims, he also brought in a demerit system increasing the cost of workers' compensation to employers with poor claims records. We have seen common law claims blow out, according to the current Minister, but I might add that we still have not seen the board's annual report. What does the Minister have to hide? Why will she not release the report? Is it because she does not want a full and proper debate?

According to the Minister, we have seen an approximately 50 per cent increase in common law claims in one year. We have also seen funds drawn from the workers' compensation pool for what are commonly regarded as normal Government services—as

I mentioned before—for such organisations as the Division of Workplace Health and Safety. There we have the hard and indisputable evidence of the maladministration of workers' compensation. The question arises: was it foreseeable?

I will digress for a moment by saying that if a board of directors or the chief executive of a private insurance fund oversaw a situation like this, I have no doubt that the Australian Securities Commission would come in and charge them. It is only that those involved have the protection of being a Government authority that that has not happened. If this was a private operation, the directors, probably the chief executive, and possibly the Minister as the chairman of the board, in effect, would all have been charged by the Australian Securities Commission.

Mrs Edmond: What a load of nonsense.

Mr CONNOR: It is nonsense, is it? The Minister should not even be in that position if she does not understand the obligations of a director to the Australian Securities Commission. If the Minister had any understanding whatsoever of the responsibilities of a director, she would know that in these circumstances he would have been charged.

Mrs Edmond: You are saying that the employer representatives on the board should be charged.

Mr CONNOR: The board is responsible for the funds.

Mrs Edmond: There are employer representatives; there are union representatives.

Mr CONNOR: They are still responsible.

Mrs Edmond: I will tell Mount Isa Mines you want their employees locked up.

Mr CONNOR: Not at all. I am saying that to allow an insurance fund to get into this position, to say nothing—

Mrs Edmond: For heaven's sake! I have been accused of saying too much; now you are saying I said nothing.

Mr CONNOR: You are saying nothing?

Mrs Edmond: We put letters out to everybody.

Mr CONNOR: I am talking about after 15 July. Does the Minister understand whom the real shareholders of the Workers Compensation Fund are? Does she know who, in the end, will pick up the tab when all else fails? The real shareholders are the

taxpayers of Queensland, because they underwrite this. The fund is operated by the Government and it is all underwritten.

Mrs Edmond: The employers pay the contributions.

Mr CONNOR: It is still underwritten by the taxpayers of Queensland. When they went to the polls they had a right to know, because they were deciding who was going to be steering this ship for the next three years. They had a right to know and the Minister did not tell them. I am saying that the previous Minister knew. I will show now that it was predictable and it was predicted.

What information did this Minister have to draw on? Was it predictable and was it predicted? Those are the two most essential questions that need to be asked when looking at the proof of the culpability of the Minister and the board. Was he blameworthy? Was he reprehensible in the manner in which he dealt with this issue? Predictability is one of the key questions that needs to be answered. To do this I go back to 23 October 1990, five years ago, when the Minister's predecessor, Mr Warburton, was responsible for workers' compensation. I will quote from the debate on the Workers Compensation Bill, the first legislative change to workers' compensation that the Goss Government implemented. I might add, this goes very much to the heart of the question of the predicability of the blow-out of workers' compensation. I quote from my speech in that debate of five years ago—

"I have grave concerns that the direction in which these proposed changes will lead Queensland is the same direction in which Victoria has moved."

That was five years ago. I am doing my best to resist saying, "I told you so." I further said—

"The Queensland scheme will go exactly the same way if these proposed changes are implemented.

Why I am so concerned is that at the same time as Queensland is experiencing a 4 per cent reduction in workers' compensation premiums—and that is admitted in the Budget papers—it is increasing the spending of the pool."

I doubt Government members would remember five years ago, but the Government bumped up the ability to claim and stretched out the amounts that could be claimed—then it reduced the premium. That was absolutely crazy stuff. This is what I said five years ago—

"Three or four years down the track"—

that is about now I think—

"those workers will scoop into the coffers to get out a few more dollars to pay for injuries"—

or whatever—

"and there will not be any money there . . ."

I wonder how I could have predicted that five years ago, and yet the Minister could not have predicted it a year ago. Further I said—

"Queensland has a shrinking pool of funds, and yet it is going to increase substantially the benefits for injured workers. The Minister should be honest about the legislation. If he is going to increase the benefits for workers, then the premiums to employers must be increased to properly fund those benefits."

Members who were present at the time may recall that one of the first things the Goss Government did was to substantially increase the benefits, substantially broaden the definition of work related injury, extend the time benefits could be received—which, I might add, it is now looking at turning back—and at the same time reduce the premium rate, hence dramatically undermining the viability of the pool. One did not have to be Einstein to predict what would happen. It was not long before my predictions and those of industry were proven correct, because the funds started to blow out almost straightaway and remedial action was required. It was a bandaid measure at best, but the figures will show that the Workers Compensation Fund continued to haemorrhage.

Mr Dollin: Give us your policy. You haven't got one.

Mr CONNOR: I will take that inane interjection, because if the member had been listening earlier, he would have heard my solution. He is obviously not listening.

As was stated by the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry in its most recent submission in relation to workers' compensation, dated 4 October 1995—

"The problem confronting the Workers' Compensation Board is clearly able to be identified. The 48.7% increase in common law claims in 1994-95 represents a continuation of a trend which was identified by the Workers' Compensation Board in its report in 1991."

In less than a year after the conversational changes to workers' compensation in 1991,

the Workers Compensation Board identified the blow-out. Again quoting the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry—

"The Chairman of the Board, in a letter to the stakeholders"—

in 1991—

"clearly identified that more drastic remedial action would be required if action was not taken at that time."

Of course, it was not taken.

Quite clearly, four years ago the board itself was highlighting the problems associated with the fund and identified the blow-out, hence showing the predicability of our present situation. It goes further. The Workers Compensation Board presented a briefing paper to the Goss Government in February 1992. The briefing paper found common law claims had increased by 9.5 per cent to more than 30 per cent between 1981 and 1990, and that, if immediate action was not taken, remedial steps in the future would need to be more drastic. We are now seeing the result of that with the drastic actions that are occurring.

In July 1993, another warning to the predicability of the problem became known, and it really is the ultimate in showing the predicability of the problem. In fact, it proves conclusively that not only was the blow-out in common law claims predictable but also that the Government and the Minister clearly understood what it was and were trying to do something about it. I might add that this was over two years ago.

I will quote from my contribution to the July 1993 debate on the motion for disallowance of the Workers Compensation Amendment Regulation (No. 1). For the benefit of those members who do not recall the debate, I point out that it concerned a substantial increase in average premiums for workers' compensation. I stated—

"About a month ago, the General Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council, Dawson Petie, said that he was not prepared to reduce workers' access to workers' compensation claims."

Further, I stated—

"Through a working party which included many sectors of the community, the Government recommended that workers' compensation—the access to a common law claim through the courts—should be available, but only after a person went through a tribunal and an offer was made. If the employee, the injured worker, felt that an offer that was

made as a result of the tribunal's decision was unreasonable and insufficient, and if he or she decided to make a claim through the courts system but failed to attain a greater amount, he or she would be responsible for the legal costs, which is generally the typical situation in the insurance industry. But Dawson Petie, on behalf of the Trades and Labor Council, rejected that position."

At the time, I had this to say—

"It simply comes down to the fact that the Premier knows that if Queensland keeps going down this track, we will be going right down the track of all the rust belt southern Labor States and that there would be nothing but trouble. But, in common with all the other Labor Governments, the Goss Government did not have the intestinal fortitude to take on the unions in this regard. Eventually this Government will take them on, but it will be too late—too late for the State, and too late for the Government. In common with most of the other Labor States, the Goss Government will let it go to the stage at which it effectively becomes non-viable . . ."

I said that almost two and a half years ago. Clearly, in June 1993, almost two and a half years ago, the Government knew that workers' compensation common law claims were blowing out. It had two warnings from the board. It had figures showing quite clearly that common law was the cause of the blow-out. Not only that, the Government initiated a process to limit this blow-out. However, because the Trades and Labor Council determined that it was not prepared to accept the Government's proposal, the common law claims continued to blow out and the Government allowed it to happen. So much for the Government's suggestion that it could not have predicted the blow-out!

The Government had another warning two and a half years ago. However, this time it was specifically directed at the blow-out in common law claims. And so we saw the Government make some minor changes to the legislation. In September 1993, three months later, the debate on the Workers' Compensation Amendment Bill went ahead. I remind the Minister, Mr Foley, of what I said in that debate. I stated—

"I would also like the Minister to set a time frame within which the matter of the blow-out of common law claims should be addressed. As I said, if we do not do

something about that, we will follow Victoria's path."

That is what I said more than two years ago. This story about a lack of predicability—for example, Mrs Edmond saying, "We didn't know"—is quite obviously untrue. I remind members that Victoria, under Workcare and the Cain/Kirner Government, ended up with an unfunded liability in workers' compensation of \$4 billion.

