

TUESDAY, 30 APRIL 1996

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. N. J. Turner, Nicklin) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 a.m.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following Bills reported by Mr Speaker—

Petroleum Act;

Parliamentary Committees Act.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Presentation and Answer

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to inform the House that yesterday, accompanied by honourable members, I presented to Her Excellency the Governor the Address of the Legislative Assembly, adopted by this House on 18 April 1996, in reply to Her Excellency's Opening Speech, and that Her Excellency has been pleased to make the following reply—

"Mr Speaker and Members:

On the 28th March 1996, I had the honour to deliver a speech at the Opening of the Second Session of the Forty-Eighth Parliament of Queensland. As the representative of Her Majesty the Queen, I now extend to you and to the Members of the Parliament of Queensland, my sincere thanks for the formal Address-In-Reply.

It will be my pleasant duty to convey to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II the expression of continued loyalty and affection from the Members of the Queensland Parliament.

The Queen remains a strong and unifying figure for the peoples of our Commonwealth of Nations, and a sign of our shared beliefs in freedom and democracy.

Within our own community of Queensland, I encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly in promoting the well-being and prosperity of our State. And I share the community's desire that your efforts will meet with great success.

On behalf of the people of Queensland, I ask that God guide you and bless your work with abundance.

Leneen Forde"

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to advise the House that today I received from the Auditor-General the following reports—

- (1) Audits of Aboriginal Councils and Island Councils, performed for 1994-95; and
- (2) Audits of Local Governments, performed for 1994-95.

PORT ARTHUR MASSACRE

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (9.34 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That the Parliament of Queensland extends its deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of the victims of the shocking massacre at Port Arthur on Sunday."

All Australians and the world have been shocked by the tragic loss of innocent lives that occurred at Port Arthur on Sunday afternoon. The peacefulness of families and tourists enjoying a quiet afternoon at one of Tasmania's prime tourist destinations was shattered by a lone gunman shooting at random. In the space of a couple of hours the area was transformed into a battle zone as victims lay strewn on roads, seated in cafes or slumped in a tourist bus. To ordinary, normal people there was no rhyme or reason for such wanton waste of human life. Yet suddenly our peaceful nation had set an international benchmark for human atrocity. Thirty-four people were slaughtered in the world's worst peacetime massacre, with four of the 19 people injured still in a critical condition last night.

Australians have witnessed similar atrocities before at home, but never on a scale such as this. We have seen the results of similar senseless acts via television in our lounge rooms, such as the recent slaying of school children at Dunblane in Scotland, and prayed that such a tragedy would never occur here. Now it has, and while our innocence as a nation, I believe, was lost as a result of similar tragedies in our recent past, the magnitude of this loss and the callous waste of human life has inscribed its black mark on Australia forever. In the wake of such a tragedy it is only human to look for reasons, to search for answers as we seek to come to grips with the loss. In particular, we must question why such a person was able to acquire weapons, including the semiautomatic rifle with which he perpetrated his own brand of warfare on

innocent people. It is not the time or place to delve into the issues I have mentioned as we search for answers to this catastrophe. We must work together to find practical, workable solutions across all areas which have the collective effect of safeguarding citizens wherever they may live.

In closing, I would like to commend the efforts of all police, emergency service workers and trauma counsellors in Tasmania for their handling of the crisis. To the hospital workers who had to treat the wounded, I pass on my very special commendation. The professionalism of emergency services and of the medical and nursing professions in caring for human life once again was evident and equal to the task.

Finally, to the relatives and friends of all the victims, whether they may be in Australia or overseas, I pass on the heartfelt sympathy of all Queenslanders. The loss of loved ones is difficult to bear in any circumstances. Seeing those loved ones gunned down in a random killing spree on a quiet Sunday afternoon in Tasmania unfortunately forges an indelible memory which will forever live with those who were present. However, each and every one of us must remember the horror of this event as we work towards building a better society in Australia and elsewhere.

I also wish to advise the House that, following an invitation from the Premier of Tasmania, the Leader of the Opposition and I will travel to Hobart tomorrow to attend the State memorial service. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—Leader of the Opposition) (9.38 a.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the Premier and also to support the comments that he made in moving the motion. In doing so, I extend the sympathy of the Opposition to the families of those who have been killed and injured at Port Arthur. I understand that the latest death toll is 34, and it may even rise to 35.

It is a sad reflection on twentieth-century society that this tragedy occurred on Sunday. The sad truth, of course, is that there are no guarantees that any community is safe from this sort of behaviour. As the Premier indicated, these tragedies have become all too frequent. We saw the one in Scotland only recently. None of us, I believe, will forget those horrific images on TV. In my view, they will scar the Australian psyche for a generation. As I said, these senseless acts could occur anywhere in Australia. That is why, once we have recovered from the initial shock and feeling of outrage, we must all act to try to

reduce the chances of this happening again. We owe it to the people who have suffered in this tragedy to learn from this experience.

In relation to the issue of gun laws, I have already offered to the Premier the bipartisan support of the Opposition, and we mean it. If we can develop a bipartisan approach, I believe that that would be welcomed by all in the community. I hope that the Government understands that we are very genuine in that approach. Indeed, we need a bipartisan approach on an Australiawide basis, not only our Parliament but also all other Parliaments in this country. Now is the time for all the Parliaments of Australia to come together. We have to put the failures of the past behind us.

As a result of the tragedy on Sunday, many people in the community feel that there should have been tougher gun laws. We cannot change the past; but, of course, we can influence the future. The Port Arthur tragedy imposes on all parliamentarians across Australia the heavy responsibility to introduce laws to protect the community and, in doing so, resist pressures from those groups who have for so long stood in the way of uniform gun laws. A bipartisan approach is the only way to look rationally at issues such as gun control laws. I look forward to working with the Government to achieve a bipartisan outcome that is in the interests of all members of the community.

I thank the Premier for the courtesy that he has extended to me, as Leader of the Opposition, to attend the service tomorrow in Tasmania. I thank him also for initiating this motion today, which is important for this Parliament.

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (9.41 a.m.): I do not think words can fully express the tragedy of events such as the Port Arthur massacre. Certainly my sympathies and all of our sympathies are extended to the families and friends of the victims and also to the people of the State of Tasmania. That type of wanton criminal slaughter strikes at the very core of our community. We can see that the community in Tasmania is reeling from this shock, and we must help in any way that we possibly can.

The true horror of this massacre is in its callousness and its very random nature. It strikes at the core of all of us, because none of us, even here in our wonderful State of Queensland, is exempt. Indeed, all of us could have been a victim on Sunday. It is frightening that this can happen in our wonderful nation. It

makes all of us rethink our position, particularly in relation to the safety of our citizens.

It is certainly not the first massacre of this type, although it is the worst that we have ever had in our nation. Unfortunately, it is unlikely to be the last. Although Governments can make some changes, it is up to the entire community to work to remove this stain from our nation. There is no doubt that the Port Arthur massacre will leave a stain on our community and on our country. I think that we must all now work together towards the healing process and help directly as much as we can the community in Tasmania. As a nation, and Queensland as a State in that nation, we must help in any way we can with that healing process.

Mr SPEAKER: Would honourable members please rise and observe a minute's silence?

Motion agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

PETITION

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petition—

Juvenile Crime, Browns Plains Area

From **Mr W. K. Goss** (92 signatories) requesting the House to (a) continue the funding for the Youth and Combined Community Action project in the Crestmead, Marsden and Browns Plains area, which has made significant progress in reducing the incidence of juvenile crime in the area; (b) the retention of the current youth worker who has established a respectful rapport with the young people of the area.

Petition received.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

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

- Coal Industry (Control) Act 1948—
 - Coal Industry (Control) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1996, No. 77
- Dairy Industry Act 1993—
 - Dairy Industry (Market Milk Prices) Order 1996, No. 74
- Environmental Protection Act 1994—
 - Environmental Protection (Interim Waste) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1996, No. 71

- Food Act 1981—
 - Food Hygiene Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1996, No. 70
- Health Act 1937—
 - Poisons Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1996, No. 69
- Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 1993—
 - Higher Education (General Provisions) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1996, No. 76
- Mineral Resources Act 1989—
 - Mineral Resources Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1996, No. 78
- Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994—
 - Motor Accident Insurance Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1996, No. 75
- Nature Conservation Act 1992—
 - Nature Conservation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1996, No. 72
- Petroleum Act 1923—
 - Petroleum (Entry Permission) Notice 1996, No. 81
- Plant Protection Act 1989—
 - Plant Protection (Papaya Fruit Fly) Quarantine Regulation 1996, No. 79
- Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990—
 - Superannuation (State Public Sector) Amendment Notice (No. 1) 1996, No. 80
- Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—
 - Workplace Health and Safety (Lead) Compliance Amendment Standard (No. 1) 1996, No. 73.

PAPERS TABLED DURING RECESS

The Clerk announced that the following papers were tabled during the recess—

- 26 April 1996—
 - Canegrowers' Annual Report 1995 (incorporating the Financial Reports of the Queensland Cane Growers' Council and Controlled Entities)
- 29 April 1996-
 - Queensland Pork Producers' Organisation Annual Report 1995.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

- Minister for Education (Mr Quinn)—
 - Annual Reports for 1995—
 - James Cook University of North Queensland
 - Board of Trustees of the Toowoomba Grammar School.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State Budget Process

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: Early in April, I made a statement to the House providing an overview of the forecast Budget outcome for the current financial year and the outlook and challenges the coalition Government faces for the 1996-97 year. I noted that the first step in the process of developing the 1996-97 State Budget was to review the initiatives, many unfunded, put in place by the previous Government to achieve savings which can be redirected to the implementation of our initiatives and commitments. That process is important for two reasons: as at the Commonwealth level, the previous Government has left a Budget shortfall, which requires urgent remedial action to restore the Budget to a balanced position; and, as the previous Government embarked on an irresponsible spending spree in its last months in office, we need to wind back their initiatives to make room for the implementation of coalition initiatives.

It is inevitable that that process will lead to speculation regarding initiatives that might be scaled back or cease. A recent example is the uninformed media speculation in relation to previous Government initiatives in the areas of the environment and tourism. In order to put this into a proper context, I will outline the deliberative process that is being followed in developing the 1996-97 State Budget. As I have already indicated, the first step in the Budget process is the review of previous Government initiatives. As part of that step, all Ministers have reviewed all previous Government initiatives and made submissions and recommendations to the Cabinet Budget Committee.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: In exactly the same manner, may I add, as the former Government did in its Budget Review Committee. Possibly the member for Ipswich took no part in that process.

The CBC is a subcommittee of the Cabinet comprising the Premier, the Minister for Trade and Economic Development and me. It is charged with developing the State Budget and, as I said, operates in a similar way to the previous Government's Cabinet Budget Review Committee. As well as submissions and proposals from Ministers, the CBC also receives advice and proposals from the Treasury in regard to both savings options and new initiatives. In accordance with

Westminster tradition, Treasury provides advice without fear or favour and, being a strong Treasury, the Queensland Treasury does not pull any punches when it comes to proposing savings options. It has given us advice in regard to savings options in the Environment portfolio and for every other portfolio of Government. However, the final decisions are made by the Cabinet Budget Committee and the Cabinet. That is part of the normal deliberative process of Government, a process followed by all States in Australia and by the previous Queensland Government.

As an aside, I would note that the documents that have been leaked are not Treasury documents. In fact, they are documents that comment on Treasury proposals and form just one part of the range of advice flowing to the Cabinet Budget Committee. I reiterate that Cabinet is the ultimate decision-making authority on all those matters. In common with other responsible Governments, we will not be drawn into the process of speculating about the final content and composition of the State Budget. Everyone will have to wait for the State Budget to be presented in September to see the final document. What is being seen at present is half-baked speculation on only the first phase of the Budget process. The speculation to date is also premature in that the second phase of preparing the State Budget will commence shortly.

The second phase will address the value for money Queenslanders are getting from Government services to identify where savings can be achieved without impacting on core service delivery and the implementation of coalition commitments and initiatives. This phase will broadly follow the same process as the first phase of reviewing initiatives of the previous Government.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: It is abundantly clear that the community did not receive good value for money from the previous Government. The failed Minister for Transport would certainly be testament to that. We intend to rectify that with our priority being back to basics in service delivery. For example, in regard to the environment, we have undertaken not to reduce base funding. Did Mr Hamill hear that? I said, "not to reduce base funding". However, our emphasis will be on national park management, not further land acquisition.

While we are committed to the policies we outlined to the Queensland community before the July State election, the timing and scope of our initiatives will be affected by the delay in

attaining Government eight months into the first year of a three-year term—

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Mr Beattie and Mr Hamill should listen well to this—and the underlying deficit of \$185m for 1995-96 and the real \$240m deficit we faced in 1996-97 left to us by the previous Government. Put another way, the greater the savings on initiatives of the previous Government, the greater the scope for coalition commitments to be implemented.

I am sure that there will be further speculation in regard to our deliberations related to this second phase. However, we will not rise to the bait. Of course, there will be a full and rigorous debate on the Budget within the CBC and Cabinet but not on the front pages of newspapers. We are prepared to be fully accountable for the final decisions embodied in the State Budget. That judgment, however, should be based on a balanced assessment of the overall package that will be delivered in September, not on uninformed histrionics from those opposite or misinformed leaks that will have little relevance to the final Budget statement.

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

Mrs SHELDON: The Opposition has been sold a pup with its leaks, and I for one will not be responding to daily doses of misinformation from Labor's motley crew opposite.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Electricity Supply

Hon. T. J. G. GILMORE (Tablelands—Minister for Mines and Energy) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: Following speculation which has arisen in the media over the past week about potential electricity blackouts in south-east Queensland, I wish today to put the facts of the matter before the Parliament.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr GILMORE: Opposition members should just wait. In doing so, I want to make it clear that the role of the coalition Government is to re-establish a reliable, low cost and safe supply of electricity for the people of Queensland as a top priority. The unfortunate truth is that in the first half of this decade, the vital task of establishing the infrastructure for our future power supplies was not a priority of the Goss Government. We will redress that situation. But first, and most importantly, I

want to assure Queenslanders that the Government will do everything possible to ensure that power supplies in any part of this State meet the needs of the community at all times.

Mr Nuttall: Go ahead with Eastlink.

Mr GILMORE: I promise the member that I will not go ahead with Eastlink. Despite the failures of the previous Government in this area, this indeed was the priority I brought to my job when I took over the portfolio on 26 February this year.

Aware that there were potential supply problems, I deemed it prudent as one of my first actions as Minister to call for an audit from AUSTA Electric and from the Queensland Transmission and Supply Corporation on power supply, that is, on generation and transmission. I received a response from AUSTA at 3 p.m. on Friday, 19 April and was later informed that a senior journalist had received a comprehensive briefing by telephone regarding that document before I had actually received it. I read that document later that evening. I was further informed that the same journalist had received a more comprehensive briefing the following day. I was not the author of the fear and confusion surrounding power supply last week.

Mr Hamill: The Premier was.

Mr GILMORE: Not at all. The member should let me finish. Rather, it was the train of misinformation which followed the initial leaking of information in a confidential working document and its publication and magnification by the media—much of it inaccurate, unfortunately. I have now been assured in writing by the chief executives of all three power supply authorities—AUSTA Electric, Powerlink and the Queensland Transmission and Supply Corporation—that action already undertaken or planned will guarantee supply, including that in peak demand periods.

I table this document in order to dispel any fears that have been raised irresponsibly in the community. I wish to quote one point from this document—

"Risks to supply in south-east Queensland in the summers of 1996-97 and 1997-98 are low and similar to the 1995-96 summer. The generating capacity and transmission lines will be utilised to their full capabilities for extended periods, but the risks are within normal acceptable practice."

There are risks in everything we do, but I repeat that the risks to Queensland's power

supply are within normal acceptable practice. The headlines of the past week have therefore been needlessly alarmist. The fact that they were apparently based on leaks from one, or other, or both of the electricity authorities is a matter of great regret. A higher degree of professionalism and loyalty from one or two people is certainly called for.

This guarantee from the industry does not in itself involve construction of any further powerlines but rather a technical enhancement of the carrying capacity of the existing infrastructure. I received this assurance of supply after the three organisations resolved, at my insistence, an apparent dispute over whether blackouts would or would not occur in peak demand periods. New information provided to AUSTA Electric by Powerlink last week has removed concerns apparently held by AUSTA.

Mr McGrady: Apologise, then—apologise to the people.

Mr GILMORE: Mr Speaker, the previous Minister has finally woken up that something has been going on! That is the gentleman who has been accusing me of wanting to run powerlines all over the country—powerlines which he had already planned—and now he wakes up and makes an inane interjection! That is the kind of foolishness that we have come to expect from the member opposite. It was a hallmark of his Ministry, and he has not learned a thing from it.

In resolving this issue, I have discovered that one of the awful legacies of the Opposition's flawed approach to the electricity industry is the division which its policies helped to create between the various power supply entities. Labor created that situation by virtue of its mismanagement of the Queensland industry. I have instructed the principals of the industry to put those issues behind them and get on with the job that they were put there to do.

On achieving office in 1989, the Labor Party inherited the nation's most efficient, low cost and reliable electric supply industry without doubt. Labor had a clear responsibility to maintain that position, and it failed. Under the former Minister's leadership, it failed. It is not as though the Labor Government did not know what the challenges of future supply were. Back in May 1994, the then Minister McGrady established a future power supply task force to gather community views on future supply options. In launching that body, he personally endorsed a series of publications, all of which began by declaring—

"Unless decisions are taken soon, we will face periods of electricity shortages from about 1998."

That was well known in 1989, yet it took him until 1994 to discover it. What an idiot! The publications stated further—

"Around then, the demand for power at certain times of the day could exceed Queensland's available power sources."

Mr Hamill: You are hiding your embarrassment behind unparliamentary language.

Mr GILMORE: I am not in the least bit embarrassed. It is the goat who sits behind the member who would not know whether it was daylight or dark unless he had a torch. He would not know!

In a signed message to the Queensland people in the same publication in May 1994, Mr McGrady stated—

"As the State grows"—

and this was a spectacular piece of insight—

"additional supplies of electricity are going to be needed."

What a spectacular piece of insight!

Mr Borbidge: How long did it take him to work that out?

Mr GILMORE: It took him four years to work that out, as well. At that time, he had been the Minister for two years.

Mr Borbidge: He is brighter than we thought.

Mr GILMORE: He certainly is brighter than we thought. We thought that it would take him a little longer to work that out. Mr McGrady stated further—

"As the State grows, additional supplies of electricity are going to be needed if we're to maintain our reputation of providing low cost, reliable supplies of power."

The Goss Government called for bids for major new power generation in Queensland and, at a total estimated cost of no less than \$25m, three organisations submitted proposals for major power developments at Wandoan, Brigalow and Millmerran. I might add that some of those costs were associated with costs of this Government. With what result? The Government deferred them all and refused to make a decision. Queensland must have more power. The task force knew that, the Goss Government knew that and everybody in the industry knew that. The Goss Government had the resources to fix it. It had three competitive, detailed proposals, any one

of which would have solved the problem. If it had accepted one of the bids the development of a major power station would be well advanced, but it dithered until it was finally tossed out of Government. The only major, new power supply infrastructure completed during the Goss Government's term of office was Stanwell Power Station, a project envisaged, created, designed and begun during the term of the previous National Party Government.

In addition, everyone, including Mr McGrady—but apparently excluding the Opposition Leader—knows that the much-touted Eastlink proposal was not going to meet any shortfall of our future power supply needs prior to 1999. Also, to my knowledge there was not an understanding or agreement signed to the effect that future competition in the electricity industry was contingent upon Eastlink—a Beattie furphy, a Beattie beat-up.

In my book, competition is very important indeed, but keeping the lights on is the most important goal of this Government's approach to the electricity industry. I am sure Queensland business would not thank this Government for placing reliability of supply in any other position than at the very top of its priority list. Therefore, any attempt by the Opposition Leader to use the confusion he has helped to create over future power supplies can be clearly seen for what it is: party politics of a very mediocre variety.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr GILMORE: Here he is laughing, the pretend Leader of the Opposition, the man who was a pretend member of this Cabinet for some months, and who spent the first 100 days wandering in the wilderness. When he finally came back, his Government was gone. There was no future for him, so now he is the pretend Leader of the Opposition. Might I say, given his background, that this man, of all Labor Party members, ought to know the virtue and value of the secrecy of Cabinet documents. However, as soon as he got his grubby little hands on a classification A secret document, he gave it to the press. What kind of a Leader of the Opposition is he? What kind of a man pretends to be the future Premier of this State and yet indulges in such a disgraceful piece of politics?

On the issue of electricity needs, Mr Beattie's party had nothing to offer in Government and has even less to offer now. As with the economic wellbeing of this State, Labor inherited the best in the country and then set about undermining it with flawed policies and an abject failure to act, even

when urged to do so by task forces it set up. As for the attacks on the Government, especially in relation to its abandonment of the ALP's much-loved Eastlink proposal, I draw the attention of the House to an article in the latest edition of the respected *Business Review Weekly*, written by David Forman. Referring to the planned national electricity market, he writes—

"Some senior business people believe Australia runs the risk of so tying up the electricity market in regulation that it will never be truly competitive. If the critics are right, Australia could be burdened with a bureaucratic, expensive, overly complicated power market that discourages private entrants and hinders the development of commercial relationships between customers and suppliers."

As I have said on a previous occasion, this Government is committed to a policy of competition within the electricity industry, but it will not enter the national electricity market as a mendicant. It will do so as an equal partner and only when it is to the long-term benefit of Queensland.

In conclusion, I repeat the facts of the situation: the lights will stay on in Queensland, no thanks to Labor; Eastlink will not be built; and, Queensland will support a competitive electricity marketplace, but will not do so by jeopardising reliability of supply.

I leave the final comment to *Sunday Mail* journalist Sid Maher, who on 28 April said—

"If there are blackouts, the politician ultimately responsible for planning electricity supplies over the past few years, former Mines and Energy Minister Tony McGrady, should be roundly condemned and probably drummed out of Parliament."

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Business Confidence

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: I wish to set the record straight on how good the Queensland coalition Government has been for business in Queensland in only the first two months of office. We saw the legacy of Labor's disastrous reign with the release last week of the Australian Bureau of Statistics State Accounts for the December quarter 1995 showing Queensland's growth in 1995 of 2.1 per cent, 0.4 per cent below the national average. This makes Queensland the equal

worst performing mainland State alongside New South Wales, which is also run by Labor.

This is just one statistic which highlights the depth of the challenge that our Government faces. It is a challenge to rebuild business confidence, to create higher levels of sustainable prosperity and to deliver the benefits to all. Today, I tell honourable members that this great State is about to reawaken after being in a half sleep for the past six years under Labor. With a coalition Government in Queensland and in Canberra, we have an opportunity to forge a powerful alliance of governments committed to a cooperative and integrated approach to policies that will restore the confidence of business and individuals, reinvigorate the economy and improve living standards for all Queenslanders.

Since 19 February, when the coalition Government assumed responsibility for the management of the State, we have already seen tangible evidence of businesses' growing confidence and the economy getting back on its feet. In January, a leading indicator of future employment, job vacancies, showed Queensland was the worst performing Australian State. The respected ANZ bank Job Vacancies Index for that month showed that the State's annual growth rate was a disappointing minus 12.6 per cent, but in February—the month we took over the reigns of Government—Queensland's job vacancy number was the best in the nation, though still showing a slight decline. With businesses' growing confidence in the coalition Government's pro-business and growth-oriented initiatives, still further improvement in the job vacancy growth was experienced in March, with the ANZ index showing Queensland was the only State to experience positive growth of 0.5 per cent for that month.

There have been other positive signs of returning business confidence in this State. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry/Westpac Manufacturing Output Survey showed that Queensland's December 1995 quarter figures for manufacturing output were the worst in the nation, experiencing a 26 per cent decline compared with the previous quarter. But this survey has predicted a vast improvement in our manufacturing output in the March quarter, and Queensland is set to become the only State to move into positive growth figures in this quarter, with a 21 per cent increase.

Another major economic indicator, motor vehicle registrations, has also experienced a turnaround, with Queensland showing the

highest growth rate in Australia in February with a 5.1 per cent increase for the month, compared with January's decline of 0.4 per cent. While we are heartened by these improving signs, we know the best is yet to come as the coalition Government's can-do attitude towards business begins to take effect.

Since coming to Government, we have announced several initiatives to boost business confidence and get the Queensland economy back on its feet. We will ensure that Queensland, on average, remains the lowest taxing State. Consistent with this approach, we have made commitments to phase out land tax, lift the payroll tax exemption threshold and reduce the burden of stamp duty in a number of areas.

Mr Hamill: When are you going to do that?

Mrs SHELDON: The phasing out of land tax will assist in removing disincentives to invest, while the lifting of the payroll exemption threshold level is aimed at job creation. The stamp duty changes will benefit our building industry and home buyers.

I can tell the member for Ipswich that this week the Bill will be introduced into the House and I hope that we will have his total and full support to our proposed changes to the stamp duty legislation.

The CitiSecurities decision, which means that the Office of State Revenue will not seek to retrospectively apply stamp duty to specific types of mortgages, and which Mr Hamill's Government would not touch—it was quite happy to have retrospective taxation in place, and in fact that was a big business disincentive—is another decision which gives business greater certainty and confidence under the State tax system.

Mr Hamill: Land tax?

Mr Elder: Payroll tax?

Mrs Sheldon: I have no problem answering the honourable members' questions on land tax and payroll tax. They will come in as part of the budgetary process in September, which was always going to be the case. I do hope we have the support of honourable members opposite in that regard.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: No, it is too late for the member's Government, because it never implemented it. The honourable member should tell us why his Government wouldn't implement the CitiSecurities decision, why it was prepared to have those 80 major

Queensland companies nearly go to the wall. The shadow Treasurer and failed ex-Transport Minister should tell us about that.

In a *Courier-Mail* article dated Thursday, 25 April, Mr Bob Mitchell, of Coopers and Lybrand, stated that the National/Liberal Government decision on CitiSecurities was "very good news for the business community" and that it would "reintroduce confidence and certainty into the business sector". Also, we have announced the intended purchaser of the State gas pipeline from Roma to Gladstone and Rockhampton, which will subsequently lead to tariff reductions for all users.

Not only does this sale provide \$50m for State infrastructure—

Mr Elder: When?

Mrs SHELDON: We signed it yesterday. Does the member never watch the news or read the newspapers? I take it that the member does not think that having the lowest tariff for gas in the nation will improve business in this State! This Government is making a concerted effort to attract business to this State. By reducing the tariff for gas for all domestic and commercial users, we have a very good chance of enticing Comalco to build its alumina refinery in Gladstone. That is something that the former Government would neither do nor face up to—more Labor inaction!

This is another part of the Government's strategy to further enhance Queensland, and particularly the Gladstone/Rockhampton region, as a world-class centre for industry. The coalition Government has also announced that workplace registration fees will be abolished as part of its drive to cut business red tape. That is another of our commitments to help business, particularly small business.

In conclusion, the people of Queensland can rest assured that the management of this great State is back in good hands. Our priority is to get the State economy moving again. I reject any misinformed or misguided claims that the new coalition Government has not moved fast enough to help business recover. In two months, we have done more to provide incentives for business than Labor did in six years. Let me repeat what we have done. We are lifting the payroll tax exemption level to create more jobs and to put an end to the bracket creep claiming more and more businesses under this tax, and increasing the tax-free threshold for mortgage stamp duty to benefit the building industry and home buyers.

We have already cleaned up the CitiSecurities debacle left by Labor by scrapping the provision for retrospective taxation. Imagine a Labor Government introducing retrospective taxation! That is exactly what the former Treasurer did, aided and abetted by his former Cabinet colleagues. We have closed the deal on the State gas pipeline, which means big tariff cuts for all users, both domestic and commercial. We have moved to abolish workplace registration fees as part of our drive to cut business red tape.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There are too many interjections and there is too much noise from both sides of the Chamber. I wish to hear the Minister's statement.

Mrs SHELDON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We also took the hard decision which the Labor Government, when it was in power, would not take in regard to compulsory third-party premiums to ensure that the scheme remains fully funded so that we do not have another Labor-induced blow-out such as that with the workers' compensation scheme.

Mr Hollis interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Does Mr Hollis remember the workers' compensation scheme, which is now \$300m in the red? What great financial managers former Government members were! Only the bitter and twisted Opposition and some misinformed commentators have missed the obvious signs of increasing confidence and activity in the Queensland economy. It is time for those opposite to face up to the truth: Labor was bad for business, State and Federally, and the coalition is good news for Queensland business and the Queensland economy. The facts speak for themselves.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councils

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care) (10.12 a.m.), by leave: On 24 March last year, the then Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, the member for South Brisbane, stood in this place to express pleasure with the Auditor-General's report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils for the 1993-94 financial year. We remember very clearly her commitment to improvement in the future. We remember clearly the stories about the cattle that had left the settlements that had yet to return. We remember clearly

the story of boats at Lockhart River which cost \$120,000—boats which recently turned up in the backyards of people at Cairns. We remember clearly the Public Accounts Committee report and its statement that "This is what should have been done in previous returns which has not been done."

However, such was the stewardship of the previous Government during the ensuing 12 months that I now consider it my duty as the responsible Minister to convey extreme concern to the House about the situation as revealed by the Auditor-General's report for 1994-95 on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils. Referring to the parlous state of these councils' affairs, the Auditor-General reports that only seven councils received unqualified reports. More than twice this number—15, in fact—received qualified audit reports. For another nine, there were disclaimers of opinion. It is nothing short of a disgrace that the number of qualified audit reports for 1994-95 was greater than in any of the past four years.

The situation was deteriorating at a rapid rate right under the nose of the former Minister and Government. The problems uncovered by the Auditor-General included—

- failure to prepare and adopt budgets for the State Government Financial Aid, Enterprise or General Funds;
- minutes of meetings not produced;
- cash books not properly maintained;
- inadequate controls over receipting and banking operations, resulting in underbankings;
- council cheques being dishonoured during the year as a result of insufficient funds;
- failure to produce a fixed assets register;
- overdrawn Trust Fund balances;
- failure to appropriately authorise or document payments;
- failure to prepare monthly trading statements as prescribed;
- inadequate recording and control procedures over the purchase and issue of electricity cards;
- failure to obtain up-to-date and reliable debtors and creditors records;
- wages time sheets could not be located, time records were not authorised, pay deductions were not reconciled to the general ledger, and failure to produce pay history and leave records;

failure to deduct tax from employee wages, pay superannuation on behalf of employees, and failure to prepare group certificates;

rent not properly charged and tenancy agreements not completed.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr LINGARD: This is what occurs in the member's electorate. This is what has been happening in his electorate. The former Minister said, "This will be improved." The Public Accounts Committee said it had to be improved and even gave outlines of what improvements should be made, yet still we have a report which cites the following—

trading accounts for enterprises were not produced monthly;

failure to document resolutions on matters relating to the financial operations of the enterprises in the minutes; and

failure to follow up outstanding debts in relation to house rentals, court fines, repairs and rates.

The Auditor-General has singled out three aspects of particular concern that contribute to the unsatisfactory audit reports. These are—

the propensity for councils to use grant and other tied monies for purposes other than those originally intended;

the apparent inability of many councils to efficiently and effectively manage their business undertakings; and

the growing tendency for councils to write off debts instead of instituting recovery action.

Although the Acts require each council to prepare budgets in the prescribed form, prior to 1994-95 the former Government failed to prescribe the form of the budgets. As a consequence, the budget provisions of the Acts were rarely observed by the councils. And still the Opposition says that it did everything correctly! And still the member for Cook, the member for the relevant area, tries to vindicate what happened under the former Government.

Similarly, the regulations require each council to produce a manual of administration and financial procedures. Many councils have adopted a generic model which has not been tailored to meet local needs. In the Auditor-General's view, many manuals are of limited value, especially as they are not kept up to date. What is required is something less complicated and, desirably, in the nature of a desk-top manual which would serve as a day-to-day point of reference for operational tasks

and form the basis of training programs. Each council is required to establish an independent internal audit function. However, prior to 1994-95 no formal audit function existed.

Although the former Government may have been content virtually to mislead the people of Queensland by painting a rosy picture of the financial management of Aboriginal and Islander councils, I feel obliged to provide the real story. A lot remains to be done, and I intend to work relentlessly with the councils to achieve a vastly improved level of accountability. To this end, I have approached the chair of each council seeking the chair's personal commitment to the goal of improved accountability. I will most definitely maintain a system of intervention. I will not sit back, as did the former Government, and say, "You will not go onto the settlements or the communities." These people need assistance, and they will receive assistance. Accountants will be available to help the people.

I am sure that help would be provided to their peers by other councils who have already developed financial management procedures leading to unqualified audit reports. I commend to the House the opinion of the Auditor-General that a number of councils consistently perform well. These include the councils of Yarrabah, Coconut Island, Yam Island, Hammond Island and St Pauls. Councils which showed signs of improvement in performance, particularly Sue Island and Lockhart River, warrant similar commendation. It is imperative that the remaining councils join this list of satisfactory performers. As I have previously informed the House, I have instructed my department to put strategies in place as a matter of urgency to effect a quantum leap in improvements in the accountability of Aboriginal and Islander councils. The Auditor-General's report for 1994-95 demonstrates clearly the need for such action as I have outlined previously to the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Marijuana Swap Cards

Hon. D. E. BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (10.20 a.m.), by leave: On the advice of the State's Publication Classification Officer, I am hereby banning and call for the immediate withdrawal from sale of marijuana swap cards that are currently being sold in vending machines in Townsville and Brisbane. Having seen these cards myself, I am angered and appalled that this type of material is being peddled directly to young children. The cards

come in brightly coloured packages of eight, randomly selected from a stock of 51. On one side, they feature pictures of different varieties of marijuana; on the other, they describe in great detail the so-called benefits of the drug.

These cards are deliberately packaged in a manner attractive to children and they do nothing but promote marijuana use and extol the virtues of an illicit drug. At least one of the cards also features cocaine and highlights its use. Consequently, the Publication Classification Officer, often referred to as the State censor, has declared that these cards fall into the prohibited category one of the Commonwealth Classification (Publications and Video Game) Act 1995. The classification officer's decision means that the sale, display and distribution of these cards is now illegal. If vending machine operators fail to withdraw them from sale they will be liable to prosecution and fines of up to \$22,000 or 12 months' imprisonment.

Gone are the days when these machines sold only bubble gum, sports cards and cheap toys. It just goes to show that these days parents must be aware of the type of rubbish that is on offer and they must be vigilant to ensure that their children do not buy it. The Government and I have done our part by banning this type of material, and we will prosecute distributors and retailers. Parents must now do their part by keeping a lookout and alerting Consumer Affairs to any offensive material they find in the marketplace. Vending machine operators must do their part by acting like adults and cleaning up their act.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Concerned Citizens for Mundingburra

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Racing) (10.22 a.m.), by leave: Honourable members opposite have sought at every available opportunity to deride, to belittle, to besmirch and to even question the very existence of the group of people who banded together under the banner of Concerned Citizens for Mundingburra prior to the historic by-election which put the final nail in the coffin of the discredited minority Goss Labor Government. The Opposition sought to suggest that the person who duly authorised those television advertisements, Mr Robert Purcal Owens, did not exist.

On 18 April in this House, I read out a statutory declaration signed by Mr Owens who, in his own time, decided to go public. That statement made clear that he had been driven

to utter distraction by non-stop harassment, and he pleaded to be left alone. Point 8 of that statutory declaration by Mr Owens bears repeating. He wrote—

"I believe in the right of free speech, and the harassment I have referred to inhibits a person's right to free speech and I am concerned that other members of the community may feel reluctant to express views if they are going to be harassed in the manner that I have."

In the *Courier-Mail* last Saturday, Mr Owens and his Concerned Citizens colleagues went public. He and his colleagues were shown to be exactly what they were and are—a decent, concerned group of private citizens who were rightly and deeply concerned about the breakdown of law and order generally and, in particular, in their own home town of Townsville. Mr Owens revealed that he had been robbed twice in the space of two weeks and that this was the catalyst for his pro-active stance. The people who stood up to be counted as the Concerned Citizens for Mundingburra were, among others, a crash repair shop proprietor, a bus line operator and a businessman with an earthmoving and civil engineering business—the very heart and soul of small business, and all had been victims. They had had enough.

It is utterly intolerable that such decent, honourable citizens should be subject to such a vile campaign of harassment and innuendo—a campaign very largely orchestrated by the Labor Party, which is yet to come to grips with the cold, hard reality that the overwhelming majority of all people did not want it last July and that this electoral judgement was not just confirmed but enhanced by the Mundingburra result. The Labor Party's humiliation has resulted in a campaign that is marked—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Honourable the Minister to complete his statement, because we are approaching question time.

Mr COOPER: I realise that, Mr Speaker.

Typical of the outrageous claims by the Labor Party was the statement in this House by the honourable member for Yeronga, Mr Foley, that \$30,000 was the cost of the campaign run by this group when in fact it cost \$5,006. My role in the making of those advertisements—as explained fully by me to this House—was freely confirmed by Mr Owens and his colleagues. Simply, they saw me as the best talent for such a campaign, and I can only modestly agree upon reflection

that their perception was proven to be wonderfully and decisively accurate.

The *Courier-Mail* reporter who wrote the story which appeared last Saturday has one advantage on me—he has met Mr Owens.

Mr FOURAS: I rise on a matter of privilege. Today's Daily Program states that after ministerial statements there will be a number of items such as personal explanations, reports, notices of motion, private members' Bills, etc. There are now two minutes until question time.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no matter of privilege.

Mr FOURAS: This is a matter of privilege. I suggest that the Government is abusing this Parliament in allowing time only for ministerial statements.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ashgrove will resume his seat. The Minister will conclude his statement. I am trying to get to question time.

Mr COOPER: I am concluding, Mr Speaker.

That story contained the following statement by the State Director of the Liberal Party, Mr Jim Barron—

"Mr Barron says he had no knowledge of who the citizens were, other than that they were a community group."

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to resume his seat.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham)
(10.26 a.m.): I table in the House *Alert Digest* No. 2 for 1996, and move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Environmental Protection Funding

Mr WELFORD (Everton) (10.26 a.m.): I move—

"That the Parliament—

- (a) condemns the Treasurer's plans to slash key State Government funding projects for the environment, including coastal and wet tropics protection, and
- (b) calls on the Government to meet election commitments it gave to protect the environment."

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Government's Performance

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—Leader of the Opposition) (10.27 a.m.): It is becoming very clear to the people of Queensland that this Government is simply not up to it. I refer to an article in *Business Queensland*—and this is appropriate after what we have heard from the Treasurer today—which carries the heading "Freeze chills business". It states—

"A number of small to medium-size business operators claim a spending freeze by the state Coalition government on projects initiated under the previous Goss government is having a devastating effect on their operations and cash flow."

The article continues—

"Carole Ross blames the state government's spending freeze for the demise of her five-year-old training placement company which went into liquidation earlier this month."

Mrs Sheldon: It's not our fault.

Mr BEATTIE: The Treasurer does not care about small business. The article continues—

"Her company, Conference Placements Australia Pty Ltd, derived much of its revenue from the government sector."

I table that article for the information of the House. It shows the full impact of this Government's spending freeze.

In addition to that, this Government has run around terrifying the business community both here, interstate and overseas about the possibility of blackouts. For the benefit of the Honourable the Minister, I point out that he and the Premier were the ones who talked about it, but the trouble with the Minister is—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It is now time for question time.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Eastlink

Mr BEATTIE (10.30 a.m.): I was about to say that the lights are on but no-one is home! I refer the Honourable Minister for Mines and Energy to the fact that he and his Cabinet colleagues have been told in an attachment to a Cabinet submission in March that the abandonment of Eastlink would cost Queensland between \$212m and \$282m. I table that attachment. I refer the Minister to page 3 of it. This means that every family is going to—

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I understand that the Treasurer does not care about families, but we do. This means that every family is going to have to pay more each time they turn on a light, cook a meal on an electric stove, use a fan to cool them in summer and use an electric fire to warm them in winter. In addition—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is asking a question. We will hear him in silence, and we will also hear the answer in silence.

Mr BEATTIE: In addition, businesses will have to pass on the higher cost of power to the consumer, so families will have to pay twice for the Minister's political opportunism. I have tabled that document, which is headed "Queensland Transmission Supply Corporation Analysis of Eastlink". I ask: has the Minister worked out how much more a typical family will have to pay for their quarterly power bill because he has abandoned Eastlink?

Mr GILMORE: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question, because it saves one of our backbenchers having to ask exactly the same question. "Aunt Dorothy Dix" of the Opposition has once again proven himself to be nothing more than a purveyor of grubby bits of paper that are shoved under his door because he has not got what it takes to run the Opposition. So what does he do? He waits for someone to leak a piece of paper to him.

A couple of days ago, I discovered why the Bible has had such currency for 2,000 years: somebody leaked it to the Opposition; so, all of a sudden, it became biblical, and everybody believes it. Just because that piece of paper was leaked to Mr Beattie does not mean that it was the only piece of advice that was given to this Government. It also does not mean that it was the only piece of advice of which we should take any notice. I assure the Leader of the Opposition that the document to which he refers, and of which he has only a part, was one of the issues that were discussed and considered when we decided to get rid of Eastlink. However, let us have a look at the document that the Leader of the Opposition had shoved under his door and with which he scuttled off so delightedly to make waves in the world and to make himself a big man in Queensland politics. Let us have a look at this grubby little bit of paper.

It was provided to me within the first week of our coming to Government. It was written by an organisation that was still peddling the

Labor line. It was a biased document. Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition has not read the whole document, which has not been leaked to him yet, but I have no doubt that it will be. When he has finally read it, he will discover that it was written by a person who was so dedicated to Eastlink that he did not include some very important and cogent matters. This was probably the most self-serving document that I have seen since I have been in the Ministry—a self-serving, biased document which sought to deceive me and, therefore, have me deceive the rest of the Ministry. And I did not like that. Not only that, the dollars about which the Leader of the Opposition talks were based on a false premise. He can wave the document around all he likes; he can spread it around and give it to everybody.

Mr Elder: We have.

Mr GILMORE: Of course members opposite have done that, because they are purveyors of grubby little bits of paper. I am perfectly happy for the Leader of the Opposition to put it in the mail, because this Government is comfortable with its position in relation to that little bit of paper.

Members of this Government are seriously concerned about the objectivity of that document and the officer who wrote it. We are seriously concerned about the methodology used, and we are seriously concerned about the underlying agenda of the organisation that was still peddling the Labor line. We are seriously concerned also about the underlying assumptions that were used in the calculation of those dollar figures and the other information that was provided to us in relation to Eastlink. Yes, we considered that; yes, we considered other information; yes, we rejected it; and yes, we will not build Eastlink.

Roma Street Rail Yard

Mr BEATTIE: I refer the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts to plans by Treasury to abandon proposals for what is described as a world-class park on the site of the Roma Street rail yard. Leaked documents on the Treasury proposals show that Treasury wants master planning changed to include options for a greater commercial content. I table a copy of that document.

I ask: will the Treasurer resist the demands of her own department to allow commercial development on that site designed to produce profits for the Government of \$50m a year? Will she commit

her Government to providing the people's park that has been widely acclaimed by the public?

Mrs SHELDON: Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition is unaware of the position of the Lord Mayor, Jim Soorley—of his own party, I believe—on this particular issue.

Mr Beattie: We're asking about your position.

Mrs SHELDON: We consult with the Lord Mayor, unlike the Leader of the Opposition and his previous Government. The Lord Mayor has a great preference for having commercial entities on that particular piece of ground.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There will be a lot of positions changing soon.

Mrs SHELDON: We are currently having some discussions with the Lord Mayor, as I would think that the people of this State would like us to do. What we are looking at is the viability of that parkland. Let us face it: the proposal was not considered by the former Labor Government in any viable way, including the cost. There is another issue that we are considering in conjunction with that area in Roma Street. As I said, we are having consultations with the Lord Mayor, who particularly wishes to have some commercial development on that site. After all, it is a park within his city, so we must speak with him. We are also considering propositions regarding South Bank, which is also a people's area, and expansion of the parkland in that area.

In conjunction with the Lord Mayor of this city, we are looking at that whole entity and having discussions with him. When those discussions are completed, and when we have the best possible use of that land for the people of this State and the best plan for the people of this city, I will be very happy to come back to this Parliament and tell the Leader of the Opposition all about it. However, I suggest that, in the meantime, he talks to the Lord Mayor to learn what his preference is for the Roma Street site.

Budget Process

Mr SPRINGBORG: I direct a question to the Premier. The Opposition Leader believes that he has discovered a mother lode of leaks on the Budget process. Can the Premier indicate just what the Opposition Leader has?

Mr BORBIDGE: I am delighted to say that the Leader of the Opposition has basically revealed his "Deep Throat". What has been

happening over the past few days is that the Leader of the Opposition and various Opposition spokespersons have been working from some draft briefing notes that were actually prepared within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. I have to advise the House that I have been at error.

What we sought to do when we came to Government was to make sure that as many people as possible who had previously been located in the infamous Office of the Cabinet were redeployed within that department. I did not sack them or send them to a Gulag. Some of those Labor operatives were merely redeployed within the department. I was naive enough to believe that some of those officers, including one officer who was a former principal policy adviser to the member for Cairns when he was Treasurer, a former policy adviser to John Dawkins and a former policy adviser to a former Federal Leader of the Opposition, may well have been able to serve the new Government, along with a lot of other people who had similar qualifications in the now-abandoned Office of the Cabinet.

What happened? Some of those officers were responsible for the preparation of draft briefing notes to the Acting Director-General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Those draft briefing notes have been the source of Mr Beattie's enjoyment over the last couple of days. However, I must say that the draft briefing notes prepared were so bad, so off beam and so off the ball that they were not even used in the briefings on preparations for the Cabinet Budget Review Committee. It is also interesting that the Leader of the Opposition and honourable members opposite seem to have some difficulty with the incoming Government's reviewing programs of the previous Labor administration so that it could perhaps give priority to its own policies. I think the Leader of the Opposition and honourable members opposite need to be reminded of a few basic facts. They seem to have forgotten the information provided to this Parliament by the Deputy Premier and Treasurer in respect of the state of the books left to us by the Goss Labor Government. The Treasury briefing said it all.

Mrs Edmond: The Treasurer said there was a surplus.

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member who interjects, the lady in red, the honourable member who propelled the Workers Compensation Scheme into a \$300m black hole, has the audacity and the cheek to tell us what we should be doing in respect of sound economic management in this State.

It is true that this year we will finish the financial year with a modest Budget surplus, which is estimated to be about \$3m. What the previous Government did not tell the people of Queensland, and what was left for Treasury to tell the new Government, is that there were three one-off payments that resulted in that modest Budget surplus. If those three one-off payments were not made into the Consolidated Fund, Queensland would have an underlying Budget deficit of \$185m. That is the real figure, but it gets worse than that.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: I can understand the sensitivity of honourable members opposite, because it gets worse. Based on a continuation of spending on Labor programs, the Treasury forward forecasts for next year indicate that we would not have a Budget deficit of \$185m next year; no, we would have a projected Budget deficit of \$240m—with no one-off payments coming in to fudge the books in order to deliver a Budget surplus. That was the briefing provided to Cabinet by Treasury.

The Treasurer has made it very clear that, as a result of the economic mismanagement of the former Government and the way that the Leader of the Opposition was like a monkey in a banana plantation in terms of the Health budget, the budget in that department has been propelled into overruns that are now in excess of \$50m. The economic strategy of the Leader of the Opposition is really very simple: one listens for 100 days, then spends by raiding the capital works budget, or gives commitments based on funds that simply do not exist. That is the true story behind the finances of this State.

Mrs Edmond: They've added several hundred million dollars more.

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member who interjects reminds me that, of course, we have the blow-out in workers' compensation. We have the legacy of the \$300m debt that the honourable member and the gentleman sitting alongside her have left the people of Queensland. Indeed the verbal advice that we have received on workers' compensation is that, since the honourable member's rescue package was delivered to the Parliament, the state of the Workers Compensation Fund has deteriorated by a further \$60m. The moral of the story is: if you need a life raft, do not depend on the honourable member who is interjecting.

We go into the round of pre-Budget discussions with, in reality, a \$185m underlying

deficit, a projected deficit next year of \$240m and a \$300m blow-out in the Workers Compensation Scheme. The mistake that I made, for which I accept responsibility, is that I trusted that certain people who were former personnel of the now-abandoned Office of the Cabinet would be loyal enough to work for the new Government. Obviously, that was a forlorn hope, because we can now attribute directly the documents being used by the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition to former employees of the Office of the Cabinet.

Asbestos Management Program

Mr WELFORD: I refer the Minister for Public Works and Housing to the Premier's just-mentioned desire to give priority to his Government's policies, and I refer him also to the vital asbestos management program put in place by the Goss Government to remedy all Queensland Government buildings containing asbestos in the interests of the health of Government workers. I table a document that shows that the Treasurer is desperate to slash funding for this vital asbestos management program, and I ask: does he support that program? Is it the case that less than 25 per cent of Queensland Government buildings have so far been audited under the program? Will he give this House a commitment to continue funding that program at levels adequate to cover all the 20,000 Government buildings still to be audited, or will he capitulate to the pressure from the Treasurer to can the program at great risk to the health of Government workers and help the Premier give priority to his Government's policies of negligence for workers' workplace health and safety?

Mr CONNOR: The answer to the member's six-part question is: yes, not sure, yes, yes and no.

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. The Minister gave only five answers and he said that it was a six-part question.

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

Retirement of Labor Members

Mr CARROLL: I refer the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts to an article in last Sunday's *Sunday Mail* about six Labor hot seats in doubt and to the announced intention of the member for Lytton to scuttle out of this Parliament and retire. I ask: how much will it cost the Queensland

taxpayer to pay for all those early retirements, and who should pay?

Mrs SHELDON: I thank the honourable member for his very timely question. I also noted the article in the *Sunday Mail*, which detailed, along with the member for Lytton, Tom Burns, Labor members who are planning to bail out before the next election, including the member for Logan, Wayne Goss; the member for Mount Isa, Tony McGrady; the member for Ferny Grove, Glen Milliner; the member for Cairns, Keith De Lacy; and the member for Bundamba, Bob Gibbs. It seems all those former Ministers do not have much faith in the member for Brisbane Central or his ability to return Labor to the Treasury benches.

They are six former Ministers, six by-elections, six costly, unnecessary weights on the Queensland taxpayer. However, that really need not be so. I refer members of the Labor Party and the House in general to another article. This time I refer to the *Sydney Telegraph Mirror* newspaper dated 3 June 1995. The page 3 article is titled "ALP early quitters to pay for elections". The article quotes many Labor luminaries stating that Labor MPs who quit politics before the end of their term will be billed by the Labor Party for their decision. The move followed the resignation of such Labor lights as Ros Kelly. The article quotes Labor's national secretary, Gary Gray, who stated—

"People who retire and cause by-elections of the kind Ros Kelly caused . . . it would be very nice if there were a rule that would allow a bill to be sent to them."

I really could not agree more. As Treasurer of this State, which was left with a \$240m Budget hole by Labor, I think all Labor members who cause a by-election to be held should not only repay the Labor Party—as indeed its national secretary has stated—but should repay the Queensland taxpayer as well.

With the possible exception of Tom Burns, before the last election all the Labor members now tipped to leave the sinking ship gave no indication of their intentions. Those six members, who include the three unwise men who sit at the back but who, these days, rarely grace this House with their company, will cost the Queensland taxpayer a total of almost \$1m if they retire before the next election. Six by-elections at \$150,000 each is a \$900,000 cost to the Queensland taxpayers—unless, of course, the members in question heed the pleas of their own party and pay for the by-elections that they will have caused when they jump ship and retire.

Electricity Supply

Mr McGRADY: I refer the Minister for Mines and Energy to the deliberate attempts by his Premier and himself for purely political reasons to frighten the electricity consumers in the south-east corner of the State and, in particular, potential business enterprises both nationally and internationally with their statements that Queensland would run short of power by 1998. In view of the fact that these statements have been disproved and accepted as untrue by leading authorities in the electricity industry, I ask the Minister: will he now apologise to the people of Queensland for the misleading statements that he and his Premier have made? Will he also admit that his Government's decision to pull out of Eastlink was economically wrong? In view of his outburst this morning, will he inform the Parliament if he has confidence in the board and employees of AUSTA Electric, the Queensland Transmission and Supply Corporation, and Powerlink?

Mr GILMORE: I thank the failed former Minister for the question. It is another question that I was hoping would be asked of me some time this morning. Let me say that it appears that the man is not only so dull that he does not know if it is dark unless the streetlights come on but also that he does not listen.

This morning, I took the trouble to outline to this House the circumstances surrounding a document that was leaked in an attempt, interestingly enough, not to embarrass this Government; I am led to believe that the document was leaked by an officer of AUSTA in an attempt to embarrass the QTSC. I was the innocent victim of a drive-by shooting. I just happened to be there at the time.

Mr Elder: Are you sure it wasn't a Labor Party member.

Mr GILMORE: It is time the member went and got some long pants. His schoolboy mentality is showing through. Big boys wear long pants down to their shoes. If the member cannot wear long pants, he should get the hell out of here.

The only person who ought to apologise to this Parliament is the former Minister, the member for Mount Isa, who, in his question, indicated that I ought to apologise for misleading the people of Queensland.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr GILMORE: So that the message gets through even Mr Beattie's thick skull—and he should listen quietly—let me say once again that this document was leaked. It was a working document that had been

requested by me. I considered that to be a very prudent measure because I was unsatisfied and very uncomfortable indeed with the quality of the information that was coming to me.

Mr Elder: It certainly lit a bushfire under you.

Mr GILMORE: Little boys should not play with matches. The member's Inala-schoolboy image is showing through. He should not play with matches; it is no good for him. This leaked document, which was grasped with both hands by the Opposition as another grubby bit of paper, just happened to be technically wrong. The principle was not wrong in that the information upon which it was based was, apparently, accurate until 16 April. On 19 April, it was proven to be wrong because this Government managed to get a concurrence of opinion between three organisations that the member's Government had divided so badly that they did not talk to each other on a professional level—at least they did not until I met with them. Let me assure the member that they now talk to each other.

If that document had not been quoted out of context—and there is no question about the substance of the document—then there would have been no problem. The matter would have been dealt with quietly and professionally in my office, as it would have been by any of the other tradesmen who sit on the 18 benches on this side of the House. So, no, I will not apologise. The member's question was ridiculous. He ought to apologise for the period that he spent in charge of the electricity industry, which has now been seen to be an unmitigated disaster.

Mr McGRADY: I rise to a point of order. The question has not been answered fully.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Electricity Supply

Mr HARPER: I ask the Premier: can he detail to the House what steps the former Government took to ensure that Queensland had adequate power supplies into the next century?

Mr BORBIDGE: In reply to the honourable member, I will detail what steps were taken by the previous Government to ensure that Queensland had adequate power supply. In a word—none!

The management of the Queensland electricity industry by the previous Labor

Government was an absolute disgrace. It is interesting to note that, during 1989-90 when Labor came to power, the big project on the books was Tully/Millstream. The previous Government had a fascinating attitude towards Tully/Millstream: when the Premier was in the far north of the State, it was a good idea; when he was in Brisbane, it was a bad idea. Now and then he was caught out.

The members of the previous Government could not collectively make a decision in respect of Tully/Millstream. For more than five years, they could not make up their minds about that particular project. They dithered, and the dithering continued. I remind honourable members opposite that, in its annual report of 1990-91, which was tabled in this place, and which, in turn, was reporting on the findings of one of the Government's own task forces, the Queensland Electricity Commission set out in black and white—emphasised as far back as 1990-91—that Queensland would need additional generating capacity by 1998. That report was tabled.

Let us examine the record of the former Government's decision making. The pace was earth shattering. The former Government had this annual report of 1990-91, but what did it do in 1991 to address Queensland's future power generating needs? Nothing at all! Perhaps I am being just a little bit unfair, because the previous Government did release a discussion paper. Year after year, we had a lack of action. What happened in 1992 after the QEC had warned some time prior of the need for additional generating capacity? Nothing! In 1992, let alone a decision, we did not even get another discussion paper. What happened in 1993 as these dynamos of decision making opposite gathered each week to plan Queensland's future electricity needs? Again, nothing!

By 1994, one would think that a responsible Government, which had received a report in 1990-91 that stated, "We are going to have problems. We need to do something", would have done something. Again, apart from another time-consuming alternative to decision making—a task force—we got nothing. In 1994, we had a total abrogation of the former Government's responsibilities in respect of making decisions in regard to electricity generation. So in a state of panic, after it raided the reserves of the QEC—and I think in 18 months, under its model of corporatisation, the former Government took something like \$600m out of the reserves of the QEC to fund recurrent expenditure—it started to think, "Gee, we might run out of power."

In the old days of coalition Governments, when we needed to build power stations we built them debt free. We built Stanwell debt free and on time. What did the Labor Government do? It raided the reserves of the QEC. It was not in a position to get a new power station up—or it did not think it was—so it came up with the great idea of putting an extension lead over the border into New South Wales, so that we could buy Bob Carr's power, because Bob Carr had too much power-generating capacity. We had old and inefficient power stations, and a mug punter like the Queensland Government which had been dithering for the best part of six years on the supply of additional power generation. The simple fact is that Eastlink would not have done the job. At the earliest, Eastlink would not have been on-line until 1999 or thereabouts.

Very early in our term of office, my Government called for a period of shortened competitive bidding for the Powerlink proposal, and that decision will be made on 29 July. I make it perfectly clear: when the Labor Party came to Government in 1989, it inherited the most efficient and effective electricity generating industry in Australia. It inherited an industry that was able to generate Australia's cheapest non-hydro power for Queenslanders. All it had to do was continue the planning. In 1990, it did nothing; in 1991, it did nothing; in 1992, it did nothing; in 1993, it did nothing; and in 1994, it did nothing except play around with a discussion paper and a task force. The record of this Government in terms of power-generating capacity and making decisions about the electricity industry is simply this: in three months, we have done five times as much as the Labor Party did collectively in six years. The Minister and the Government are picking up the pieces of the massive political abrogation of the proper management of the electricity industry of this State.

This morning, the Minister highlighted the difficulties in respect of the various authorities once the QEC is split up. We have got the parties involved talking again, instead of competing. They are starting to go in the same direction at last, and we are improving on the shambles that we inherited. This Government has moved quickly, and we will continue to take whatever action is appropriate to keep the lights on in this State—no thanks to Labor. The Labor Party's management of the electricity industry in this State rated a big round zero; it was nil. The best the Labor Party could do was come up with a task force or a discussion paper, yet the QEC annual report of 1990-91 warned the Labor Government

that Queensland would need to make major decisions in respect of power generation capacity.

Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation Seoul Office

Mrs BIRD: I refer the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry to Treasury's current—not aged, as the Minister claims—proposal to close the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation office in Seoul, South Korea. I ask: does he agree that the tourism industry has every right to be outraged at any plan to close this office in Queensland's fastest growing international tourist market for the sake of saving the Borbidge Government a mere \$200,000 in 1996 and 1997? Will the Minister fight hard in Cabinet to keep the QTTC's Korean office open and stop Mrs Sheldon's razor gang from implementing a measure which his own department argues may reduce growth in tourist numbers and revenue for the State in subsequent years? If it is not the Korean office that the Government intends to close, which office is it?

Mr DAVIDSON: Dear, oh dear! This interferes with our strategy. Should I unload? Is this going to bring us down?

I do not know whether the honourable member for Whitsunday listened to the radio last night or read this morning's papers, but I gave an ironclad, rolled-gold commitment that the Korean office would be maintained. I suggest that Mrs Bird review her role as the shadow Minister for Tourism, because from Wednesday until yesterday my office received over 300 phone calls and faxes from people in the tourism industry throughout the State supporting the Government's move with the board of the QTTC, and advising me and my staff in no uncertain manner that the honourable member's behaviour over the last week has been totally unacceptable to the industry. As she moves around this State and talks to the key people in the industry—as I have done in the last six or seven months—she will learn very quickly that over the last four or five years under the Labor Government people within the tourist industry have been utterly frustrated at their inability to be involved in the processes of Government, at appointments to the board of the QTTC, and at their inability to meet with the successive Ministers for Tourism. Labor Ministers would not meet with key industry people from Cairns to Coolangatta. These people wanted to have an input. They had a role to play and they had major investments in tourism in Queensland, yet they could not get

to meet the Ministers, could not get involved in the processes of Government, and were locked out altogether. As the honourable member for Whitsunday starts to talk to those people, she will get the message loud and clear.

I believe the Premier will make a statement later, but I say this: as the honourable member for Whitsunday begins to learn what the tourism industry in this State is all about, and the economic and social benefits derived for all Queenslanders from that industry, she will learn very quickly that her party is on the nose. So many doors in this State will be closed in her face as a result of her behaviour last week, and people will refuse to talk to her. I suggest she call on the board representative for the Whitsundays, Mr Hutchen.

Last Wednesday night, when I named the members of the board I met Mr Hutchen for the first time. I had the greatest pleasure in being able to say to him, "Mrs Bird made this statement today." This man is one of the most respected business people in the honourable member's electorate, and in Queensland tourism. I was able to say to him, "I am pleased to meet you, David", as it was the first time I had ever met him. He was appointed to the board because of the advice and recommendations given to me by people in the industry throughout Queensland. Those recommendations did not come from the Liberal Party or the National Party or the Premier or the Treasurer or any other Government member; his appointment to the board was industry driven. Over the last three or four months, many people whom I have spoken to have put his name forward as a very great Queenslanders who could make an enormous contribution to tourism in this State. I went up to Mr Hutchen and said, "I am pleased to meet you, David. How are you? I would like to advise you of what your local member, the member for Whitsunday, said about you today." She said—

"It starts at the top, if you start having changes at the top that aren't necessary and you start wobbling around as to who's going to be on the Board and who is not, you start putting on there shonks and people who sponsor you financially, then of course, you finish up with an industry that's falling all over the place."

How dare the honourable member refer to David Hutchen, one of the most respected people in the tourism industry in this State, as a shonk! He is a highly respected business person in the honourable member's

electorate. The honourable member called him a shonk and went on to say that these people sponsor us financially. That was the first time in my roles as either shadow Minister for Tourism or Minister for Tourism that I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Hutchen. His appointment was a recommendation of the industry right across this State.

In answer to the honourable member's question about the Korean office, last night, after another of the member's silly, immature and uninformed statements to the media—as I said, the industry will lock her out and she will be finished—I made a statement that the Government's position is that the Korean office will be maintained. We have enjoyed an enormous growth in tourism from Korea in the past couple of years. The then Deputy Premier and Minister for Tourism, Tom Burns, opened that office last year. Last year, there were 60,000-odd Korean visitors to Australia, which is of enormous benefit to Cairns and Brisbane. This Government and I, as the Minister for Tourism, are totally committed to the funding of the Korean office, and it will be maintained.

Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation

Mr TANTI: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to the recent criticism of the new QTTC board by the member for Whitsunday and in particular to her claim that the Government was employing shonks and people who supported the coalition financially, and I ask: can the Premier outline to the House the credentials of those appointed to the board?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will have order. I cannot hear the question.

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. Is this a question on notice or without notice?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Members will not take frivolous points of order. I will have order. I did not hear the question because of the persistent interjections.

Mr TANTI: I asked: can the Premier outline to the House the credentials of those appointed to the QTTC board and whether the changes proposed enjoyed the support of the tourism industry?

Mr Elder: No, that was question one.

Mr BORBIDGE: No, there is a bit more to come. Members opposite only got the first act; this is a duo.

The Leader of the Opposition thinks that he has achieved a great coup in stealing Budget secrets. What the Leader of the Opposition is excelling in is stealing our dorothea dixers.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. I find that comment offensive. I was provided with this material by his department. What an offensive thing to say! I ask that the comment be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Opposition Leader finds the comment offensive and asks that it be withdrawn.

Mr BORBIDGE: That he steals my dorothea dixers or my Budget secrets? Whichever comment it is, I withdraw it.

The Minister for Tourism has ably responded to certain comments made by the member for Whitsunday in her maiden statement as the shadow Minister. However, I think the House is entitled to make its own judgment as to whether members on the board of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation are shonks. The member for Whitsunday described them as shonks. I wish to know whether the Leader of the Opposition shares that assessment of the following leading Queenslanders who have been recommended for appointment to the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation by the industry itself.

Let us have a look at some of the shonks referred to by the member for Whitsunday. Mr Paul Morgan is the Chairman of Pacific Sports Entertainment Limited, a director of a large number of sporting organisations, including the Brisbane Broncos Football Club, Brisbane Bullets Basketball, Brisbane Bandits Baseball, International Quarterback, the International Triathlon Union and the Jindalee AllSports Fitness Club. Mr John Angel is the Chairman of the Australian Chapter of the Tourism Council of Australia. He is another shonk, according to the Opposition. Mr Angel is the General Manager of Australian Resorts (Brisbane) which operates five Great Barrier Reef properties for the Qantas group of companies. He has had extensive experience in the tourism industry, including the position of Assistant General Manager (Operations) with the Australian Tourist Commission. He was also the General Manager of Traveltrain with Queensland Rail. According to members opposite, he is a shonk.

Mr Gary Baildon is a former distinguished mayor of the City of the Gold Coast. In 1989, Mr John Osborne was appointed as the National Marketing Manager for McCafferty's Express Coachlines. As to Ms Wendy

Morris—I would have thought that the honourable member opposite would have welcomed the appointment of a distinguished Queensland woman such as Wendy Morris to the board of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation. She is the Director of Marketing for Port Douglas Reef Resorts.

However, we would also think that the honourable member for Whitsunday, the alternative tourism Minister in this place, would welcome representation from her own electorate. But, no, that is not good enough for honourable members opposite. Let us have a look at the CV of David Hutchen. As to his community involvement and honorary positions in the tourism industry—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Honourable members opposite will have to cop all of this. Mr Hutchen was the Federal President of the Australian Boating Industry Association from 1970 to 1979. He was a member of the Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association and founding chairman. He is the Chairman of the Whitsunday Visitors and Convention Bureau and Deputy Chairman of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators and founding member. He is a board member of the Cooperative Research Centre for the Ecologically Sustainable Development of the Great Barrier Reef. Interestingly, he is also a member of the Regional Ministerial Tourism Advisory Committee established by the former Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing. The former Government appointed him! Bob Gibbs, the President of the Labor Party, appointed to the Regional Ministerial Tourism Advisory Committee the man whom the shadow Minister describes as a shonk.

Aside from that, Mr Hutchen is a member of the Whitsunday Tourism Development Focus Group established by the Coordinator General's department. He is the founder and series organiser of the annual XXXX/Ansett Hamilton Island Race Week yachting regatta. He is a member of the Shute Harbour Development Committee, and on it goes. We have seen a disgraceful performance by the Opposition in its criticism of these very distinguished Queenslanders who have accepted appointment.

It is interesting to know what the industry thinks. Is the industry falling over in the aisles supporting the member for Whitsunday? It might be falling over in the aisles, but it is not supporting her. Let us have a look at some of the press coverage. I refer to an article headed "Tourist chiefs back Minister", which states—

"Tourism leaders yesterday supported the State Government's move to enforce sweeping changes to the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation after two board members refused to resign."

The appointments were "backed by key tourism groups including the Brisbane Visitors and Convention Bureau, the North Queensland Promotions Bureau, the Cairns Port Authority and the Tourism Council of Australia". The article further states—

"Brisbane Visitors and Conventions Bureau chairman David Clair said the decision of a Tourism Minister"—

in respect of appointments to the board—

"should be final.

'I think we have to be sensible in all this and realise that if a new Government decides to take a different direction then it's probably time for a change . . .

'Nobody is benefiting from somebody making a stance on this and I believe Mr Ludwig isn't a help to the State of Queensland.

North Queensland Promotions Bureau general manager Steve Noakes called on Ms Carne and Mr Ludwig to give someone else a go.

'It seems like there is an element of sour grapes involved—it is almost unfair to management and staff of the QTTC that this uncertainty is lingering.' "

Bruce Baird, the Director of the Tourism Council of Australia, stated—

"The industry's perception is that the QTTC board has dropped the ball in the last few years."

Wasn't it interesting when Billy Ludwig was squatting at the Riverside Centre in the boardroom of the QTTC—

Mr Davidson: Where was Mr Elder?

Mr BORBIDGE: Where was Mr Elder? Where was Mr Beattie? They were not rushing to the defence of big Bill Ludwig. Bill was down there squatting with Judith Carne, and the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition were silent.

The simple fact is that the Government is well pleased with industry reaction over the appointment of the new board to the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation. I appreciate the support that the Government has received from key industry groups, in particular the Brisbane Visitors and Convention Bureau, the North Queensland Promotions

Bureau, the Cairns Port Authority and the Tourism Council of Australia. If ever there was an example of hypocrisy and duplicity, it was the disgraceful comments by the member for Whitsunday in her maiden press statement as shadow Tourism Minister, when she described very distinguished Australians—people who have made a far greater contribution to this State and the tourism industry of this State than honourable members will ever do—as shonks. If the Leader of the Opposition was prepared to do the right thing, he would publicly dissociate himself from the disgraceful comments by his shadow Minister.

Education Budget

Mr BREDHAUER: I refer the Minister for Education to leaked documents in which the Education Department proposes—and I stress, "the Minister's department" proposes—to Treasury that the Government defer \$23.3m of capital works initiatives from the current budget and axe initiatives including the school uniform allowance, the Supporting People with Disabilities Program and Asian language studies in schools. I table that document for the information of the House. I ask: how does the Minister justify slashing these programs in Queensland schools just to prop up the Borbidge Government's \$7 billion in unfunded election promises?

Mr QUINN: The documents that the member for Cook has are part of the normal budgetary process that flows backwards and forwards between departments in the pre-Budget period. Such documents go backwards and forwards between my department, Treasury and the Premier's Department, and they are in no way indicative of the final outcome of the Budget. I refer the honourable member to the comments by a previous Education Minister, who had a far more realistic assessment of the process. The honourable member should read this morning's *Courier-Mail* and the comments in it by Mr Comben, a previous Education Minister. I believe that his statement should be borne in mind by members opposite when they are discussing the sorts of documents which they have got their hands on. They are indicative documents only; they do not reflect the final outcome. I conclude by referring to the statement of former Minister Comben—

"The test is not this Treasury wish list but the eventual outcome (after Cabinet)."

That is how we will be judged. We will not be judged on the indicative documents which go backward and forwards between departments at this particular time.

District Health Service Policy

Mr MITCHELL: I ask the Minister for Health: in light of the Borbidge Government's recent decision to disband Labor's costly and failed regional health system, could he inform the House of the expected benefits from the introduction of the new district health service policy? What is the current status of the transition process from regionalism to districts?

Mr HORAN: The good news for Queensland is that under the Borbidge Government, health has returned to the people and we now have a truly decentralised health system. Once again, communities will have some input into how health services are delivered in their areas. Under Labor, we had a failed and costly system of regionalisation—a system that soaked up millions and millions of dollars; a system that erected a barrier between the corporate office in Brisbane and the units which delivered the service. The people out in the field—the people in the hospitals and in the community health centres who actually did the work—were totally frustrated by that barrier to the delivery of decentralised services.

It is interesting to note that at the conclusion of his 100 days of listening, the previous Health Minister, Mr Beattie, sought submissions on how people thought the health service could be improved. Over 800 submissions were made. Overwhelmingly, those 800 submissions opposed the system of regionalisation. The Borbidge Government has been able to achieve in two months what the previous Labor Minister could not even start in seven months. He undertook seven months of wandering around the State and listening and self-promotion and self-publicity; seven months of letting the budget run out of control; seven months of promoting his own political interests, and nothing happened.

In two months—by last Friday—the Borbidge Government has brought about the closure of regional offices and the transition of responsibility to the district health services. In two months, we have been able to achieve not only the transition of responsibility so that we have a truly decentralised system for the running of Queensland Health but we have also undertaken this difficult process with the 264 staff of the regional offices receiving compassionate and caring assistance. I am pleased to announce in the House today that after we sent back to the hospitals all the people who had been seconded and were parked in the regional offices, there were still 264 positions in existence. Since then, approximately 20 people have been involved

in the audit process or have retired, meaning that we have actually had to look after 244 positions. In just two months, three-quarters of those people have been placed in permanent or temporary positions—positions that are available through having a freeze on the filling of administrative position vacancies—meaning that they have been placed into vacant, funded positions within the hospitals and the districts. The remaining one-quarter of those people are all gainfully employed. This is in contrast to the mob opposite, who put people in a room with only a table and a chair—without windows and without a phone; just like a Gulag. We have discovered 20 or 30 people in the department who have been without a job since 1989 when the former Government made its changes. The remaining one-quarter of the staff from the regional offices will be gainfully employed for the next six months as we find them a vacant and funded position.

What a change! Two months and we have made things happen. In two months we have delivered a good, decentralised service. In two months we have been able to place the majority of people into positions. At the end of the day, out of 264 positions we anticipate that there will be only 20 VERs. It is quite an achievement for the Borbidge Government to have done all that in two months, when in seven months of looking around the previous Minister could not even get started. As I move around the State, I hear nothing but praise from the districts as they look forward with great enthusiasm to these innovations.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

May Mini-Budget

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich) (11.28 a.m.): Despite her most resolute efforts to talk down the State's economy and denigrate six years of sound and responsible financial management by the former Labor Government, the Treasurer has been forced to admit that the coalition inherited a budgetary position which was the envy of the rest of Australia. It must have hurt the Treasurer to admit that the former Labor Government left the State's finances in good order. It must have hurt the Treasurer to admit that the former Labor Government had maintained a low-tax environment in Queensland. It must have been galling for the Treasurer to admit that the Queensland Budget was on track for a \$3m surplus in the Consolidated Fund at the end of this financial year. Nevertheless, the

Treasurer is going to present a May mini-Budget. Well might we ask: why is this necessary?