In November 1993, another two months later, after the remedial action was undertaken, further information became available that quite clearly showed that the problem was still there. I stated in the Parliament in the debate on Appropriation Bill (No. 2) the following in relation to workers' compensation—

"If this Government allows it to blow out as every other Labor Government has, Queensland's manufacturing sector will shrivel up and die. The only industries that will be left in Queensland will be those that cannot be transplanted easily. If the Government does not stop the blow out in claims of almost two-thirds in the last two years . . ."

Two-thirds in two years; it was two years ago that I said that.

Mr Hayward: What do you think your leader has been saying—you just pay it out of consolidated revenue?

Mr CONNOR: Had the Minister been here earlier during my contribution to the debate, he would know that I have already suggested a way of resolving the situation. However, the Minister was not here, or was not listening—one or the other.

Mr Hayward interjected.

Mr CONNOR: I will not take an inane interjection, if the Minister is not bothering to listen.

Back in 1993, I continued—

". . . the Government can expect to wear the blame for the demise of industry and the associated jobs. It is as simple as that. Queensland cannot continue to have growth in claims of this magnitude without premiums going up commensurably. As we have seen, the Government has increased the average rate"—

that is, the premium rate—

"by 13.5 per cent, yet at the same time, claims have blown out by two-thirds in the last two years."

That is what I was saying two years ago. I continued—

"All the Government has done is delay the payment of those claims, hence the increase in non-current liabilities within the workers' compensation annual report."

That was what I said two years ago. We had a two-thirds increase in claims, the Government increased the premiums by 13.5 per cent, and yet it cannot understand why it blew out. Quite clearly, even after the remedial action of a 13.5 per cent increase in the premium rate across-the-board, it can in no way have compensated for the massive blow-out in claims in the previous two years of almost two-thirds. A 60 per cent plus increase in claims was to be offset by only a 13.5 per cent increase in premiums! Quite clearly, at best the Government was using a bandaid measure; at worst, it was being totally cynical and was purely trying to keep the lid on a massive problem before the next State election. That was two years ago, more than 18 months prior to the last State election.

We move along to November 1994, just over a year ago and approximately eight months before the State election. I quote from the debate on a further Workers' Compensation Amendment Bill. During the second-reading debate, I stated—

"One of the most worrying aspects of the annual report"—

which had only just been released at that stage—

"is the dramatic escalation in Commonwealth settlements—an increase of 27.4 per cent. Common law claims are the very appropriate claims of employees against their employers where there is some degree of negligence on the part of the employer."

That is what I said. Further, I stated—

"These claims must be rigorously watched to ensure that they do not go in the same direction as the southern States, forcing a dumping of employees' common law rights. That is most imperative.

Successive Labor Governments in southern States, through their incompetence and incompetent treatment of workers' compensation, have allowed them to become non-funded and non-viable, resulting in the collapse of the schemes and the dumping of employees' common law rights. All of these common law rights were dumped under Labor

Governments, not conservative Governments."

That is what I said nine months ago. Again, the Minister was warned and again the Minister did nothing. This is little more than eight months before the election, just on a year ago. The annual report quite clearly showed a blow-out. This was on top of a two-thirds across-the-board increase in claims that had been offset by only a 13.5 per cent increase in premiums. On top of that, there was a further 27 per cent increase in common law claims.

The Government, the Minister and the Premier were warned many times in confidential reports, public reports and briefing notes from the Workers Compensation Board, the QCCI and so on. The Government acknowledged that it had a huge problem when it initiated negotiations with the unions back in 1993. That is what proves that it knew about the blow-out. That is what proves that it was predictable. That proves that not only was it predictable; it was predicted. It also proves that the former Minister, Matt Foley, was guilty of incompetence and culpable negligence in his dealings with workers' compensation.

Time expired.

Mrs McCAULEY (Callide) (3.59 p.m.): This is my fourth contribution to a debate on the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply. I take this opportunity to pledge my loyalty to maintaining the present stable system of Government that we enjoy in this country and to reassure my constituents that I will continue to vigorously represent my electorate and their concerns both inside and outside this House.

The electorate of Callide is large. In fact, it is the sixth-largest in the State, comprising some 71,000 square kilometres. Along Highway 17, the electorate covers the towns of Wowan, Biloela, Monto, Eidsvold, Mundubbera and Gayndah, and Biggenden towards the coast. In the Dawson Valley, the electorate stretches from Baralaba, Moura, Theodore, Taroom and Wandoan to Rolleston and halfway to Springsure. It covers a huge area, and it takes a lot of time to travel around it. My electorate also has the largest percentage of National Party members per head of population in the State. Members of my own party often ask me why this is so. I do not have the magic answer to that question, except that it is predominantly a rural area. Those electors are obviously real thinkers and very articulate people who have chosen wisely and well. In fact, my home town of Biloela has the largest National Party branch in the State.

According to the document released this morning by the Electoral Commission, at several booths in Callide the National Party polled in excess of 91 per cent of the vote at the last election. But I make it clear that I represent all the electors of Callide, not just the National Party supporters.

Because Callide is such a large electorate and it is hard to get around, it is sometimes difficult for city members to appreciate the sorts of problems encountered by its elected member. I was interested to read an article recently about women who travel alone in vehicles and what they should do if they get into trouble. Apparently if a woman's car breaks down she should make a lot of noise but not leave her car. My car broke down the other night when I was an hour from home and two hours from the function that I had attended. I was a long way from anywhere. If I had sat in the car and made a lot of noise, nobody would have heard me—except the kangaroos and the starving cattle. That is the difficulty that one faces in a situation like that. Fortunately, the Mobilenet is expanding and I was just within its range. It was half past 12 at night, but luckily I was able to ring up and ask someone to come and get me. Those are the sorts of problems that one faces. I try not to put myself in that position. I try to have a car that is very reliable, but it does not always work that way.

At present, almost the entire Callide electorate is affected by drought. It is difficult to find the words to describe what that means to that area. Earlier in the year, wheat crops were planted in many areas. All of those wheat crops—apart from the irrigated ones—have failed. There is little grass anywhere in the electorate. There is not even enough grass to burn in hope of summer rains. There is just bare dirt in many places. The roadside verges have been eaten off. The kangaroos are enormous, and they are coming closer and closer to the roads because the only green vegetation for them to pick is right along the edge of the bitumen. That applies for miles and miles. From Wowan to the Biggenden area, things are bad.

All the water storages in my electorate are empty or near empty. The new Kroombit Dam has never been filled. It has been built for four years, but it has never been opened because it has never had water in it. The Wuruma Dam is empty. The level of the Callide Dam is very low—less than 20 per cent. That is the situation throughout the electorate. Things are not looking very bright at all. If city members believe that the drought has ended, they really should visit my electorate.

This dreadful drought has continued for at least five years in some places, and longer in other places. Despite those conditions, this Government has just increased water charges and rates for 1995. That information was tabled in the Parliament this week. The increase in charges for the Callide Valley is more than 20 per cent and, in some cases, much more than 20 per cent. I do not mind the Government charging more for water use over the announced allocation, but I believe that increasing the announced allocation costs by more than 20 per cent—and to a somewhat lesser extent in the Dawson Valley—is an indictable offence when people are struggling so much. There is no point in charging for water and hoping to deter people from using it. They cannot use it, because it is not there; it is simply not there to be used.

Not only has this Government increased water charges and rates, it is also imposing a 600 per cent increase in some areas for stock-watering facilities. Two of those facilities are located in a certain shire in my electorate. The man who looks after one of those facilities, which is situated on a bit of ground that was resumed from his property, has been carting water to that facility since January this year. That watering facility is used by stock travelling through that district. The agreement which has been in place since the 1960s is that the landowners maintain that facility and derive a benefit through using that water. That is fair enough. For that, they were charged \$30 a year. In reality, the Government should be paying the landowners, because they are the ones who look after the facility. In some places the shire councils look after stock-watering facilities, but in these particular cases the property owners themselves do that.

As I said, the property owner to whom I referred has been carting water to that facility since January this year. He has just built a dam at a cost of \$3,400 to maintain the facility. That money came out of his own pocket. Now the Government says, "We are going to charge you \$215 for the privilege of using the facility. Next year the charge will go up to \$300, and it may eventually reach \$800-odd." That is absolutely unrealistic. I just cannot believe that the Government is thinking along those lines and intending to do that sort of thing. It is simply not on. I will be talking to the Minister about that and trying to make him see the light. It is one of those very foolish ideas that somebody obviously thought would be a bit of a money maker, but it is simply not on when we are suffering such a severe drought.

Another aspect of the drought is the sand troughing that people in the Burnett area have been carrying out in an effort to obtain water for their orchards. Orchardists are in a very invidious position, in that if their orchards die they cannot just plant another crop next year when it rains. It takes seven years for fruit trees to reach maturity and before decent crops can be harvested from them. If the orchardists lose those crops, they face a seven-year lull. They really are in a no-win situation. Last week, I visited Ken Loakes' place at Mundubbera and had a look at where he was sand troughing in the Burnett River. He had to get two Komatsu dozers and a sand excavator. Every time people do that sort of thing it costs them \$2,000 at least. In excess of \$100,000 has been spent by growers in the Burnett region on sand troughing in an attempt to obtain water. They dig a big hole, the water seeps up from the riverbed, and eventually they get a nice little well of water which keeps them going.