Since assuming power in this State in February, members of the coalition have demonstrated that the business of Government is beyond their capacity. They have dismayed their supporters in the business community by their lack of preparedness for Government, their ineptitude and their economic illiteracy. Just look at the Treasurer's ill-advised freeze on capital works spending, which has dealt a body blow to the State's economy, and to the hundreds of small businesses, contractors and their apprentices who have lost much-needed income, work and jobs over the past two months—yes, two months; not the 10 days that was mentioned in one of the Treasurer's media pronouncements. And still it continues. Only last Friday, I had the mother of a second-year apprentice ring me to tell me how her son and nine others had been put off from a Housing Department job at Riverview because State funds had stopped. How many others have to suffer the same fate before this Government wakes up to itself and recognises that public sector capital works will kick-start a housing and construction industry which is in the doldrums?

The former Labor Government responded to last year's downturn in the State's economy by implementing a \$745m Accelerated Capital Works Program to stimulate business activity. However, this Treasurer responds to the need to boost the State's economy by pouring out another piece of vitriol against her predecessors and continuing with her harebrained capital works freeze and the misery which she is generating. She forgets that she is now the one who is responsible for the economic management of the State.

Over the last two months, we have heard the Treasurer claim, contrary to her own figures, that the Budget is in disarray. Yet, over the same two-month period, we have seen this coalition Government announce a range of initiatives which should only exacerbate the Treasurer's worries. With Budget blow-outs in prisons, in health and in roads—not to mention the \$200m to be found for the Sunshine Motorway, or the \$282m lost because of the decision to plunge Queensland into darkness by scrapping Eastlink—what we have is a Government which is good at spending, especially money it does not have, but incapable of making the decisions necessary to keep the Budget on track.

This Government is amassing additional spending commitments at the rate of over \$20m a week, and this year it will seek to pay for them by extending to September the capital works freeze, which has the short-term effect of running up a bigger surplus in the Consolidated Fund. By failing to address the facilities needs in schools and public housing, and delaying hospital projects, the coalition will seek to pay for its new initiatives. But it cannot last. As there are \$7 billion worth of unfunded coalition election promises bearing down on the Budget, the Treasurer needs a May mini-Budget to soften us up for the full impact of her Government's fiscal irresponsibility.

But what should the May mini-Budget deliver to the people of Queensland? For a start, it should reflect the Treasurer's repeated assertions that the coalition will not introduce any new taxes and charges, nor will it increase existing taxes and charges. However, the May mini-Budget should deliver the coalition's taxation policies with respect to land tax, payroll tax and stamp duty. Do members recall that promise on land tax? I certainly do. Land tax was to be abolished over a 10-year period, with at least \$20m a year being provided in concessions over that period. In other words, land tax collections should be reduced by at least \$20m in 1996-97. As the bulk of land tax assessments are issued in September, the Treasurer must announce the promised reductions in her May mini-Budget and have the necessary legislation enacted by the end of June; that is, if the Treasurer and this Government are going to honour their promise.

The second coalition promise was in respect of payroll tax. Do members remember that one? The coalition promised an annual \$50,000 increase in the payroll tax exemption level. As all honourable members would be aware, the former Labor Government raised the exemption level for payroll tax from \$700,000 to \$725,000 on 1 July 1995 and, through legislation, provided for a further raising of the exemption level to \$750,000, effective from 1 July this year. Surely the Treasurer could not be so dishonest as to claim the 1 July 1996 concession as her own. The Treasurer must provide for nothing less than a payroll tax exemption level of \$775,000, effective from 1 July 1996, to satisfy this part of the Premier's contract with the people of Queensland.

Finally, there was the promise to exempt from stamp duty the refinancing of home mortgages up to \$100,000. Again, the Treasurer has an obligation in her mini-Budget to honour this promise and implement it from

1 July 1996 at the latest. Clearly, the May mini-Budget provides the coalition with the opportunity to deliver on the tax reforms it promoted so heavily when in Opposition. Yes, indeed, the Treasurer's May mini-Budget should prove to be a very interesting document.

George Street is full of stories about the Treasurer's Budget process being a shambles. There are stories of hundreds of Budget savings options being submitted by departments, but with very few real savings being offered. Then there are the Budget blow-outs and the reports that funding sources identified by the coalition are inadequate to pay for the election promises, the cost of which were grossly underestimated. And then there are the stories that this Government is looking at new taxes and asset fire sales to address the funding crisis of its own making.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr HAMILL: For the benefit of the member for Moggill, I will chance a few predictions. I predict that the Treasurer will break her taxation promises by delaying the promised tax cuts; that we will see little, if any, cuts to land tax this year; and that, in her press release, the Treasurer will falsely claim that she had insufficient time to provide these cuts ahead of the September Budget. And, oh yes—and by the way—unfortunately it would then be too late to deliver on the promise this year, because those paying land tax will already have received their assessments. And if the May mini-Budget says anything about payroll tax, then it will be to defer the delivery of that coalition promise as well. The Treasurer will put it off to the September Budget, and then she will probably announce that the exemption level will not be raised until some time later in 1997—maybe even July—12 months after it was due. And as for the stamp duty concessions—the Treasurer will use smoke and mirrors to pretend that she is delivering on her promise when really she is going to deliver only half—just like the Transport Minister and his half a highway to the Gold Coast.

What about the Treasurer's promises of no new taxes and no increases in tax? Contrary to its public statements, this Government is considering introducing new taxes and broadening and increasing the old ones. Just ask the Deputy Leader of the National Party, Mr Lingard, who, in a lapse into truthfulness, let the cat out of the bag. Despite the Treasurer's denials, she and the Premier have been looking at broadening the scope of the bank accounts debit tax, which is already

proving to be a nice little earner for the Government. Beware of the Treasurer, who now embraces the rewriting of the Stamp Act and other initiatives under the guise of helping Queensland business by bringing our legislation into line with that of other States.

But what the Government has not told the people of Queensland is that it is considering a massive hike in tobacco tax. In 1992, the Goss Government went to the election promising to increase the tobacco licence fee to pay for its Jobs Plan and its 10-year program to rebuild the State's hospitals. But in 1995, and again in 1996, the coalition promised that it would not increase taxes. We are soon to see the value of such promises. This coalition Government is poised to lift the tobacco licence fee by one-third, to the level that applies in New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT. It is expected that the tobacco tax will raise \$450m for the Queensland Government this year, and the Government's tax grab would see revenue boosted by up to \$150m extra in a full year. It would see the price of a packet of cigarettes rise by around 80c to around \$6.60 a packet. This 14 per cent increase would be a hefty slug to many Queensland families, particularly to low and modest income earners, who will already be feeling Mrs Sheldon's hand in their pockets with massive increases in compulsory third-party insurance premiums and increased vehicle registration charges, not to mention the impending increased cost of electricity.

Furthermore, if the Government pursues the rest of its secret tax agenda, Queenslanders will pay Mrs Sheldon just for the privilege of paying their power bills or car registration fees. Members should not for one minute believe the propaganda that any increased revenue from a broken promise on tobacco tax will be earmarked for health purposes, because this Government's Budget problems span a wide range of issues, such as police and prisons, education, transport, roads and electricity supply. By the way, members should expect the increase in tobacco tax to take effect immediately, or even retrospectively—so desperate is this Government for cash.

For the last two months, the Treasurer has failed to deliver leadership and direction. She has frozen the Queensland economy and allowed Queensland to drift. Rhetoric and press releases have replaced policy implementation and delivery. Unless her May mini-Budget delivers economic leadership, the

State will face a difficult and uncertain future with business confidence continuing to fall.

Time expired.

Central Queensland Tourism

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel) (11.39 p.m.): I herald in this Parliament the official opening by the Premier last Saturday of the Keppel Bay Marina. For a long, long time we have waited for that amenity to be provided for central Queensland, servicing Yeppoon, Rockhampton and, of course, points west. It was really a terrific weekend, with a lot of fun and achievement. The fact that the Premier, the Mayor of Rockhampton and the Mayor of Livingstone Shire were able to attend made for a great day.

Mr Schwarten: I would have come if I was invited.

Mr LESTER: That is great. I am sure that, had the member for Rockhampton been present, he would have added to the occasion.

We in central Queensland must keep pushing for more and more tourist amenities. Obviously, that marina will be used by sailors from all over the world, who will make it a primary point of call. Those people spend money, which is very important to the economy of the area. However, I have to say that a lot of money needs to be spent on the Rosslyn Bay Harbour. I signal in this Parliament that we do not want to have that beautiful marina and its amenities without the harbour being upgraded similarly to an A-1 standard. A lot of work needs to be done to that harbour, and I will be pursuing that vigorously.

Many tourist operators are trying to do their best for the area. Capricorn Caverns, or as it is now known, Olsen's Caves, is a fantastic set-up. The Augustines, who came there in recent years, have spent countless hours of time and effort building up and improving that amenity as a place for people to visit. All sorts of wonderful events now happen in those caves, such as Easter ceremonies and Christmas carols by candlelight. Many weddings take place in the caves. Of course, every time one goes there, one sees that just a little more work has been done. Hopefully, in time, some accommodation will be built at that site. I am not leaving out the Como caves. In fact, they also are doing their bit for tourism in the area.

Other amenities exist in the Byfield area, including our wonderfully run Nob Creek Pottery. Steve and Beth Bishopric do a heck of a good job. Their pottery is always up market. They have an international reputation. They do a lot of work for and have an association with Japan, and their products beat the best from that country, which is not a bad effort. Ferns Hideaway, a unique little tourist place, is very well run by the Martins.

Mr Pearce: Nice place.

Mr LESTER: The honourable member has been there. That is one of the most unusual places that I have ever seen in my life. One can camp there or stay in a unit over a weekend. It is a great place to take youth groups, as has the member for Gladstone, and allow the young people to roam free in the knowledge that they will be okay. Thanks to John Martin and his wife Genevieve, guitar and other wonderful music is played while people eat their meals.

Mr Pearce: A great place.

Mr LESTER: The member for Fitzroy says that it is a great place.

Mr Schwarten: It gets its name from the Byfield fern.

Mr LESTER: It is great to see that the members for Rockhampton and Fitzroy agree. I do not mind that; that is wonderful.

At Easter time, a ritual of mine is to attend the fete at the old homestead at Byfield and then travel on to Ferns Hideaway. I cannot eat Easter lunch there, because it is booked out for about the next 10 years, but I sit in the corner and have a cup of coffee and a couple of scones—probably too many—and join in the festivities and the singing. On the same day, Easter Sunday, I travel to Nob Creek Pottery, where a number of bands play. We must never allow sandmining at Byfield. An extension to the national park should be declared as soon as possible.

When the Premier came to the Capricorn Coast, that great area of Queensland, at the weekend, he performed a name-changing ceremony for the Capricorn Hearts Flower and Tea Gardens. The Bennetts have been doing a fantastic job emphasising tourism at that place. When one enters those tea rooms, soft, environmental-type music is playing. The flowers have really come on. In their own way, some of the amenities in central Queensland have more charm and are better places to visit than any others in Queensland. That is a fact of life.

The area has many other attractions. I should mention the Dreamtime Centre, run by

the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, which is probably one of the greatest tourist attractions I have ever seen in my life. That is particularly well run. The chap in charge was an Army major, and with him there, God help anyone who gets out of line, including Messrs Schwarten, Pearce and Lester.

Mr Schwarten: Thirty-three people they employed last year.

Mr LESTER: Yes, 33 people are employed there, which is pretty good. That gives those people an opportunity to share their culture with the rest of Australia and the rest of the world. I certainly have to compliment Mr Blair for his great efforts at the Dreamtime Centre.

Mr Pearce: What about the crocodile farm?

Mr LESTER: I am coming to that. I might as well start on that next.

Mr Pearce interjected.

Mr LESTER: I remind the honourable member for Fitzroy that this is a very serious matter. We are trying to build up our tourism areas.

Mr Pearce: I am supporting them.

Mr LESTER: Thank you.

I go to the crocodile farm many times and contact Mr Lever. I pay tribute to what he has done over the years. That he has not been reappointed to the board is not a mark against him; it is just that, from time to time, the Minister will choose new people. He has taken that particularly well. He is still very supportive of tourism. He has moved into the international market and is doing one heck of a good job. I take the opportunity in this Parliament to pay a very special tribute to John Lever. He did an excellent job on that board and has always promoted not only central Queensland but also the rest of Queensland.

Mr Elliott: I opened his crocodile farm.

Mr LESTER: Yes, years ago, the member for Cunningham opened that crocodile farm.

People like him, who will not spit the dummy but get on with the job of promoting tourism are needed. He will make quite a mark in central Queensland.

Gangalook is changing its location and will be moving to Parkhurst. We are also developing the cattle industry park, which has a heck of a lot going for it.

In relation to the appointment of a QTTTC board member from central Queensland—if honourable members, including the Minister, think that I am going to lie down and accept the board not having a member from central Queensland, they have another think coming. The Minister has assured me categorically that a representative from central Queensland will be appointed. The tourist people in central Queensland have to get their act together. A bit of back biting is going on.

Mr Elliott: They're not working together.

Mr LESTER: No, they are not working together. They need to get on with the job and put tourism first rather than indulge in personal differences.

Time expired.

Hervey Bay Hospital

Mr NUNN (Hervey Bay) (11.49 a.m.): Remembering that the Minister for Health, Mike Horan, opposed the building of the new Hervey Bay Hospital and remembering that he supported Maryborough specialists and the Royal College of Gynaecologists when they closed the low-risk birthing unit in Hervey Bay—and incidentally, three weeks after they closed it I had it reopened; they said I would never do it but I did—is it any wonder that the people in my city do not trust the Minister? Is it any wonder they do not trust him especially regarding the staffing and equipping of the new Hervey Bay Hospital?

Mr Horan refuses to give a cast-iron guarantee to staff the hospital to base hospital standard, as was the intention of the previous Labor Government. A member of his staff, after much badgering, did give such a commitment to a Hervey Bay newspaper, but since then the Minister has been back-peddling. The best he can do now is to say that it will be "adequately" staffed; it was going to be "appropriately" staffed; and his latest, it will be "well" staffed. I have a memo to hand that states that the staffing will now occur "eventually". All this on top of the fact that so far he has given no commitment and no allocation of funds to this hospital which is due to open early next year.

It is no wonder that the people of Hervey Bay do not trust him when he tells enormous porkies in the Maryborough media. When I complained that he had not done me the courtesy of informing me that he was coming into my electorate—

Mr Mulherin: He did the same in Mackay.

Mr NUNN: Of course, he would do it. He would do it in any electorate which is represented by a Labor member. The Minister said that he had come on the spur of the moment. Pig's eye he did! It was a Saturday and he had the local TV crew with him. Let me say to members that, in the Wide Bay area, it is harder to get a TV crew out on the weekend than it is to draw teeth from an elephant. But what did he do? He managed to get a TV crew out, without notice, on the spur of the moment. He also just happened to have with him an officer from project services. All this on the pretext of opening a facility for the Blue Nurses in Maryborough, which the TV crew did not even bother to cover.

Not happy with having had one joust with the truth, the Minister had another go at it. I tell the House that it was an uneven contest. The truth did not stand a chance against such an accomplished prevaricator as is the Minister for Health. He stated—

"I have always favoured a new hospital for Hervey Bay, but not at the expense of services at Maryborough."

Everybody in Hervey Bay knows that the Minister opposed the building of the Hervey Bay Hospital. He said so on ABC radio. However, the people of Hervey Bay want to know whether they get their hospital, properly staffed and equipped to base hospital standard, only if somebody from the Maryborough medical establishment gives his blessing. That is how it appears to them.

That point brings me to another matter: on 2 April the Director-General of Health met with the medical staff of the Maryborough Hospital. A reliable source from Maryborough reported that, at that meeting, the director-general said that the Hervey Bay Hospital should never have been built. He added that it was a result of a political decision made at the time.

Mr Ardill: What's the population of Hervey Bay?

Mr NUNN: It is over 40,000. Of course, that was not the case. The decision was made only after extensive consultation and evaluation by departmental experts. It has also been reported that the director-general said that there would be no extra funding to operate the hospital and that there would be no extra staff. Also, the director-general is reported to have stated that there would be no extra facilities and that existing X-ray equipment would be transferred from the old hospital.

It would appear that, under the coalition, we may have a 130-bed hospital doing only the same work that our old 40-bed hospital does now. I would be extremely grateful if the Minister could refute those reports and restore the confidence of the people of Hervey Bay that they will, at least, get a hospital that can cater for the needs of one of Queensland's fastest-growing cities.

People should not forget either that the Government tried to sell off our pathology units. For the information of honourable members, I point out that Labor was committed to between \$17m and \$18m of recurrent funding to staff the hospital. The radiography department was to be equipped with a CAT scan as well as the usual X-ray unit.

Mr Mulherin: I bet you he wants it for Noosa.

Mr NUNN: I bet the Minister does want it for Noosa. Hervey Bay people are well aware of the reprioritising of the Capital Works Program to shoot proposed hospitals at Noosa, Robina and Beaudesert to the top of the list. Those hospitals will also have to be staffed and equipped. The people of Hervey Bay are livid when they see an attempt to siphon off this much-needed funding for the facility in their city and transferred to benefit yet again the silvertails of Hastings Street, Noosa. The people of Hervey Bay are well aware of the north coast/Gold Coast/Beaudesert triad who had granted themselves a franchise to plunder the public purse of Queensland.

By now, Mrs Sheldon is aware of the domino effect her axing of the jobs of 50 people and the closure of the tollway is having on Queensland's economy. No wonder she panics when the ghosts whisper in her ear, "Beware the bulging Budget." To axe the regional health offices in Queensland was not the smart thing to do. As a matter of fact, the Government was half smart about it; it kept open two offices in western Queensland. The Government might have called those offices a different name, but they have been kept open. However, the people of Hervey Bay are being made to suffer for all of that. I think that the axing of the regional health offices will fall into one of the all-time great "It seemed like a good idea at the time" categories.

Redefining the health sectors is a good idea, but without regional offices the district health councils will take us back to the old hospitals boards system. "Half-right" Horan copied the Beattie model but his anti-Labor hang-ups made sure that he got the job only

half done. It was the board system that passed on to the Labor Government a health system gorged with a \$600m debt. That debt sucked over \$70m a year out of the Queensland health system. What could we have done with that \$70m? I bet it would have gone a long way towards reducing waiting lists. If there was a blow-out in the budget for Queensland's hospitals last year, that \$70m contributed to it.

The coalition is set to do it all over again. It is set to make the same old mistakes because it wants to. In this place I have challenged coalition members three times to deny that, prior to 1989, they ran the public hospital system into the ground to favour their mates who had a vested interest in the private health system, and three times they have refused to accept the challenge. We could all be excused for thinking that the Minister is again deliberately taking us down the path to a debt-ridden health system, and for no result. As a consequence of the way in which the health system was run under coalition and National Party Governments, capital works—both minor and major—were needed to drag Queensland's hospitals up to standard.

In my own electorate, works which would never have been undertaken under the centralist system include \$42m for the new Hervey Bay Hospital, a new hospital at Childers to serve the people of Isis, a major refurbishment of the Maryborough and Bundaberg Hospitals, a new community health centre in Hervey Bay and minor works to smaller country hospitals. New programs have been introduced and services have been increased. A health network was created of all of the hospitals in the Wide Bay area in a way that was never seen before. Those improvements to the health system could never have happened under the centralist system to which Mr Horan, in his misguided wisdom, would have us return. They could not have happened without the presence on the ground of dedicated professional health administrators out there where the people are. These are the same dedicated professionals for whom he is now boasting he has found jobs. So much for the bloated bureaucracy!

I want to say categorically that, without the help of these Wide Bay regional health office staff, the centralists in Brisbane would still be yawning their way to a decision on the building of the new hospital for Hervey Bay. That is the hospital which the National Party shadow Minister for Health said that the people of Hervey Bay did not need. He virtually said to them, "There is a perfectly good hospital falling down around your ears in

Maryborough. Go and use that." In Childers, three successive National Party Health Ministers, under the system to which Mr Horan wants to take us back, promised a new hospital. Three successive National Party Health Ministers gave the people of Isis nothing. Labor promised the new hospital and delivered it in its first term under a regional health system. Members must remember that this hospital was built in a strictly rural cane-farming area—the type of area that those people opposite boast that they, and only they, can represent. They did nothing for the Isis.

Mr Mulherin: It was all good representation.

Mr NUNN: Of course it was. The Nationals were very good at tearing down heritage buildings in Brisbane but they could not replace a decaying hospital in country Queensland. They do not care about country Queensland. I have no doubt that the inadequacies of the old health system, so beloved by the old National Party Government but which now tired, jaded and discredited and about to be revisited on the people of Queensland, will be painfully apparent before the end of the life of this Parliament.

Time expired.

Hospice Care for Terminally Ill Children

Mr WOOLMER (Springwood) (11.59 a.m.): I rise to speak on a very serious topic, and that is the need for hospice service care for families with terminally ill children. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." That is a statement from the Old Testament, made thousands of years ago. That statement is as true today as it was then. The developments of modern civilisation all depend on the triggers of vision by people which bring to bear knowledge, technology and the power of money in a committed way to change life for the better. There is a vision for change which I wish to share with the House this morning, relating to the way in which society acknowledges and assists families burdened with the care of life-limited children. This was the experience of Nigel and Erika Reed in the 11 years leading up to their daughter's death from the complications of cystic fibrosis about two years ago. Prior to their daughter Zoe dying, Nigel and Erika had felt isolation and the burden of care in the most painful of ways.

Nigel promised his daughter that he would walk around the world so that others similarly

placed might find more timely and appropriate support for their needs. Late last year I had the distinct honour of officially welcoming Nigel home from his remarkable, long trek. It was a very moving occasion, as he was flanked by hundreds of children and their parents as he marched in the Slacks Creek State School's welcome home parade. Nigel then opened the Zoe Reed Memorial Garden at the school, which serves as a very poignant reminder of how short life can really be.

With the support of the Rochedale/Springwood Lions Club, Nigel set out to walk around the United Kingdom and then across north America, to seek out and talk with others about his vision. Through speaking with the members of over 300 Lions Clubs, he spread the message. The solitude of the walk helped clarify his vision and fuelled his purpose.

It is fitting that Nigel went on a pilgrimage, because in ancient times hospices grew up in religious institutions to provide health care and support to pilgrims when far from home, isolated and in need. This phenomenon became less common, and in the mid 1960s Dame Cecily Saunders, a nurse and a physician, had a vision of recreating a place of care, specifically for those with a shortened life expectancy for whatever reason. She established what has become known as St Christopher's Hospice in London, now recognised as the world centre of excellence in teaching palliative and hospice care. This movement catered most significantly for adults, and it was not until some 10 to 15 years ago that a specialised children's hospice concept was put into practice in an evolutionary way at Helen House in Oxford. Similarly, Australia has Mount Olivet, and some other well-established southern institutions. A university Chair of Palliative Care has been set up in several medical faculties around the country.

Nigel Reed's inspiration came from Helen House and its newest successor, Little Bridge House, in south-west England, which was being built while he was in England. Upon his return to Australia, media reports of the final stages of his walk were picked up by others who shared his dream. As a result of a formal meeting which was called in March this year, the Zoe Reed Little Bridge House Association was formed in Brisbane. Professionals, experienced local people and interstate visitors all spoke at this meeting. The association is now in the process of incorporating and has been encouraged by the receptions of its representations to the Minister for Health, the Honourable Mike Horan.

The hospice movement is a concept rather than a place. It serves wherever the need may be. It provides total care, including religious and spiritual care when wished for. The children's hospice movement here, as elsewhere, seeks to fill as many of the existing gaps as possible in care for families—parents and all children, not only the ill child. There are two bodies in Australia, the Very Special Kids project of Melbourne, which covers Victoria, and Bear Cottage in Sydney, which provides services for New South Wales. Sister Margaret Noone from Victoria, Dr Stephens and Dr John Yu have been most helpful to the association in its initial stages, and have helped to provide contacts with the United Kingdom. The whole project is now gaining a much more experienced base.

Such organisations do not seek to replace the functions of existing groups which support conditions such as cystic fibrosis and leukaemia. Rather, they seek to extend, where necessary, the supports that are available and provide for the majority who have no such collective support services for their health and welfare. Much help exists, but it needs to be identified and networked wherever it may be. In the first instance, available community resources and acute hospitals will be more clearly identified. Existing professionals and other resources in the field will have readier access to the support they need through networks and professionals. At the same time, a hospice will be planned when a site and finance become available. A headquarters, with accommodation for up to seven or eight beds for children and accommodation for families, will also be provided. It will be a home away from home, not a hospital. However, with full-time paediatric nurses and other necessary carers available, more may be done at times than can be managed at home. This will not involve the care that should be carried out in an acute hospital.

The idea is to provide respite care, holiday care where the special needs of the whole family can be met, and sometimes, of course, children may choose to die there. The care is not just good palliative care for life-limited children; the needs of brothers and sisters and their parents' wellbeing are also taken into consideration. An attempt is made to normalise lives, and to compensate in part for the intense demands for attention and care of the sick one. Grief support will also be made available to the entire family in the hospice.

Queensland has thousands of families which would have direct access to the planned hospice services in Brisbane. Families in regional Queensland can benefit from linking

initially to those resources, pending sufficient population growth in their area to support the need for that service further north. All child hospice units seem to best operate at a maximum size of about seven or eight beds, with sufficient accommodation for families. Using Sydney's Bear Cottage as a guide, that indicator works well on a population base of about one million people. It is the outreach expertise that diminishes the isolation and desolation so common to the families in need who stay at home and care for their sick children.

For Governments, this vision has relevance. It enables appropriate care with less untoward and tragic outcomes for those overburdened for too long, as we now know occurs too often. It will probably not be at an overall lesser cost, but how does one measure a cost in these terms? This vision of the project is commended to honourable members for their attention and support, and it is gathering significant commitment in the community to make it a reality. The support of leading organisations such as Qantas, Mojo, CETV of Toowoomba and all the Lions Clubs in Queensland has greatly contributed to the realisation of Nigel Reed's dream. The speed of change can be enhanced by the association's ability to rapidly develop its current approach to problems. Apart from much goodwill, this takes skill, time and money, both for services to be established which require recurrent funding and the capital costs of establishing such a unit. In the south, the media, through the gaining of public and endowment funds and the support of this Government, has provided a good starting point. Professionals, lay volunteers and paid staff have all contributed greatly to this project, as have the churches in the area.

Australia has seen most hospices created as special hospitals, rather than as special, homes away from home for life-limited children. A more domestic need arises for children and families, as has been seen recently in the acute Westmead Hospital for Children. This is a fresh approach needing a political understanding for both health and welfare measures necessary to change the ways in which things are done. I commend this project to the House as a matter of public interest and as important for honourable members' attention.

Mr K. Mudgway

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy) (12.08 p.m.): I bring to the attention of the House and the people of Queensland the unscrupulous

activities of Mr Alfred Mudgway, also known as Kelvyn Mudgway, who has been pocketing money paid as rent on houses constructed and purchased under a house and land package and rental agreement with Queensland Assured Rentals. The media and the people of Queensland need to be certain about one thing: Kelvyn Mudgway will claim that he has done nothing wrong and that his books are in order. That may be the case, but the facts are that people and businesses are owed money by Kelvyn Mudgway, which he has collected as rent. He has not paid his bills, he has not honoured signed agreements, he has walked away from his clients. He is again setting himself up in the marketplace to repeat the theft of moneys from people who put trust in him. Kelvyn Mudgway is one of two registered directors of Queensland Assured Rentals Pty Ltd. The other name which appears on an Australian Securities Commission company extract is a Mr Arno Sedlar, who has also, according to unconfirmed reports, been stung by Kelvyn Mudgway in that he has not been paid his share of commissions.

The case of which I speak is similar to that reported by the *Courier-Mail* on 9 December last year in which a Donald Stanley Riggs was convicted for pocketing money paid by overnight guests and erasing entries made by pencil in the books of Paradise Towers, of which he was the manager. According to a *Courier-Mail* article written by Paul Whittaker and Phil Bartsch, Donald Riggs discovered a loophole in the Auctioneers and Agents Act which enables crooks to lease large numbers of privately owned units, thus becoming the tenant, and then sublet them for profit. The arrangement is called lease-back rentals. The attraction is that the unit owners are guaranteed a regular income and are not required to look for tenants.

Kelvyn Mudgway has applied the same principles but without the guarantees. Instead of being involved with high-rise units, he has conned Queenslanders and people living in other States into purchasing house and land packages. The company advertised for people interested in investing in property. Interested parties were introduced to a builder and then entered into a building contract for the construction of a residence. The people who I am representing today signed contracts with Tony Kempe Homes, which then paid a commission to Kelvyn Mudgway.

When entering into a contract to build, the investors also entered into a further contract with Queensland Assured Rentals Pty Ltd for the leasing of the home for a three-year term.

On face value it appears to be a good investment plan for people looking to secure their future. However, what these good people did not know was that they were dealing with a con man who was lacking in common decency and who was interested in building a nest egg only for himself.

In the property section of the *Noosa News* on 22 December 1995, Kelvyn Mudgway, the manager of Residential Investments, detailed a program to help people plan for retirement through investment housing. I table the document and seek leave to have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Property

Housing investment plan set for launch

"If you bought a block of land for \$50,000 and it increased in value eight percent a year, its worth at the end of five years would be \$73,500. However, you would be paying it off at \$100 a week and getting no write-offs and no income. Thus, in five years you will have paid off about \$30,000 for a return of \$23,000 . . ."

A major program to help people plan for retirement through investment housing constructed by leading Sunshine Coast based builder Tony Kempe Homes will be launched soon.

Selected blocks of land, made available from about 40 estates between Gladstone and Brisbane, will be used.

Tony Kempe Homes has been chosen because of the quality of workmanship and its reputation of value for money.

Kelvyn Mudgway, Manager of Residential Investments, said the project aimed to make it as simple as possible for people to invest in quality rental housing.

He said many people 45 and over were concerned and confused about pensions, superannuation and the economy.

A large proportion knew vaguely of the benefits of investment housing but were confused on matters such as negative gearing.

"The aim is to de-mystify these issues and to simplify the procedures for those wanting to have investment properties," he said.

The consortium would find the land, assess the type of three or four-bedroom home most suited to it, the cost, and the return on investment to the buyers.

"We do all the preliminary work like obtaining finance, siting the house, even choosing colour schemes," Mr Mudgway said.

"Tony Kempe Homes would construct the house, and a rental guarantee company in Brisbane would ensure payment of the first three years' rental on the property."

Houses would range in size from 180sq m to 220sq m and in value from \$125,000 to

\$175,000, which included carpets, light fittings, drapes and other fittings.

Negative gearing an investment house could result in important financial benefits, Mr Mudgway said.

"For example, if you bought a block of land for \$50,000 and it increased in value eight percent a year, its worth at the end of five years would be \$73,500," he said.

"However, you would be paying it off at \$100 a week and getting no write-offs and no income. Thus, in five years you will have paid off about \$30,000 for a return of \$23,000—the increase in the value of the land.

"On the other hand, if you had built a \$100,000 house on that land so it was a \$150,000 project you would receive rental income, depreciation on fittings and so on.

"At the end of year five at eight percent annual increases, the property's value would have increased by \$70,000.

"The incredible thing is that you outlaid only \$10,000 over that five year period—\$40 a week—because of the rental income and other deductions."

Further information: Rick McCarthy Marketing Manager. Phone (074) 45 5766 or Kelvyn Mudgway Manager Residential Investments.

Phone (07) 3851 2938.

Mr PEARCE: I have had the article incorporated in *Hansard* so that the people of Queensland can gain some understanding as to how unscrupulous characters such as Kelvyn Mudgway can con decent, hardworking citizens into entering into deals which they believe are safe and offer security for their future. It is unfortunate that these people have been caught out by a man who intended from the start to steal money from those who put their trust in him.

Mudgway offers a world of assistance in finding land, assessing the type of home most suited for the site, the cost and the return to investors. He will even select the colour scheme for the house and, yes, he will even help investors obtain finance. He will also help out with investors' worries in regard to obtaining a return on their investment in that he will lease the property from them and sublease it to tenants of good character who will take care of the investors' new and expensive home. However, the goodwill ends there.

By this stage, Mudgway has investors depending on rentals from tenants whom he will sign up. At a time that best suits his intentions, Mudgway fails to deposit collected moneys as rent into the accounts of clients and then starts the game of hide and seek—disappearing, not returning phone calls

and playing the games that people play when they do not have the courage to face up to the truth. When he does return calls he offers what appear to be legitimate excuses as to why payments have not been lodged in accounts as agreed—for example, staff off sick, changing offices, "the cheque's in the mail". If Mudgway's clients realise early on what game he is playing they act quickly and terminate the agreement. Unfortunately, unsuspecting clients may for one reason or another not be alerted to Mudgway's fraudulent practices for several months.

When deciding how I would present this matter to the House, I originally considered naming seven builders whom I am told have an association with Kelvyn Mudgway. I have their names, as they were displayed in Mudgway's office. I have decided against naming those builders because they would appear to be involved only as the builders of the houses that Mudgway then leases from the owners. These builders operate in Brisbane, northern New South Wales, the Sunshine Coast, Rockhampton and at least one other town in central Queensland. I will send each of them a copy of this speech and they will then have to decide for themselves whether they wish to continue their association, if any, with Mudgway. However, they should understand that I will not hesitate to name them in this place if I am made aware that they continue to be associated with a man who is lacking in principles and integrity.

Anyone who has had a house constructed by builders as an investment through a lease-back agreement should be checking to see whether Kelvyn Mudgway is involved. If he is, they should be talking to their solicitors. Mudgway is also linked with a company named Prosperity Group which is promoting a similar build and lease back scheme. I have in my possession documentation from people in Middlemount who first bought this matter to my attention. Since then, I have met with a group of investors caught up in the scheme who have provided me with further documentation.

Mudgway has not restricted his activities to Queensland. He has managed to sign up investors in Victoria, New South Wales, the Northern Territory and Papua New Guinea. It would appear that up to 40 investors have signed up with Queensland Assured Rentals. The Sunshine Coast-based firm Tony Kempe Homes is known to have built all but one residence relevant to the scheme, and I am concerned that Tony Kempe Homes continues to be associated with Kelvyn Mudgway. Mr Kempe knows about Mudgway. Although it is

true that he may be only the builder, why would anyone want to be associated with a man who has taken decent people for a ride?

Several investors have confirmed through a spokesperson for the group that bond moneys have not been lodged with the Rental Bond Authority. I am also able to tell the House that a number of businesses wish to talk to Kelvyn Mudgway about overdue accounts. In trying to determine how much money may be involved, at this time the group that I represent can only come up with conservative estimates. Let us have a quick run down of the moneys involved: the amounts of rent collected and not passed on to home owners range between \$1,500 and \$3,000. For example, at \$2,000 a client, we agree that up to \$80,000 in rent payments could be outstanding. Some bond moneys have not been lodged and it is difficult to put a figure on the amount which may be owed to tenants. In one case, the owner of a house allowed the tenants to live out their time on the bond moneys that had been paid to Mudgway.

Mudgway has also received a commission from the sale of each house and land package deal of \$7,500. We have figured out that the commission on about 30 homes would realise him over \$200,000. So he has made in excess of \$300,000 from a scam that has minimum risk of ever appearing before the courts. Where has the money gone? Who else is involved in the laundering of the stolen money?

Governments at both State and Federal levels must act to end this highway robbery in which hardworking families and individuals are being caught up by grubs like Mudgway. There is no protection for Queenslanders under Acts administered by Consumer Affairs. I have a document that I wish also to table and have incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

21 March 1996

Dear Sir/Madam

I refer to your inquiry concerning lease arrangements entered into by yourself and Queensland Assured Rentals Pty Ltd.

Queensland Assured Rentals Pty Ltd are not licenced real estate agents and the operations of the company do not come within the ambit of the Auctioneers and Agents Act 1971 which is administered by this Office.

Having regard to the nature of your lease agreement with the company, rentals collected are the property of the company and need not necessarily be placed into any trust account. Therefore outstanding rentals owing to you are

merely a civil debt owed by the company and civil action will be required for any recovery of such.

Inquiries made by this Office reveal that Queensland Assured Rentals has been placed under administration on 18 March 1996. The receivers will be notifying all creditors by mail of the date for a creditors meeting where information will be provided concerning any distribution of funds.

Any further inquiries should be directed to the receivers upon receipt of their advice.

Yours faithfully

(Sgd)

Peter Jenkins

Principal Investigations Officer

Investigations Branch

Mr PEARCE: With respect to the Federal legislation, certain procedures are followed by the company and there appears to be little protection for people caught up in this type of scam. The threat of massive legal costs frightens people from taking action against Mudgway and others such as him. He is aware of that and operates on the basis of taking a large number of clients for a reasonably small amount. Even a joint action through the legal system would cost each of Mudgway's clients close to the amount of money stolen from them.

As I said, under the legislation Consumer Affairs is unable to act. The Australian Securities Commission is notoriously slow in dealing with these matters, even when it can act under the legislation that the commissioner has the responsibility to administer. The people whom I represent want Kelvyn Mudgway exposed. They cannot sit by and let other innocent Queenslanders be trapped by this man. They accept with anger and disappointment that Mudgway has robbed them and that there is little that can be done to recover their losses.

One woman whom I have talked to has mortgaged the family home to invest in a second home that would have been paid for in part through the lease-back arrangement. The ANZ Bank is suggesting that she sell the new home she purchased with the help of Mudgway because the repayments are several months behind. However, because of the downturn in the housing market, the sale will not recover the outstanding debt and there is a strong possibility that she may have to sell her family home to meet the balance. I urge the ANZ Bank and the manager who agreed to approve the finance—and I have his name—to show some compassion and work with this woman to help her through this

difficult time as she has at all times acted in good faith. I will be monitoring this case closely and may have to rise in this place again if I feel she is not being treated fairly.

Today, I will be providing the *Courier-Mail* with documentation and photographs in the hope that it will expose Kelvyn Mudgway for what he is. He should be exposed so that ordinary Queenslanders know about his activities.

Time expired.

Mice Plague

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham)
(12.18 p.m.): I wish to raise a matter of great concern to my area and to many other farming areas. I refer to the catastrophic mice plague on the Darling Downs, in particular around Millmerran, south of Millmerran, in the Wyaga area and in the Goondiwindi area.

Some of those areas have recently received timely rain. Although the northern and central parts of the Darling Downs have not had sufficient rain to plant, many of the southern parts of the downs and through to Goondiwindi have received such rain. Many people who commenced planting have ceased doing so. After planting, they discovered that the mice had burrowed into the ground and eaten all the seed.

I was talking to a gentleman who lives not far from the Wyaga property. He indicated to me that it is a total and utter waste of time to plant crops while mice are so prevalent. This problem could be financially disastrous. Farmers will not get the sort of strike required to establish a decent crop. I do not need to remind members of the difficult financial circumstances being faced by many farmers. In the last seven years, some farmers have had only one profitable crop. Of course, the problems have arisen due to seven continuous years of drought. The current mice plague will merely compound the problems already encountered.

Last year, a baiting program took place. The program was quite successful. I pay tribute to the honourable member for Thuringowa and former Minister for Lands, Mr McElligott. I believe that he is one of the few practical people on the Labor side of politics. He immediately grasped the situation, understood the enormity of the problem and moved swiftly to do something about it. The end result was that thousands of acres of grain crops were saved. Unfortunately, the baiting did not occur across-the-board. In common with many people, I held grave

concerns about baiting. We baited an area in which there was not much product because the majority of the crop had failed. We did bait the crop that had survived. Being one of the older properties, ours has a lot of grass country with timber on it which has never been broken up. It has a lot of bird life. We pride ourselves in that as we understand that magpies, crows and butcher birds are important in keeping down the pests on one's paddocks. As a result, we were loath to bait as we did not want to kill any birds. But when we saw the way in which the baiting was being undertaken, we believed that it could be done without loss of bird life. At the end of the day our belief was upheld. As one would expect, many people involved in the green movement took a very intense interest in the baiting program and followed its progress. To my knowledge, they were unable to attribute any bird deaths to the baiting program. That was due to the way in which the baiting was undertaken—unlike in years gone by, when at times baiting has been done willy-nilly without a lot of scientific consultation, and it has caused significant problems. I take my hat off to the previous Minister for the success of that baiting program.

As the Government of the day, we must move swiftly and outline a program which will enable people to bait their crops to overcome the current mice plague. There is no threat to human life, unless one does not pay attention and take the normal care of using gloves and masks when handling the chemicals. There are no grain crops with outed head in the areas that need to be baited, so there is no possibility of the treated grain lodging in those heads and then being harvested straightaway and getting mixed in with the good grain. When one works out the percentages of bait-treated grain that are used, one talks about kilograms per hectare to be able to do the job rather than large amounts of grain. We must bait the mice quickly in order to reduce, if not wipe out, the mice population so as to allow farmers to recommence planting and hopefully ensure that their crop comes to fruition. Given a reasonable season—and surely to goodness we are about due for one of those—some farmers may grow a decent crop.

The potential for financial disaster is unbelievable. Many farmers are on a knife edge as far as the cash flow and overall indebtedness of their property is concerned. If we do not get on top of this problem, many farmers could face the prospect of another failed crop. The opportunities to plant are not necessarily always available. People who do not understand the circumstances have the

attitude, "Why worry? If you wait a while the mice might abate. We might get more rain; we might get cold weather; the mice might go away and then you can plant at a later date when it rains again." There will not necessarily be planting rain a second time. Quite often there is only one good planting rain. Many properties received heavy storm rains during the summer and have good subsoil moisture. There is the ability, given enough rain to produce secondary roots, to grow a reasonable and profitable crop. It looks as though prime hard wheat will once again be worth a lot of money this year. With the present kernel bunt scare in America, there is the possibility that the American crop may be down, both in yield and in quality. That will reduce the world's stocks. They are already at one of the lowest levels we have seen for some time. So there are blue skies in relation to the potential profitability of some farms. Surely the members of this Parliament will not allow a situation to develop in which farmers are unable to plant this season's crop. That would be an absolute disaster.

I was interested to note that the Reverend Peter Hollingworth recently identified Queensland farmers in particular as the new poor of Australia. That is a shocking indictment on those State and Federal Governments which have been in power over the previous decade. It is sad that people who were once quite strong, good operators who made a reasonable living from the land are now recognised by someone with as eminent a background as the Reverend Peter Hollingworth as the new poor of Australia. If we do not do something about that, all of us will be deemed to have failed the rural sector of this nation.

There are many programs which assist those living in the cities. The Metropolitan Transit Authority, as it was formerly known—I am not sure that that is what it is called now—had responsibility for the trains and buses which operated around the city to bring people to work. Does any member know what that body is called now?

Mr Ardill: SEQTA is the one we set up, which you have now abolished.

Mr ELLIOTT: I see. I openly supported the subsidisation by the Metropolitan Transit Authority to provide an electric train service to the city to get people off the roads. That was a sensible program; it was a social necessity. I have no complaint with the fact that in some years in the vicinity of \$100m is spent on subsidising those services. At the same time, none of us should complain when the rural

producers of this nation require assistance to stay viable. If we do not provide such assistance, what will happen to this nation's status as one of the great producers of crops—including grain—and cattle and sheep? Quite frankly, the young people living in rural areas have had a gutful. I do not wish to use an inelegant phrase, but that is the reality. They have been faced with one disaster after another.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Laming): Order! The time allocated to the Matters of Public Interest debate has expired.

CONSTITUTION (PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 April (see p. 570).

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—Leader of the Opposition) (12.30 p.m.): I rise to express a number of concerns about this piece of legislation before the House, namely, the Constitution (Parliamentary Secretaries) Amendment Bill 1996. I do so for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Opposition will oppose proposed new section 60, which allows the reimbursement of a Parliamentary Secretary's reasonable expenses of office. The Opposition will also be opposing payment to Parliamentary Secretaries. We do this for a number of very clear reasons.

Firstly, the Opposition believes that this is not about good Government; this is about using public funds to look after a few mates who could not be fitted into the Ministry. It is a sneaky way to get three coalition members a pay rise, and the Opposition will not support it. When this provision was first flagged by the Premier in Parliament on the evening of 20 February 1996, his motion stated—

"That this House endorses—

- (a) the appointment of not more than three members of the Legislative Assembly as Parliamentary Secretaries to assist certain Ministers on the basis that—
 - (i) the appointments are not to affect the right of the members to sit or vote as members of the Legislative Assembly"—

that is fair enough; and, secondly—

". . . additional salary or allowance is not payable to the members unless the Parliament otherwise decides."

Today, members have this before them in the form of a Bill so that they can decide on it. When this matter was first flagged, there was no indication that Parliamentary Secretaries were to be paid. Had that been the case, the Opposition would have opposed them right from the beginning.

When one considers the provisions within this legislation, one finds a number of matters which cause great concern. The Government is entitled to make whatever administrative arrangements it determines necessary to conduct the business of Government. The Opposition would not obstruct that. But the costs of those arrangements are properly a matter for full examination by this Parliament and the Opposition. The Bill should have been called the "Every Child Wins a Prize Bill", because that is what it is designed to do. It is all about political pay-offs. It is an attempt to cover up the lack of coalition representation in this State, particularly in the north and far-north Queensland. Nobody in north Queensland is fooled by this charade. They know that the real power lies around the Cabinet table, and they believe that the Government's attempt to buy them off with a couple of Parliamentary Secretaries is a joke, and a pretty pathetic one at that.

All members would know that only one Minister, that is, the Honourable the Minister for Mines and Energy, represents an electorate north of the Tropic of Capricorn. Many north Queenslanders, including many within the Premier's own party, expected that Marc Rowell would be a Minister. They expected him to be their representative. Now they realise what a joke Parliamentary Secretaries are. Consequently, Marc Rowell refused to accept appointment as a Parliamentary Secretary so that he could properly represent the interests of his electorate and the north of the State as a whole. The Opposition shares the view of the member for Hinchinbrook in relation to Parliamentary Secretaries. Many people in north Queensland, particularly those in the National Party, have become even more depressed in recent weeks as they have realised that all the power in this Government resides on the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. I will return to Mr Gilmore in a minute.

Let us consider what this Bill does by going through it clause by clause. The Explanatory Notes state—

"The purpose of the Bill then is to legislatively clarify the situation of Parliamentary Secretaries in Queensland and remove any areas of uncertainty."

What a joke! What does the legislation say? Who appoints the Parliamentary Secretaries? According to proposed section 58, a Parliamentary Secretary has the functions decided by the Premier. What a degree of certainty that is! It refers to clarity and certainty, but who determines their functions? The Premier does. So Parliamentary Secretaries are there at the whim and the will of the Premier to carry out whatever functions and roles he should determine from time to time. What degree of certainty is there in that? The answer is: none. If we cannot draft legislation that is more specific about the role of Parliamentary Secretaries, then these pieces of legislation should not come before the Parliament in this form.

As to proposed section 60 in relation to the reimbursement of expenses—this is a classic! I foreshadow an amendment to remove this proposed section, which states—

"A Parliamentary Secretary is entitled to be reimbursed the Parliamentary Secretary's reasonable expenses of office."

What an opening that is! What an opportunity for more snouts in the trough. What an opportunity for getting into the public purse—"reasonable expenses"!

All members would know that the Ministerial Services Branch—one of whose officers was recently sent home by the Premier—has been under vicious attack by this coalition minority Government because Ministers want to spend like drunken sailors and they do not want the checks and balances that the Ministerial Services Branch imposes on Ministers and their expenditure. When I was a Minister, officers of the Ministerial Services Branch were, from time to time, a difficult group of people to deal with. And so they should be; that is their role. They have a set of guidelines that need to be adhered to by Ministers. We cannot return to the sort of behaviour that existed under previous National Party Governments, when Ministers were given \$300 cash to take home on the weekend. That well-documented fact was recorded at the Fitzgerald inquiry. Therefore, the Ministerial Services Branch needs to be supported, not grossly undermined by having its role eradicated over time, which is what is happening now. The Ministerial Services Branch is being eroded to the point at which it will not be able to carry out its responsibilities. That is happening on the one hand, yet on the other hand the Premier is seeking the approval of the Parliament for Parliamentary Secretaries to be reimbursed for

reasonable expenses of office. Members of the Opposition are not prepared to support such a section. As I have indicated, not only will we be opposing it, but we will be seeking its deletion.

Subsection (2) of proposed section 60 states—

"The consolidated fund is appropriate for the reimbursement."

So the taxpayers will be paying for those reasonable expenses of office. They will be the ones who will be paying for all those snouts in the trough. They are the people who will be bleeding from this.

Nowhere in this legislation is there any mention of how much Parliamentary Secretaries are going to be paid. In his first-reading speech, the Premier did not even mention how much Parliamentary Secretaries are going to be paid. I know that these matters will be determined by Executive Council. If they are determined by Executive Council, once this piece of legislation is passed we will lose forever any control over how much Parliamentary Secretaries will be paid. They will then be paid simply at the whim of the Premier of the day. They will have their snouts in the trough. The Premier is prepared to put three of his mates on increased salaries at public expense. I notice that he has made sure that they get their superannuation benefits. He has made sure that the amount they are being paid is calculated in their superannuation benefits. That is why the Opposition will oppose Part 5 and Part 6 of the Bill.

As the Honourable the Premier pointed out in his first-reading speech, there are precedents for Parliamentary Secretaries in other parts of Australia. That is quite true. However, the Opposition is concerned about the payment not only of these so-called reasonable expenses but also the payment of Parliamentary Secretaries. Why was this not flagged when that motion was first moved in the House, so that there could have been adequate public debate about it? That is the issue. There has not been adequate public debate about this measure. It was introduced via that motion in *Hansard*, but it was not until this piece of legislation was introduced that there was any warning.

Let us consider what happens in other jurisdictions, particularly in the Commonwealth. No extra salary is paid to Parliamentary Secretaries at a Commonwealth level, but they receive extra staff and they do get unlimited travel. This is of great concern, given the limited travel entitlements of shadow Ministers.

As well, extra allowances are paid for extraordinary expenses. That is the position federally; Parliamentary Secretaries receive no extra salary, but they do get paid for extraordinary expenses. That is the Commonwealth precedent.

In Victoria, Parliamentary Secretaries were introduced by Premier Kennett in 1992. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet gets 32 per cent, or more than \$20,000, extra salary, and an extra 6 per cent of his or her basic salary and allowances, while other Parliamentary Secretaries receive 15 per cent extra salary. Statistics on the extent of staffing and travel were not available, but obviously travel is not as important in Victoria as it would be in this State—and we all know that one can fit Victoria on a postage stamp.

In the Northern Territory there are no Parliamentary Secretaries. In New South Wales there are six Parliamentary Secretaries, who are paid a salary and expenses. Those positions were first created in 1967. In Western Australia in 1993—

Mr FitzGerald: What happened in South Australia?

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to tell the honourable member about Western Australia, a State with which he identifies quite a lot. In Western Australia, as at 1993, there were four Parliamentary Secretaries, who were not paid a salary; however, they did receive expenses.

We have been presented with an inconsistent precedent from other States. There is not a consistent precedent that shows that Parliamentary Secretaries should be paid. As I indicated when I started this speech, the Government can make whatever administrative arrangements its likes. That is appropriate and that is why, when the motion was first moved in this House, the Opposition did not seek to oppose it. However, our concern now is that we have before the House a first-reading speech which did not refer to an amount of money. Of course, the legislation and explanatory notes did not either, although I can understand that because of the necessity for it to go to Executive Council. I believe that, if we were to have an appropriate, well-informed public debate, it was incumbent on the Premier to include in his first-reading speech the amount of money to be paid to those Parliamentary Secretaries.

Mr Borbidge: What Bill is your salary included in?

Mr BEATTIE: If the Premier wants to be half smart about this, that is fine, but he knows very well that he is asking the Opposition to agree—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The Premier should let me finish. He is asking the Opposition to support him on the payment of an amount of money to be paid by the public, but about which the public does not know. That is the standard that he applies.

Mr Borbidge: That is the same as yours.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, but these payments are new, and he knows it. These positions are being created for the first time.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: What did he do with that amount of money? He announced publicly the amount of money to be paid to the shadow Ministers and he was quite correct in doing so. I applaud him for announcing that initiative and releasing it publicly. I just want him to be consistent; I want the same standard to be applied to Parliamentary Secretaries as was applied to shadow Ministers. That is all that I am seeking.

Mr Borbidge: It will be announced.

Mr BEATTIE: I am sure it will, but it should have been announced in the Premier's first-reading speech so that the people of Queensland know what their legislators are voting on in this legislation. The Premier says that it will be announced and I am sure that it will be; I am glad that we have pressured him into that. However, the point remains that those figures should have made public before this legislation was introduced into this House, and the Premier knows it.

Mr Foley: Did Mr Borbidge mention this concept of Parliamentary Secretaries before the July 1995 election?

Mr BEATTIE: No, he never mentioned it. He did not go to the people with this proposal. I thank the honourable member. As he well knows, this is not an election commitment, which is why it is more important than ever that the amount of money to be paid to the Parliamentary Secretaries should have been released publicly before today and should have been included, at the very least, in the first-reading speech so that every member of this House could discuss it with their constituents and seek the advice of their supporters. To do so would have been appropriate; not to do so is grossly inappropriate.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The Premier can make all the half-smart remarks he likes. He knows full well that this is the first time that the office of

Parliamentary Secretaries has ever existed in this State, and he did not even have the courtesy to tell the people of Queensland. What is this all about? Let us get to the nub of it. Why does secrecy surround how much Parliamentary Secretaries are to be paid? Why does secrecy surround the payment of reasonable expenses? Why are they defined in such a way that they are totally controlled by the Premier? That is occurring for very clear political reasons, and I will come back to that.

Let us consider the legislation in some detail. Proposed section 58 states—

"A Parliamentary Secretary has the functions decided by the Premier."

We do not even know what they are going to do. The legislation is before this House, and we do not even now know what functions the Parliamentary Secretaries will perform. It is not even spelled out in legislation. In his first-reading speech, the Premier stated—

Mr FitzGerald: Second-reading speech.

Mr BEATTIE: Of course, I apologise. The member for Lockyer had to get one right; he has been wrong 15 times in a row.

In his second-reading speech, the Premier did not mention the duties of the Parliamentary Secretaries, nor does the legislation mention it. The functions of those secretaries are at the whim of the Premier. One can understand why, with the performance of some of his Ministers, such as the Minister for Transport, the Minister for Mines and Energy and a few others, the Government would need assistant Ministers. However, in his legislation, the Premier has not sought to do that. He has not even identified that those people will be assistant Ministers. The Minister for Health needs all the help he can get. There is no assistant Minister or Parliamentary Secretary for him.

Let us examine the politics of this and why the people of Queensland are being asked to support a move by this Government to dip into the public purse. We all know that the National Party had a lot of difficulty firming up its Ministry. We know, for example, that the member for Burdekin, who is so vocal in this place, was very disappointed at being excluded from the Ministry. We know that the member for Hinchinbrook also was excluded from the Ministry. What did the National Party do? It offered the member for—

Mr Livingstone: They looked after their mates.

Mr BEATTIE: They looked after their mates; that is what it is all about: snouts in the trough and looking after their mates.

The member for Hinchinbrook had the courage to say, "No, I will not accept this trade-off. I don't believe that Parliamentary Secretaries amount to a cracker." He is right, because all they do is get to make the tea and carry the bags. He was not prepared to accept one. Of course, the member for Burdekin was prepared to do so, and not only he but also two other members accepted positions as Parliamentary Secretaries. Another Parliamentary Secretary position went to north Queensland to make up for the fact that the National Party was copping a caning in the north over having only Mr Gilmore in the Ministry.

The third choice for a Parliamentary Secretary is the honourable member for Moggill. I can understand why he would be chosen as a Parliamentary Secretary. During the time that he has been in this House, he has demonstrated that he is a very capable and ethical member of this Parliament. He is someone for whom I have enormous respect and regard. I believe that it is a disappointment for the people of Queensland that he is not in the Ministry. If he were the Treasurer, things would be in a much better state than they are now. I applaud the choice of the honourable member for Moggill as a Parliamentary Secretary, because I know that at least he will endeavour to encourage the Treasurer to keep things on an even keel.

I turn now to poor old Tom Gilmore, the north's only representative, the Minister for Mines and Energy. Two weeks ago, it was demonstrated clearly in the House that he was not even included in the discussions on the gas pipeline. Poor old Tom was not even told about the trade-off of a higher cash payment for reductions in tariffs to industry, and again the north was ignored. The Treasurer from the Sunshine Coast had to come to Tom's rescue and try to explain to the House what happened, because Tom just did not know. The same Treasurer would not promise to guarantee that the money from the gas pipeline sale would go towards the Mount Isa to Townsville railway line. She reneged on that decision of the previous Government, because she needs all the money she can get her hands on for the \$200m political pay-off to her friends on the Sunshine Coast in the form of the abolition of the toll, and also for the \$630m towards the highway to the Gold Coast.

What I find extraordinary about the legislation is this: on the one hand the Government is repeatedly crying poor—although I am pleased to see that today the Premier admitted finally the truth that there will

be a \$3m surplus in the Budget this year, a matter that the former Government had claimed publicly and a matter that the Treasurer had claimed on a previous occasion before suffering selective amnesia—yet on the other hand it can pay three Parliamentary Secretaries an undisclosed amount of money. The hypocrisy of that move will not be lost on the people of Queensland. Nor will they miss the hypocrisy of the fact that the Treasurer can remove \$200m worth of tolls from the Sunshine Coast tollway, lose \$750m in Federal funding through the abolition of Eastlink, still cry poor and yet come into this House and support legislation to pay three politicians an additional amount. After this debate, members of the coalition will never be able to hold their heads up and argue about anything to do with the Budget. They are prepared to look after their mates financially in more ways than one, yet they cry poor. The hypocrisy of that will not be lost on the people of Queensland.

Where is the estimate of the cost of these positions? What will reasonable expenses of office for those Parliamentary Secretaries be to the Government and the people of Queensland? Will it include new dinner sets for Parliamentary Secretaries as well as the Ministers and digital mobile phones for all the staff? Will it be back to the bad old days of snouts in the trough—just a lot more snouts this time? Where is the limit? How can they possibly come into the House and introduce legislation that is only a skeleton at best? It is all bones—there is no flesh about the role of Parliamentary Secretaries, no flesh about how much their salary will be and no flesh about how much their reasonable expenses will be. The Government is asking the Opposition to give it blank-cheque support. That is not on. The Opposition will not give the Government a blank cheque because, if the Government will not do it, the Opposition will be the custodians of the public purse. It is not prepared to allow the Government, through this legislation, to look after its mates.

What do we have from this Government? On the one hand, it talks about finances—and earlier today we heard it talk about finances—yet, on the other, it is prepared to spend money on legislation such as this. It is just an hypocrisy, and the people of Queensland are becoming more and more aware of it. However, one could not describe the Government as not being sensationalist because, in a sense, it is a sensationalist Government. The Premier has been threatening blackouts, yet today we have the extraordinary set of circumstances in which the

Minister for Mines and Energy confirmed what was reported accurately by the *Courier-Mail* and said, "I am sorry, guys and girls, there are no blackouts at all. That was a beat-up to try to justify 'Centrelink', the powerlines that we are going to build in central Queensland. That is all it was." So those sensational blackouts came to nothing.

Then we had the great sensation of the Premier saying that a claim for title by an Aboriginal group was going to cut off gas supplies to Brisbane. That was another beat-up. There was no truth in it. It was sensationalism at its best. Then we had the sensational theatre about pastoral leases. This is a sensational Government all right: it lurches from one irresponsible sensation to another. However, all the Premier's sensational claims do is damage Queensland's trading reputation both overseas and interstate. People interstate and the business community here are starting to wonder what sort of Government Queensland has.

Mr Ardill: They act like an Opposition.

Mr BEATTIE: They act like an Opposition. It is about time they started acting like a Government. How many more times will the Government break its contract with the people of Queensland before voters finally realise that they have been sold out by this Government? It has broken promises and bungled everything it has touched. When legislation such as this is introduced, why should Queenslanders believe the Government? Yet Mrs Sheldon says, "Trust us. We are the Government."

The Government has handled the economy like it handled the appointments to the board of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation—beautiful one day, bungled the next. Talk about the great performance by the Premier this morning when he referred to the comments of the shadow spokesman for Tourism about the incoming tourism board! What a joke! Government members know—and if they do not, I am happy to tell them—that at 7 a.m. the Premier had a meeting with the Minister for Tourism and Frank Burnett because the Tourism Minister tried to sack Frank Burnett—one of the most respected businessmen in this State. To his credit, Frank Burnett said, "I am not going." He stood firm, and so he should. So the "joke"—the Minister for Tourism—criticised the performance of the QTTC, yet he retained the chairman of the board. Why? Because the chairman was a good chairman and the chairman would not be intimidated. The Minister for Tourism said

that the board was not performing, but he kept the chairman. The Minister for Tourism has about as much credibility as the Premier in relation to this matter. The big, tough man said on television, "When push comes to shove, I can shove." That big macho man could not even handle the removal of the board in a dignified way. For the Premier to come into this place and attack the shadow Minister for Tourism was nothing short of a disgrace.

I will return to financial matters, because they impinge directly on the community. The real catastrophe for the Queensland economy is that we have a Treasurer running amok and a Premier who simply cannot control her. No wonder the Health Minister is sitting there, quietly waiting to be drafted into the leadership. Government members know that the Premier is placing them on a very, very sticky wicket. They know that the community is saying, "The Government is not up to it." And the Government is not up to it—it keeps turning back the clock to the bad old days. This legislation is another example: back to the bad old days, back into the public purse, more snouts in the trough—similar to when National Party Ministers used to take home \$300 a week for their personal expenditure. This legislation turns back the clock to look after a few mates the Government could not fit into its Ministry.

This "Fawltly Towers" Ministry is determined to make Queensland the economic laughing-stock of Australia. Unfortunately, it is heading down that path with a success that the Opposition does not particularly like. The Opposition is not prepared to support this legislation. It is not prepared to sit by and watch the coalition single-handedly wreck the Queensland economy. In the short time that it has been in Government, it has wrecked Queensland's electricity strategy for the next decade. I will not bother asking: how many Government members does it take to change a light bulb? The reality is that, in two months, the Government has done more to damage the power strategies of this State than anyone could possibly have imagined it could have when it won office. The only imminent blackouts will be those suffered by Government members when they try to get out of the mess that they have made of Queensland's power supply industry. When electricity consumers pay more for their electricity, they will remember the Government, and they will remember it right through to the next election. The Government talks about other financial matters, such as workers' compensation.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I say to the member for Lockyer that, when the Government was in Opposition, it claimed that it had all the answers. However, in Government, the coalition has done nothing at all to address the problem. It is looking for any excuse to run away from its election commitment that all workers will retain full access to common law in workers' compensation cases. The coalition is trying to blame the former Government for its inability to meet its election commitments.

The cartoon that appears in today's *Courier-Mail* says it all: the Government finally acknowledges that there are not going to be blackouts, and the cartoon depicts me as saying, "And I suppose that's Labor's legacy too?" I am happy to say that it is the former Government's fault that there are not going to be blackouts. However, the Government has mucked the economy around. It is now considering these vicious cuts that have been leaked to us by six different departments. The people who work in those departments are concerned about where the economy is going. The Government cannot have it both ways. It cannot say, on the one hand, "We are short of money", and then, on the other hand, spend like drunken sailors on election commitments and on three of its mates.

Mr Hollis: There will be four of their mates, including the Leader of the House.

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed, of course.

Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.30 p.m.

Mr BEATTIE: Before the luncheon recess, I was referring to why I felt this legislation needed to be opposed for a number of reasons. As I said, part of the reason is that there is not enough certainty in the legislation. For example, if Parliamentary Secretaries were to be appointed to help some of the Ministers who have been in trouble—for example, the Health Minister, the Minister for Transport, the Minister for Mines and Energy, the Minister for Police, or, in particular, the Minister for Tourism—we could understand the need for that assistance. However, we are not prepared to give an open cheque to the Government. Once this legislation is assented to, of course, Parliament itself will not have control of any salary increases to Parliamentary Secretaries. We will lose control of that; that will simply be a decision of Executive Council.

When the Government says, as it does in these matters, "We are not putting the money in, but please trust us", one can understand the Opposition's scepticism. We saw that in

question time today, when the Premier and the Minister for Mines and Energy made excuses for the public panic they caused over possible electricity blackouts and tried to deflect criticism by expressing concern about the conflicting information being provided by the various electricity corporations. We find that strange because, if they were not confident about that information, why did they publicly release it and use it to justify a \$120m infrastructure project? That is the sort of concern that the Opposition has.

Also at question time the Deputy Premier referred to the Roma Street parklands, claiming that there had been discussions with the Lord Mayor. However, advice from the Lord Mayor is that he has had only one meeting with the Government on the Roma Street parklands and that most of that centred on the Queensland Place site on the corner of George, Roma and Turbot streets, which the Lord Mayor understands was always intended for development. The Lord Mayor informs me that the Government put up a proposal for a small scale commercial development within the parklands but the Lord Mayor was sceptical that it would succeed and was sure that it would not produce an annual profit of \$50m. In addition, he has had no discussions with the Government on South Bank. When such claims as these are made by the Government, one can therefore understand our level of scepticism.

Our view on these matters is best summed up by the editorial in the *Courier-Mail* on Friday, 26 April, headed "Sorry case of the dithers", which refers to the State Government's suitability to deal with Eastlink and other electricity matters. I table that editorial for the information of all members in the House.

Other Opposition concerns, of course, relate to matters I raised before lunch, that is, the uncertainty about the role of Parliamentary Secretaries and the fact that the legislation does not indicate the amount they are to be paid. Prior to lunch, the honourable Leader of the House interjected, "What about South Australia?" That was a fair interjection and I am happy to respond to his question. According to the Table Office in South Australia, the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries in that State was initiated under the current Brown Liberal Government. Initially two Parliamentary Secretaries were appointed, but in March this year—and I suspect this is seasonal—an additional 14 were appointed.

The honourable member for Lockyer may assist me: it could well be climatic that that sort

of decision would be made at that time. Some Ministers now have more than one Parliamentary Secretary. In South Australia the Governor in Council appoints Parliamentary Secretaries under the Constitution Act of 1934. However—and I suspect that this was what the honourable member for Lockyer was really getting at—no additional salary is payable. Some of the Parliamentary Secretaries are provided with offices in the relevant Minister's department, where they have access to the staff and resources of the Minister's office. Therefore, they do not really get resources, either. The South Australian Table Office was unaware of any additional staff and resources provided exclusively to Parliamentary Secretaries. In South Australia, Parliamentary Secretaries are not recognised in Standing Orders, and therefore cannot be questioned in question time or by parliamentary committees. That is the same as here; the Government is not suggesting anything different. I think that gives a balanced view of the position in the Australian States.

At the Committee stage, the Opposition will move an amendment to omit from clause 3 all words in lines 18 to 21. In addition, because the Opposition is not prepared to give the Government an open cheque, it will disagree with other provisions in the Bill. My view on that is reinforced by what the Police Minister said this morning when he was trying to defend the Concerned Citizens of Mundingburra. After reading Saturday's *Courier-Mail* and learning that all the members of that organisation bar one were members of the National Party, that the cheques were cleared through the local National Party branch and that the organisation is a front for the National Party, a lot of people in Townsville—indeed, throughout Queensland—will now know that they were tricked—conned—by what they thought was a community organisation. The Government takes the "Trust us, we are the Government" approach, but I am afraid that we are not that silly.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick) (2.35 p.m.): I rise to support the Constitution (Parliamentary Secretaries) Amendment Bill introduced by the Honourable the Premier. First, I wish to respond to a few matters raised by the Leader of the Opposition. Today he gave a great political demonstration of the Brown's Cows Act; he was all over the place on a number of issues. He said that Parliamentary Secretaries should not be paid out of the Consolidated Fund. What I am unsure of, Mr Beattie—

Mr Beattie: I didn't say that.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The honourable member said that. How else does one pay Parliamentary Secretaries? They are paid out of consolidated revenue. Does the member want us to find a philanthropist—God help us—who is prepared to pay his salary? The Consolidated Fund pays the salaries of members of Parliament and members of the Executive, and it will pay the salaries of Parliamentary Secretaries. I hope that may have been a faux pas, but how else would Mr Beattie expect them to be paid? No philanthropist is going to pay that. The Leader of the Opposition ranged across a number of issues, including Eastlink and blackouts. You name it, he basically went into it!

Turning to the role of a Parliamentary Secretary and what may be expected of them—the Leader of the Opposition raised concerns that the legislation does not define what a Parliamentary Secretary is supposed to do. My understanding is that there is no Australian Parliament which actually defines in legislation the role of a Parliamentary Secretary. However, I will quote from the speech of the Honourable the Premier when he introduced this Bill and allude to some particular points that give us a pretty good indication of what exists in other States and also what we may expect to be the role of a Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr Beattie: I went through all that.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Well, it did not sink in, did it? A charming and charismatic character the Leader of the Opposition may be, but certainly he is a little intellectually challenged from time to time. Mr Borbidge said—

"In no legislation that I am aware of are the duties of Parliamentary Secretaries spelt out in the enabling legislation. Usually the duties of the Parliamentary Secretary are either not dealt with, as is the case with the Commonwealth Act, or the legislation provides that the Premier determines their functions, as is the case in New South Wales."

Mr Beattie: Didn't I say that?

Mr SPRINGBORG: No, the honourable member did not. Certainly he may have tried to make the point; I listened to his speech and I know that he was floundering from time to time. He had a little bit of difficulty in trying to come to terms with the concept of Parliamentary Secretaries and their role. I did not have the same difficulty. Certainly in his

speech the Premier defined rather well the role to be played. They are not going to be mustering sheep; this is what they are going to be doing. It should be reasonably easy to work out that in other jurisdictions Parliamentary Secretaries undertake a range of duties at the request of their Minister, including representing the Minister at public functions—I think that is quite acceptable—and signing correspondence, which is also quite acceptable. I have received correspondence in my time from Parliamentary Secretaries to Federal Ministers. Their duties include meeting with deputations. We all know how busy Ministers can be from time to time and, being a former Minister, Mr Beattie is probably aware of that. That is probably one of the reasons for the backlog of correspondence and unattended to matters in the offices of former Ministers and other offices around the place. Other functions include specific policy development duties and making inquiries at the request of the Minister in relation to matters affecting the Minister's administration.

Mr Beattie: Where is that in the Bill?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I suppose the penny might drop by the time I have finished my contribution, but I am indicating to the Leader of the Opposition that what we are doing in establishing the positions of Parliamentary Secretaries is similar to what happens in other administrations around Australia. Their duties are not defined in the Bill. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition understands what will be the role of a Parliamentary Secretary. Is the Leader of the Opposition saying that what has been done in New South Wales and the Commonwealth is wrong? I do not think what they have done is wrong.

Mr Beattie: I am simply saying: why can't we do it? It is not in the Bill; it is in the second-reading speech. Why are we so useless that we can't do it?

Mr SPRINGBORG: Page 4 of the Premier's second-reading speech spells out what the expectation would be. I do not think that any other State or the Commonwealth has seen abuses by Parliamentary Secretaries. I do not have a problem with our following the examples set in other jurisdictions.

Another issue that I wish to address is that of determining what are reasonable expenses. Such expenses would relate to the activities of individual Parliamentary Secretaries to a Minister. Some Parliamentary Secretaries to Ministers may not have the same workload and duties as others. It may

be that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier has a greater workload than, for example, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer. I am not sure whether that will be the case. However, I think that we have enough commonsense and there are sufficient precedents for us to realise that expense moneys should be apportioned according to the job carried out by each Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr Beattie: What is reasonable? Tell me about reasonable.

Mr SPRINGBORG: It depends. Obviously, if a Parliamentary Secretary makes very few trips representing the Minister, one would expect that that Parliamentary Secretary would not claim very much. On the other hand, if a Parliamentary Secretary is representing a Minister at a number of functions, deputations and so on which may accrue some expenditure on behalf of that Parliamentary Secretary, his or her expenses may be slightly higher. I do not have any problem with that concept and the explanation offered to us by the Premier. I see this as a positive step.

I know that, in his heart of hearts, the Leader of the Opposition believes in parliamentary reform. However, what we have witnessed today does not give us any indication that he holds such a belief. In the time since we have been in Government, we have worked to ensure that some of the reforms necessary in this place were introduced. I cite the example of the restructuring of the hours that the Parliament sits—something which I hope will continue.

Another reform that the Government has introduced is something that should have been done 30 years ago, not just in the past six years. I refer to the Government's recognition of the workload of the Opposition and the importance of shadow Ministers, whom we have now given extra resources. That reform was overdue. I make the point today that we can probably go further with such reforms down the track, but at least we have made a start. We have also offered the olive branch to the Opposition Leader by saying that in the future we will be giving him more resources. That may have already happened; I may not be apprised of the current position.

I understand that the other day in this place, be it during a debate or at some other time, the Leader of the Opposition turned down an offer from the Premier for a ministerial-standard office. Such a comment may have been flippant, but I understand that

something along those lines was said in this place.

Mr Beattie: No.

Mr SPRINGBORG: If that is not the case, I will happily withdraw my remark. Certainly, the Leader of the Opposition's job is very important. Ministerial-level accommodation would be very important for the Leader of the Opposition. I believe that such issues are being addressed.

I return to what the Government has offered to shadow Ministers. I believe it is an amount in the vicinity of \$5,700. As I said before, I believe that at some time in the future—hopefully, sooner rather than later—that issue will be examined, because the workload of members of Parliament is increasing. Any backbench member on either side of this Parliament would agree with that. I hope that reforms continue in the future.

The Government has adopted another recommendation of EARC. It has introduced a provision to allow for an extra electorate office and staff for members with electorates over 100,000 square kilometres in area. That provision affects five members of the Parliament. This is a positive step and will lead to better functioning of the Parliament. In addition, the provision of Parliamentary Secretaries will enhance the functioning of the Executive. We cannot bury our heads in the sand any longer in the belief that a Minister's job is an easy one. Ministers are asked to shoulder enormous responsibilities, as are shadow Ministers.