In previous years, the National Party Government did not charge growers for that water. It said, "Righto. You would not be doing that if you were not in dire straits. We know it costs you a lot of money to do this in the first place, and we will not charge you for taking that water." After all, those people are now paying for an allocation of water that they are not receiving. As I said before, the Wuruma Dam is empty. Those growers are not receiving their water allocation from the Burnett River, but they still have to pay just the same. As I said, those people were not charged for that water in the past, but this Government is now charging them for it. I have written twice to the Minister about this matter, and he flatly refuses to alter his ways. He says, "No, we are going to charge you, and that is all there is to it." That is unfortunate, and it shows a lack of understanding of the problems faced by people in that particular region. If the Boondooma Dam pipeline is finished and there can be a release before Christmas into the water storages in my electorate, that may well save some people. I certainly hope that it does, because conditions are very difficult.

I again wrote to the Minister about desilting existing weirs in the Callide Valley. I received a very pompous reply from him, the gist of which was that the end users must contribute. I am sure that the end users would be happy to contribute if they could—if they were getting any money out of their properties at all—but at the moment very few of them are making any money at all; it is simply a matter of trying to hang in there and hope for rains

that may not come this season. If only the desilting of the existing weirs could continue—some of which has been carried out, with tremendous results for recharging the underground aquifers—the benefits in the produce that would result would certainly outweigh any money that the Government would be forced to contribute.

I wrote also to the Minister about additional water storage in Queensland. Once again, the reply referred to the user-pays principle. The thrust of the proposal by the Government before the election about building a large dam on the Dawson River was: "Yes, we will build this multimillion-dollar project. We are going to spend all this money and we are going to build this big water storage on the Dawson River, and that is great." After the election, the Treasurer backed right away and started talking about the project being a good investment for the Government in that it would reap returns from it. If the Treasurer is expecting to see monetary returns in his pocket from such capital investments, I can assure him that it will not happen. If water users are forced to pay fully for such facilities, they will never be built, because they cost in the vicinity of \$70m to \$90m. It is simply not a feasible proposition for primary producers to foot the bill for such projects. Let me, however, state my unequivocal support for more water storages in this State. That is part and parcel of the coalition's policy, and it is something that I support very strongly.

Before I leave the concerns of primary producers, I want to touch briefly on the situation with AMH and the Rockhampton meatworks. Rural reporter Gordon Collie wrote a good article in today's *Courier-Mail* concerning the problems that the beef-producing industry has been experiencing, particularly in the Rockhampton area. It states—

"Countless studies and reports have tried to determine why Australia is struggling to match overseas competition."

And Australian producers are struggling to match overseas competition. Our processing costs are far in excess of those of the United States and New Zealand—far in excess. All of these reports, including the Booz-Hamilton report, have according to the article—

". . . identified the meat processing sector as hopelessly inefficient by offshore standards. Antiquated abattoirs have labour forces locked into a rigid piece-rate or tally system which has produced a standard 6.5-hour working day."

Let me just say that I think that time when people worked six and a half hours a day are long gone—even if it is heavy and hard work. Even the mining industry works longer than six and a half hour days. It is simply not on to try to say that meatworkers can work only six and a half hours a day.

Gordon Collie goes on to state—

"Achieving change in the meat-processing culture has been painfully slow."

And it will be more painful as the time goes on. It seems to me it is about time meatworkers were dragged, even if it is kicking and screaming, into the twenty-first century, because we are simply not making any headway at all. The meat processors operate on a very skinny profit margin. Recently at the Cattlemen's Union forum held in Rockhampton to talk about the future of the beef industry it was stated that a \$15 a head saving at meatworks would make an enormous difference overall. I am quite sure that is true. The Cattlemen's Union put out some interesting statistics on this subject. The beef industry's contribution to Australia's gross value of production rose from \$2.5 billion in 1980-81 to \$4.4 billion in 1993-94. This is a big industry that I am talking about. I cannot understand how the Federal member for Capricornia, Mrs Marjorie Henzell, can come out and attack AMH for trying to make things more efficient, more equitable and more competitive by world standards.

In relation to meat processing costs—60 per cent to 70 per cent of the cost gap between Australian processors and competitors is due to external factors such as distance to market, type of cattle processed, lack of Government support, and so on. We cannot do anything about the fact that in Australia there are long distances to be travelled. However, 30 per cent of the cost gap is addressable by the processors. This means labour reform. It would mean an additional margin of \$50 a head. Therefore, we simply have to bite the bullet and get into it. Another clear message that I got from the seminar, and others may disagree with me, is that our niche is in grass-fed beef. Certainly we do turn out good grass-fed beef. It is our strongest market. The hamburger trade in Asia is growing and perhaps we should learn to stick with it.

Before I leave the beef industry, I want to say also that quality assurance has been causing a lot of anxiety and straight out anger among beef producers because they cannot really see where the quality assurance

program is leading them, except into their offices to do a lot of paperwork that they do not have time to do. I am not talking about chemical usage in the beef cattle industry, because that has to be fully documented, anyway. When I talk about quality assurance, I am talking simply about the quality assurance program. As one of the beef producers said to me, the only test in beef cattle should be taste and tenderness. I am sure that is fair enough.

Someone the other day was telling me he was trying to become accredited for grain-fed beef. He had a 60-acre paddock that he put his cattle into. It had a hill in it; they could get out of the wind when they needed to; they had shade trees but, no, that is not good enough. He has to fence that 60-acre paddock into much smaller lots before the DPI will accredit him to be able to produce grain-fed beef. It is a nonsense. There is no more money in beef producers' pockets at the end of the day but there is a lot more anxiety, a lot more paperwork and a lot more things that they do not need to cope with.

On environmental issues—the Environmental Protection Act has not really impacted on shires yet. But environmentally relevant activities such as concrete batching, motor vehicle workshops and boarding kennels will all have to be licensed by March next year. That is when those proposals will affect small businesses throughout the Callide electorate because a fee will be attached to that program. It will cost people to upgrade to the standards required and people do not have that money to spare. They perhaps even do not even have the will to do it and will simply close up shop and go away.

I might also mention that I have been approached by one of my councils for a deputation to the Minister for Environment and Heritage and I have been told there is a nine-week wait. That is something that has never happened before. I have always had access to Ministers with deputations, particularly deputations from councils, which are really in the same line of work that we are. I believe that a nine-week waiting list is simply wrong. It has to be looked at. It is not the way to run Government.

Another aspect of the environmental issue which came to my attention recently was a tender that was put out for a fencing contract up in the Kroombit Tops area. It is a beautiful national park area. It is a very remote area of my electorate. It is not easily accessed and is certainly not on the beaten tourist trail by any means, although there is now a small tourist resort up there, and that is great. This

fencing contract was apparently to keep "the brumbies and the scrubbers" out of a certain frog habitat, which seems a rather ludicrous thing in the first place. But the point that interests me is that the forestry officer who was in charge of this tender said that it was drought money that was being used. The job is worth in the vicinity of \$50,000 to \$60,000. If it is drought money that is being used for this sort of nonsense, I intend to get to the bottom of it. I have asked a question on notice of the Minister. I want to know what it is all about. It is absolutely ludicrous that that sort of money can be taken from drought funding and used on something like that.

In the health area, I was pleased to hear from the central regional director the other day that the Theodore and Moura Hospitals report, which was the cause of major meetings and a lot of anxiety in those towns earlier this year, has been totally scrapped and that the consultation process will start from the grassroots, which is what should have happened in the first place. People in those areas are not going to accept any downgrading of their hospital facilities. It is quite foolish in an area such as Moura, where there is a mine operating 24 hours a day, to try to downgrade hospital facilities. It is not on.

Another and very urgent aspect of health funding is HACC funding. I know the problems that that funding is designed to address are endemic right throughout the State. The same problems have been faced by a lot of other people. In the Biloela area there is a desperate need for support services to keep our aged and infirm in their own homes for as long as possible. We have a large number of elderly people who, with a bit of help, will be able to end their days in their own homes. They need help to mow their lawns, to do the heavy cleaning and those sorts of things, combined with a Meals on Wheels service, will keep them happily in their homes. The relatives can pick up all of the extra pieces and usually that keeps them quite mobile and quite happy in their homes.

However, that service has been reduced in my town—and it is not a big service; it was one and a half hours a week. It is going to be reduced now to something like less than one hour a fortnight, so it is not really big bikkies. The budget for it is only \$18,000 a year, but it provides 60 services. The need is for 80 services, which does not involve a large amount of money, but for goodness' sake, provision of that service will keep those frail aged in their own homes, and I believe that is the way to go. I have heard this Government say that is the way to go, so it has to put its

money where its mouth is and do something about this. The only place for those frail aged to go if they cannot stay in their own homes is the Wahrenonga Retirement Village, which has a waiting list for both the hostel and nursing home care of some 30 people. So that is out. That means that hospitalisation is the only other option for these people. If this is happening right across the State, I am sure the Minister for Health is aware that that means he is going to have to increase his Health budget considerably.