The Leader of the Opposition may not agree with our reforms. However, if the day does come—and the polls are not indicative of this happening at this stage; the Leader of the Opposition is languishing a long way behind Mr Borbidge—that Mr Beattie returns to Government, I am sure that he will appreciate the role of Parliamentary Secretaries, and perhaps he will encourage the appointment of more of them. In his contribution, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that Parliamentary Secretaries were appointed in New South Wales in 1967. It may just be that we are late starters in Queensland. However, I do not think that we should be concerned about any remuneration that might be received by Parliamentary Secretaries. I am not sure of the amount under consideration. I think that the Government will examine the position in other States of Australia in coming to some sort of arrangement.

Mr Hollis interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: No. We have the resources to do that without having a committee of review. If we look at introducing a reasonable amount based on the salary increases that Parliamentary Secretaries receive in other States, we will end up with something that is not too bad. A few months down the track, it will be realised that this was a very positive step; Parliamentary Secretaries will assist the Executive and the Parliament to function a lot better.

The Leader of the Opposition said that the Government is out of touch, that it does not represent rural Queenslanders, and so on. In the two months that we have been in Government, we have held two country Cabinets. I am told that people turned up in droves to meet the Cabinet that was held in Cooktown. I am told that people swung from the trees, so to speak; they said that they had never seen so many Cabinet Ministers.

Mr Beattie: No, that was the Ministers swinging from the trees.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Some 250 people in Cooktown cannot be wrong. There was a repetition of that in St George last weekend. We are taking our Cabinet to the people.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The honourable member's former Premier did not meet with Murradoo Yanner in six years, so I do not think that the honourable member can proudly proclaim anything from his position.

Unfortunately, we are again seeing political brinkmanship in this Parliament compromising what is available to members of Parliament and what should reasonably be available to members of Parliament, whether they be Parliamentary Secretaries, Ministers, shadow Ministers or backbenchers. One issue that concerns me is our appalling inability to agree in this place when we are debating issues that are to the benefit of the Parliament and democracy. Members on all sides of the House tell me how dismayed they are that, when a good suggestion is made regarding advancing the resources available to members of Parliament to assist them, the side that did not put forward the proposition turns it down and criticises the idea in the media.

It was appalling that Mr Beattie said that we had our snouts in the trough. It perpetuates the myth in the community that that is the case. It is not the case. We have a very important and responsible role, whether it be as Parliamentary Secretaries, Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition, shadow Ministers or backbenchers. It is about time that we had

more unanimity and common ground in this place. This is good legislation and legislation which would have had to have been introduced at some time in the future. This Government is introducing it today, and it deserves the support of all members of this Parliament.

Mr HOLLIS (Redcliffe) (2.49 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise to speak to the Constitution (Parliamentary Secretaries) Amendment Bill 1996. I have no problem with the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries, but their appointment comes at a cost. That cost is to the taxpayers of Queensland. We should be asking why the Government is spending extra money on Parliamentary Secretaries' salaries, on staff salaries, on additional office space and on other perks of office—costs that this Government will not reveal. We should be asking: why did the Premier not detail all the costs associated with these positions when he made the original announcement? Of course, the original announcement was that there would be no cost to the people of Queensland. The Premier claimed that there would be no extra remuneration for Parliamentary Secretaries. Why would a Government—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Laming): Order! I remind honourable members that they should interject only from their own seats.

Mr HOLLIS: Why would a Government that is slashing programs in health, in welfare and in education risk the ire of the Queensland voter by indulging in this extra expenditure to satisfy the factions within the Liberal/National Party coalition? That is the question we should be asking today.

Mr Beattie: That is dead right—dead right.

Mr HOLLIS: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his support. Are the Ministers whom these secretaries are being appointed to assist inept or unable to cope with the responsibilities of their office? We should be asking that question. I believe that the people of Queensland will be asking this Government why it should burden them with the cost of the salaries for these additional positions.

Let us consider which members have been appointed to these positions and why. The member for Moggill has been appointed as Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer. There is no secret as to the feelings of the Liberal Leader towards the member for Moggill. He is the only real talent in the Liberal Party, but, through the machinations of Mrs

Sheldon and her former Deputy Leader, Santo Santoro, he was relegated to being the only Liberal without a position prior to the June 1995 election.

Mr Bredhauer: Don't forget Porky Everingham. He had a hand in it.

Mr HOLLIS: He did, too. We should ask: is this a reconciliation process within the Liberal Party, or is it a way of keeping this member quiet so that there will be no leadership challenge during this Parliament? That is a high price for the public of Queensland to pay.

The member for Burdekin, another talented member who obviously had a falling out with the Premier and who returned to the back bench, has now been appointed as Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier. This was another protection mechanism for the Premier's back, and who pays? The taxpayers of Queensland pay. The pensioners, the battlers and the workers are now paying for Liberal/National Party factional disputes.

The third Parliamentary Secretary is the member for Mulgrave. This is the Government's apology to the people of north Queensland for having no north-Queensland based Ministers other than the Minister for Mines and Energy. Again, the taxpayers of Queensland have to pay for this Government's inability to govern. Are the Queensland taxpayers going to be told what the duties of the Parliamentary Secretaries will be? Will we be told where the additional staff will be located? Will they be used in the electorate offices of these members for election campaign efforts? We can only wonder. There are many unanswered questions in this Bill and in relation to the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries that need to be answered. The people of Queensland need to know.

I want to return to the ineptitude of the Government. It is quite interesting to examine which departments and Ministers the Parliamentary Secretaries are appointed to assist. There are monster portfolios such as Primary Industries and Transport, but those Ministers do not have Parliamentary Secretaries to assist them. The Premier formerly had Economic Development in his portfolio. Of course, he divested himself of that and gave it to the Honourable Doug Slack. Given that the size of the Premier's portfolio has been reduced, we must ask why he would need the services of a Parliamentary Secretary.

We are all well aware of the inability of the Treasurer and Deputy Premier to cope with the

demands of the Treasury portfolio. We have heard the way in which the Honourable the Treasurer replies to questions. The occasion that will stand in the memories of all Queenslanders is the day when she was asked where she would find the \$200m to fund the removal of the tolls from the Sunshine Motorway. The Treasurer replied, "Trust us. We are the Government." What sheer arrogance! The only explanation the Treasurer could give as to how that money would be returned to the Treasury coffers was, "Trust us. We are the Government." No wonder the Treasurer needs the services of the honourable member for Moggill to help her fund programs and conduct the business of Treasury. I am sure that no Government member is more qualified than the member for Moggill to assist her in that regard. In hindsight, it will probably be a very good thing for the people of Queensland that the member for Moggill will be there to put the Treasurer on the right path.

The Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care is another Minister who needs to be propped up. The honourable member for Mulgrave will at least bring some warmth and concern to that portfolio. During his time in this Parliament, the current Minister has demonstrated sheer arrogance, a lack of concern for his fellow man and particular harshness towards the welfare of people, and young people in particular. I could cite speeches in which the Minister refers to what should happen to young people. The Minister hides behind his high-profile CEO. The *Sunday Mail* of 28 April dedicated four pages to the new CEO but did not even mention the Minister. Mr Lingard is another inept Minister who is unable to control his department and who needs the assistance of a Parliamentary Secretary and a high-profile CEO. One must wonder why a Government which is slashing programs would announce to the people of Queensland, "We are going to appoint these people at extra cost."

Mr Beattie: It is amazing they had the gall to do it.

Mr HOLLIS: It is amazing that the Government has the gall to do it. We have seen Ministers wandering around the State promising the world to all people. The list of some of the promises made by Ministers is quite staggering. Mr Horan has complained at various times—in no particular order—that there is a hole in his budget of \$70m, \$60m and \$58m. He has claimed that scrapping health regionalism is saving \$6m. Mr Borbidge claims that it has realised savings of \$20m. I will outline some of the promises that Mr

Horan has made. On 29 February, he promised \$850,000 in extra funding for the Rockhampton Hospital, and on 4 March he promised \$7.2m to cut waiting lists. Douglas Shire Chairman Mike Berwick estimates that the promise by Tom Gilmore to take power into the Daintree will cost \$18m. The cost of some other promises is as follows: \$5m for reductions in stamp duty; \$600,000 this year and then \$2.5m a year for the Prince Charles Hospital in extra health funding announced by Mike Horan on 19 March; \$36.5m in extra spending on correctional centres over three years, as contained in a Cabinet submission agreed to on 27 March, although a submission revealed that the true figure is \$151.5m; a \$61m cost over two years for the coalition plan to boost police numbers; \$12m for the extra cost of putting the controversial Woree-Challumbin powerline underground despite public opposition; and under the child protection strategy \$2m promised by Kev Lingard on 13 April to help kids going off the rails. The list goes on and on and on. There is \$600m for the half a highway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. There is \$180m to scrap land tax, which was an election commitment of the coalition. This is \$180m in lost revenue which has to be found elsewhere. This Government is now saying to the people of Queensland, "We are going to appoint these Parliamentary Secretaries and pay them higher salaries."

We have heard much from the Treasurer and the Premier about the Indy Car race. It is amazing how when the coalition came to Government it turned around and claimed that the Indy Car race, which has cost the people of Queensland \$81m over the last five or six years, had suddenly made a profit. It has not made a profit. I believe that that was a deceitful announcement by the Premier and the Treasurer to the people of Queensland, many of whom would not understand finance. There is a great difference between a surplus—

Mr FitzGerald: They showed a surplus after the Government put the money in.

Mr HOLLIS: That is right. There is a great difference between a surplus and a profit. It has been claimed in the newspapers that this year the Indy made a profit. That just illustrates the deceitfulness of this Government. It is not prepared to tell the truth. That has occurred so regularly that people are now starting to wake up to this Government. They now know that it is not to be trusted.

This morning in the House, the shadow Minister for Education spoke about the

proposed cuts to Asian studies and the complete abolition of the uniform allowance. Again, this will hit the needy and the battlers—the people who are least able to defend themselves from being hit by this Government. Perhaps this Government will go down in history as a Government that looked after its own in the privileged independent schools and the universities. If Asian studies are abolished in State schools, those subjects will be taught only in the independent schools and the universities and, once again, the battler will miss out on a very important part of his or her education.

I believe that there is some merit in Parliamentary Secretaries. I believe also that there is some merit in making sure that the Government is efficient and works well. However, I question the manner in which the Government has appointed these Parliamentary Secretaries and the departments to which they have been appointed. I can see more merit in appointing them to departments with monster portfolios, involving many divisions within those departments, rather than those to which they have been appointed. One must ask why the Government would appoint Parliamentary Secretaries to the smaller Ministries when there are obviously larger Ministries—

Mr FitzGerald: So Treasury is very small, and Premier's is very small, is it?

Mr HOLLIS: They are single-focus portfolios. There is quite a difference between a Ministry with a focal point and a Ministry such as Primary Industries, which includes fisheries, forestry, water and all the rest of it.

Mr FitzGerald: Not water.

Mr HOLLIS: No, not water. I thank the member for Lockyer. As well, there is the Transport Department, which has control over roads, rail and associated sectors. It is quite a monster of a portfolio. One must question why Parliamentary Secretaries are being appointed to those portfolios. As I said, I believe that there is a political basis to this rather than an efficiency basis. Over the past nine weeks, the Government has proved by its actions that it was not ready to govern and not up to the task. The appointment of these Parliamentary Secretaries reinforces that view.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer—Leader of Government Business) (3.02 p.m.): In joining in the debate on the Constitution (Parliamentary Secretaries) Amendment Bill 1996, I wish to make a few comments on the contributions that have been made so far by two Opposition members, namely, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for

Redcliffe. My understanding of what they said is that they have no argument whatsoever with having Parliamentary Secretaries, because it is a tradition that has gradually spread throughout the Westminster parliamentary world, and that other Parliaments do have them. Some questions were raised about whether those Parliamentary Secretaries are serving the right Ministers and whether they are serving only small portfolios. But the basis of the Opposition's argument is that those Parliamentary Secretaries should not be given any additional salary.

Mr Hollis: I didn't say that. I queried your spending money at a time when you are slashing programs.

Mr FITZGERALD: If I could correct the honourable member for Redcliffe, the Leader of the Opposition referred to snouts in the trough.

Mr Hollis: I didn't say that.

Mr FITZGERALD: No, the Leader of the Opposition said that. I know that the member for Redcliffe does not support him on that, because he said that he did not say that. I know that the member probably does not support that type of language: snouts in the trough.

I would like to point out a couple of things to the Leader of the Opposition. He has no problem with Parliamentary Secretaries, but he has a problem with their getting paid. He believes that they should receive only a backbencher's salary, that is, the standard salary of a member. That is what he indicated. He did not indicate that he was happy for them to receive one cent more. He should look around at his fellow members in the House. How many members on the Opposition side of the House are on a backbencher's salary? When the Labor Party was in Government, it introduced legislation setting up the parliamentary committees system and chairmen of committees. All of those committee members get an additional salary. There was no objection to that. When there is a change of Government, the salaries of those committee chairs continue. They come from the Government side. Most or all of those committees contain three Opposition members. The Leader of the Opposition made no mention of their collecting additional salaries.

Mr Beattie: What is your point?

Mr FITZGERALD: The Leader of the Opposition wants to know what my point is. The Leader of the Opposition indicated that he was not happy that Parliamentary

Secretaries should get any additional salary, because that would amount to snouts in the trough. I have seen some snouts in the trough in my day; they generally had round faces and round noses.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: I do not want to get personal, but I notice that Mr Beattie is halfway there. The question is: are these secretaries to Ministers going to do as much work as a parliamentary committee member? Will they have as much responsibility and do as much as a chairman of one of those committees? The Leader of the Opposition now says, "Tell us what they are going to do. We want their list of duties and responsibilities." I suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that Estimates committees can delve as hard as they like into what Parliamentary Secretaries are paid, what they are doing and where they have been. I would be quite happy to provide that information, because I believe that that is all part of accountability. I ask the Leader of the Opposition, who is "Mr No Additional Salary": will he give a commitment on behalf of the Labor Party that, if he ever returns to Government, he will give no additional salary to any Parliamentary Secretaries? I would like to see that one!

The Leader of the Opposition also spoke about accountability. I will tell the House about accountability. The Leader of the Opposition said that Parliamentary Secretaries are answerable to the Premier. I think the term used was "at the Premier's whim". I will tell honourable members what that whim is all about. Parliamentary Secretaries certainly are there at the Premier's whim. All Cabinet members are there at the Premier's whim. The Premier himself is there at the whim of the National Party while it is the senior party. That party is in Government at the whim of the people. Everybody is here at a whim. Is the Leader of the Opposition trying to tell me that there is something dreadful in the fact that we in our party do not have a caucus to elect our Ministers? It is a tradition in the conservative parties that we elect our leader and that leader appoints the Ministers. I know that the Leader of the Opposition does not agree with that, but that is our way of doing things. When we were in Opposition, we said, "This is what we are going to do when we get there. The Premier will appoint his Cabinet." Everybody knew that. The Leader of the Opposition knows about the level of accountability demanded by a Premier, that is, if any Cabinet Minister fails then he or she should be sacked by that Premier. I know that the former Labor Party

Premier had a very strong view that people had to earn their spurs before they could become Cabinet Ministers. So he kept some members out of Cabinet for some time. Why did he keep others in? That was the whim of the caucus that decided that. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about whims. Of course, it is the Premier's whim.

The honourable member for Redcliffe asked why Parliamentary Secretaries should not be appointed to more important portfolios. I will tell the House about the portfolios to which those Parliamentary Secretaries have been allocated. The Ministers are the three most responsible Ministers, in pecking order, on this side of the Chamber. The Premier has one, the Deputy Premier has one and the Deputy Leader of the National Party has the other. Therefore, the three most senior Ministers have Parliamentary Secretaries. The member for Redcliffe cannot tell me that the Premier's Department and the Treasury Department are not important and wide-ranging portfolios. They can affect other portfolios.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: We will get one for Transport, if the member is asking for one for Transport. I will give the Premier the message that the honourable member for Mount Isa indicates that there possibly should be a Parliamentary Secretary for Transport.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about accountability. He went on about snouts in troughs, claiming that there is no accountability in this Government. Today in this House, two Auditor-General's reports on certain matters were tabled. There is an indication in that report that, over a long period, the Labor Government did nothing about accountability.

Mr Bredhauer: It never said that at all. You point to that in the report.

Mr FITZGERALD: That is an interpretation of that report. I will put it to the public to see whether they come to the same conclusion. There is an indication that very little was done. A commitment was made by the former Minister for Family Services that something needed to be done. Is the honourable member trying to tell me that Family Services is not a problem area with regard to accountability? In spite of all the problems that the former Government had with the Family Services portfolio, is he criticising the decision to give that portfolio a Parliamentary Secretary? Come off it! Who is he kidding? If that one Parliamentary Secretary is able to stop a couple of hundred

thousand dollars being lost from that portfolio, she will have earned her salary well and truly.

Honourable members opposite would like Parliament to determine the salary of Parliamentary Secretaries. Prior to the legislation going to Executive Council, the members opposite were advised that there was to be an increase in allowances for members of the Opposition who were not the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Opposition. That appeared in the last *Queensland Government Gazette*. In the same way, the salaries of Parliamentary Secretaries will have to be published in the *Queensland Government Gazette*. The salaries will have to go to the Governor in Council. If honourable members opposite then wish to criticise the Government, a forum exists in this Parliament in which they can stand on their two feet and do so. Then the Leader of the Opposition can use that phrase that he likes to use. He can use that as much as he likes and say that Parliamentary Secretaries are not worth it. That would be the legitimate form of criticism. One can do so in a parliamentary democracy. If members opposite can convince Queenslanders that the Premier has it wrong, that he has chosen the wrong people and that they are not doing the job, the members opposite can stand the test of the ballot box. That is where accountability will come into it. Every three years, the people decide whom the Premier of this State will be; every three years the people decide whom the members of Parliament will be; and every three years the people decide whether or not they have confidence in the Government.

The arguments put forward by the Leader of the Opposition are absolutely ridiculous. He uses terms that belittle those members of Parliament who have been chosen to be Parliamentary Secretaries. When one considers what members of the Opposition have said about the salaries that are paid to the chairmen of committees, committee members and the allowances that are paid to members of the Opposition, one should not forget how those allowances are determined and that they are printed in the *Queensland Government Gazette* after an Order in Council. I cannot see any problem with the legislation before the House. The people of Queensland will decide whether a fair amount has been paid or whether those Parliamentary Secretaries have been overpaid. Eventually, the decision will be with the people of Queensland.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga)
(3.12 p.m.): This Bill seeks to amend the Constitution of Queensland. The Constitution

(Parliamentary Secretaries) Amendment Bill seeks to amend the Constitution Act of 1867. In so doing, it does what many in the community would find surprising without a referendum. Many people think that it is necessary to have a referendum of the people before a Constitution is changed. This, of course, is not the case in relation to the Queensland Constitution, nonetheless it should drive home to all honourable members that the Bill that is being debated goes to the deep structures of governance within Queensland, for the Constitution Act 1867, which is sought to be amended, sets out the fundamental structure of Government. In its provisions, it deals with the Legislature, the Governor, the Legislative Assembly, Crown rights and revenues, powers and privileges of Parliament, aspects of local government and so on.

This Bill seeks to add a series of sections to that Constitution Act to create a new constitutional creature, that of Parliamentary Secretary. One might have thought that, for a change as fundamental as a change to the Constitution of Queensland, there would have been a process leading up to a constitutional review of this order. But this is not an initiative that has emerged out of the major review undertaken by EARC, the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission, nor is it an initiative arising out of the parliamentary committee's review of EARC's report; this is an initiative that has come about as a result of political expediency on the part of the Government of the day.

Indeed, it is passing strange that the Government of the day adopts the rhetoric of small Government and yet, in one of its first pieces of legislation, it actually changes the Constitution of Queensland so as to add to the machinery of Government in this State. It does so through the expenditure of money, which is contemplated by the Bill, and this at a time when other aspects of Government are suffering cuts as a result of being unable to be funded. I mention in that context organisations like the National Institute of Indigenous Performing Arts, which has been scrapped by the Federal Government and which this Government seems to have little interest in supporting.

I deal basically with the constitutional reform contemplated in the Bill, because it comes after a period when EARC, at the recommendation of Commissioner Fitzgerald, completed a report on the Queensland Constitution in August 1993. That report was then the subject of an all-party parliamentary committee, which reported in November 1994.

I pose some questions to the Honourable the Premier and invite him to deal with them in his reply, because this is the first major Bill that has dealt with constitutional issues that the new Government has brought before the Parliament. I invite the Premier in his reply, given that this is a Bill amending the Constitution Act 1867, to indicate to the House whether other amendments are foreshadowed of a kind that would consolidate the Constitution of Queensland in the manner that was recommended by EARC and substantially adopted by the all-party parliamentary committee.

Mr Borbidge: I will be referring that matter to the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee and support the consolidation into one Act.

Mr FOLEY: I thank the Premier for that response.

Mr Schwarten: I draw your attention, Mr Speaker, to a state of undress of a member.

Mr Veivers: You don't look too good yourself.

Mr Schwarten: Can't you see? You poor soul, I pray for you.

Mr FOLEY: I am not sure that prayerful intervention would be sufficient.

Mr Veivers: Mr Foley, could you please withdraw that. That wasn't nice.

Mr FOLEY: I think that prayerful intervention could be sufficient in the circumstances, but only with a prayer that emanated from someone so dazzling with actual grace as the honourable the member for Rockhampton.

I am delighted at the attention to constitutional topics from the honourable the members of the Government and I hope that their interest in constitutional reform is ongoing, because the next issue that I ask the Honourable the Premier to deal with in his reply—and I note that he is absent from the Chamber, but I ask the Honourable the Minister for Transport to convey this to the Premier—is whether, in addition to the process of constitutional consolidation, the Government has in mind the more ambitious task of bringing the concepts of the Constitution up to date and to engage in a process of constitutional reform as opposed to mere consultation. In answering that, I invite the Premier to inform the House as to—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr FOLEY: Again, I thank the Honourable the Premier for that observation. As I indicated at the outset of my speech,

many people would, in fact, find it surprising that the Parliament is amending a Constitution Act. Needless to say, that is a misunderstanding on their part.

I ask the Honourable the Premier to give special consideration to the course of action that the Government proposes to take with respect to the August 1993 report of EARC titled "Report on a Review of the Preservation and Enhancement of Individuals' Rights and Freedoms". For one reason or another, over the past couple of years, this report has languished. It recommends a Bill of Rights for Queensland. That is not something about which I expect the Honourable the Premier to give me a "Yes" or "No" answer from across the Chamber. However, I invite the Honourable the Premier to spell out on behalf of the Government what process it proposes to follow in order to progress the recommendations set out in that EARC report. For example, is it to be referred to the Legal, Administrative and Constitutional Review Committee?

Mr Borbidge: I am happy for that to happen.

Mr FOLEY: Again, I thank the Premier for his observation. Given the passage of time, I would respectfully urge the Premier to indicate what sort of time frame his Government has in mind for a response to that major report and recommendation. I say that mindful of the fact that time has passed.

Mr FitzGerald: You are not critical of previous committees for not doing it, are you?

Mr FOLEY: I note that the honourable member for Lockyer has made a very considerable contribution to electoral and administrative review in this Chamber. In fact, I seem to recall he supported some very fine reports in the first term—

Mr Borbidge: Are you concerned that he might be as slow as you were?

Mr FOLEY: I am sure that, in the arena of constitutional reform, none is without sin. If I may say so, I think that the real danger is that the debate on the Bill of Rights is not in danger of dying on the battlefield of debate; it is in danger of dying simply by neglect. I think that that would be a tragedy for the process of constitutional reform. There has been a lot of work done. Indeed, there was a submission from the National Party to EARC recommending the establishment of a Bill of Rights. Early in the term of the Nicklin Government, it introduced a Bill of Rights into this Chamber for adoption.

I encourage the Honourable the Premier to indicate in his reply the time frame within which his Government would expect to be able to give its response to the recommendations of the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission with regard to a Bill of Rights. Of course, that would entail some fundamental changes to the way in which we go about our business in Parliament.

For my own part and expressing a personal view, I support a statutory Bill of Rights for Queensland. The suggestion that it be entrenched in the Constitution is a much more difficult proposition and one about which there would need to be considerably further debate before such a course could be vigorously adopted. However, it would be tragic if the energies of constitutional reform, which EARC set in train following the Fitzgerald report, were to perish through a process simply of neglect.

This amendment to the Constitution Act is opposed by the Opposition for the reasons so eloquently set out by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Redcliffe.

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham) (3.25 p.m.): I support this Bill before the House. In doing so, regardless of what Opposition members say, I support very definitely the concept of Parliamentary Secretaries. In fact, for many, many years I have been on record as supporting the concept of a junior Ministry. I believe that it is a nonsense that we in this place appoint members to the Ministry, throw them in at the deep end and expect them to perform like veterans who have been Ministers for 10 years. Heaven knows, some portfolios carry a great weight of responsibility and involved a mountain of work. Any member who does not think that Ministers need support and assistance obviously has not been a Minister.

I can recall that, when I was responsible for the Tourism, National Parks, Sport and The Arts portfolio, I had a large workload and I insisted on signing and reading all the letters that were sent out from my office relating to that portfolio. Many times I would take two little suitcases of letters up to my room in Parliament and read and sign the wretched things until midnight or 1 o'clock in the morning. That is not an inconsiderable effort for Ministers, particularly for those who have families. I do not believe that when people come into this place as members that they should walk away and neglect their family responsibilities. Quite frankly, if a Minister is going to do his or her job right down to the tee, that is almost what is required.

Whichever way we look at the matter, there is a lot of practical commonsense in the concept of junior Ministers. Once members are appointed to those positions, particularly if they work together with the Ministers, they watch, they learn and they develop an understanding of the job. Hopefully, they also learn from other people's mistakes. I believe that the concept of junior Ministers is admirable. It is not a concept that should be rubbished by the Opposition. I regard the comments of the Leader of the Opposition in this debate as a very bad case of sour grapes.

Imagine if we went to a work site that was covered by the BLF or the Electrical Trades Union and said to the people there, "You people are going to work an extra 30 hours a week but we are not going to pay you." Jeez, would we not hear the yells from members opposite! We would hear them yowl from the rooftops. They would scream, snarl, gnash their teeth and carry on in a shocking fashion. It is totally without foundation for Opposition members to say that, although it is right that workers receive more money for extra work, Parliamentary Secretaries should not get paid for their extra work. Opposition members believe that we should not pay Parliamentary Secretaries for their extra duties—that we should ask them to spend time away from their families, work their insides out, sign mail and travel all over the place, but not pay them for it. Why should Parliamentary Secretaries be out of pocket because they are working for the people of Queensland? As we all know, members could be out of pocket for many reasons related to working for the people of Queensland, but why should Parliamentary Secretaries be out of pocket? I do not think that is a reasonable concept at all.

Mr Grice: Did those people in the Opposition complain about the extra remuneration?

Mr ELLIOTT: I did not hear them. I did not see a lot of them lining up to say, "Do not pay us any more." When I was in the shadow Ministry, there was not a lot of joy to be had in spending one's own money to try to do one's job properly, because it was hard enough as it was. Let no-one come in here and suggest that we do not need these people or that they should not be paid.

The committee system has improved tremendously over the years, and some of our committees work particularly well. I have been Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, and I enjoyed that role. I found it interesting, rewarding and challenging. I am finding the Scrutiny of Legislation

Committee more challenging than any of the other committees that I have been involved with. It is significant that, in fact, the most responsive and most cooperative Minister in relation to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and our Alert Digest has been the Premier himself. In some States, Premiers seem to be at odds with legislative review committees and seem to take great delight in scrapping with them and trying to—

A Government member interjected.

Mr ELLIOTT: Our past one was not bad at it, either. It is rather refreshing, as far as I am concerned, that the Premier has the ability to recognise that this committee is providing a service to the Legislature and, through this House, to the people of Queensland. After all, the committee is trying to improve the standard of legislation going through this House. That is what it is here to do; that is its role. When it does its job, surely no-one should throw rocks at it. Therefore, not only is the Premier indicating that he is on top of his job, but he is also leading by example. I urge all Ministers to follow his example.

I must say that some Ministers have done an excellent job. They have bent over backwards to try to accommodate the committee's Alert Digest, to talk to members of the committee and to try to work through it. Regardless of which committee we are talking about, there is a lot of work involved. One does not take them on for fun. Indeed, it is easier to be a backbencher and float along and say, "We are always in the House so we cannot spare the time."

Mr Fouras: The Alert Digest is right in front of me now, and I am very impressed.

Mr ELLIOTT: Very good. I thank my colleague from school days.

A Government member: Who learnt the most?

Mr ELLIOTT: He was a little smarter than me, I have to say, but he did not necessarily follow it through. In this, the only unicameral State in the Commonwealth, the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee is the nearest thing that Queensland has to an Upper House to scrutinise legislation. Therefore, it is important that we understand that it is there for a reason, it is not there for fun. No-one gets a tremendous amount of enjoyment out of trying to pick holes in legislation, but we really need to follow it through and to work on it. The Premier is about to respond to this debate, and I am sure he will comment on some of the issues raised. With those few words, I support the Bill.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (3.35 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate. Firstly, I would like to mention a few matters raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. Last night, I received from the committee its comments on the Bill, and I am pleased that the committee takes no objection to the intended effects and likely operation of the legislation. In particular, I am gratified that the committee noted that the proposal was "eminently sensible" and that the practice of appointing Parliamentary Secretaries in the United Kingdom had proved highly valuable and even necessary to the better functioning of Parliament and the Executive. The committee also noted that the Bill was entirely constitutional.

The committee did, however, raise two questions about the means by which this constitutional innovation was given effect to. Firstly, the committee presumed that the appointment and termination of a Parliamentary Secretary would be the subject of a statement to the Parliament by the Premier, as is the practice for the appointment and termination of Ministers. I inform the House that when parliamentarians are appointed as Parliamentary Secretaries and when the appointment of a Parliamentary Secretary is terminated, the Legislative Assembly will be informed. The second point was a suggestion that the functions of a Parliamentary Secretary be set out in writing and that the Bill be amended to reflect this. As I mentioned in my second-reading speech, the functions of a Parliamentary Secretary will differ from Minister to Minister, from time to time, and from portfolio to portfolio.

The legislation which this Bill is based on is the New South Wales Constitution Act. Section 38C of that Act provides that a Parliamentary Secretary will "perform such functions as the Premier may, from time to time, determine in respect of him." Under the Tasmanian Constitution, the equivalent of a Parliamentary Secretary "may perform such functions with respect to the affairs of State as the Premier may, from time to time, determine in respect of him." This practice is also adopted in New Zealand. In the Constitution Act of that nation, the functions of a Parliamentary Secretary are "to exercise or perform under the direction of the Minister concerned such of the functions, duties, and powers of the Minister of the Crown for the time being holding that office as may from time to time be assigned to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary by that Minister."

It is clear, both from the legislation and conventions elsewhere where Parliamentary Secretaries exist, that the role of such persons is limited although useful. It would not be possible or desirable to set out in writing at the outset what functions a Parliamentary Secretary will be performing. Presumably, in some cases such a person may have a more limited role at the outset, but would progressively be given more tasks to perform.

Turning to the committee's comments, I was a little concerned about the suggestion that Parliamentary Secretaries could be delegated legislative and judicial functions. I am a little uncertain as to what the committee means. Presumably, under most pieces of legislation the Minister can only delegate his or her powers to an officer of the department or possibly to another Minister of the Crown. I cannot conceive of any circumstances in which a situation could arise whereby a Parliamentary Secretary could be delegated legislative powers of this type. As for judicial functions, I would have thought that with the separation of powers doctrine, Ministers would not themselves have such powers to delegate in the first instance. Setting out in writing the breadth of the delegation to a Parliamentary Secretary would not cure this problem, if it in fact existed. However, as I have indicated, and subject to further information being given to me, I do not believe that the delegation of legislative and judicial functions is a practical problem.

Summing up, the provisions in the Bill regarding functions are based on sound precedents of other jurisdictions which have operated satisfactorily. To limit the scope of a Parliamentary Secretary's duties at the outset would devalue the worth of the office by diminishing the flexibility which this innovation is intended to provide. Obviously, the committee's comments are appreciated, and I assure both the committee and all honourable members that this matter will be kept under review.

In respect of the debate today, I thank all honourable members for their contributions. The Leader of the Opposition gave a typically meandering speech, which dealt with the legislation only in passing. The arguments raised by the Leader of the Opposition for opposing the payment of salaries and allowances to Parliamentary Secretaries were weak and totally unconvincing. The honourable member would know full well from his days as a union secretary that if a person does extra work, they deserve extra pay. The Opposition Leader and his shadow Ministers were the first to put their hands up and ask for

extra resources and remuneration when they slipped from the Treasury benches.

When the Leader of the Opposition was the Chair of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, he did not knock back the extra salary which attached to that office. When the Leader of the Opposition was finally elevated to the Ministry, I cannot recall him running into George Street offering to pay back his extra salary. The honourable member knows full well that in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom Parliamentary Secretaries are paid extra for serving the public.

I wish to enlighten and educate the Leader of the Opposition as to why salaries are not paid to Parliamentary Secretaries in South Australia and the Commonwealth, and why Parliamentary Secretaries are not paid an extra salary right now in Queensland. For a start, there is currently no legislation in South Australia governing Parliamentary Secretaries. Queensland and South Australia currently hold the dubious distinction of being the only places in Australia which have not recognised this practice in legislative form. It is no wonder that South Australian Parliamentary Secretaries get no extra salary or allowances; there is no statutory means of doing so.

I turn now to the Commonwealth. I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition read the Commonwealth Constitution. If he read the document that enshrines the fundamental law of our nation, he would learn that if a Parliamentary Secretary were paid a salary he or she would become the holder of an office of profit under the Crown and, by the operation of section 44, would become incapable of being chosen or of sitting as a Senator or as a member of the House of Representatives. In other words, the reason that the Commonwealth does not pay its Parliamentary Secretaries is that the Constitution prohibits it.

The Leader of the Opposition also does not know apparently that Commonwealth Parliamentary Secretaries are paid allowances which are set out specifically in the regulations to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Secretaries legislation. The reason that Parliamentary Secretaries are not paid a salary or reimbursed for their expenses in Queensland now is that the current Queensland law prohibits it.

Let me enlighten the Leader of the Opposition a little further. Did he know that in 1992 the Government of which he was a member sought advice from the Crown Solicitor as to whether it was possible to

appoint Parliamentary Secretaries? Did he know that his Government was slinking around the corridors trying to activate this mechanism but never made it public? It was only when the Crown Solicitor threw a bucket of lukewarm water over the proposal at that time that Mr Goss and the Government went into retreat mode.

The hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition to stand up in this place and criticise Government members for introducing legislation and for being up front and honest is breathtaking. Perhaps the previous Government was going to appoint him as a Parliamentary Secretary; Mr Goss seemed to have some reluctance about having him in Cabinet! The poor old Leader of the Opposition was in the "Z Team". He was right down the back and the former Premier kept him on the back benches for almost six years. Now he hops up in this place and jumps about in relation to a measure which his Government was trying to introduce through the back door and which he supported in this place only some three months ago, provided that the Parliament endorse the improvement of staffing and resources for the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition should be the last person to talk about snouts in the trough!

I turn now to some of the other comments from the Leader of the Opposition. However, before I do so I point out that I did not notice the Leader of the Opposition valiantly distancing himself from the generosity of the new Government in providing for the first time an expensive office allowance to shadow Ministers—\$5,887—in line with the recommendation of the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission. Presumably it is okay for shadow Ministers to accept funds from the Consolidated Fund on his side of the House, but somehow in his twisted logic it is not acceptable for Parliamentary Secretaries on this side of the House to receive some sort of extra entitlement.

So we have a situation whereby Parliamentary Secretaries can undertake certain duties and not be recognised. However, the salaries of the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, members of parliamentary committees, the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees, Ministers, and the Premier are not in legislation. The twisted logic that we hear from the Opposition is that somehow the salary of Parliamentary Secretaries needs to be defined in legislation.

I inform the House that it would be premature to do so at this stage, simply because the legislation has not been passed and we have not arrived at the salary levels payable. I will come to that shortly. As to criticism that the functions of Parliamentary Secretaries are not set out in this legislation—I have pointed out previously that this is the standard position in most Westminster Parliaments. If the Leader of the Opposition took the time to read the legislation in New South Wales, Tasmania, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, he would see that the provisions in this Bill are almost identical—practically word for word. I am not aware of one piece of legislation in any part of the Westminster world in which the functions of Parliamentary Secretaries are set out.

The honourable member knows that the functions of the Leader of the Opposition are not set out in legislation. If they were, the draftsmen would have a lot of difficulties working out exactly what the current Leader of the Opposition was doing. If his contribution to the debate this afternoon was any indication, some very creative drafting would be needed if we were to define his role in this place.

The next farcical contribution was the criticism that reasonable expenses of Parliamentary Secretaries would be paid. It is hard for me to follow the reasoning on this point. The Leader of the Opposition carried on about the Ministerial Services Branch in a vain attempt to try to put some flesh on the bones of this criticism. Let me remind the Leader of the Opposition that when his Government was in power it did not at any time, in spite of the recommendations in two separate reports of the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission, introduce legislation regulating ministerial allowances. It may interest the honourable member to know that this provision actually ensures that there is a legislative basis for the payment of allowances, whereas his Government ignored two reports by EARC and left the position of Ministers up to Executive action. In spite of this glaring omission by his Government, he has the temerity to come into this place and criticise us for providing a legislative foundation for what his Government would have otherwise done by Executive action.

Let me impress this point on the House: we are seeking parliamentary approval up front for a process, whereas in its term in Government the Labor Party used the Cabinet room to make all of its decisions in that respect. As to the quantum of the extra salary that Parliamentary Secretaries will be paid—the Leader of the Opposition will note

that the Bill requires that those will be set out in a gazette notice. In other words, they will be open for all the world to see. We are not hiding behind closed doors, and the Leader of the Opposition will no doubt have plenty of opportunity to have his say.

The bottom line is that I am not in the business of negotiating extra salaries with people until such time as I know that I have been given the legislative basis and authority from this Parliament to do so. In addition, I happen to respect this place. I am not arrogant enough to believe that I would be in a position to negotiate on salaries until I know the final form that the Bill will take. The Leader of the Opposition is attempting to judge this Government by his own standards, and that is a standard based on contempt for this House. When I know what form the Bill takes when it is passed, I will negotiate the extra salary that should be paid. The quantum of extra salary in other Australian jurisdictions ranges from an extra 13 per cent to an extra 40 per cent.

The concept that I am keen to pursue is that I believe that a Parliamentary Secretary to a Minister should be paid less than the Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier, and that person should be paid a little less than the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier. So we are looking at a tiered arrangement. For the information of the House, I point out that it is not my intention to exceed the broad salary level payable to the Chairman of Committees.

Finally, the petty attack by the Leader of the Opposition on the calculation of a Parliamentary Secretary's superannuation entitlement did him no credit. Obviously, in calculating superannuation one takes into account a person's total salary. This Bill simply reflects workplace practices inside and outside Government and inside and outside Parliament.

In contrast to the knocking contribution by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Warwick, as usual, made a sensible and constructive contribution to the debate. The honourable member quite correctly pointed out the need for Parliamentary Secretaries to be paid an extra salary and the positive contribution that such persons will make to government in Queensland. I appreciate the honourable member's timely warning to the Leader of the Opposition about his constant carping about people having their snouts in the trough. We all expect vigorous debate in this House, and searching criticism when required. But it does the institution of Parliament no good for the Leader of the

Opposition to make constant half-baked point-scoring contributions about people in this place, because in the process he simply feeds the public cynicism about politics, politicians and the institution of Parliament. He should learn that as Leader of the Opposition he has a duty to lead and not simply play to the peanut gallery.

The next speaker was the honourable member for Redcliffe. Although the honourable member echoed some of the criticisms made by his leader, he at least made some interesting points which are worthy of consideration. From what I understand, it would appear that the member for Redcliffe was suggesting that Parliamentary Secretaries should have a single focus rather than being required to cover all the activities of a department where it has a number of different, discrete responsibilities. As I understand it, the honourable member was suggesting that in a portfolio such as Justice, which has responsibility for justice issues as well as consumer affairs, there may be merit in having more than one Parliamentary Secretary assisting the Minister, each focusing on a discrete area of the department's responsibilities. I understand that this may in fact be the practice in some other jurisdictions, and I believe that the honourable member's proposal has merit. I will certainly keep the honourable member's suggestions in mind in the future.

The member for Lockyer provided a very useful contribution and pointed out the various parliamentary and Executive mechanisms for ensuring the accountability of Parliamentary Secretaries. Quite properly, he pointed out that the Estimates committee process is one very useful parliamentary mechanism that the Opposition can utilise in monitoring expenses incurred by Parliamentary Secretaries. It was interesting to hear the interjection by the member for Mount Isa during that speech that the Minister for Transport deserved a Parliamentary Secretary. While I am not going to promise this extra assistance to my colleague the Minister for Transport, I found it heartening to hear that at least some members of the Opposition recognise the heavy workload of Ministers and the useful assistance that Parliamentary Secretaries can provide. I thank the honourable member for Mount Isa for his more than usual constructive contribution.

Finally, I thank my old friend the honourable member for Yeronga for his contribution.

Mr Schwarten: An excellent one.

Mr BORBIDGE: Well, an interesting one. I got the impression that the honourable member did not have his heart in it, because most of his time was spent discussing constitutional reform in general and not this Bill in particular. As the honourable member would know, in the six years that the Labor Party was in Government there was not one bit of constitutional reform in Queensland. It was six years of wasted opportunity which he no doubt regrets now that he is in Opposition. He quite correctly referred to EARC reports that have languished. It is not the fault of this Government that the Labor Party put constitutional reform at the bottom of the pile, but I acknowledge the honourable member's considerable knowledge and expertise in areas of constitutional reform. Perhaps in quieter moments we can have a cup of tea, and I would certainly welcome the input and the advice of the honourable member. As I indicated, it is the intention of the Government to move to consolidate the constitution into one Act through the appropriate parliamentary committee, and clearly I would welcome the honourable member's input.

This Bill is but the first instalment of this Government's constitutional reform agenda. Now is not the time for me to outline in detail other elements of my Government's reform package, except to say that reform is high on our agenda. It would also be fair to say that I have grave doubts about the merits of a Bill of Rights, although I recognise that our various constitution Acts require updating and consolidation.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the honourable member for Cunningham, who is one of our most experienced parliamentarians. I appreciate very much the valuable role that he is carrying out in his capacity as Chairman of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. I appreciate the comments that he made and his support for what I believe is a long overdue change to the way that we do things in Queensland—a move that will certainly bring Queensland into line with most other jurisdictions around Australia, with the UK and with New Zealand.

Despite what the Leader of the Opposition has indicated today, I would be very surprised if at some future time—if the Labor Party is back on the Treasury benches—the Labor Party moved to repeal the legislation that it is opposing in part today. However, I have to say that the way the honourable gentleman is going, I think it will be a little way down the track before he has

that opportunity. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 42—Baumann, Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Cunningham, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Goss J. N., Harper, Healy, Hegarty, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Laming, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Radke, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Stoneman, Tanti, Veivers, Warwick, Watson, Wilson, Woolmer *Tellers:* Springborg, Carroll

NOES, 42—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bird, Bligh, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Burns, Campbell, D'Arcy, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Foley, Fouras, Goss W. K., Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, McElligott, McGrady, Mackenroth, Milliner, Mulherin, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Welford, Wells *Tellers:* Livingstone, Sullivan T. B.

Pairs: Woodgate, Lester; Gibbs, Grice

The numbers being equal, Mr Speaker cast his vote with the Ayes.

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Committee

Hon. R. E. Borbidge (Surfers Paradise—Premier) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Mr FOLEY (4.04 p.m.): This clause deals with an amendment to the Constitution Act of 1867. I refer to the matter discussed during the debate on the second reading of the Bill concerning ongoing constitutional reform and, in particular, the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission's report of August 1993 titled "Report on Review of the Preservation and Enhancement of Individuals' Rights and Freedoms".

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. I cannot hear the debate.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members wishing to discuss matters will kindly withdraw from the Chamber.

Mr FOLEY: That report recommended a Bill of Rights for Queensland. I invite the Premier to indicate his Government's willingness to refer this matter to the parliamentary Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee for its consideration.

Mr BORBIDGE: I have no objection to the committee examining that report.

However, as I indicated earlier, I do not personally support a Bill of Rights.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—

Mr BEATTIE (4.05 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 5—

Omit all words in lines 18 to 21."

In doing so, I do not intend to reiterate the arguments that I have previously outlined during the debate today, other than to highlight two matters.

Mr FitzGerald: Have they been circulated?

Mr BEATTIE: Yes. I am grateful to the Premier for providing the Leader of Government Business with the amendment. I thank him for his assistance. The member for Lockyer does need help from time to time.

Mr Schwarten: Is he going to get any more money for this?

Mr BEATTIE: I am not sure.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: I thank you for your protection, Mr Chairman. The member for Lockyer is very raucous.

I turn to an article in the *Courier-Mail* on 24 February 1996 written by Peter Morley in relation to the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries to assist Ministers in Mr Borbidge's first Cabinet. That article stated that the job would not carry any extra pay. That article, which was published quite widely, reinforces the point that I have made during this debate, that is, that the community were not aware that Parliamentary Secretaries were to be paid. Even today, while the debate on this Bill is taking place, people in the community still are not aware of how much Parliamentary Secretaries are going to be paid. I do not accept the Premier's rather spurious argument that he was not prepared to determine the amount until the Bill had passed through the House. Legislation should not be brought into this Chamber unless it is carefully considered, carefully thought through and carefully prepared. I would have thought that it would be fundamental to any piece of legislation that the amount to be paid to Parliamentary Secretaries would have been very central. I also point out that the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, has cut the salary for junior Ministers by \$10,000. So we have that measure at a Federal level, but at a State level we have this move by the coalition minority Government to

pay allowances and salaries to Parliamentary Secretaries without due and proper parliamentary debate.

Having moved this amendment, I am aware that clauses 8 to 13 also relate to parliamentary salaries. Of course, the Opposition will be dividing the Committee on this proposed amendment, but we will be signalling our opposition to those other clauses, and that will suffice.

Mr BORBIDGE: The hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition is breathtaking. One of the first actions of the new Government was to do what members opposite denied to us when we were in Opposition, because they were so selfish, greedy and self-centred during the six years that they were in Government. For the first time, this Government is giving an expense of office allowance to shadow Ministers. I would have thought that if the Leader of the Opposition was fair dinkum about his opposition to this proposal, we would have 16 volunteers writing out cheques and putting their money back on the table of this Chamber.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: It went through Executive Council last week. Their cheques are in the mail!

When in Opposition, we waited six years and got nothing. Within about three months, shadow Ministers have been recognised in this place for the first time. But if members opposite do not want entitlements for shadow Ministers—and what is good for the goose is good for the gander—and, I presume, they do not want the entitlements for Parliamentary Secretaries, we can have a rethink and treat everyone in this place equally, if that is the point of view that the Leader of the Opposition is putting forward.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: I understand that the member for Chatsworth has been told by one of the shadow Ministers sitting behind him to keep quiet. That is the first time Mr Mackenroth has ever shut up when told to do so by Mr McGrady. A bit of an internal row is going on on the other side of the Chamber because all the shadow Ministers want the \$5,887 allowance that the coalition has made available to them.

I canvassed these matters in my reply. This section relates to reasonable expenses of office. It relates to allowances. I know that later the Leader of the Opposition will raise the arguments in respect of salary, but if we look to the jurisdictions in which Parliamentary

Secretaries exist, we see that the additional salary is from zero to 40 per cent. I have indicated that we want this legislation to go through first. I do not want to presume the House, but I can understand that honourable members opposite want an indication of the amount. I gave that indication in my reply, when the Leader of the Opposition was obviously not listening, that is, that the current thinking of the Government is that we should have a tiered system: the Parliamentary Secretary to a Minister should receive less than the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer and less again than the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier. Obviously that depends on the workload and the circumstances, but as a ballpark figure, we would not anticipate that Parliamentary Secretaries would earn more than the Chairman of Committees. I think that that is reasonable for the additional workload that is involved. In reply to the honourable member, the amendment is not acceptable to the Government.

Mr BEATTIE: Let me be very clear about this issue, because the Premier, the master of the half-truth, glosses around it. There is no parliamentary committee in this Parliament from PCEAR onwards—and the Premier was a member of that committee—that recommended the establishment of the position of Parliamentary Secretaries. This is a decision by Government, which was not taken to the people on 15 July last year. It is not one of the Government's election commitments. The Government has given no clear indication as to payment of the secretaries. Finally, as the debate is almost at an end, the Premier has given a rough indication that it will be at the allowance level of the Chairman of Committees, but then says that he does not want to presume the outcome of the legislation. Legislation is about having these matters properly thought through, considered and prepared. The Premier has not sought to do that. Any well-thought-out legislation would include all the integral parts. One integral part is missing.

Earlier, when the Premier was talking to the Leader of Government Business, I referred to an article that appeared in the *Courier-Mail*. At the time that this resolution was first moved, the Premier indicated that those positions would not be paid. So until this legislation was introduced, the taxpayers of the State did not know that Parliamentary Secretaries would be paid, and until today they had absolutely no idea what that payment was likely to be.

During my contribution to the second-reading debate, I indicated the position of the

Commonwealth and the other States. I indicated that a number of jurisdictions do not pay a salary but they do pay an allowance, such as the Commonwealth, Western Australia and South Australia, so precedents exist in other States.

Mr Borbidge: Commonwealth—paid allowances.

Mr BEATTIE: I said they are not paid a salary but they are paid an allowance.

Mr Borbidge: This clause is allowances.

Mr BEATTIE: I am aware of that. I am trying to save some divisions occurring a bit later in the Committee stage. I indicated that courtesy to the Premier when he was talking to the Leader of Government Business. I am not seeking to delay this Bill indefinitely; I know that we are all busy. I am indicating that the Opposition has an amendment to this clause, and we will divide on that. We will indicate our opposition to the other clauses, but we will not divide on them. My view has not changed in relation to the Premier's position. It is clear that we have a differing view.

Mr WELFORD: The Leader of the Opposition ought simply to come clean on this issue. He ought simply to come clean and recognise—

An honourable member: The Premier.

Mr WELFORD: There you go! He has not changed his performance, has he? I have hardly noticed. The quality of the performance is no better. The Premier ought to come clean on this issue and recognise that he has not introduced this legislation on a matter of principle. He has introduced this legislation for one reason only: to accommodate a couple of members of his back bench who, frankly, at least one or two of them, should be on the front bench if it were not for the logs who are there. That is why he has to make a rushed accommodation for them with this legislation.

An Opposition member: The member for Moggill.

Mr WELFORD: The member for Moggill is a case in point. The Premier has not introduced this legislation because of a high, moral principle about the need for Parliamentary Secretaries. It was interesting that he was able to resolve promptly upon a figure that would be provided as an allowance for Opposition spokespersons, but he cannot come up with a figure for his own Parliamentary Secretaries. It is an extraordinary state of affairs that first he says that they will receive nothing and tells that to the public through the media—

Mr FitzGerald: Until the Parliament decides otherwise. Come on; be honest!

Mr WELFORD: Two weeks ago, the Premier told the public that Parliamentary Secretaries would receive nothing, and then he went to the Parliament and said, "Let's change our ideas about that. Now we will give them something." The Opposition is not taking issue with whether Parliamentary Secretaries are or are not paid—leaving aside the assurance the Premier gave the public—the issue is that the Premier has gone back on his word that they would be not be paid. If the Government had said in the first instance that they would be paid an allowance, as are Opposition spokespeople, the issue would not be so contentious. Initially, the Premier was putting up a grandiose plan to harness the energies of qualified backbenchers to support the Ministry on the basis that it would be done voluntarily, and now he is providing them with an allowance.

If he is going to provide them with an allowance, he should at least tell honourable members what it will be. He should not waffle, saying that it will be a figure of the nature of the allowance paid to the Chairman of Committees. He should tell honourable members what the allowance will be. If the Premier is going to introduce legislation, he should at least try to have in mind clearly what the legislation is about, and quantify what he will provide through the legislation in terms of additional cost to the taxpayer, before bringing it to the House.

Mr BORBIDGE: In reply to honourable members opposite, I emphasise that the Assembly is determining this matter today. It is the right of the Assembly to determine this issue and that is what we are in the process of doing. Opposition members referred to the resolution that was passed by the Parliament, and they quoted the *Courier-Mail*. I did not read that particular article. At the time of the resolution it would have been illegal to pay Parliamentary Secretaries any additional salary. That is the whole point of the amendments. That is why we have been completely open. We have introduced legislation.

I will walk honourable members through the legislation once again. Honourable members opposite should be well aware that, in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia, New Zealand and in the United Kingdom, Parliamentary Secretaries are paid extra for serving the public.

To try to educate honourable members opposite as to why salaries are not paid to

Parliamentary Secretaries in South Australia and the Commonwealth and why Parliamentary Secretaries are not to be paid an extra salary here in Queensland, let me again explain: there is no legislation in South Australia governing Parliamentary Secretaries. Currently, Queensland and South Australia hold the dubious distinction of being the only States in Australia that do not recognise this practice in legislative form. It is no wonder that South Australian Parliamentary Secretaries receive no extra salaries or allowance; there is no statutory means for doing so. That is why we are here today—to provide legislative form in Queensland.

Again, turning to the Commonwealth Government—if honourable members opposite read the Commonwealth Constitution, they would be aware that if a Parliamentary Secretary was paid a salary, he or she would become the holder of an office of profit under the Crown and by the operation of section 44 of the Constitution become incapable of being chosen or of sitting as a Senator or a member of the House of Representatives. In other words, the reason why the Commonwealth Government does not pay its Parliamentary Secretaries is that the Constitution prohibits it. It must not be overlooked that those Parliamentary Secretaries receive substantial allowances.

To outline the Government's position, I have given an indication of the ballpark figures that we are considering. In terms of the top range of Parliamentary Secretaries, the salary will be about a ballpark equivalent to that of the salary received by the Chairman of Committees. However, I expect that other Parliamentary Secretaries would be paid less.

Mr BEATTIE: I want to raise an issue. The Premier has just advised the Chamber that Parliamentary Secretaries in Western Australia are paid a salary. I have to say to the Premier that that is not my advice. My advice is that the four Parliamentary Secretaries in Western Australia are not paid a salary but receive expenses. The Premier is quite correct about the Commonwealth Government's position. There is no extra salary paid to Parliamentary Secretaries in that regard. As I understand it—and I reported this previously—no salary is paid to Parliamentary Secretaries in South Australia. My information is very clear in relation to Western Australia.

Mr Borbidge: That's not my advice.

Mr BEATTIE: I am not saying that the Premier has done this deliberately; I am simply indicating that my advice is different from his. I will return to the other point that I made. My

concern about these allowances and salaries is very simply this: we are debating a provision before the Parliament which contains a secrecy clause about how much Parliamentary Secretaries are going to be paid. It is a secrecy clause in the sense that the community will not understand what these Parliamentary Secretaries are going to be paid. The Premier made much about how—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, but the Premier's indication came at the death. The public are entitled to know what these people are going to be paid, yet the Premier gave no indication of it in his second-reading speech. In addition, the general indication that he gave today is still not as specific as perhaps the Opposition would like. The Premier referred to a tiered system, but it is still not clear. He made reference to an allowance that is going to be paid to the shadow Ministry. I am not talking about salaries; I am talking about allowances, which is different. In this case, Parliamentary Secretaries will receive not only a salary but also an allowance for expenditure. The Premier announced—quite rightly—the amount of the allowances that were going to be given to shadow Ministers so that everyone in the community knows exactly how much they will be. As I understand it, the Executive Council has simply made the decision and shadow Ministers have not yet received that allowance. The public knows what it is. However, in relation to this legislation, because of this provision, the public does not know the amount to be paid.

The Premier cannot have it both ways. We hear from the Government constantly that there is a great need to undertake penny-pinching exercises and there is a great need to save money. Currently, the Treasurer is going through the exercise of finding ways of cutting funding to the Environment Department, the Education Department, the Department of Tourism, the Health Department, the Police Service and wherever else it is possible—

Ms Spence: Transport.

Mr BEATTIE: Transport. The Government is trying to find ways and means of cutting expenditure. Yet it wants to pay three Parliamentary Secretaries additional amounts of money. A lot of people—the battlers of this State—are going to say, "Where am I in all this?" That is the question that the Premier has to answer.

Mr BORBIDGE: In reply to the honourable member—Parliamentary Secretaries will not receive an allowance as

such. They will be reimbursed for costs reasonably incurred in the conduct of their business. There is no difference between the process that the Parliamentary Secretaries will go through further down the track and the process of the shadow Ministers. The matters are determined, an announcement will be made, and the matter will go to Executive Council. It will all be made public before any additional salaries or entitlements are given to the Parliamentary Secretaries. It is exactly the same process as has been followed in respect of shadow Ministers. Under existing legislation, the Government did not need to introduce a special Bill to give those allowances to shadow Ministers. The Government already had the legislative authority. So Cabinet made a decision, which was broadly in line with what EARC recommended—I think it was 7.5 per cent. We took it to Executive Council. It was announced at about that time. It has now been approved. I understand that there is some nervousness because the cheques are still in the mail. They are coming for the shadow Ministers who are sitting opposite.

I am saying that exactly the same situation will occur in relation to this legislation. There will be a determination by Cabinet, a recommendation to Executive Council, a public announcement will be made, and, as occurred in relation to shadow Ministers, the allowances to the Parliamentary Secretaries will be subsequently gazetted.

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

AYES, 42—Baumann, Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Cunningham, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Goss J. N., Harper, Healy, Hegarty, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Radke, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Stoneman, Tanti, Turner, Veivers, Warwick, Watson, Wilson, Woolmer *Tellers:* Springborg, Carroll

NOES, 42—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bird, Bligh, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Burns, Campbell, D'Arcy, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Foley, Fouras, Goss W. K., Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, McElligott, McGrady, Mackenroth, Milliner, Mulherin, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Welford, Wells *Tellers:* Livingstone, Sullivan T. B.

Pair: Woodgate, Lester; Gibbs, Grice

The numbers being equal, the Chairman cast his vote with the Ayes.

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clause 3, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—

Mr BEATTIE (4.34 p.m.): In my contribution to this debate, I have indicated that the Opposition does not support clauses 8 to 13, and that is consistent with our argument. In terms of the amendment that has just been moved and carried by the Government 43 to 42, there is no point repeating the argument nor seeking a division on this matter. The vote of 43 to 42 on the allowance clause would no doubt be repeated on these clauses, but we will be opposing them.

Clauses 8 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

COURTS (VIDEO LINK) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 April (see p. 572).

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga) (4.36 p.m.): The Opposition supports this Bill, which was, of course, introduced by the Labor Party when in Government. It is a Bill which brings the courts of the land up-to-date in terms of the use of appropriate technology through their use of a video link to assist in the dispensing of justice. It is a most important development in the law to ensure that the technological transformation which is occurring throughout our workplaces, and indeed throughout all aspects of our lives, also brings benefits to our court system.

The courts are not immune from change. The essence of justice requires that each generation finds new ways and means of improving access to the court system and justice. This Bill is a part of the process of using modern technology to ensure that the courts function effectively and efficiently. The courts have moved to the use of fax machines to allow litigants to deposit material with the courts. Similarly, the Magistrates Court at Inala is using a speaker-phone connection to allow the use of interpreters. I am told that that pilot, which was initiated by the Labor Government, is bearing fruit, and it is of assistance both to the Magistrates Court itself and to the parties who appear before that court. To take an

example, it ensures that a Vietnamese person appearing before the court fully understands bail conditions which may be imposed. Accordingly, the processes of justice can take their course.

This Bill, however, does raise issues of civil liberty, which has been referred to by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee in its Alert Digest. The Bill provides amendments to the Supreme Court Act, the District Courts Act and the Justices Act to compel the use of video link facilities in bail and remand proceedings unless the court, in the interests of justice, otherwise orders. If the defendant would otherwise be required to appear in court in person, the facilities are installed in the court and the defendant is held in a correctional centre where such facilities are also installed.

The question which naturally arises is: why such compulsion? The answer, of course, is to ensure that the system can be used effectively and efficiently. It is of the utmost importance that the administration of this new system be handled with care and sensitivity. It is of the utmost importance that standards of justice should be equal for all citizens, but experience in southern States indicates that the use of this technology has not produced the affront to civil liberties that some might have feared. On the contrary, I am told that legal practitioners who have been working with this technology and are in close contact with defendants are finding that it works in a way which is perfectly satisfactory in the interests of justice. It is important that the opposition to change which many working in the law, because of its conservative nature, find attractive is resisted.

If the courts are to be relevant to modern times, they have to change and develop. Importantly, this legislation enables the courts to do just that. Accordingly, I commend the Minister for introducing the legislation. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and I commend him for his great wisdom in bringing this legislation before the House.

This legislation relates to the Supreme, District and Magistrates Courts. In this respect, I mention the important role of the Magistrates Court in a whole range of matters that affect the day-to-day life of the community. The Magistrates Court is the court with which most people have occasion to have contact. Although the big cases of the day may be determined in the Supreme Court, and ultimately the Court of Appeal and even the High Court, the ordinary citizen is more likely to have contact with the operations of the Magistrates Court.

This legislation, the Courts (Video Link) Amendment Bill, will assist the Magistrates Court in carrying out its important functions. The Magistrates Court has an important role under a wide range of Acts, including the Peaceful Assembly Act. For example, under that Act it is the court to which a person may make application for refusal to authorise a public assembly where a group of people have given notice that they propose to engage in a public assembly.

In this respect, I ask the Attorney-General to turn his mind to a disturbing report relating to an incident last Friday in the streets of Brisbane in which a number of people engaged in an anti-uranium protest were arrested by police. In the course of the Channel 7 news on Saturday night, a police officer was heard to say that one needed a permit from the district superintendent of traffic in order to conduct a march on a road. That is plainly wrong and does not correctly state the law. The Peaceful Assembly Act of 1992 makes it plain that ordinary citizens have a right of peaceful assembly, and that is provided for in section 5 of that Act. Under that Act, a further step can be taken by way of giving of notice which then gives that public assembly certain legal immunity pursuant to section 6. Upon the giving of notice to the relevant police and/or the local authority, an application may be brought in the Magistrates Court for refusal to authorise the public assembly.

However, that does not detract from the essential principle that in Queensland a person has the right to assemble peacefully with others in a public place, and a "public place" is defined so as to include a road. I ask the Attorney-General to turn his mind to that matter, because one certainly does not want to see a return to the days of confrontation between police and demonstrators. Whether the views of individual honourable members in this Chamber are for or against uranium, it is of fundamental importance that the right of citizens to peaceful assembly and protest should be preserved. I urge strongly that the Attorney-General investigate that matter, because it would appear on its face that the statement of the law by the police officer failed to reflect the operation of the Peaceful Assembly Act. Accordingly, it is of the utmost importance that the Minister, as the Minister responsible for the Peaceful Assembly Act, should take the necessary action to ensure that police officers are familiar with the law and that they administer it in a way which facilitates and protects the rights of ordinary citizens to peaceful assembly.

That piece of legislation was developed with the contribution of the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission and all of the political parties in this Chamber. Accordingly, I ask the Attorney-General to turn his mind to it and to carry out such investigations as may be needed in order to ensure that we do not have a change of practice by the police and that there remains in Queensland a fundamental right to peaceful assembly.

Let me turn to another matter. Interestingly, this Act amends the Supreme Court of Queensland Act of 1991 and the District Courts Act of 1967. I make this point: five judges are still missing. Where are the five missing judges? I refer to the five missing judges promised by Mr Beanland in the lead-up to the July 1995 election. Five additional judges were to be appointed to the District and Supreme Courts. This promise formed a strong part of the coalition's justice platform. In amending the Supreme Court Act and District Courts Act, I invite the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to make it plain——

Mr FitzGerald: What did you do about it?

Mr FOLEY: I did not promise five additional judges. However, the Attorney-General promised five additional judges. I am doing exactly what the Parliament should do: make the Minister accountable to the Parliament for his actions. I invite the Minister to enlighten the House as to the date by which he will have completed the appointment of the five additional judges to the District and Supreme Courts.

As I indicated previously, the coalition's policy is a judicial quintet short of a Bench. Those five missing judges should be relieved of their wanderings through the world of broken political promises. Is this to be another broken political promise of the coalition, or will the Minister come clean and inform the House as to the date by which he proposes to appoint the five additional judges which were such an important part of the justice platform which he and his colleagues took to the last election?

The Opposition welcomes this Bill. It will be of practical assistance. It will save some public funds, because it will enable prisoners to have their bail applications heard by way of video link and thereby avoid some of the security problems and the cost of bringing them to court. In the interests of justice, it is important that there remain an overriding discretion for the court to enable the person to

be present. Such a safeguard means that, when a disadvantaged person is before the court, in its discretion the court may ensure that the cause of justice is served.

The provisions for the use of video in civil cases have already been used extensively by the courts to include, for example, the taking of evidence by witnesses from Europe and north America. I note that recently President Clinton gave evidence in a trial, that evidence having been taken by way of video recording. I am pleased that the President of the United States has caught up with the pace of law reform which we are marking out here in Queensland.

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh) (4.50 p.m.): Two changes are essential to our court system if there is to be improved access to it for all Queenslanders: delays and costs within the system must both be reduced. These delays and costs hinder people from gaining quick access to the justice system, and ease of access is one of the keys to justice. One reason for these hindrances is the need for the physical presence in the courtroom of people facing charges for remand hearings and some bail hearings. Court proceedings are not cheap, and this Government will do everything it can to reduce costs to the public and to those people before the courts.

The Queensland Corrective Services Commission estimates that it costs about \$70 per defendant to get that defendant before the courts in the City of Brisbane. That does not include transportation and associated costs. The cost of each such appearance is borne by the taxpayers of this State. Adding costs such as transport expenses and security expenses makes this financial burden much, much higher. The process of a prisoner physically appearing in a court is not as simple as it sounds. Not only must security be provided at the correctional facility and the courthouse but also, obviously, between locations. A drive from the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre at Wacol to the Brisbane court means travelling through about a dozen residential suburbs. An average trip takes 30 minutes. Annually, more than 300 prisoners are transported from the Wacol correctional facilities to the Supreme or District Court for remand and bail proceedings. An additional 900 prisoners are transported to magistrates courts. The total time spent on the road and the total cost of transport, together with the cost of maintaining security, is massive. The manpower required for such a simple and common exercise is enormous. The demand for secure vehicles is similarly large. That cost aside, the security risk in itself is great. The

prisoners cannot be left unattended at any time. A lengthy ride through the suburbs to the city is a risk that would be best stopped.

Before the last election, the coalition committed itself to using technology to improve the justice system and relieve the burden on the taxpayer. This Bill promotes both of those interests. The fast, easy, inexpensive, efficient and safe access provided by video links to courts will allow courts to function smoothly and without as much worry or cost as they are currently experiencing. This Bill manages to give courts those benefits, yet it does not diminish the rights of defendants at all. All parties must consent to the use of the video link for it to be used in actual trials. The defendant has a choice. In fact, the defendant's rights have been very carefully considered in this Bill, and all those rights will be maintained.

The two-way system will allow the defendant the benefit of private communication with his or her legal representative. Such communications will be confidential, just as if the defendant were in the room. The use of video links between Queensland and the High Court is already a reality, with special leave to appeal cases being heard using this technology. Technology has pervaded every other aspect of life, and it is time it was incorporated effectively into our courts, especially if it can reduce the burden on taxpayers.

The video link serves the coalition Government's commitment to moving the court system along with technology. The eventual expansion of the system into regional areas will further extend the benefits throughout most courts in the State and reduce the basic functioning costs. Everyone benefits from video link court proceedings: defendants maintain their legal rights; the court process is made less expensive and quite probably faster; the taxpayer will pay less; and Queenslanders currently exposed to the risks associated with the transportation of defendants will no longer have that risk. It also updates the courts to the video age, providing a service that can only make the courts more efficient and effective. I support the Bill.

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN (Caboolture) (4.55 p.m.): I rise to support the legislation before the Parliament and to support the contribution of the shadow Attorney-General in respect of it. I approach this Bill in a slightly different position from most other members of Parliament, given that as a member of the shadow Attorney's committee when he was the Attorney-General we discussed this Bill in

length before it was introduced to the Parliament; and then as a member of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee I discussed it from a different angle, again at length, and that committee reported.

Mr Stephan: Did you come up with the right answer?

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: Both times we came up with the right answer. The two answers are slightly different, but when one is approaching things from a different angle it is easy to do that.

As Government members would realise, the work of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee is precise and unique and pays not a great deal of service to the policy behind certain legislation. This legislation is pretty much about policy.

Mr Palaszczuk: Unfortunately, the committee does not have the panache that it had previously when you were the chairman.

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: I will not hear a word said against the current chairman of the committee, who thus far has demonstrated to me that he is doing an excellent job and who for a short period will be a worthy successor to me.

I want to refer briefly to the mean-spiritedness of the current Attorney-General, as illustrated in a press release issued by him on 17 April to talk about this legislation. The press release states—

"The innovation was mooted by the former Labor Government, yet it is only through the longstanding commitment of the coalition Government that the technology will be implemented quickly, with a view to expand the facilities depending on their efficiency and their acceptance within the justice system."

It must be understood that two Attorneys-General ago, the former Government introduced subordinate legislation by way of court rules for the Supreme Court, the District Court and the Magistrates Court to enable them to use this technology.

The April 1996 edition of *Proctor* contains an excellent article—which I commend to the Attorney for his bed-time reading—by Wendy Harris, a lecturer of law from QUT who served on a professional development program with Judge Botting. She was able to evaluate the introduction of this technology into the courts and has written an article on the subject. A couple of points made in that article are important. Ms Harris said that the objectives of the Rules of Court were to provide for a reduction in delays, ensuring that justice is

done and the reduction of costs—exactly the same reasons as the introduction of this legislation. At the end of that article, Ms Harris indicated that from her observations and from discussions with people involved, the new provisions would achieve their objectives of reducing delays and costs and ensuring that justice is done.

In that article, Ms Harris touched on what is a concern for some of us, that is, the erosion of existing rights. Whilst I would regard it as a right of a detained person to appear in front of a court, Ms Harris talks about the erosion of the traditional principle that witnesses must give oral evidence in court and be available for cross-examination in person.

It is probably true to say that we need to be able to move with the modern times. The technology that is available to us today provides us with certain benefits, and we should not discard those benefits. However, I note that similar legislation that was introduced in New South Wales and which became active on 21 February 1994 required that the New South Wales Attorney prepare for Parliament a report on the first 18 months' operation of that legislation. As all honourable members would be aware, this Queensland legislation is modelled somewhat on the New South Wales example. Whereas I am prepared to support this legislation, what surprises me more than anything else is that the New South Wales Parliament is to receive its report in the next couple of weeks, and unless the Queensland Attorney is privy to an advance copy or a draft copy of that report, it may well have been wiser to have waited rather than bring on this legislation at this time. I say that in the full knowledge that this legislation was first introduced by the former Labor Government some six months ago. At that time, the New South Wales Attorney's report was a long way off. The release of that report is now imminent, and we could well have waited for that.

During this period of change in Queensland politics, when a new Government has come in and a former Government has departed, there are all sorts of arguments about who did what and whose idea any particular action was. I want to talk about the Caboolture Court House, which was conceived, constructed and commissioned by the former Government. I believe that the former Government can take full credit for that one. Within those premises is a room where distressed witnesses can give evidence to the court by television. That is an excellent advance for people appearing before the justice system in this State.

I am supportive of this legislation. However, I do have some reservations in terms of the rights of individuals. Much has been said about the protection of those rights. At some stage in the future, I would like the Parliament to receive a report that would give members an assurance or give them an idea of whether video link appearances in our courts are operating to the benefit of those individuals who find themselves in front of courts, as well as to the courts and the public purse of this State. As I said, I am pleased to support this Bill.

Mr CARROLL (Mansfield) (5.02 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Bill. The member for Yeronga relied upon his experience as legal counsel. I want to add some words from my own experience over many years as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Queensland. Many problems have arisen from and been associated with the transport of prisoners to and from courts. I have had clients contact me and want to know, for example, why it is that they have heard on the grapevine at the prison that a vehicle will be coming to take them from Brisbane to, say, the Southport watch-house. That is one example of how the arrangements break down. These matters can be readily dealt with and amended by the proper use of this Act when passed. Few people would know the enormous cost to this State of transporting dangerous suspects and criminals around by the Government police aircraft, for example. That fairly expensive jet is sometimes occupied by only one or two prisoners and is required to travel from one end of the State to the other simply for court appearances.

I recall a situation in which a prisoner broke out of the Supreme Court lockup in Brisbane and ran up the street, to be shot dead on the front steps of a bus. There have been other situations in which prisoners have managed to evade custody. Very high risks are involved in transporting prisoners, who continue to have access to video films and fantasy stories which only fuel their vivid imaginations while they sit on their backsides in gaol awaiting appearance in court. The very same kind of modern technology leads them to think that they are innocent and that, therefore, they have some sort of right to evade the courts and take every opportunity to clear off. That thought pattern, hopefully, will be broken by this kind of legislation. My only hope is that the manner in which the video link is installed will encourage prisoners to understand that they are still in the court system and will not contribute to their belief

that the court system is something about which they should not be too concerned.

I endorse the remarks of the member for Burleigh as to the likely saving of costs and the intent of this Government to minimise costs not only to the Government but also to clients of the legal profession. I want to flag a couple of problems that may arise in the implementation of this Bill. One of these is the extra cost which may be incurred by arranging for prisoners to participate in video links in cases in which they might not necessarily have to appear but may elect to appear. For example, I refer to matters heard before the Court of Criminal Appeal. Prisoners rarely appear in those cases, but they may elect to involve themselves in the additional episode of a video link hookup. A similar situation applies to appearances by prisoners in relation to applications for criminal compensation.