Those people will be in hospital. They do not want to be in hospital, and they do not need to be in hospital. A decent increase in the HACC budget is needed. There was a 6 per cent increase this year, 3 per cent of which went to quality assurance, award restructuring—all that sort of stuff—so only 3 per cent flowed on to client services. I am not talking about a huge amount of money, but an increase is needed. It is not a matter of the Government having cut the budget; it has simply not kept the budget in line with the demand for services. I understand that the request for that type of assistance in the central region would total about \$1m. The budget figure is \$80,000; so that is a hell of a difference. Mr Beattie has to do something about this. I have written to him asking that he do something about it, and I am sure that he will try. He not only has to try, but he has to succeed. That is most important.

The Mundubbera Rotary Club has written to me outlining its concerns about the local hospital. The club mentioned cars being given to the medical superintendent at the hospital—a scheme introduced by this Government. The club believes that is unnecessary and is upset that that sort of package is provided. I know that it was provided by the Government as a pre-election promise, which cost about \$25m and involved some 700 cars. That scheme will certainly have to be evaluated. The main issue raised by the Mundubbera Rotary Club that concerns me is the lack of funding for the State Emergency Service. In its letter, the club stated—

"Lack of funding for the State Emergency Service was highlighted last week when Rotary members attended a mock multiple person accident involving a vehicle and a train. During the course of this procedure both the generator used for lighting and the hydraulic jaws of life failed."

It is a good thing that it was only a mock exercise. The letter continued—

"We have been advised by the SES controller that funding for serviceable equipment for the unit is virtually impossible to obtain through normal Government channels."

Let us hope that a vehicle never hits a train in the central Burnett area.

I turn now to fire services. The Mundubbera Rotary Club made a telling point about fire services when it said—

"Recently, the local fire brigade unit attended an accident involving a person falling off a horse and suffering a broken leg. This was on a Saturday afternoon and involved travel of some 50km one way. No fire was involved. The unit travelled out so that they could log an incident and thus receive funding which is based on the number of call-outs. We believe that this is a total waste of resources and should there have been a house fire in Mundubbera whilst the unit was out fundraising, dire consequences could have resulted."

I have not had a chance to talk to fire brigade officers in Mundubbera to ascertain whether or not that is correct; but if it is correct, it is a sad indictment on this Government that it forces fire brigade officers to go to such lengths to fundraise. Never before has that sort of thing happened. It is a lot of nonsense, and it should not happen. People in those areas should not have to do that sort of thing, leaving the town without a fire brigade.

Mr Schwarten: They don't have to do that sort of thing. That's wrong. It's not true.

Mrs McCAULEY: That is what the Rotary Club of Mundubbera has told me, and that is what I am passing on to the Minister.

I refer now to police services. Two police officers have gone from Biloela. There is also a vacancy in the CIB because one detective has left. Three police have been lost from the Moura area, which is a huge area to cover. Moura has a 24-hour coalmine, and it should not be without the services of five policemen. The current manning levels for the area allow for five policemen, but it has only three. The police officer in a one-officer town in my area recently went on holidays, and there was no replacement. The nearest police were 30 minutes away. If people think that home invasions do not happen in rural areas and that people in the bush are safe, let me tell members opposite what happened to some people in the Theodore area the week before last.

Gunny and Loye Hewitt are well known in that area. Gunny is a councillor on the Banana Shire Council. He is the brother of Neville Hewitt, the former member for Auburn. Recently, he and his family had the biggest and most successful Hereford bull sale probably in Australia. He and his wife are in their sixties. They are not weight-lifters by any means. They were going to bed one night when Loye heard a noise on the patio. She went to investigate and found that a table had been knocked over, so she went to turn on the light. As she did so, a man appeared in a balaclava and gloves, pointed a rifle straight at her and told her to go upstairs. To stop that happening, Gunny saw the man with the gun, rushed down the stairs and tackled the fellow. I should probably tell members opposite what happened in Gunny's words. He said—

"When I came to the door and saw the rifle just inches from my wife's chest, I realised I had to do something to save her before he forced us upstairs, so I had charged him, forcing the gun barrel down. We wrestled for a few seconds before he had me on the floor and commenced kicking me and stomping on my head, bursting open a stitched sun-cancer wound.

My wife, thinking that I would be killed"—

his wife is about the size of Mrs Sheldon—

"went for the gunman and started punching into him, causing him to drop the rifle. She succeeded in forcing him away from me.

...

The gunman then drew a knife cutting my wife's hand, but he then ran off."

While his wife picked up the gun and waited for him to come back, Gunny somehow managed to crawl upstairs to phone the police. He was in hospital for some time with a cracked bone in his knee, severe ligament damage, a split forehead and multiple bruising on his face and kidney area. That rifle was loaded.

The offender had worked on that property. He had been found guilty of murder for a drug crime in the Rockhampton area some years previously. He had escaped from Etna Creek Prison and was arrested in the Northern Territory on drug charges and armed robbery charges. The rifle that he had was loaded. He was wearing a balaclava and gloves and had a knife in his belt. Nobody can tell me that he did not mean to do those

people a great deal of harm. Had he got them upstairs, he would have killed them; I really believe that. He is a violent and very dangerous person.

After his first escape from Etna Creek, when he was recaptured and put back into gaol, where was he sent? He was sent to the minimum security prison at Wacol where he simply drove a tractor up to the fence, raised the bucket, jumped over, and off he went. What is going to happen to that man now that he has been recaptured? I might add that the police picked him up at Redbank. He gave them a false name and they let him go; so that was a sad indictment on them.

My concern is that justice in this State has lost its way. What is going to happen to that prisoner, who is a very dangerous man and obviously will create mayhem if he is freed again? Will he eventually go back into minimum security? How much extra time will he have to serve because of the act that he perpetrated on the Hewitts? Probably not a great deal! He will probably be out again before we can turn around—if he has not escaped. There is something wrong with the prison system. As Gunny said at the bottom of his statement about this incident—

"I feel that a person with his convictions should never have been allowed on minimum security, and trust it does not happen again."

That is really an understatement from someone who has suffered badly at the hands of a man who should never have been allowed out of gaol and who I hope is kept there for many years to come.

I am disappointed that this half hour has gone so quickly and that I do not have time to discuss other very interesting issues that concern my constituents. I have mentioned a few of the most important ones, but there are a lot more. I could certainly talk for another half hour, if I was allowed to. It is unfortunate that I cannot discuss those other issues today. Let me say, however, that I will to the best of my ability, represent my electorate in these issues as they arise.

Time expired.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Gamin, adjourned.

COMMONWEALTH POWERS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for the Arts) (4.30 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to refer to the Commonwealth Parliament certain matters about de facto relationships, and other matters."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for the Arts) (4.31 p.m.): I move—

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

The growth in the number of couples living together in de facto relationships has been one of the significant recent changes in the structure of Australian family life. Should they continue at the growth rate indicated by comparison of the last two census years, 0.8 per cent per annum, the current percentage of Queensland couples living as de facto partners will by now have reached 12 per cent, 74,700 couples—almost 150,000 of the State's adult population.

Before the Goss Government came to office, de factos in Queensland had few legal rights. However, aided by the Queensland Law Reform Commission, the Goss Government has addressed the legal problem of de facto couples in a number of areas, namely, access to the Family Court for custody and maintenance arrangements for ex-nuptial children; amendments to the Common Law Practice Act 1867 to give Queensland de factos, who lose their spouses, the same rights to commence legal proceedings to sue for negligence as people in traditional marriages; provision in the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 to recognise de factos and prohibit discrimination in a number of areas including work, education and the provision of goods and services; a new presumption of parentage based on a de facto relationship created by the Status of Children Amendment Bill 1995 currently before the House.

Like married couples, de facto partners sometimes experience breakdown of their relationships. No specific statute governs their situation. They are obliged to seek relief under the general law, claiming entitlement under some common law remedy in contract or seeking equitable relief upon such grounds as

resulting or constructive trusts, unjust enrichment or unconscionable conduct by the other partner, promissory or proprietary estoppel, restitution, equitable lien, or the like.

Consider, for example, the case of a woman who has lived as the de facto spouse of a man for 15 years and raised three children. Upon the break-up of the de facto relationship such a woman under current law may have no entitlement if the house is in the de facto husband's name. If she brings a court action to get a property settlement, her non-financial contribution by the way of child care and housekeeping is very unlikely to be taken into account. Such a situation is unfair and requires remedy in the interests of justice. New South Wales, Victoria and the Northern Territory have already enacted remedial legislation. South Australia and Tasmania have some statutory rights for de factos. The ACT introduced a Bill in April 1994. Western Australia is expected to release a draft Bill soon.

However, there is a pronounced lack of uniformity in the legislation proposed or enacted by States and Territories. There are several alternative methods available to enable de facto partners to resolve financial and property disputes following the breakdown of their relationships. Three methods were considered. The first method was a referral of power to the Commonwealth. The second method was to use the forum of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) to seek uniform legislation. The third method was for Queensland to enact its own legislation.

The first alternative was chosen for several reasons—

A referral would ultimately result in the conferring of jurisdiction on the Family Court for the handling of de facto disputes;

There is wide support for bringing de facto property cases under that court's procedures as the court currently deals with child custody and access issues involving de facto couples;

Family law practitioners are familiar with the procedures of the Family Court and have found them to work satisfactorily;

This will result in considerable savings to litigants as the Family Court has well-developed case management procedures and a wealth of experience with its specialist judges, conciliation registrars and mediators;

It will result in a more predictable approach to judicial interpretation, leading

to more likely negotiation between parties to settle their disputes.

In addition, on 16 December 1993 the Commonwealth Attorney-General, Michael Lavarch, initiated the most far-reaching reform process in family law since the introduction of the Family Law Act in 1975. As part of that reform process, Mr Lavarch also announced that the Commonwealth was seeking a referral of powers on de facto legislation. The Commonwealth legislation will confer jurisdiction on the Family Court. The Commonwealth does not foresee any costs for the States and Territories from such a referral. It is anticipated that several other States will ultimately refer power to the Commonwealth. Tasmania and the Northern Territory are actively pursuing a referral. South Australia has indicated an interest in doing so.

A referral of power will also avoid the initial and recurrent costs of implementing in the State courts a scheme equal to that provided by the Family Court with qualified conciliators and mediators. In addition, the Family Court already has jurisdiction in relation to the children of de facto relationships as a consequence of a referral of that power by Queensland in 1990, pursuant to the Commonwealth Powers (Family Law—Children) Act 1990. It therefore makes sense that the Family Court would handle de facto property. Accordingly, the Government has determined that a referral of power was the most appropriate way of achieving the policy objective.

The proposed law refers to the Commonwealth Parliament power to legislate in relation to the resolution of financial matters, including disputes about financial matters, arising out of the de facto relationship between de facto partners other than because of death. "Financial matters" is defined to include matters about property or maintenance. "Property" is defined to include, amongst other things, a prospective claim or entitlement under a scheme or fund providing superannuation, resignation, termination, retirement or similar benefits. Superannuation is frequently one of the major "assets" of a couple, married or de facto. Contributions to the fund are made from family finances during the relationship in the expectation that the eventual benefits will be enjoyed by them both.

The proposed law includes the following matters in the reference—

- Agreements between de facto partners;
- Financial adjustments;

Maintenance;

Declaratory, injunctive or other relief including declaratory relief about the existence or non-existence of a de facto relationship.

It should be noted that rather than preparing a separate Act, Parliamentary Counsel has amended the Commonwealth Powers (Family Law—Children) Act 1990. That Act currently refers power to the Commonwealth in relation to ex-nuptial children. In this Bill, that Act is renamed the Commonwealth Powers Act 1990 and is divided into four parts. The new structure of the Commonwealth Powers Act 1990 will accommodate any future referrals of power. This satisfies the program to rationalise the Queensland statute books by reducing the number of statutes and keeping all related acts in one place.

For these reasons, the Government moves this Bill. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

COASTAL PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT BILL

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (4.37 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act about the protection and management of the coast, and for related purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (4.38 p.m.): I move—

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

Queensland has the most beautiful coast on earth. However, we risk spoiling our coast through a million small decisions. Most decisions are well intentioned and on their own would not be considered a big threat to the coast. But the lack of a plan for the coast means development is haphazard, sometimes ugly, and, increasingly, is denying ordinary

Queenslanders access to and enjoyment of the coast.

The Coastal Protection and Management Bill will be Queensland's first comprehensive legislation for protecting the coast. It has been written to ensure that Queensland's coast is preserved and managed in accordance with the wishes of the people of Queensland. It accommodates development in the coastal zone, which is environmentally sensitive, but prohibits environmental vandalism and the destruction of the natural beauty of the coast. The object of the legislation is to protect and manage Queensland's coastal zone while allowing for development that improves the total quality of life, now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.

The new Act will be binding on everyone, including Government departments and statutory authorities. The approvals process will be fully integrated with the Integrated Development Approvals System (IDAS) being developed in the Government's Planning and Development Assessment Bill. For businesses which are proposing environmentally sensitive developments, this will offer the major advantage of streamlining the approvals process. This streamlining will not, however, involve cutting corners or fast tracking, and the community will be fully involved in the assessment of environmental and social impacts. Until PEDAs are enacted the existing approvals provisions of Beach Protection, Harbours and Canals Acts will remain.

At the heart of the new Act will be the development of a State Coastal Management Plan and a series of more detailed regional coastal management plans. In the development of the Bill, there has been widespread public consultation, starting with the Green Paper on a Coastal Protection Strategy in 1991. Further consultation took place with the draft Coastal Protection Bill in 1993. This Bill also takes into account the objectives of the final report from the Coastal Zone Inquiry in 1993 and the Commonwealth Government's coastal policy, "Living on the Coast", released in May this year.

During the lead-up to the State election this year, the Premier and the then Minister for Environment and Heritage released "Reclaiming the Coast". This visionary policy's aim is to—

provide for the orderly development of Queensland's coast in a way which preserves its natural beauty and protects the ecological processes upon which living things depend.

This Bill embodies the spirit of this policy and is a major plank in fulfilling the "Reclaiming the Coast" election commitments. The objects of this Bill are to—

provide for the protection, conservation, rehabilitation and management of the coast, including its resources and biological diversity;

have regard to the goal, core objectives and guiding principles of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development in the use of the coastal zone;

provide, in conjunction with other legislation, a coordinated and integrated management and administrative framework for the ecologically sustainable development of the coastal zone; and

encourage the enhancement of knowledge of coastal resources and the effect of human activities on the coastal zone.

In particular, one of the objects requires that use of the coastal zone has regard to the goal, core objectives and guiding principles of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development.

One of the guiding principles of the National Strategy is—

"Where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation."

The Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment in May 1992 defines this guiding principle as the "precautionary principle". For the purposes of the Coastal Protection and Management Bill 1995, the precautionary principle is taken to have been applied when, wherever practicable, decisions are based on—

(a) careful evaluation to avoid serious or irreversible damage to the environment; and

(b) an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of the various options.

The objects of the Bill will be achieved through—

provision of State and regional coastal management plans, which include objectives for coastal management and guidelines for decision making and protection of key areas;

using other relevant legislation including the recently released Planning, Environment and Development Assessment Bill (PEDA Bill);

provision of a proposed State Planning Policy and Guidelines which will be incorporated into local government planning and decision making; and

community consultation.

However, effective coastal management must be delivered at the local level and this Government recognises the key role of local government in this. The Bill provides for local government to be closely involved in all stages of planning and implementation of coastal management. The Government will provide support for local government in this role.

The term "coast" means many different things depending on the context in which it is used. The coast is not just where the sea meets the land—this is the foreshore. Coastal management focuses on the coast, which is defined as all areas within or neighbouring the foreshore. However, activities which occur in areas outside the coast can affect the coast and therefore need to be considered in coastal management. This wider area is referred to in the Act as the coastal zone. The coast is defined in section 6 as, "all areas within or neighbouring the foreshore." "Neighbouring" means near; therefore, the definition of the coast is not prescriptive. Areas will be considered to be near the foreshore when there is a clear link with the foreshore. On the seaward side, this includes all Queensland coastal waters. On the landward side, this includes areas influenced by sea water or salt spray, the movement of sand or the drainage of waters into tidal areas. Therefore, the following areas are covered by the definition of "coast" under the Act—

communities comprised of salt-tolerant vegetation such as mangroves, tidal marshes, coastal casuarinas, coastal banksia, coastal heath;

dune systems;

coastal wetlands;

rivers and creeks subject to tidal influence up to the highest astronomical tide; and

any other area clearly affected by a coastal process.

This legislation establishes a Coastal Protection Advisory Council (CPAC) to promote the objectives of the Act and to advise the Minister on coastal management issues. This Statewide advisory council will, as far as practicable, monitor the integration of coastal

zone management in Queensland being carried out by other State and Commonwealth Government agencies and local government. The advisory council will also liaise with and have regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and generally have regard to existing tenures, interests in and rights to the land.

CPAC will oversee planning of the coastal zone and will promote integration of coastal planning with other Government planning initiatives such as integrated catchment management (ICM) and natural resource planning; local government planning schemes; and Commonwealth marine parks. The membership of CPAC will be a chairperson and eleven other members chosen for their experience in and knowledge of coastal zone management and the composition is outlined in the Explanatory Notes to the Bill. There will be representation from conservation, tourism, industry, fishing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests.

The Bill also makes provision for the State Coastal Management Plan, which will give general effect to many of the coastal policy prescriptions of the Government outlined in "Reclaiming the Coast". It will also include the criteria for development assessment that will apply when the approvals process is provided by the proposed planning, environment and development assessment legislation. The State plan will also establish the regions for the more detailed planning based on coastal biogeographic regions, not administrative regions which are so often inappropriate for coastal management purposes.