It is important to ensure that prisoners can communicate instructions to their legal counsel or solicitors. We should not overlook the need for justice to be seen to be done in that regard. If prisoners are not transported to the courts from the various gaols or remand centres around the State, counsel and solicitors can go out to see them at a more convenient time. That is a benefit. They will be able to fix their own appointments at perhaps a more suitable time than the previously narrow timeslot, when legal counsel and solicitors had to be packed into the watch-house under the court buildings in Brisbane or in country centres. The only problem with that is that solicitors and legal counsel may have to travel further than they previously travelled, but at least there will be a minimisation of expense to the public purse.

There are many benefits, of course, to this legislation. One which I would like to highlight is that if members of the legal profession can use this legislation and the altered arrangements to best advantage, they may be able to encourage prisoners to be realistic. On many occasions I had the opportunity to listen to judges who were charged with going through the Supreme Court criminal callover in Brisbane. I often heard those judges, in sheer frustration at times, resort to lecturing members of the profession about going to court organised and being able to get those criminal cases through the sausage machine and to reach some kind of conclusion. I have no doubt that, in some of those cases, members of the legal profession could have done a better job. But in many of those cases it was the prisoners who were playing games with the system. As a result, we

ended up with a very choked court system, frustrated judges and frustrated practitioners.

If this new system can be used to best advantage by the legal profession, solicitors and barristers can use it to force prisoners to be more realistic, that is, make a sensible decision as to how they might plead much earlier than they sometimes do at the moment. Therefore, I take this opportunity to call upon the profession to take advantage of this legislation and to use the new Act carefully and for the better administration of justice, not to utilise any teething problems that might be encountered to frustrate the system or simply for the sake of giving some temporary or short-term benefit to their clients. I commend the Bill. I am sure that its implementation will bring a reduction in court costs and greater efficiency to the court system.

Hon. D. E. BEANLAND

(Indooroopilly—Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (5.10 p.m.), in reply: I thank the Opposition for its support and thank the Opposition spokesperson, the member for Yeronga, for his remarks. I will certainly be getting around to cleaning up the mess and delays in the court left behind by the member for Yeronga after his seven or eight months as Minister. That mess has changed in some respects; nevertheless, a considerable amount of delay exists in the courts. However, I will not be verbally by members of the Opposition in relation to what our commitments were. I notice that the version from the members on that side of the Chamber changes a bit depending on which member of the Opposition is speaking, but that is all right.

As to the Peaceful Assembly Act, which was raised by the member for Yeronga—I point out that the law is the law. I am not aware of the remarks to which he referred, but the situation is quite clear as to what the people of this State can and cannot do in relation to assembly. I do not know that I have to turn my mind to it, because the law is there and there is nothing to be done. From time to time, police officers do make errors in relation to these matters, and the person concerned may have been making an incorrect statement. I am not aware of it. However, as the member for Yeronga is aware, the people who march are aware of the law and I am sure that the people concerned were abiding by the legislation. I have no problems with that legislation.

I refer to a couple of other points made by the member for Caboolture. This legislation was introduced into the Parliament at the first opportunity, and was then brought on for

debate as quickly as possible. He referred to a report that will be presented in New South Wales in the not-too-distant future. No doubt we will examine that report when it is tabled in that Parliament. As to this State—if there are hiccups or problems, I am sure that they will be raised either in the media or in this Chamber, and brought very quickly to the attention of members. If there are problems with the provisions of this legislation, I give a commitment that I will return to the Parliament to amend the Act if required, because, as the members for Burleigh and Mansfield indicated, it is very important to ensure that justice not only be done but also be seen to be done and that this system works and works well. We do not want to deny the democratic processes to anyone, even though we might be implementing more up-to-date uses of technology that has been developed in recent times.

I refer to the Alert Digest, which is produced by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. I have taken note of the three points raised in that publication. To be fair, those points are fairly well covered within the legislation itself. I am sure that both sides of the Chamber are aware of the points that were raised—they were raised previously. We must be vigilant in relation to these changes to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged under the law though our introducing these technological changes. Again I thank the members for Mansfield and Burleigh for their contributions to this debate, and commend the Bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. D. E. Beanland (Indooroopilly—Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—

Mr FOLEY (5.15 p.m.): This clause deals with the operative part of the amendments relating to the Supreme Court of Queensland. I take up the point made by the member for Caboolture that this amending piece of legislation does raise concerns with respect to civil liberties, which have been addressed by the previous Government and by this Government. However, the honourable member's suggestion of a report to the Parliament after six months seems to me to have a great deal of merit. It would enable the Parliament to satisfy itself that this legislation is working well, as one hopes and expects it will

work. I note that the Honourable Minister has said that should there be problems he would take the matters back to the Parliament. I respectfully suggest that it would be no burden upon the Honourable Minister or upon his department to give an undertaking to the Committee to report back to the Parliament.

I would make this observation further that, in the course of reporting back on how this initiative has gone, the Honourable Minister could inform the House of the views of the participants in the process, that is, most significantly, the prosecution, the defence, the officers of the courts themselves and, indeed, any victims of crime who may have a view about this as they are all too often forgotten in the debate on the criminal justice process. One would expect that, in the normal course of justice administration, those people would be consulted and the Minister, as the Minister responsible for administering this Act, would keep a close scrutiny on it. In view of the fact that this does change the traditional nature of the court, I ask the Honourable the Minister to accede to the request of the member for Caboolture and to give an undertaking that a report would be forthcoming to the House after, say, six months.

Mr BEANLAND: I have just been sitting here thinking about aspects of this point, and perhaps instead of a report after six months, we might say 12 months to allow for a settling-in period. I am more than happy to have a report. That report may also cover a few other aspects that need to be examined. I think six months is a little too soon to allow all the parties to settle in and the system to be running. I look forward to giving a report to the House within 12 months on the operation of this new system.

One would need to take all the participants into account and that includes a whole range of people, including the views of the officers of the Corrective Services Commission as to how they find the system operating, as well as police officers and the others who have been mentioned—the victims and the defence. I look forward to bringing that report in in 12 months' time.

Mr FOLEY: I thank the Minister for his willingness to do that. I think that will assist those parties, including the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties and other defence lawyers who have expressed reservations about this Bill. They will have a vehicle for the expression of their concerns.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 9, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10—

Mr FOLEY (5.19 p.m.): This clause, of course, deals with the Magistrates Court, which is the court to which parties have reference pursuant to the Peaceful Assembly Act, which I mentioned previously. I listened with interest to the Honourable Minister's response, but I press the matter with the Minister because, with respect, my concern is not simply about the misstatement of the law by the police officer concerned. My concern is to ensure that the Minister, as the Minister responsible for the Peaceful Assembly Act, takes pro-active steps, for example, by liaising with the Minister for Police, who is present in the Chamber, to ensure that ordinary citizens have their rights to peaceful assembly respected. It would be quite wrong if police officers were to proceed, on an outdated and mistaken view of the law, to deny people their rights of peaceful assembly. Those rights of peaceful assembly in certain circumstances where the assembly is not authorised—

Mr Beanland: It was on Channel 7 on Friday night.

Mr FOLEY: Yes, it was actually reported on Saturday night dealing with the Friday night demonstration. The concern was that the relevant police officer appeared to be under the view that one needed a permit from the district superintendent of traffic which was, of course, the old law. I welcome the presence of the Honourable the Minister for Police in the Chamber. My concern is that many of the demonstrators believed that their legitimate rights to peaceful assembly had been denied.

Mr Cooper: I attended the AGM of the Council for Civil Liberties last night. I spoke to them last night and said that they complained about it.

Mr FOLEY: The Minister responsible for the Peaceful Assembly Act is present in the Chamber. I ask him to be pro-active to ensure that the administration of that Act is respected and that police attending those demonstrations do not fall into the practices of the past, which cause so much division within the community.

Mr BEANLAND: I am glad the Honourable the Minister for Police is present in the Chamber. He has indicated clearly that he has the matter in hand. Last night, he attended a meeting at which some of those matters were discussed. He is aware of the matter and he has it in hand. However, I will also view the videotape that was broadcast on Saturday night.

Clause 10, as read agreed to.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.
Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

CHOICE OF LAW (LIMITATION PERIODS) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 April (see p. 574).

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga) (5.24 p.m.): The Opposition supports this Bill. It is another Bill that was introduced by the Labor Government and, again, I commend the Attorney-General for his good sense and wisdom in reintroducing it.

This Bill curtails forum shopping with respect to the limitation periods applying in civil actions. The area of choice of law is not always an easy area of law. The rules of private international law can be quite complex. This legislation came about as a result of a decision of the High Court in December of 1992, namely, the decision of *McKain v. Miller and Co. (South Australia) Pty Ltd.* In short, the High Court had to decide whether limitations statutes would be characterised as procedural or substantive. That decision really opened the door to forum shopping. Accordingly, the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General resolved to have uniform legislation, of which this is a part. Indeed, this has taken some years to be enacted and that fact itself goes some way towards ameliorating the concern raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee in respect of any potential retrospective operation of the legislation.

I note from the Attorney-General's speech that it is proposed by the Government that there be a further period of six months before this Bill comes into operation. That was the intention also of the previous Government. The importance of such measures cannot really be overstated. The common law is not something which is handed down on stone tablets and is never changing. Much of the modern common law of negligence developed in the 1930s and it has taken particular force as a result of the widespread introduction of motor vehicles and, with that, the personal injuries that flow from the collisions of motor vehicles and the running down of pedestrians. It is simply not possible to pretend that one can always have the procedural rules able to be used by creative pleaders in a way that

maximises their ability to shop from one forum to another. At the end of the day, that practice causes extra cost and extra uncertainty. Usually, that cost and uncertainty is borne by insurers and, in turn, by the ordinary person in paying his or her third-party compulsory car insurance or, indeed, in paying his or her workers' compensation.

One of the great challenges that faces Governments—and it is facing this Government—is the dramatic increase in common law claims that has occurred in the area of third-party compulsory insurance and, indeed, in the area of workers' compensation. It is all very well for the current Government to point the finger and seek to blame the previous Government, but the simple fact of life is that, over the last couple of years, there has been a dramatic increase in common law claims. People are becoming more litigious. The community, quite correctly, is being better apprised of its rights. Although the substantive law of negligence has not changed greatly, it is fair to say that the application of the laws of negligence, particularly in what were quaintly referred to as master/servant actions, has changed. Indeed, Justice McHugh of the High Court made the observation that one saw in the area of employee/employer relations almost the introduction of a doctrine of strict liability instead of the traditional doctrine of negligence.

This all boils down to the fact that Parliaments cannot sit idly by and allow the common law to progress on its majestic way without regard to the impact on the citizen. In the case of *McKain v. Miller*, the High Court had to make a decision as to whether it was a procedural or substantive matter. That bore with it certain implications, and the effect of this legislation is to override that decision and to ensure that there is certainty with limitation periods that operate in respect to actions that may be brought.

This is a prudent course of action; it is a course of action which enables the system to be used by the ordinary citizen; it is a course of action which means that there is greater certainty in the courts of the land. Lord Denning once observed that the law struggles to achieve two great goals, one of justice and the other of order, and that sometimes these two great goals can be in conflict. Whether it can be said that the litigant in *McKain v. Miller* achieved justice is a moot point, but certainly the interests of order and certainty in the legal system are advanced by the course of action that is proposed in this Bill. Indeed, the Bill was previously introduced by my learned friend, the former Attorney-General and the

member for Murrumba, the Honourable Dean Wells. That came about through cooperation amongst the Attorneys-General. It is a Bill that clarifies the law; it is a Bill that makes the law certain; and it is a Bill which the Opposition supports.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer—Leader of Government Business) (5.32 p.m.): I support the Bill also, and I note that the previous Government, now the Opposition, had introduced similar legislation in the House. This legislation is another development in Australian law as distinct from English law, from which much of our legal system derives. The December 1992 decision by the High Court in *McKain v. Miller* (South Australia) Pty Ltd, referred to by the member for Yeronga, was the interpretation, as the High Court saw it, of the common law with regard to procedural or statutory law. Of course, that law was based on English law which had evolved over a long period. In Australia, we have six State jurisdictions, plus the Federal jurisdiction in the territories. Therefore, it became a problem that in Australia we had a lot more forum shopping than would have taken place in England. That problem needed to be fixed. I understand that the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General had addressed the problem, and all the States had agreed to introduce this type of legislation. I understand also that all the other States have passed legislation, so there is consistency between the States.

When we were young, there was a quiz about a baby born at sea, whose father was one nationality and mother was another. If the ship was from a certain place, the captain was from another, and at the time of the birth the ship was in yet another jurisdiction, what was the nationality of the infant? We also had a bit of fun working out which court would be involved in the case of a car accident, depending on the address of the person driving the car, where the car was registered, where the victim came from and in which State the accident occurred—we even discussed where the dog which ran across the road and caused the accident came from. It ended up a lawyer's delight if the parties wanted to litigate.

Mr Foley: Those were the days.

Mr FITZGERALD: Those were the days. I see that the honourable member is looking forward with glee to going back to a profitable occupation in that area. However, we have cut off this source of income for his colleagues. He would never have stooped to taking an honest man's dollar to defend him, although he took a dollar off many rogues, of course.

Mr Foley: No, many people wrongly accused.

Mr FITZGERALD: Yes. As the honourable member said, he defended many people who were accused of a crime. Most of us would have thought that they were represented by a very poor barrister! Be that as it may, this legislation is another step in the evolution of Australian law.

People outside this Parliament quite rightly say, "Why on earth do you legislate? We do not want more laws." However, this is an excellent law which will simplify the course that people have to take to receive their just desserts when they take a matter before the courts. I believe that this Parliament has every right to approve legislation that is designed to assist in the administration of justice.

Mr CARROLL (Mansfield) (5.36 p.m.): I rise to support the Bill. At the outset, I resist the implication by the member for Lockyer that lawyers no longer wish to minimise costs, in case that is open to some as an interpretation. As a solicitor of the Supreme Court in this State, it was always a source of great satisfaction to me to bring matters to a conclusion as quickly and as economically as possible. I know that that is the earnest wish of the vast majority of legal practitioners in this State to this day.

I have no doubt that, when enacted, this Bill will save the costs, time and anxiety of many applicants and defendants. At first glance, it appears to be a complex piece of legislation, but it does fit in with the very coarse fabric of common law cases and interstate legislation. I have no doubt that the new Act will enable lawyers to be more readily able to predict the outcome of a claim that their client might be wanting to make or defend. If we can do that, we have achieved much for the administration of justice in this State and the appearance of justice to the many people who go to solicitors with often complex problems. It is often the very difficult cases involving clients who have little money, who may be recovering from illness or injury, or who are in a situation of enormous stress—they may have lost relatives or friends in a motor vehicle accident—which will benefit from this kind of legislation.

I have no doubt that this Bill will also avoid the rather expensive situation in which solicitors have to seek very lengthy opinions of legal counsel. I commend the Bill to the House. In doing so, I am confident that it will be another building block in the scheme of making the law simpler and more accessible for the people of this State.

Hon. D. E. BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (5.39 p.m.), in reply: I thank the Opposition for its support of this much-introduced piece of legislation, which I trust and hope might at long last go through the Parliament this evening. I thank also the members for Lockyer and Mansfield for their very worthwhile contributions to this debate.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. D. E. Beanland (Indooroopilly—Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr FOLEY (5.40 p.m.): I ask the Minister: does he have plans to make regulations under the Act in accordance with the power contemplated in clause 7?

Mr BEANLAND: I am not contemplating regulations at the moment, but they will be introduced if they are required. If they are, they will be tabled in this Chamber through the appropriate processes.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

LAND AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 April (see p. 575).

Mr PALASZCZUK (Inala) (5.42 p.m.): The Opposition notes that this Bill introduces some important amendments to the Land Act. Although the Opposition does not intend to oppose the Bill, I believe it is important to put on the record some observations about the intent of the amendments.

Similar to the Government, the Opposition is sympathetic to the plight of rural producers undergoing undue hardships as a result of the State's crippling drought. As the Minister knows, I have spent considerable time travelling throughout Queensland observing at first-hand the hardships suffered by rural producers. In my capacity as deputy chair of

the then Premier's Rural and Northern Task Force, I was able to talk to producers and gauge an understanding of the problems that they faced. On a number of occasions in this House I have outlined my concerns about rural problems.

When in Government, the Labor Party recognised the hardships experienced by drought-affected producers and introduced many and varied drought relief measures to assist those producers. I understand also that the former Government, under the then Lands Minister, Geoff Smith, froze the percentage of land rents to assist rural producers. Therefore, the Minister's decision to set land rents at the amount of rent payable for the previous year will be supported by the Opposition.

I understand that the amount of rental forgone by this measure will be in the vicinity of \$1.3m. This is to be offset by a range of increases in the rentals of leases in the other nine categories. I wish to ascertain from where most of this offset will come. Will it come from increases to category 4, the commercial and industrial category; from category 5, the industrial/DBIRD category; from category 9.1, the mainland tourism category; 9.2, the island tourism category; or from any other category?

As the Minister has stated in his second-reading speech that he will allow flexibility to extend this provision in future to those categories of people or industries that could be deemed as not viable or incapable of paying increased rentals without dire hardships, it is only hoped that he will not end up like King Farouk sitting in judgment of what he considers appropriate but that he will consult extensively before he arrives at his decision.

In relation to the chief executive of the responsible department investigating applications for tree-clearing permits, the Opposition has consulted on this issue and finds that this measure is purely of a machinery nature, and supports it also.

There is a matter that I wish to raise in this House concerning land clearing which has not been covered today. I refer to the large number of live tree-clearing permits in rural Queensland, covering an area of land reportedly in excess of one million hectares. As the legislation stands at present, these permits can be activated at any time in their five-year life and acted upon with absolutely no reference to these new guidelines. In the interests of preserving the biodiversity of the State, this must not be allowed to happen, and I call on the Government, and the Minister for Natural Resources in particular, to put in

place a system to encourage or require these land-holders to clear lands in a manner sympathetic to the new guidelines. Perhaps this can be achieved through the Landcare movement or through extension officers of the DPI or the Department of Natural Resources.

Failure to do this will result in further land degradation of western Queensland. Already land degradation is evident in two-thirds of south-west Queensland, with over half of the arid grazing lands similarly affected. This degradation is particularly worrying when we realise that national annual losses of production due to degradation are estimated to be in excess of \$600m. This degradation has also affected the carrying capacities of our grazing lands, with a 40 per cent decline over the past 40 years in the carrying capacity of our mulga lands. At present, that drop in carrying capacity has a direct financial impact, with each hectare of mulga land contributing \$1 per hectare. Forty years ago, all other things being equal, that amount would have been \$1.67 per hectare.

This land clearing must also not be allowed to proceed unchecked in the interests of the image of our rural land-holders. Responsible elements of our rural society have invested considerable time and effort in dispelling the image of rape and pillage that they previously had been labelled with, and nothing must be allowed to occur that will cause ground to be lost in that regard. Responsible rural land-holders have changed their land use practices in recent years, and every effort must be expended to ensure the example they have set spreads to all land-holders, particularly those in possession of live permits. Failure to do so will inevitably result in undesirable land-clearing practices receiving wide media coverage, with a lot of the good work that has occurred in the land-clearing debate amounting to nought. If that happens, we will go back to the bad old days of the city versus the bush and the greens versus the farming community.

I realise that the holders of these permits have a perfectly legal right to exercise their permits as they see fit, but I believe with a measure of goodwill and strong leadership on the part of the Minister we will see many of the permits lapse, others converted to new permits under the new land-clearing controls and others used in an environmentally responsible way. I stand ready to give bipartisan support to any move by the Government in this area. I cannot think of a more responsible land management move for our leasehold lands.

In conclusion—in not opposing the Bill, the Opposition gives clear notice that it will monitor closely the provisions of the Bill and reserves the right to raise concerns if and when the need arises.

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers) (5.50 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to participate briefly in the debate on the Land Amendment Bill 1996. The Bill seeks to introduce a discretion allowing the Minister to set rentals to alleviate the hardships which would be caused by rent increases. Those increases have been brought about mainly by the unfair valuation system implemented by the previous Labor Government. The Bill is designed also to give the Minister and the Department of Natural Resources further time to plan and consult with people in the industry to come up with a more compatible rental valuation system.

Just a couple of weeks ago, my office was inundated with phone calls from people all over the electorate after they received their rental notices for the coming year. One chap even commented that it was a wonder that I could not see the steam rising above the Burra range west of Charters Towers, as the guns were blazing once people received the notices. I can understand that reaction, as most of the rentals had increased by an average of 40 per cent to 50 per cent, which is a serious impost on those land-holders. As all members would appreciate, such increases are quite outrageous given the current economic situation faced by the rural industry.

I must congratulate the Minister for Natural Resources, Mr Howard Hobbs, on his swift action to allay all fears by placing a freeze on land rentals at the value of the previous year. That move was very well accepted, and the Minister acted very swiftly to bring this measure into effect, knowing that the legislation was coming before the House.

Both wool and beef prices are currently at levels well below the cost of production, regardless of the fact that the vast majority of producers are producing a much lower quantity than usual due to the prolonged drought. I want to cite the ABS figures for Flinders Shire stock numbers over the past 10-year period. In 1985-86, cattle numbers stood at 237,548 and sheep numbers stood at 559,000. In 1995-96, cattle numbers are down to 107,786 and sheep numbers are down to 198,540. As can be seen from those figures, production has dropped by well over 50 per cent. In addition, the prices now being offered for stock are well below the 1982 prices. Recently, prime bullocks were going for only

about \$135, whereas three to four years ago the same beast fetched \$480 to \$500. Those are the main reasons why it has been imperative for the Minister to seek the implementation of these amendments, which will give him greater flexibility to look at the current situation facing the industry and adjust land rentals to avoid undue hardship to producers.

These amendments are not intended to benefit only Queensland's primary-producing sector. The Minister has included in the Bill a provision to allow all other categories of land-holders to be covered in this manner. As all members are aware, along the coast sugar producers may face horrific events such as cyclones. These amendments will cover all categories of land-holders. They will provide the Minister with much-needed flexibility at times when certain industries are in trouble. The amendments will allow him to alleviate certain difficulties straightaway.

Consultation is ongoing across Queensland on the subject of tree-clearing guidelines. We would like to get it right from the start, so we are going back to square one. Most areas currently have their own guidelines. Under this Bill, if people are seeking to clear land in an area where there are no local guidelines, the chief executive may refer to an approved broadscale tree-clearing policy to allow people to undertake tree clearing, thereby facilitating higher production levels.

On the subject of the tree-clearing debacle—I believe that we must go back to the people on the land, because as far as I am concerned they are the best environmentalists when it comes to protecting their own property. I am sure that after the consultation period has concluded we will come up with a compatible set of guidelines for people on various categories of land which will enable them to increase production levels.

Another objective of the Bill is to re-establish the Land Court, which was proposed to be abolished by the previous Government. This is a positive move, because it gives producers an avenue through which disputes can be processed swiftly instead of going from one jurisdiction to another, in the process incurring high legal costs. Under these amendments, producers will still be able to take disputes to the Land Court, which has the power to resolve disputes. The delays caused by court hearings related to tree clearing and other issues inhibit production. I support the amendments proposed by the Minister under

this Bill, all of which are designed to assist primary producers.

Debate, on motion of Mr Smith, adjourned.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUNDING

Mr WELFORD (Everton) (5.58 p.m.): I move—

"That the Parliament—

- (a) condemns the Treasurer's plans to slash key State Government funding projects for the environment, including coastal and wet tropics protection, and
- (b) calls on the Government to meet election commitments it gave to protect the environment."

When this Government came to office in the most unusual circumstances that it did, it did so against the backdrop of an election campaign in which, probably more than at any time in its history, it laid claim to the environment vote. It did so in circumstances in which it made all sorts of arguably justifiable and reasonable commitments to protect the environment. But in the short two months that it has been in office, we have seen from this Government procrastination, oscillation, dithering, and, if anything, backtracking on key environmental commitments.

Just when all the evidence was starting to mount to confirm our worst fears about the National and Liberal Parties returning to their traditional habits with respect to the environment, last weekend we had the worst of our nightmares confirmed when it was disclosed that the Treasurer and her department are determined to undermine funding for the very vital programs over which the Environment Minister will preside. Already, the Minister has conceded that there will be funding cuts in his department; already he has made decisions which will cut many millions of dollars from his departmental budget. What we will see is a massive climbdown from the coalition's high moral ground on environmental issues—a reversal of its previous claims to electoral support on environmental issues—to a state in which once again the Liberal Party, kowtowing to National Party cargo-cult development rednecks, will scour this State from Cape York to Coolangatta with their developer mates damaging the environment and tearing apart the fabric of environmental richness which underpins the quality of regional, rural and urban life in our State, not

to mention our economic and tourism potential.

Wherever one looks in Queensland, from Cape York to Coolangatta and, in particular, in Cape York and Coolangatta, one will see environmental risks rearing their ugly head again. The Premier has already repudiated the Cape York Land Use Agreement, which was a landmark agreement between conservation groups, cattle graziers and the Aboriginal people of far-north Queensland to protect the cape. Members have also seen the Cape York conservation zone, to which this Government's own Federal Government party colleagues have committed \$40m, put on ice because this Government does not have a commitment to the protection of Queensland's wilderness.

Hand in hand with that, we have seen a freeze in the acquisition of national parks, just when Queenslanders were starting to believe that Governments in Queensland, regardless of their political colour, were prepared to act to protect the biodiversity of all Queensland's bioregions across the State. They have been frozen to the point at which the Environment Minister now says that Queensland will acquire national parks only when land-holders want to give that land away. That is the test of where this State Government stands with respect to the protection of Queensland's biodiversity. It represents an appalling retreat from a responsible strategy to protect biodiversity in the natural ecosystems of our State from north to south.

Hand in hand with that is the downgrading of proposed national park areas, such as the Bunya Mountains area, which has great ecological value, so much so that the former Labor Government contemplated its assessment for World Heritage listing. Not only does this new Government not recognise the clear environmental values of the Bunya Mountains region, but it has also downgraded the additional areas that the former Government was about to add to national parks and conservation zones. Why? So that this Government can allow its mates in a certain industry to permit cattle to trample through environmentally valuable areas! The Government has done that without the slightest regard to a proper environmental assessment of the true values of that area. In other words, this Government wants to turn a blind eye to the ecological and environmental values of the great wilderness areas of our State so that it can allow unbridled, untrammelled and irresponsible development to occur in circumstances in which Queenslanders would otherwise prefer it not to occur.

As to the Daintree Rescue Package—the entire Daintree region, which is right on the doorstep of the Wet Tropics World Heritage area, is now at risk because this Environment Minister is not prepared to protect it from the ravages of powerlines and overdevelopment. He is not prepared to protect it from the ravages of destruction caused by excessive settlement in the region, just as he is not prepared to protect Fraser Island from excessive tourist development, even though he has made quaint promises about committing himself to the \$10m that the former Government had already committed to the protection of Fraser Island and the improvement of its infrastructure.

Both Fraser Island and the Wet Tropics are areas of global significance. They are not just important for Queensland and Queenslanders, they are important for all people on the planet. Those two areas have qualities which satisfy all four of the key criteria and conditions for World Heritage listing. Properties and assets of that type occur in only 20 or so places on the entire planet. Fraser Island and the great Wet Tropics rainforest wilderness are areas of that character. Yet this Government is not prepared to protect them, despite all the bold promises that it made to the green movement and the Queensland electorate before the last election.

Mr Fouras: It's a scandal.

Mr WELFORD: It is an appalling backslide and an appalling scandal that a Government which took office on the basis of green credentials and a commitment to be more middle of the road than it was in its destructive past has now backslid to an appalling degree. What about the mahogany glider protection plan—a \$16m plan which the former Government had established and which was ready to go? That plan is now on ice.

Where does the Government stand with respect to the protection of the essential habitats of threatened species, such as the mahogany glider and many other species that are threatened in this State? What is this Government going to do about funding the protection of those essential habitats for the mahogany glider and other threatened species—both plants and animals? Not only have we seen that, we have seen a retreat on tree clearing. This Government is going to review the tree-clearing guidelines upon which the former Government had achieved substantial agreement with all interested parties before the last election. Do members

seriously believe that those characters on the other side of the Chamber are going to review those guidelines with a view to strengthening them? Of course not! This Government is about weakening controls on habitat and vegetation protection. That means that land degradation is well and truly back on the agenda of this State, because this Government is not prepared to protect the remnant vegetation of our State from the ravages of overdevelopment.

This is the Government's responsibility. In particular, it is the responsibility of the Minister for Environment. So far, members have barely heard a peep or the slightest inkling of interest from this Minister, who has openly told people in his own department that the Environment portfolio was the last thing he wanted. Well might he say that, because he knows, as do Opposition members, that this Government cannot stand for environmental protection. Its constituency will not tolerate the standards of environmental protection and wilderness protection that the former Government put in place and for which it stood.

The Moreton Bay islands in the south-east region are at risk. The Coastal Protection Strategy is now subject to significant cuts. Where are the management plans for coastal protection which the former Government was going to put in place and fund? What funding is going to be allocated to that strategy now that the Treasurer has clearly highlighted it for slashing? Regional transport planning and the \$100m busway to which our Government was previously committed have both been abolished. It is an appalling record, and it is getting worse.

Time expired.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—Leader of the Opposition) (6.08 p.m.): It is with some pleasure that I second this motion moved by my learned colleague. In doing so, I point out to the House that, at the last State election and in the Mundingburra by-election, the National Party perpetrated a fraud on environmentalists and green voters in this State by pretending that it was something it was not. What members of the National Party have sought to do—and this is demonstrated very clearly by these cuts—is turn back the clock to the days of environmental vandalism, which they demonstrated so capably over 32 years with their white-shoe brigade and their mates.

The National Party has sought to fool people into supporting its policy. Members witnessed the classic double speak. In relation to the Tully/Millstream project, we had the

Premier saying one thing to environmentalists in Brisbane and the Minister for Mines and Energy saying something totally different in the north. They tried the old three-card trick. They tried to con people in the north into thinking that the Tully/Millstream project would go ahead, and then they tried to con environmentalists in Brisbane and the south-east corner of the State into thinking that it would not. The proof is very clear. An article in the *Australian* on 12 March stated—

"The Queensland Conservation Council asked Mr Borbidge to 'prohibit new mines and dams, including the potential Tully Millstream development within Queensland's natural World Heritage Areas'.

Mr Borbidge replied in writing—
and I ask members to listen to this. He said—

"As a general rule the Coalition does not support mines and dams in World Heritage Areas and does not envisage these issues arising."

In other words, Tully/Millstream was never going to happen. That is what he said in writing. But what did Mr Gilmore say in north Queensland? In the *Cairns Post* of 19 March—and it is interesting to note the dates: Mr Borbidge's comments were made on 12 March and Mr Gilmore's on 19 March—Mr Gilmore stated—

"The State Government fully supports the Tully-Millstream hydro-electric scheme."

Mr Bredhauer: A week is a long time.

Mr BEATTIE: Exactly! A week is a long time.

In an article in the *North Queensland Register* of 21 March, Mr Gilmore stated that the Tully/Millstream project would be one of his top priorities. That is dishonest politics at its worst. Mr Borbidge is the master of the half truth and Mr Gilmore is perpetrating the same nonsense in north Queensland. I table those articles for the record of this Parliament so that environmentalists can see the fraud that was perpetrated on them.

Prior to the election, Mr Doug Slack ingratiated himself to the environmentalists across the State. As soon as the coalition snuck into Government through the back door, Mr Littleproud became the Minister. What happened to Doug Slack, who gave the environmentalists all the commitments? He is nowhere near the environment; he is involved with industry and business.

Mr Welford: Into development.

Mr BEATTIE: Exactly! Into development. He is nowhere near the environment, and that is the second part of the fraud.

In two months, Mr Borbidge has already demonstrated that the only green credentials that he possesses are his self-confessed political naivety. The members opposite are seeking to destroy what was to become the lungs of Brisbane, the Roma Street parklands, the great concept that was going to be supported by all people in Brisbane and those who are interested in a livable city. What are the members opposite going to do? They are picking up the concept from Treasury that 1995-96 funding for detailed master planning should continue without year funding to be determined following Government's consideration of its preferred design option, and that master planning currently under way should canvass options for a greater commercial content thus reducing or eliminating the project's call on the Consolidated Fund. That means less park for Brisbane, less park for Roma Street, and commercial development for monetary reasons. That destroys one of the best parks that could have been built in Brisbane. What a disgrace!

The coalition also wants to destroy funding for coastal management. In comes the white-shoe brigade and the brown paper bags, as the member for Lockyer quite correctly said. Then the coalition will throw out the window the funding for the Wet Tropics. Of course, they are not going to fund that the way they should. Those plans are very clear. The Treasurer can try to get out of it, but this is a return to environmental vandalism.

Those are the major projects that the coalition is prepared to move away from. But this problem goes right down to Stage 3 of the walkover near the Kangaroo Point cliffs. The coalition is not prepared to extend it under the Story Bridge to Holman Street. It is prepared to destroy the environment without any consideration.

Time expired.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook) (6.13 p.m.): I rise to speak on the motion moved by the shadow Minister condemning this Government on its actions and the future of the environment. The coalition has a sound record of coastal protection.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ROWELL: I point out to those who laugh and heckle on the other side of the Chamber in their dismal contribution to this

debate that, back in 1968, the coalition Government was the first Government in Australia to bring in a Beach Protection Authority Act. They have acted on that in the past.

The coalition is very much aware of the problems that are associated with beach protection and it is very concerned about the coastal protection and management legislation that the previous Government, which is now in Opposition, brought into the House last year. There will be a revision of the legislation, factors concerning compensation and property rights, and land-holders' representation on the various bodies. That legislation is an absolute disgrace and I am absolutely certain that that will be addressed by the coalition.

In its true tradition, Labor spent approximately \$750,000 and took five years to produce Green Papers, White Papers, draft Bills and so on. Three Labor Ministers were involved in the process and, at the end of the day, produced legislation that, in the opinion of the people of the coastal regions, is unworkable. That legislation is an absolute disgrace, and it has to be looked at.

I will refer to some areas in my electorate to illustrate the outcome of Labor's commitment to beach protection: Flying Fish Point, major erosion; Kurrimine Beach, major erosion; and Tully Heads, more erosion problems. The Labor Party did little or nothing in the way of beach protection.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr ROWELL: The member for Cook might waffle on, but what about Labor's record on Aboriginal and Islander Affairs. What does he say about the level of scrutiny in that sector? That, too, is an absolute disgrace. The coalition has a commitment to adequately resourcing the coastal protection and management legislation; that will continue.

Mr Welford: What's "adequate"?

Mr ROWELL: Whatever is adequate will be considered. What does the honourable member for Everton consider to be adequate? I will raise some issues that he raised in my electorate recently.

Mr Welford interjected.

Mr ROWELL: No, we will talk about Port Hinchinbrook. In an article in the *Herbert River Express* of 13 April relating to that development, the shadow Minister for Environment stated—

"I was very surprised at the extent of foreshore clearing . . ."

The honourable member was concerned about foreshore development. Did his Government not sanction that development? Am I wrong on that point? Was it not his Government that decided that the \$100,000 that was to be supplied by the developer for one of two options, to replace the mangroves that were knocked down and had to be cleared or put money into a plan for the Hinchinbrook Channel? The funds were used for the Hinchinbrook Channel planning? The members opposite could not give a damn about the mangroves that were cleared. The member for Everton does not know what he is talking about.

The article also refers to erosion on that site. Does he know what "erosion" means? How severe was the erosion? Was that where the excavator dug the hole to go into the channel? Would the shadow Minister know the difference between erosion and a man-made channel?

Mr Welford: You wouldn't.

Mr ROWELL: I do not think he would. He would know as much about the environment as could be written on the back of a postage stamp with a 4-inch paint brush. There is no query about that.

In my electorate the shadow Minister also referred to repair of damage and a sustainable, ecologically friendly resort—all those nice, cuddly words.

Mr Welford: You don't want them, do you?

Mr ROWELL: No.

Mr Welford: You just want to slash and burn them.

Mr ROWELL: No, I want to make sure that what is developed at that site is suitable for the environment. I have always put that view forward. There has been a lot of contention with the Cardwell people that their concerns are addressed. That needs to be looked at very closely, and there is no doubt about the future of that development.

I turn now to the mahogany glider, because I see that the former Minister is in the Chamber and this issue has been raised in Parliament.

Time expired.

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba) (6.18 p.m.): "Treasury recommends that the coastal protection strategy be curtailed pending further information on Commonwealth funding", so I understand reads a formal Treasury document which is part of the Budget round consultations. The slashing of the

coastal protection strategy funding will have significant effects from Cape York to Coolangatta.

The previous Government, the Labor Government, had put in place the necessary legislation. Funds were being made available for the development of regional management plans under the coastal protection strategy. Now that that program is going to be slashed, instead we will have untrammelled development from Cape York Peninsula to Coolangatta. We will have coastlines being used as developers find that the profit motive moves them to use those coastlines. We will not find our coastlines being used as the quality of life of the people of this State dictates. We will have high-rises anywhere from the top of the cape to the Tweed River. We will have canal estates placed indiscriminately along the coastline. This will lead to a despoliation of our natural resources, including the natural resources of the fish habitats, and the consequent crop of fish will be reduced, much to the detriment of commercial, professional and amateur fishers.