A draft State coastal management plan is due to be released next year for public consultation and a final plan will be prepared after that. The State plan will be reviewed at least every seven years. If the review identifies the need, a draft plan will be published for public comment.

It is the Government's intention that local government planning schemes will be the major avenue for implementation of coastal planning in local government areas. A State planning policy for the coast will be produced as the primary tool for the introduction of the State's coastal management principles into local government planning schemes and decision making. The State planning policy will contain matters which need to be addressed in local planning schemes. The State coastal management plans will go further to include marine areas and State land, aspects of land use and intergovernmental arrangements, all

of which are outside the scope of local government planning schemes.

Regional coastal management plans will be prepared for parts of the coast as soon as practicable. They will establish management requirements for the coastal zone in each region. They will identify key coastal sites that will be used in determining the boundary of control districts. These key areas requiring special management and development controls are selected using criteria based on the Coastal Protection Strategy Green Paper and may include areas of significant ecological, cultural, heritage or scenic values, and areas of importance for the maintenance of coastal processes.

One of the most important functions of the regional plan will be to determine the boundary of the control district, as this is the area in which coastal development controls will apply. I will outline details of control districts later in this speech.

The regional plans will also take a detailed look at land uses and land management practices within control districts and the policy framework that applies outside control districts. The regional coastal management plans also offer business the benefit of early identification of areas which may be suitable for environmentally sensitive development, while also identifying no-go areas. If a business were tempted to look at developing in one of the no-go areas, it would save time and money by not bothering to approach the State Government or local government, because it would know that the area has already been assessed as not available for development.

Where areas have been designated for development, or there are existing development rights, a building setback line can be designated and developments will have to occur behind this line. Setback lines will be determined in relation to the area's vulnerability to erosion or foreseeable natural hazards and the location of existing developments in the area. If the imposition of a building line or other land use requirements under a regional plan are viewed by the court as a prohibition, then the compensation provisions of section 86 will apply.

In areas covered by a regional plan that are landward of a control district, local governments must have regard for the provisions of the regional plan. However, the plans will be of a policy nature only outside of control districts. The regional coastal management plans will be developed in full consultation with the general community, local

governments, industry, tourism and conservation groups and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests. This will be through a two-stage formal consultation process and by the formation of a regional consultative group. Coastal plans must be reviewed at least every seven years.

It is the intention of the State Government that the provisions of regional coastal management plans will be translated into appropriate provisions in local government planning schemes. Inconsistencies between a regional coastal management plan and a local government planning scheme should be resolved through consultation with local government. However, the State Government will have the power to amend planning schemes where this is necessary to meet its requirement of practical consistency of these schemes with regional coastal management plans. This power to amend is limited to planning schemes prepared under the existing Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act 1990 and will not apply to any schemes prepared under the proposed Planning, Environment and Development Assessment Bill. All land-holders whose land is affected in this way will be notified. Again, the compensation provisions would apply if existing rights are lost.

To ensure that the planning process can proceed quickly, the Goss Government has allocated \$5m over the next five years for coastal planning. Priority areas for regional planning are the wet tropical coast, the Whitsunday coast, the Great Sandy coast and the south-east Queensland coast. The coastal legislation provides that the Minister will appoint a regional consultative group to assist in the preparation of a regional plan.

Wherever practicable, to facilitate the integration of planning initiatives carried out by State Government departments and agencies, regional consultative groups established under the Act would be linked to any existing regional planning advisory groups or forums established under the auspices of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning. The regional groups will be formed when a regional plan is to be prepared for a particular coastal region. Representation for these groups will include members from relevant local government, tourism, conservation, industry and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests. Representation may also be sought, where appropriate, from regional State Government agencies and from the commercial and recreational fisheries industry.

Regional consultative groups are to advise the Minister about the preparation of regional plans and to make recommendations on coastal issues and management strategies and on areas which require special coastal management to achieve ecologically sustainable development of the coastal zone. The chairperson of each regional consultative group will be nominated by the Minister. The legislation provides that the regional consultative groups may be provided with departmental services necessary for them to perform their functions.

This Bill includes a provision allowing for the declaration of control districts. Control districts will normally be declared through a regional plan, but may be declared by regulation in an area that does not yet have a regional plan if the Minister considers the area needs protection. In an emergency situation, the Minister can declare a control district by notice. For example, in areas without a regional plan, if a foredune was being removed and exposing neighbouring properties to the risk of tidal inundation during the next cyclone and no other means were available to prevent this, an emergency declaration would allow for a coastal protection notice to be issued requiring work to stop.

When a control district is declared, all land-holders within the control district will be notified. Control districts will cover all of Queensland's coastal waters as well as adjoining land up to defined maximum limits which are set out in clause 48 of the Bill. Control districts will be used to delineate that part of the coastal zone over which the State Government wishes to exercise some control concerning the type of future development for these areas. This is needed to ensure that the development of Queensland's coastal areas conforms with the Government's commitment to ecologically sustainable development and allow our future generations to enjoy what is one of our greatest assets—the "coast".

The criteria to be used to determine the extent of each control district are outlined in the Bill. Control districts will be of primary importance on undeveloped areas of the coast and areas where there is a clear need for coastal management, such as areas prone to erosion, key biological sites, cultural sites or areas needed for public access.

The Beach Protection Authority has already developed a well-recognised methodology for determining the erosion potential of Queensland's beaches through the calculation of erosion prone area widths. This methodology will continue to be used.

However, the assessment of the coast's vulnerability to erosion will also need to include an assessment of the likely impacts on coastal land due to sea level rise caused by what is now commonly referred to as the greenhouse effect. It is not intended that under this Bill there will be any retrospective provisions or development controls. Where development has been previously approved, this legislation will not modify those approvals by the introduction of new conditions such as land surrender. For the purpose of clarifying the transition arrangements for this provision, a rezoning will be considered to be approved if it has been approved by local government and meets all existing State Government requirements, but has not yet been gazetted.

The exposure draft of the coastal legislation, which was released for public comment, contained an approval process for coastal development. Under the integrated development assessment system (IDAS), the approval process has been deleted from this Bill and will be incorporated in the planning, environment and development assessment (PEDA) legislation. In the interim period between the dates that the coastal legislation and the new planning legislation become law, existing approval processes will continue. This means that the separate existing statutes—the Beach Protection Act 1968; the Canals Act 1958; and those provisions of the Harbours Act 1955 dealing with works in tidal water—will remain in force. By the date of the PEDA legislation becoming law, the above statutes will be repealed and the relevant approval provisions will be consolidated into a single and integrated process in the PEDA legislation. Based on the proposals in the exposure draft of the PEDA legislation, the department administering the coastal legislation will be a concurrence agency or development manager for a development in a control district, depending on the circumstances of the particular development. Local government would be development manager where private land was involved under the current proposal.

It is intended that the Department of Environment and Heritage will be development manager for development applications involving works below high-water mark. The department will be a concurrence agency for land-based development within a control district. Under the planning legislation, proposed developments will be assessed against planning criteria and the object of that legislation. As a development manager or concurrence agency the Department of Environment and Heritage will take account of

the object of the coastal legislation in assessing the development application. This will involve taking account of all relevant coastal, social, environmental and any other relevant parameters to ensure that development complies with the ecologically sustainable development of the coastal zone and its resources.

To enable the Government's policy on coastal management to be implemented as soon as practicable, this Bill contains consequential amendments to the Beach Protection Act 1968. One of these amendments will allow the Governor in Council to place a land surrender condition on any development application involving the rezoning of land which is susceptible to coastal erosion—termed "erosion prone area" in the Beach Protection Act 1968. This amendment is consistent with the Government's policy of maintaining public access to the coast, and protecting vulnerable coastal land from inappropriate development. It is intended that a similar land surrender provision will be incorporated into the Coastal Protection and Management Act by the planning, environment and development assessment legislation.

Cabinet decided in November 1994 as a matter of policy that neither compensation nor appeals against land surrendered as a result of subdivisions, opening or closing of a road, or change of use of the land will be allowable. The land surrender condition will not apply to "as of right" development but deals with those types of special development applications where the owner of land is seeking increased development rights over the land. That is, it is only triggered by an application by the owner and will lapse if the owner does not proceed with the application. It must be realised that the existing Beach Protection Act 1968 has had land surrender with no compensation provisions for many years. It is fundamental to the coastal protection strategy that vulnerable coastal land be returned to public ownership.

The Departments of Housing, Local Government and Planning and Environment and Heritage will jointly put out an advice to local governments regarding changes to administrative processes for rezoning applications resulting from this amendment. There will be a joint submission to the Governor in Council from the Ministers for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Environment and Heritage when a rezoning application involves land surrender. Remember, these arrangements are interim until the PEDAs legislation is law and there is one streamlined process.

For land within a control district, the coastal Bill allows the chief executive to issue notices—termed "coastal protection notices" and "tidal works notices". Notices will be issued to prevent the continuation of an activity which is having a significant effect on coastal management, or to remove works situated below high-water mark that have been abandoned or are in need of urgent repair. It should be stressed that notices shall only be issued as a last resort option. Where such an activity is leading to a coastal management problem or where there is a need to remove or repair works located in tidal water, then the department will first seek to remedy the problem through consultation and discussions with the land-holder or owner of the works. Notices will be issued where such discussion cannot resolve the dispute.

The Coastal Protection and Management Bill provides appeal provisions against the issuing of a notice where the person receiving the notice feels aggrieved or believes the notice is unreasonable in the circumstances. Coastal Protection Notices will not be used to modify existing conditions of development in a way which would constitute a withdrawal or modification of an approval. However, they may be used to control irresponsible construction practice being used to build approved works. As an example, unnecessary damage to vegetation or dune systems may attract a notice where the developer refuses to act in a responsible way. In addition, the Bill provides for the court to order someone to stop offending against the Act.

An action by the court can be initiated by the Minister, the chief executive, someone whose interests are affected by the matter or someone else with the leave of the court—that is, the court grants standing to a third party. The court must be satisfied that the third party meets certain conditions to ensure that the provision of third-party rights is not abused. The legislation makes provision for the court to award costs. Where the courts decide that an application for a restraint order is made in a frivolous or vexatious way, the opportunity would be open to the court to award costs against the person who brought the action. It is expected that third-party rights will be granted under the planning and development assessment legislation to allow third-party appeals against decisions of the Queensland Government and local governments.

The compensation provisions in the coastal Bill relate to a prohibition of an existing lawful use by the declaration of a coastal management plan or a control district. These compensation provisions have been drafted

based on the compensation provisions contained in the recently released public exposure draft of the PEDDA Bill. The exposure draft of the PEDDA Bill provides for down-zoning with limited compensation provisions for "as of right", consent, preferred and discretionary developments. One of the main eligibility criteria for compensation is that owners must lodge an application with the local government within two years of the change of zoning.

However, the coastal Bill only provides compensation for existing development rights, not potential development rights such as consent developments. Consent development does not carry automatic rights in the same way as "as of right" developments. A consent land use category only represents a possible increased development right subject to the development application meeting all other social and environmental factors. Because a regional coastal management plan deals primarily with the environmental management of the coastal zone, it is considered that a consent development should not be entitled to compensation. The coastal Bill also includes compensation for loss of rights for rural activities. The prohibition of an "as of right" rural activity should attract the same right to compensation as the loss of an "as of right" development. As no specific application is required for rural activities an alternate trigger for the consideration of compensation has been included, that is, application to the chief executive.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Slack, adjourned.

ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (5.09 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994 and other Acts."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (5.10 p.m.): I move—

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

The objective of this Bill is to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994, the Health Act 1937, the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949 and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993. This Bill has been drafted to achieve the recommendation of the Public Sector Management Commission to transfer the responsibility for waste from Queensland Health to the Department of Environment and Heritage. This transfer of waste responsibility will strengthen the role of DEH as the lead agency for the environment in Queensland. This Bill will be necessary for an interim period until 31 December 1996, when the Environmental Protection Policy for Waste is completed.

To effect this transfer of waste responsibility, it was necessary to amend the Health Act 1937 by repealing those sections that dealt with the removal, collection and disposal of refuse and transferring the intention of these sections into the Environmental Protection Act 1994. These amendments will remove Queensland Health from the approval process for waste activities. However, it will still play an integral role in providing advice on public health issues associated with waste management.

The proposed amendments will retain a number of local government functions, especially in relation to local government's approval of persons who may carry out waste removal and transport within the respective local government area. While such local government approval is necessary to conduct waste activities, this may be seen as a monopoly in that local governments alone can determine who operates waste activities in their respective town or shire. Therefore, in accordance with the requirements of the National Competition Policy, this matter will be addressed as part of the public consultation period of the Environmental Protection Policy for Waste when a public benefits test will be carried out. The Queensland Treasury's National Competition Policy Unit has agreed to this process.

It should be noted that this Bill will be for an interim period and the Bill has a sunset clause dated 31 December 1996, when it is anticipated that the Environmental Protection Policy for Waste will be ready to commence. This Bill will basically improve the approach to waste management in Queensland. Primarily, for the first time, private ownership of landfills will be possible, thus opening up waste

disposal to the private sector in line with the National Competition Policy. This move raises the question of proper and safe management of these landfills. I can assure the honourable members of the House that, under the Environmental Protection Act, strict and rigid controls are in place for landfill management, whether it is under public or private ownership. Under the Environmental Protection Act, the onus of environmental protection on landfills and other waste activities will be on the operator or the licence holder.

The amendment of the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949 addresses the issues raised in the Criminal Justice Commission's investigation into the improper disposal of liquid waste in south-east Queensland. It will increase the penalties, providing a maximum penalty of 1,000 penalty units for the discharge of prohibited substances into sewerage or stormwater drainage, the discharge of trade waste into stormwater drainage, or the discharge of trade waste into sewerage without the local government's permission. This will prevent such actions becoming a means for circumventing environmental protection legislation. Also as part of this process, it will increase the maximum penalties allowed in the standard sewerage and water supply laws under the Act from 40 penalty units to 165 penalty units. Apart from their conversion to penalty points in late 1992, the maximum penalties under these standard laws have not been increased since 1981. This Bill will reinforce the improved controls to ensure that Queensland's environment will continue to be protected.

Another part of this Bill refers to the Wet Tropics area and an amendment to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993. I should point out to honourable members that the draft Wet Tropics Plan has been developed to put forward a number of options on the management of this important conservation area. The plan identifies a need to have delegation mechanisms in place for decisions under the Wet Tropics Plan. This amendment will expand the Wet Tropics Management Authority's ability to delegate decision-making powers to other State agencies and local government. This amendment will assist in placing the Wet Tropics Plan in line with the principles of the Integrated Development Approval System, IDAS.

Under the amendments, the Queensland Government will continue to ensure that strict controls are maintained for the protection of Queensland's environment and that our

magnificent conservation values are properly managed. I commend this Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Slack, adjourned.

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT BILL

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (5.17 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Electricity Act 1994."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (5.18 p.m.): I move—

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

The introduction of this Bill gives the Parliament the opportunity to provide a guarantee to electricity consumers in Queensland, both domestic and industrial, that tariff equalisation will continue in Queensland. The Electricity Act of 1994 provides—

"The Minister may act to maintain equalisation of price throughout the State for customers to whom a particular tariff applies."

The amendment proposed to the Act ensures that the Minister must act to maintain equalisation of prices. The amendment is important as the Government has committed Queensland to the national electricity grid which will commence in 1999. According to Mr Hilless, the Chief Executive of the Queensland Transmission and Supply Company, the national electricity market is based on five key principles: freedom of choice; non-discriminatory access to the grid; merit order dispatch-based generator bid prices; non-discriminatory barriers to entry by participants or to interstate trade; and uniform and cost-effective grid pricing. Hilless went on to explain—

"In general terms, (customers) will be able to seek unique solutions for their individual electricity supply and service needs, and the successful distributors will be those who have developed a

competitive advantage in the provision of those solutions.

The advantage will be reflected in their depth of understanding of their customers' needs and by offering products and services that outshine their competitors' in terms of price, quality, flexibility and reliability.

Examples would be more choices of pricing options and provision of equipment to customers to ensure that any special requirements for higher than normal quality electricity supply are met."

The fifth principle requires analysis. Mr Hillless used words such as "competitive advantage", "outshine their competitors in terms of price", and "choices of pricing options". It is quite clear from what Mr Hillless is saying in this statement that uniform pricing will be eclipsed by competition between suppliers. The fifth principle of uniform pricing has fallen away and been replaced by "competitive and cost effective grid pricing."

Before the electricity pricing mechanism of tariff equalisation is eroded by a decision of the Executive Labor Government without reference to the Parliament, it is imperative that action be taken to provide a legislative requirement that the Government maintain equalisation of price throughout the State. Tariff equalisation did not occur by chance. In 1935, William Forgan Smith's Labor Government appointed a royal commission on electricity. In appointing the commission, the Government of the day stressed the need for coordinated and planned development of the electricity industry. The two main aims of the 1936 royal commission and subsequent legislation were to extend electricity supply to rural areas of Queensland and to work towards uniform prices throughout the State. Uniform pricing, the second aim of the royal commission, was a consistent objective over the next five decades.

The fulfilment of that long-term aspiration was accomplished in 1986 by successive coalition Governments. It was a hard-won policy achievement and not without pain for customers. For the coalition parties, tariff equalisation has the same absolute policy commitment as the full actuarial funding of long-term liabilities such as superannuation, workers' compensation and motor vehicle third-party insurance.

The Goss Labor Government cannot lay claim to the full actuarial funding of the Workers Compensation Fund following the recent revelation of a \$120m shortfall in the fund. The Goss Government knew of the

pending blow-out from June 1992, yet did nothing to stop the haemorrhaging of funds to save its political hide.

The Bill before the House proposes a legislative requirement which puts an obligation on Government to act to maintain equalisation of electricity prices. It endeavours to shut the gate before the horse bolts. The Bill is a preventative measure. It removes the equivocating "may" for the Minister to maintain equalisation of price throughout the State, replacing it with an obligation for the Minister to maintain tariff equalisation. The amendment proposed to the Act requires that the Minister must act to maintain equalisation of prices. The Government should support this amendment if it is genuine about its policy stance on tariff equalisation.

The Minister for Minerals and Energy, speaking before the Estimates Committee E, on 6 June 1995 stated—

"I want the committee to be fully aware and under no illusions at all that tariff equalisation is an integral part of this Government's policy."

The Minister further stated—

"I want it stressed loudly and clearly that tariff equalisation is part and parcel of our Government's policy, and I do not want it to be interpreted in any other way, shape or form."

Despite these words, the Minister subtly demonstrated the lack of commitment to tariff equalisation in a recent comment on *Late Edition* regarding Eastlink. Firstly, he took umbrage at a Senate committee's inquiry into the construction of the Eastlink power line project. He stated—

"I take exception to senators . . . all coming here to interfere with the domestic political decision of this State."

He further stated—

"What we have to understand is the reasons for Eastlink, and this has been lost . . .

There's \$750m to be given to Queensland by the Federal Government if we participate in the competitive exercise which is going on."

On the one hand, the Minister takes exception to a Senate committee inquiring into the high voltage power lines across this State's agricultural lands but is quite relaxed about the Federal Government dictating the policy direction of energy supply in Queensland. There is no consistency in the Minister's argument. The difference is that the senators

did not have \$750m in their pockets and were listening to reasons why Eastlink should not proceed. The bottom line is that the Federal Government is offering a \$750m incentive to join the "competitive exercise", namely, the national marketing grid which enables this Government to get out of an embarrassing supply problem after 1998. The Minister further stated—

"We will go into Eastlink because it means cheaper and more efficient electricity for the people of this State and will enable this State to continue to grow and prosper.

Going into Eastlink does not necessarily mean that there will be cheaper and more efficient electricity for the people of this State. What Eastlink means is that this Labor Government has had to put Queensland into the "competitive exercise" not for the good reason of participating in the competition policy reforms but because of its failure to ensure supply for 1998 and beyond. As stated before, Eastlink is a \$750m aphrodisiac for the Government and a face-saver for the Labor Government to alleviate a shortfall of power towards the end of the century. That is what it means.

The competitive energy edge that Queensland had at the beginning of the 1990s has gone. It has been eroded by this Labor Government's failure to maintain the planning momentum it inherited in 1989. Instead of being in the position to sell power, what is this Labor Government having to do? To maintain sufficient supply it has to buy power from the national marketing grid. The concern is that this new "competitive exercise" that this Government talks about will mean that tariff equalisation will be sacrificed—that it will be whittled away in the same way that the Workers Compensation Fund was eroded.

The current Electricity Act of 1994 does not place an obligation on the Minister or AUSTA to maintain tariff equalisation. The Electricity Act of 1976 to 1988, section 64 (3), states—

"In determining the prices to be paid for electricity, the commission shall at all times have regard to, and proceed towards, the objective of progressively equalising throughout the State the prices to be paid by consumers to whom a particular tariff applies."

In this Act, there was an obligation on the then commission to "at all times have regard" to the equalising of tariffs. The new Electricity Act of 1994 does not insist on that duty. It is watered down to the "Minister may act to

maintain". On the one hand, the Minister talks about a policy of tariff equalisation, but there is a difference between talking about a policy commitment and actually being obliged to act to maintain price uniformity throughout the State. The Treasurer, in an interview in the electricity supply magazine of 20 July 1995, acknowledged the policy of equal tariffs. He went on, however, to confirm that the policy has to blend with corporatisation. In other words, the corporatised bodies, such as electricity authorities, have to be competitive and the corollary is that the user-pays principle applies. The Treasurer, in an interview in the electricity supply magazine, further stated—

"We have got a policy in Queensland of equal tariffs and there is quite a bit of work to be done. We have to work through a lot of issues in respect of that.

How do we pay authorities to deliver electricity at a uniform price but also provide incentives for efficient delivery?

Those things are not impossible but there are some fairly difficult methodology and conceptual issues that we have to work through.

We have established a policy, now we have got to see how we can blend that policy with the principle underlying corporatisation. We think we can do it. It is just a bit more difficult than in some other States."

The Treasurer went on to state, however—

"We make no apology for the fact all components of the electricity industry should generate commercial rates of return and pay an appropriate dividend on that."

Commercial rates of return, sale and lease-back of generating units, and national grid-like contestable markets point to the fairly difficult methodology and conceptual issues that the Government has to work through. The fear is that in working through the difficult methodology and conceptual issues equal tariffs may be the victim. The Treasurer, speaking on the Appropriation Bill, on 31 May 1995, was more positive on the issue of equal tariffs, stating—

"The Government will now explicitly fund tariff equalisation for domestic consumers throughout the State, at a full year cost of \$70 million."

It seems from what the Treasurer said then that tariff equalisation is Government policy, but uniform prices do not sit well with his Government's commitment to the national electricity grid. It is a matter of regret that we

cannot accept the words of the Treasurer and the Minister for Energy that "tariff equalisation is part and parcel" of Government policy.

It will be recalled that the Premier and the Treasurer gave similar positive commitments to full actuarial funding of long-term liabilities such as workers' compensation in *From Strength to Strength and Leading State*. The commitments ultimately were nothing but platitudes. The people of Queensland cannot take the Government at its word. The Minister's words before the Estimates committee and the Treasurer's words in the electricity supply magazine are not sufficient. There needs to be a legislative requirement to make it a responsibility of the Minister to act to maintain tariff equalisation.

The Government can ease concerns about the future status of uniform prices by supporting this Bill. Failure to do so will underscore existing concerns that the Government lacks commitment to its policy stances. The Government has suffered much damage arising from its failure to uphold and be honest about the first element of its financial management strategy to fully fund long-term liabilities such as superannuation and workers' compensation. The Government has lost credibility on that policy issue.

The Government has little standing in the non-metropolitan areas for its commitment to service delivery after five years of rationalisation. There is concern throughout Queensland that tariff equalisation will be cut out of the rural areas in the same way as the courthouses, teachers, police officers, etc. There is genuine concern throughout the north, the far north and rural and western areas that tariff equalisation will be chopped around to the extent that it is irrelevant.

As stated before, equalisation of tariffs was finally achieved in 1986—some nine years ago. Over that time all Queenslanders have benefited from the equalisation of tariffs, such as the development of secondary and tertiary industries across the length and breadth of the State. There have been new industries, jobs and opportunities. In north, far-north and western Queensland, uniform pricing is sacred. The loss of tariff equalisation, if it occurred, would cause electricity prices to rise by 20 per cent or more in areas such as Cairns, Charters Towers, Townsville and other areas of the State that are distant from major generators.

The inevitable result will be a retraction of industrial and domestic development to those areas in central and south-eastern Queensland where the majority of electricity

generation occurs. Remote areas will face further industrial development isolation and will become uncompetitive. With such vastness and decentralisation comes a greater cost burden for the provision of essential services. In all areas of service and utility provision, the ultimate goal should be equalising service access and cost equalisation across the State. Electricity tariff equalisation provides the benchmark for the realisation of this achievable benefit. The Bill offers the Parliament a chance to ensure that all Ministers, regardless of party political persuasion, must act to maintain uniform pricing. For more than half a century, tariff equalisation was a controversial matter. The big step towards tariff equalisation occurred in 1977 with the re-organisation of industry.

In introducing the new Electricity Bill in 1976, the then coalition Minister for Mines and Energy, Ron Camm, said—

"One of the objects of the legislation is eventual equalisation of tariffs throughout Queensland.

The concept of eventual equalisation of tariffs throughout Queensland is merely that the electricity consumer in Queensland is entitled to the benefit of the State's ample resources of cheap coal whether he lives in Cairns or Corinda, in Blackwater or Birdsville."

It should be noted that the Labor Opposition at that time agreed that "electricity costs be reduced", but did not agree with the modus operandi of achieving equalisation. The Labor Opposition's preferred option was a "subsidy scheme to level electricity costs." According to the Labor Leader at that time, Tom Burns, the scheme was to be implemented by—

". . . subsidising the power distribution authorities in country areas so that they could charge the same price as that charged in the city of Brisbane."

There is one outcome clear, if a subsidy did exist when Labor came to power in 1989, it would not exist now. As said before, it would have been cut along with other services to the rural areas of this State. It should be noted that the Labor Opposition in 1976, which consisted of just 11 members, spoke against the Bill on the third reading. The Labor Opposition of 1976 at that time did not make the tough decision which was necessary for the entire State. The Labor Government of today, like the Labor Opposition of 1976, is unable to make the tough strategic decisions for Queensland's future development. Instead of progressing Queensland it has had to put its hand out to the south to supplement power

supply and in so doing put in jeopardy a key policy—tariff equalisation. This Bill gives the Parliament the opportunity to ensure that tariff equalisation remains the benchmark from which Queensland can develop. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hamill, adjourned.

The House adjourned at 5.33 p.m.