We will see the destruction of wetlands along the coast as a result of the fact that management plans will not be put in place to limit development to circumscribe the rapacity of those whose concern is for the dollar rather than for the ecosystem.

Right at this moment, an excellent example of that activity is occurring in my own electorate of Murrumba. The firm Transtate has made an application to the local council to build canal estates on the north side of the Redcliffe peninsula. Many members would be familiar with the location of the Redcliffe aerodrome. A narrow strip of bitumen goes from Anzac Avenue down to the Redcliffe aerodrome. On one side of that strip of bitumen there is an area that is protected already. That is an area of wetlands which will, let us hope for all perpetuity, be an important part of the heritage of the people of the Redcliffe peninsula. It is an area of tremendous biodiversity. Hundreds of species of birds, both native and migratory, inhabit those wetlands, and many of those species are extremely rare. Those birds travel a long way to get to the Redcliffe peninsula. Many of them come from as far away as Siberia.

However, on the other side of that narrow strip of bitumen is the area that is proposed by Transtate to be turned into a canal estate. The effect of the development would be to plunder from the people of Redcliffe part of their environmental heritage. The effect of it would be to build canals right over to the airport. The

encroachment of those canals on the wetlands area would have a direct and indirect effect on the wildlife that inhabit that area. One of the effects would come from the run-off of water from the properties. Another effect would come from domestic animals prowling around in the adjacent protected wetlands area.

Had there been management plans in place or, indeed, had there even still been a Labor Government that was committed to the development of management plans and had made money available for those management plans and had the legislation in place for management plans, then it may very well have been possible that, when the Redcliffe City Council came to consider the preposterous proposal put forward by Transtate, the Redcliffe City Council would have known that it was against State policy and stayed its hand. In the present circumstances, we have a State Government in place that has, effectively, given the green light to this kind of environmental desecration and despoliation. We have in place a State Government that is saying that spending on these essential programs for the development of management plans to protect such fragile areas should be curtailed.

Time expired.

Hon. B. G. LITTLEPROUD (Western Downs—Minister for Environment) (6.23 p.m.): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the Opposition. It is interesting to note the wording—"condemns the Treasurer's plans to slash the key State Government funding projects for the environment." The words "slash" and "plans" are important. The motion refers to something that is not set in concrete. Members opposite have put forward all sorts of ideas. In fact, the previous speaker, the member for Murrumba, did not even refer to the motion. He was trying to paint a picture of what a terrible place Queensland has become since February this year when the coalition came to power.

This motion is all about the Treasurer's plans to slash funding. Firstly, I should set matters straight. If members listened to what the Premier and the Treasurer had to say today, they would know that the Government inherited an awful financial mess.

Mr Fouras: That's not right.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The member will have his say. It is projected that the Government has to come up with \$240m because of the bad management of the previous Government. Added to that is the

economic disaster inflicted upon Australia by the Keating Government. This Government has to bear a share of that economic loss. When those factors are put in context, members would understand the process that the Government is going through. To be a realistic Government, we have to perform accordingly.

The main issue that should be taken into consideration is that the Department of Environment must have a proportionate share of the Budget. I guarantee both members on the Government side and opposite that I will be in there bidding for my portfolio's share of the State Budget. The fact that Queensland is in a financial mess goes back to members opposite.

The process that we are going through is the same process that the previous Environment Minister, Mr Barton, undertook. We have to work out how much money is available and what our priorities are. The other matter to take into consideration is that Queensland has just had a change of Government, and the new Government is entitled to put in place its policies. This Government also has the right to examine what members opposite were doing when they were in Government. Where the Government's policy differs from that of the previous Government, this Government has every right to say, "That is out."

Members opposite have been making a lot of noise about the process that the Government is undertaking—both in the weekend newspapers and in this place tonight. Currently, I am looking very carefully at all the projects that were put in place by the members opposite when they were in Government and noting where they were spending the money. I do not agree with some of the projects of the previous Government, especially its attack on private land rights. Some of the previous Government's policies were acceptable, and they will continue.

Mr Welford: By "attack on private land rights", you mean "habitat protection".

Mr LITTLEPROUD: No, I do not. The Government is in the process of determining which of those projects the previous Government had in place we will throw out. The Government promised the people of Queensland that it will make certain projects a priority, and it wants to put them in place. So the Opposition is jumping the gun. There are no plans to slash funds. We are undertaking a very, very cold, calculated search of what members opposite had put in place. I have

discussed those policies with the Treasurer and the Budget Review Committee.

Mr Welford: National park acquisitions?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The member should listen. I listened to him. The Government is going through the process of working out what the previous Government did. My colleague Mr Slack formulated an environmental policy and, in July last year, the coalition made a promise to the people that it was going to put more money into the better management of national parks at the expense of acquisitions. The people of Queensland voted for that policy. They knew what was going on. The previous Government doubled the size of the national park estate, but the level of funding remained the same. It was like using one dollop of butter for two slices of bread rather than one—it will not work. So we had to make some adjustments. This Government is going through a process of finding what the former Government put in place and, if the Government believes that a project has not worked, it will put it aside. I will then go to the Budget Review Committee in a few weeks' time with the policies that I want to implement.

In July last year, the people of Queensland slashed the Opposition's electoral margins. Finally, when the court investigated one election result and decided that a bit of a dodge had gone on and ordered a by-election, the Labor Party was chucked out of Government. The coalition is now the Government and the Opposition has to wear it.

The shadow Minister referred to the Bunya Mountains. The people who live in that area are very committed to the Bunya Mountains. It does not need World Heritage listing. The shadow Minister referred to me allowing some of the ground on the escarpment to be transferred from conservation park to grazing. I sure did. That move was agreed to by the senior conservation officer of the department. He said that it was good management practice, because that area is experiencing real problems. Over the last two weeks, there have been three bushfires on the escarpment of the Bunya Mountains. So we have implemented a management plan—something that members opposite forgot about completely. We are talking about acquisitions. Since I have been the Minister, I have carried on some work started by the member for Waterford when he was negotiating buying some land under the Daintree Rescue Program.

Mr Barton: I had a signed contract. What did you do?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I made it reality. Time expired.

Mr ARDILL (Archerfield) (6.29 p.m.): Last year's Budget provided a record amount of funding for environmental initiatives, as an extra \$100m was provided to take total funding up to \$160m. Of that, \$14.3m was allocated to environmental protection measures, \$3.7m was allocated to reducing ozone depletion and a further \$4m was allocated to the acquisition of open space in south Queensland. We obtained sufficient land for national parks to bring the total land set aside in Queensland for national parks in line with the national average. When in Government, the National Party set aside 1.89 per cent of land for national parks—the worst record in Australia. The 1995 Budget was a giant step forward, the likes of which had never before been seen in this State. It was the third major initiative in the recent history of Queensland.

On 21 March 1896, 100 years ago, Robert Collins was elected to this House as the member for Albert. Since that time, we have seen very slow progress in protecting the environment in this State. Despite Collins' great vision and wonderful energy, it was another 20 years—when the Ryan Labor Government was elected—before a large area of land was set aside for a national park with the establishment of Lamington National Park. Very gradual progress then took place, until all progress ceased when the Bjelke-Petersen Government took over this State. That is a fact. A step forward occurred in 1980 when the member for Cunningham, Tony Elliott, took over as Minister. He attempted to redress the situation, improve national parks and engender a responsible attitude towards the environment within the community.

Mr Nuttall: And they gave him the flick.

Mr ARDILL: That is exactly right. I have a pamphlet which Mr Elliott published at that time, and it was the first initiative implemented since Bjelke-Petersen came to Government in Queensland. What happened to Tony Elliott? He was removed from office. He did not last long before such environmental protectors as "Crocodile" Tenni and "I go to Rio" Muntz took over.

Today, we see a return to the past under Treasurer Sheldon. The member for Caloundra brings shame on her predecessors—people such as Angus Innes, who fought very hard to prevent the worst

excesses of Bjelke-Petersen and his pack of vandals. The new Minister is not strong enough to stand up to the vandals and prevent a return to the past. He says that private rights to profit cannot be superseded. Private rights to profit cannot be allowed to totally override public rights and the rights of the ecology of this planet. The crazy promises of the National and Liberal Parties to slash all the revenue sources of this State means that insufficient funds are available for the environment; there is no other reason. The present Government carried out a masterly campaign of subterfuge before the State election and represented themselves as born-again greens. They convinced some very easily led people of their new credentials. These people should now be wondering why they were so gullible.

The environment is not just parks, gardens and beaches; it is the air we breathe, the water we drink, the other species that share the planet with us, the vista that we view, and the ozone that protects us from the sun's rays. It is everything that makes life worth living on this planet and, in fact, everything that makes life possible. There are many people who are so selfish that they care only about their own profit. I refer to people such as Williams at Hamilton Island and the Hinchinbrook Channel, and Quaid, the vandal of north Queensland. The conservative parties are making a fundamental mistake in only considering the point of view of these people, and another one in slashing funding for environmental protection and environmental programs. Funding for the environment brings financial benefits to the State. People come from all over the world to see our environment. If we fail to protect it, they will not come.

Time expired.

Ms WARWICK (Barron River) (6.33 p.m.): I rise to condemn the motion moved by the Opposition spokesman on Environment. The coalition Government is committed to preserving the unique environment of Queensland. I am sick and tired of the empty rhetoric which spews forth from the collective mouths of members opposite when they talk about the environment. The environment is a key part of the everyday life of all Queenslanders. The Labor Party does not have a monopoly of concern for our environment. Labor Party members are so out of touch with the electorate that they are not aware of the fact that environmental matters concern the majority of people in our society.

I represent the people of an electorate which is very environmentally conscious. To a large extent, my area depends on the tourist dollar. People visit the region because of its unique environment. Commonsense dictates that, in order to preserve our economic base and encourage tourists to come to the region, we must do all in our power to stop further destruction of the environment. To suggest that the coalition is not committed to the environment is to acknowledge the fact that the Opposition is——

Mr Nuttall interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Sandgate is not in his correct seat and cannot interject.

Ms WARWICK: The Opposition is out of touch with reality. The people who approach me with issues relating to the environment are not the stereotypical radical greenies portrayed in the media and by the Labor Party. They are Mr and Mrs Average, people who live in suburbia and who go to work every day. They live in my region because they enjoy the quality of life available.

I refer to a region which is bounded by two World Heritage areas, namely, the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef. I have sought and been given assurances by my Government colleagues that their commitment to my area in terms of preservation of the environment is absolutely rock solid.

The Wet Tropics rainforests of north Queensland are among the world's outstanding natural treasures. In 1988, the special importance of the area was recognised when the previous conservative Government placed it on the World Heritage List. The area covers about 900,000 hectares, and extends in a narrow band for about 450 kilometres from Townsville to Cooktown. A management scheme for the area was set up in 1990 by the Commonwealth Government and the previous Labor Government. This involved joint funding and the establishment of the Wet Tropics Management Authority in 1992. The Wet Tropics Management Authority has an important, pivotal role to play in my area, and the Borbidge/Sheldon Government is committed to ongoing funding. This Government recognises the very important need for funding and, in spite of the bleatings from the other side, will not be deterred from that commitment.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority has released a draft Wet Tropics plan, which was prepared to help Australia meet its international obligations under the World Heritage Convention. The intent of this draft

plan is praiseworthy, and it is supported by the coalition Government. Submissions closed last Friday and have come from a wide range of private citizens and organisations. Many people have expressed serious concerns to me about this draft plan, and some aspects of it, quite frankly, appal me.

While we recognise the extremely important role of the environment, we are also conscious of the fact that we should not lock up our natural resources and not enjoy them. It is important that we learn to live in practical harmony with our environment. People have rights which we must respect and rights, of course, bring responsibilities. As a Government, we must ensure that these responsibilities are met, but locking up our natural resources will not benefit anybody.

Several groups have grave reservations about this draft plan. The Cairns Chamber of Commerce, for instance, has spent over \$13,000 in preparing a submission in which it voices its concerns. These concerns include the statement that the plan exceeds the requirements of the World Heritage Convention, and it goes well beyond what was contemplated by the Commonwealth Act and the intention of the Queensland Parliament. The draft plan appears to be inflexible. It fails to provide a balance between the need to protect the listed area and the legitimate needs and expectations of a growing population in far-north Queensland. Local government is not happy with the draft plan, as it imposes unreasonable controls on the legitimate powers of elected local governments to determine appropriate land use strategies. The draft plan does not adequately recognise legitimate rights under the Mineral Resources Act. It also presents a barrier to the development of essential infrastructure, including utility corridors. Legitimate tourist industry activity is also restricted.

Time expired.

Mr BARTON (Waterford) (6.38 p.m.): I rise to support the motion and, in doing so, I state very clearly that the position that has been adopted by this new minority Government on this most important of issues is nothing short of scandalous. We have to spell out very clearly that the intent of this motion tonight is to say to this new Government, "We want you to honour your commitments." The Opposition is very well aware of what occurred in the run-up to the July election and the Mundingburra by-election. The member for Burnett hawked around the State to every conservation group

that would talk to him, and to the Green Party. He told them, "Trust us, because we are different from when we were last in Government; we will protect the environment." As far as I am concerned, the coalition never intended to honour that commitment because, as soon as it attained Government, we saw it shift the member for Burnett away from the Environment portfolio very quickly. I think that was the reason that he was moved and somebody else was put in his place.

Although I do not wish to spend too much time dwelling on the position of the member for Barron River, let us look at her involvement. The member was elected on Green preferences. I have been to the CAFNEC areas. Issues such as the Cairns hill slope and the Government's lack of support for the environment in the Wet Tropics area—evident from the proposals of the Minister responsible for electricity—will demonstrate just how gullible the member was for believing the undertakings she was given by the new Government.

I wish to ask about cutbacks in the Department of Environment. I give the Parliament an assurance that, under the record budget in place when we left office, the program budget statement showed very clearly that we were within budget in every one of those areas. If the Environment budget is being cut, it is being cut because the money is being spent on areas other than the environment and is being used to prop up those areas that the new Treasurer got wrong.

I wish to cite a couple of examples. I had a close involvement with the coastal protection legislation. It took many years for that legislation to reach the Parliament. Although that legislation was applauded, its funding is likely to be withdrawn as part of the cutbacks being put forward by the Government. That is totally unacceptable. We have heard from the member for Barron River that the Government may even introduce mines into the Wet Tropics area. On 20 February, the member for Tablelands, the Minister responsible for electricity, stated very clearly—and in a very arrogant way—that he wishes to pursue a Tully/Millstream hydro station. He said, "Power to the Daintree—consider it done." That was his view. That is the view of the people who still claim that they have the interests of the environment at heart. When we see documents indicating that the Treasury is looking at ways to interfere in those areas—for example, with respect to costing for the Wet Tropics and coastal management plans—we have to be concerned.

I wish to make a few comments about national park acquisitions. The former Government was still undertaking significant acquisitions right up to the point at which I left the Environment Ministry. The environment movement, and even the National Parks Association, which is a fairly conservative group in this State, is critical of the new Government for its wanting to slash the program of land acquisition for national parks. Once potential land is lost, it is lost forever. Although there were problems in ensuring sufficient funding, the necessary funding was not reduced. There were record amounts for the management of national parks in this State. I will always say that, yes, we needed more. However, the acquisition programs were important in that significant areas could be purchased and turned into part of the national parks estate.

For the benefit of the member for Hinchinbrook, I will speak briefly about mahogany gliders. The mahogany glider is one of the world's rarest animals. Now the farmers are fighting back and are saying, "We are going to lose \$128m if we can't put that mahogany glider land under cane production." That is one of the costs that society has to bear to protect one of the rarest and most important animals on Earth.

Time expired.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands) (6.43 p.m.): I oppose the motion moved by the member for Everton that the Government is not meeting its election commitment to protect the environment and is slashing funding.

Firstly, I wish to draw the attention of the House to the fine body of members opposite who, according to the Queensland Conservation Council, implemented only 16 per cent of their environmental commitments during their term of office. I wish also to draw the attention of the House to the former Premier's, the member for Logan's, pre-election announcement for acquiring 11 properties to form the Cape York conservation zone. The former Premier, similarly with other projects he announced, announced that project without first waiting for a feasibility report. However, he did initiate a report at a cost of \$7m, and the report was to be called the Cape York Peninsula land use strategy. That report has not yet been finalised. So we had an ambitious plan to acquire 11 Cape York properties, by resumptions if necessary, without first awaiting the outcome of the study. Furthermore, no consultation was entered into with other stakeholders, particularly the indigenous people, who in fact want the white

property owners to stay. They consider the pastoral lessees very much part of the Cape York community. Many of the property owners are forth-generation land-holders.

The previous Labor Government approved a \$10m figure for property acquisitions in the Cape and a further \$15.7m for management. To date, four properties have been bought, totalling 418,000 hectares. However, it is our policy not to compulsorily acquire further properties. In relation to the \$15.7m for management of the cape over the next five years, one wonders whether, once the total area of 774,000 hectares has been acquired, management funding would have met the same fate as the funding for other national parks under the previous Labor Government.

Although in its time in office the Labor Party doubled the area of national parks, the national parks management budget stayed static, causing areas of national parks to become overgrown and infested with feral pigs and the like. The National Parks Service was undermanned and under-resourced. Also, a curious aspect is that, if parts of an area of Cape York were included in Stage 1 of the CYPLUS because they were identified as being of high environmental quality, it must be largely due to the care with which the previous and present holders of pastoral leases preserved that environment. This is a fact that members on the opposite side of the House always fail to address. The Government does care about the environment. We will never find a better environmentalist than the person who owns the property. Whether local, State or Federal Governments acquire land, someone has to manage it, and that means that money has to be set aside for it.

As to the list of areas to be acquired under the CYPLUS study—as I said, Stage 1 of the CYPLUS plan has identified some very highly environmentally sensitive and valuable land. However, it must be also stated that we will not be overriding any property owners' rights and forcing them into further sales. In certain cases—and I know the Minister saw a delegation of them recently—lessees are not happy with their settlements, something about which the other seven lessees are concerned. The coalition will wait to evaluate the CYPLUS plan. It will not blindly follow the mistakes and the "big is best" strategy of our predecessors. However, when properties in the cape become available through voluntary sales we will continue to acquire them.

Furthermore, we will maintain our commitment to the environment, but like most

other things in life its protection comes at a monetary cost. Thanks to the financial mismanagement of the former Labor Government and its unfunded promises for the environment, we are now left with the responsibility of caring for the existing national parks that members opposite left in a mess. The issues of inadequate fire protection strategies and insufficient numbers of rangers and so on need to be addressed first. Also, responsibly acquiring further areas of environmental significance will be our aim.

Time expired.

Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (6.48 p.m.): I am glad that the coalition has managed to find another expert on the Cape York Peninsula—even if it did have to go to Redland Bay to find him. We have not had an expert on the Cape York Peninsula since we had "Indiana Jones" from the Burnett running around the Cape York Peninsula with a barefooted Pat Shears and a reporter from the *Sunday Mail*. In terms of the environment, it turned out to be the last crusade of that "Indiana Jones".

An Opposition member: Where's the reporter?

Mr BREDHAUER: I think the reporter is now working for the Premier.

It is history now that, as soon as this minority Government came into power, it shunted Mr Slack off to the development side of town and put the grazier from the Condamine in the Environment portfolio. Nothing since the signing of the memorandum of understanding with the Police Union by the coalition exemplifies more the fact that we have hearkened back to the pre-Fitzgerald bad old days with regard to the treatment of the environment by National Party and National/Liberal Party coalition Governments.

I listened to the contribution by the member for Redlands in relation to Cape York Peninsula, the east coast conservation zone and CYPLUS. All I can suggest to him is that he should have a talk to whoever he got to write that speech for him or whoever handed it to him and say, "Next time you are writing me a speech, how about interspersing it with a few facts?" Most of what the member said was absolute rubbish. His reference to the 11 properties that were going to be acquired for the conservation zone is a very interesting point, because prior to the July election last year, his leader was running around Cape York Peninsula with all the other members of the National Party up there scaremongering up and down the cape and talking about the

200 properties that we had earmarked for acquisition. I was interested to hear the member for Redlands, on behalf of the coalition, admit during this debate that only 11 properties were ever targeted by us and that the scandalous mistruths that were peddled up and down Cape York Peninsula and around Queensland by the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Burnett as the then Opposition Environment spokesperson and a host of other people were nothing more than claptrap.

The member for Redlands referred also to the number of those properties which have fourth-generation families on them. I can inform him how many of those properties have fourth-generation families on them: one. The part of their property which we were interested in acquiring as part of the conservation zone was actually a special lease over a timber reserve which they held for grazing purposes. We were not interested in acquiring their pastoral lease. We told them that if they wanted to keep their pastoral lease they could do so, but the special lease over a timber reserve which they held for grazing purposes was the area which we wanted to acquire and which we wanted to dedicate to the conservation zone. It is about time that a few facts interspersed this debate. The fact is that those people were negotiating with us and, as the member stated, we had already acquired four of those properties without any compulsion.

I want to refer briefly to the Daintree rescue package. I think it is crazy for this Government to be talking about winding back funding for the management of World Heritage areas, particularly in the Wet Tropics. I am particularly concerned about the Daintree rescue package. The Minister admitted in this Chamber today that he spent how much acquiring Quaid's properties in the Daintree?

Mr Littleproud: About \$6m.

Mr BREDHAUER: We had a contract signed for \$5.8m. If the Minister has gone up to \$6m, I am not quite sure why. But if the Minister is going to acquire the properties, then he has to maintain the commitment to the infrastructure part of the program so that the necessary resources and facilities can be provided. The Minister for Mines and Energy has been talking about putting power in, and the Minister for Local Government and Planning has been talking about watering down the DCP draft that has been drawn up by the shire council. The Minister for Environment should be making doubly sure that the environment of that area is protected

from the double onslaught that is likely to occur as a result of pushing the power through and watering down the DCP.

I admit that there are people in that area who support both of those initiatives. I have talked to the former Minister for Housing and Local Government and the former Minister for Minerals and Energy about that. But this is an important environmental area and one which we need to protect not just for future generations of Queenslanders but for all the world.

Time expired.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 41—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bird, Bligh, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Burns, Campbell, D'Arcy, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, McElligott, McGrady, Mackenroth, Milliner, Mulherin, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Welford, Wells *Tellers*: Livingstone, Sullivan T. B.

NOES, 42—Baumann, Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Cunningham, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Goss J. N., Harper, Healy, Hegarty, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Laming, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Radke, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Stoneman, Tanti, Veivers, Warwick, Watson, Wilson, Woolmer *Tellers*: Springborg, Carroll

Pairs: Woodgate, Lester; Gibbs, Grice

Resolved in the **negative**.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer—Leader of Government Business) (7 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Community Health Centre, Palm Beach

Mrs ROSE (Currumbin) (7 p.m.): I wish to respond to serious accusations made by the member for Burleigh concerning construction of a Community Health Centre in Palm Beach. Members should be aware that the member for Burleigh has played a supportive role in attacking the health centre proposal, and it is unfortunate that she has decided to continue this deliberate campaign of negativity.

When plans for the health centre were announced by the Labor Government, the member for Burleigh did nothing to defuse the false and misleading rumours and statements that a needle exchange service would be set

up at the centre—a claim that was clearly refuted in this House by the then Minister for Health, the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Jim Elder.

A public meeting was called by coalition members and candidates in the lead-up to the July 1995 State election—a public meeting calling for residents to attend and express their rage about and objection to the inclusion of a needle exchange service. There never was going to be a needle exchange service at the centre. This was stated over and over again by me and former Health Ministers. But did that stop the member for Burleigh and Liberal candidate for Currumbin running a scare campaign? No, it did not. They held the meeting in Palm Beach—a meeting attended by the then National Party shadow Minister for Health, Mr Horan, and chaired by none other than the National Party member for Burleigh.

At that meeting, a motion was put from the floor "that the meeting support the positioning of a community health centre at Palm Beach for the benefit of all Southern Gold Coasters." The member for Burleigh, in the chair, refused to accept the motion. What did that show? It showed her total lack of support for a Palm Beach Community Health Centre. Members should be aware that, during the time I was fighting for approval for a health centre, coalition members were strangely silent and made no representations supporting a Community Health Centre on the southern end of the coast.

When I was first elected in 1992, my main priority was to bring to the attention of my Government the lack of health services, particularly dental services, as a result of 32 years of National Party neglect. The then South Coast Regional Health Authority had outlined in its regional services plan the need for the establishment of a number of Community Health Centres throughout the region and agreed and highlighted the need to establish a Community Health Centre in the Palm Beach/Currumbin area. It was recognised by other health service providers as the area which was best able to provide services to the southern Gold Coast community, which included sizeable populations of aged and socially disadvantaged persons. The Community Health Centre would deliver much-needed services, including aged care, family and child health, community health, health promotion, youth health, women's health and a dental clinic.

The approval of the health centre at Palm Beach by the Labor Government was

welcomed by the southern Gold Coast community. I have tried hard to keep them up to date with progress on getting the centre up and running. I must confess to being frustrated by the unavoidable delays which have occurred to date, but the land was purchased in January, with plans to build a purpose-built facility, including a brand-new health centre and dental clinic. What did the coalition do? It froze the funding for that project.

Southern Gold Coasters have fought long and hard beside me to get approval for the centre. In last week's Gold Coaster column, the member for Burleigh said—

". . . and as there is currently a review on all Capital Works he was unable to provide a likely date for its completion."

How disgusting! How can this coalition Government turn around and say to the elderly and the disadvantaged on the southern end of the coast, "Well, you will have to wait because we have to have a review of the capital works commitments of the Labor Government"? The member for Burleigh, in a statement to this House, said—

". . . the only beneficiary in this bungle appears to be the member for Currumbin, who has been able to move her electorate office out of the unsuitable building and to better and more pleasant surrounds."

What a strange thing to say. I think that the member is somewhat confused. She has never been in my previous office or my current office. How does she know anything about it? I am sure that the Parliamentary Service Commission would be surprised by her comments that the building was unsuitable. They and I were quite happy with my previous office accommodation. It is more than evident that the member for Burleigh and her coalition colleagues have been using the Palm Beach health centre as some kind of political football to score cheap points. Her hypocrisy in attacking the former Labor Government concerning the centre—

Time expired.

Instant Scratch-Its

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North) (7.05 p.m.): Tonight, I wish to bring to the attention of the House the unfortunate circumstances that have surrounded a Toowoomba family and its near windfall from the Golden Casket Office. Before I do, I feel that it is an ideal time to echo the many verbal complaints that I am starting to receive from

my constituents in relation to the increasing difficulty in actually working out the procedure in identifying a prize from the latest range of Instant Scratch-Its. I refer particularly to the \$5 variety. As one of my elderly constituents said to me the other day, one nearly has to have a university degree to work out the game. I am sure that this increase in difficulty must be contributing to the number of unclaimed prizes and an amount of unclaimed prize money being accumulated by the Golden Casket Office.

Recently, a Toowoomba business woman, Mrs Catalina Bumatay, purchased a Summer Sizzler \$2 Instant Scratch-It and scratched off what she thought was the \$100,000 prize. But something appeared a little strange. Upon further examination, it was found that the ticket had been misprinted. In two instances on the ticket, two prize amounts appeared where there should have been one—one amount of \$100, the other for \$100,000. Mrs Bumatay then took the ticket to another newsagent, who noted the double print and rang the Golden Casket Office. He was told to scratch off the "void if removed" section and read out the number revealed. The newsagent noted that it was an unusual move to make, as that process was usually done by the Golden Casket Office when winning tickets are sent to it. The newsagent was reluctant to scratch it, but felt that it was all right because he had been instructed by a Golden Casket official. The official then said that the ticket won a prize of only \$25, according to the void number.

Mrs Bumatay then received a letter from the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation which stated—

"We refer to your 'Summer Sizzler' Scratch-Its ticket numbered 017375-086.

The abovementioned ticket was forwarded to our printing company for verification, and they have determined that the ticket was successful in winning a prize of \$25.00.

Please find enclosed Cheque . . . for \$25.00."

Mrs Bumatay sought legal advice, and eventually her solicitors received advice from lawyers acting for the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation which stated that the ticket, due to a printing error, had been superimposed with a ghost print from another ticket. The legal firm then went on to quote the instant casket rules governing the playing of Instant Scratch-Its and, in particular, Rule 8 dealing with void tickets. That rule says that a ticket is void and no prize is payable if—

". . . a ticket is misprinted or multiply printed (paragraph (a));
more than one prize amount appears in each panel (paragraph (b));
if any prize is inconsistent with any security validation or verification number on the ticket (paragraph (d)); or
the ticket fails any confidential or other security tests conducted by or on behalf of Golden Casket (paragraph (e))."

The letter from the solicitors then goes on to state—

"Rule 8.2 provides, however, that notwithstanding that a ticket is void, a prize may be paid if the Manager of Golden Casket is satisfied that there is a valid claim for payment."

The letter stated further—

". . . despite the ticket being void, your client had a valid claim for payment of a \$25.00 prize as security checks revealed that the 'Void If Removed Number' on the ticket corresponded with Golden Casket records that the ticket was a \$25.00 prize winner."

Mrs Bumatay reluctantly accepts the ruling but still feels rather cheated. She and her husband, Alfredo, run a small fruit mart and oriental mixed groceries business in Toowoomba. Just prior to scratching the ticket, Mrs and Mrs Bumatay had received the sad news that Mr Bumatay's sister had died in the Philippines. When Mrs Bumatay scratched what she thought was the \$100,000 prize, she thought she could help pay for her sister-in-law's medical expenses and funeral.

These costs and a downturn in their business has meant that the future for the Bumatays now looks very bleak. Surely, with all the unclaimed moneys being accumulated by the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation, a compassionate approach to cases such as the Bumatays' should be considered. I am certainly not suggesting that the \$100,000 prize money should have been automatically awarded, but perhaps the Golden Casket corporation may have found some way to assist the family's plight after a mistake which clearly was the fault of the printing company engaged by the corporation to print its tickets. This has not happened yet. Perhaps if the manager of the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation, who I am sure was made fully aware of the family's circumstances through a fairly comprehensive media coverage, and with all the discretionary powers that he seems to have, could have made a family very

happy. It would have been a nice gesture. Maybe it is not too late.

Professor D. McTaggart

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba) (7.10 p.m.): Honourable members may be interested in some of the published views of the new head of Treasury, Doug McTaggart. A glance at some of his published academic writings reveals that he stands for the following propositions—

that wage fixing tribunals should be abolished and unions broken up;

that 6 per cent unemployment might now be considered as full employment;

that recessions are not all bad because they reduce the level of inflation;

that even when unemployment is appallingly high and investment in plant and equipment is depressed Governments should resist pressure to do something.

Professor McTaggart is a self-styled economic rationalist. In his review of a book of Shann Memorial Lectures, the new Under Treasurer hailed Shann as "one of the first and most eloquent" of the economic rationalists, saying that he was 50 years ahead of his time. In the same review, the Under Treasurer puts forward what he describes as an—

"alternative proposal . . . To abolish the source of real wage increases: wage fixing tribunals . . . At least we should reform the union structure in which compensation has been detached from individual employment and productivity growth, a move away from centralised mechanisms towards fully decentralised enterprise based unions."

So the Under Treasurer is in favour of abolishing wage-fixing tribunals and dismembering unions with a view to replacing them with a large number of presumably impotent workplace-based employee organisations. This is an unusual view to hear from someone who is supposed to be a politically neutral public servant.

In a 1993 article titled "Australia's Economy Towards 2000", the Under Treasurer says that the Australian economy runs in three-year cycles. He notes that, with each economic revival, firms appear to be increasing output but not reinstating their work forces. In this situation of long-term cyclical job loss, the Under Treasurer suggests that

unemployment is going to be a permanent feature of the Australian economy. He says—

"Six per cent unemployment might now be considered full employment because we are unable to do better than this."

So we have an Under Treasurer who believes that 6 per cent unemployment is full employment. That is arrant nonsense. Full employment is when everybody who is willing and able to work has the opportunity of a job. Unemployment figures are not just statistics; they are barometers of human misery.

Later in the same article, the Under Treasurer informs us cheerily—

"The good news from the recent recession is that inflation has all but been eliminated."

That is as bad as saying that the good news from the war zone is that world population pressure has been reduced. Recessions do not yield good news, unless one happens to think that numbers are more important than people.

The Under Treasurer then goes on to look at the factors which influence the economy. The overwhelming factor, in his view, is the American economy. He stated—

"The main determinant on Australian economic activity is not the Government but the United States."

Then he goes on in this alarming vein—

"Australians, and the Australian Government, always end up trying to do something My suggestion is that we accept that As a nation, we are at the mercy of the rest of the world. We must learn to deal with that."

That is not the language of policy formulation; that is the language of a psychological encounter group. We have an Under Treasurer who is going to be advising Government that we are completely at the mercy of the United States, that we should not try to do something; we should just "learn to deal with that". How do we learn to deal with that? According to the Under Treasurer, by resisting any temptation to do something!

Mr T. B. Sullivan: And this is the person Mrs Sheldon chose.

Mr WELLS: That is right. I note the comment of the honourable member for Chermside. It is indeed the person chosen by the Treasurer.

Summarising the state of the economy in 1993, the Under Treasurer said that it was

emerging from a recession but that unemployment was still high, and would have been even higher if discouraged workers had not simply taken themselves off the lists of job seekers. That is a funny sort of way of recovering from a recession. If unemployment is higher, the economy has not recovered. The Under Treasurer goes on to say that inflation is expected to stay low and, as a result, interest rates are also low. However, the current account is in deficit; the dollar shows no signs of regaining lost ground; and housing investment has picked up, but investment in plant and equipment is depressed. The Under Treasurer then says—

"To its credit, the Government has largely resisted pressures to do something."

That is the kind of economic advice that the Government is going to be receiving. It will get a list of things that are going badly, and it will be told in conclusion that the Government ought to resist pressures to do something.

Mr X. Herbert

Ms WARWICK (Barron River) (7.15 p.m.): I inform the House of a need to preserve a small part of our cultural heritage. I refer to the cottage of Redlynch, Cairns, where the writer Xavier Herbert lived and where he wrote his masterpiece, *Poor Fellow My Country*. Xavier Herbert is one of Australia's greatest novelists. He lived with his wife Sadie in the cottage at Redlynch for 32 years. All of his novels, except *Capricornia*, were published while he lived there. He was notoriously eccentric and it was part of his character that he "buried himself" in an unpretentious worker's cottage in a tiny north Queensland township. Herbert loved Redlynch and its surrounding mountains.

He extensively renovated and improved the cottage. Most of those changes were to make it maintenance free, easy to clean and more comfortable. The Herberts were certainly happy with it. In an interview, they said that even if they became rich, they would not move. Herbert left the cottage four years after Sadie's death, giving it to his bank agent Robyn Pill, with the request that she look after it. In 1984, he died in Alice Springs in the wilderness where he wanted to die. There have been few changes to the house except for the unfortunate demolition of the backyard shed in which he worked. The house still looks much the same as it did in 1983 when he left.

The present owner is willing to sell the cottage into public ownership for the same

price he paid for it. He asks only that the proposed use be not deleterious to the operations of his Red Beret Hotel next door. He has placed a time limit on the offer, which will expire at the end of May. If the cottage is not purchased or reliable promises of funding for purchase not obtained, he will make extensive changes that will damage the heritage value of the cottage.

Preservation of the cottage has considerable public support. A Xavier Herbert Cottage Preservation Committee was set up in September 1995 at a public meeting in Redlynch. The committee includes representatives from the local community, the Cairns Historical Society, James Cook University and the National Trust of Queensland, which has recently listed the cottage on its register. Expressions of support have been received from several professors of Australian literature, the Queensland Writers' Centre and the Writers in Cairns Incorporated. There is also a great deal of media interest.

The committee envisages that the cottage could be used as a small museum to Xavier Herbert. Similar ventures elsewhere have proved to be good cultural tourist attractions, for example, May Gibbs' house in Sydney. The Cairns City Council has planning provisions to preserve the heritage feel of Redlynch town centre as an historic precinct. The cottage is across the street from the world-famous Kuranda railway line. The cottage could also be used as a small community centre, housing community groups' meetings. Xavier Herbert's publishers, Harper Collins, have promised to assist with funding for maintenance. This property is an important part of Australia's cultural heritage.

Xavier Herbert was a native of Western Australia, who had lived in Melbourne, Sydney, the Northern Territory and London. After being demobilised in Sydney at the end of World War II, he and his wife, Sadie, drove north until the road ended and they settled on a dairy farm in the Daintree River area for a few years. In 1951, Sadie was having trouble with her then landlord, so Xavier accepted reluctantly a fellowship with the Australian Literary Fund and applied for a war service loan so they could buy a house. Herbert had fallen for Redlynch, describing it later as "the most beautiful little town I have ever set eyes on". The house chosen was a Redlynch cottage with fibro walls and an iron roof. The cost was 150 pounds, with a deposit of 60 pounds. Herbert purchased it on 27 June 1951, and did not leave it until late in 1984. He finally left the district in 1984, and died in Alice Springs in that same year.

Xavier Herbert built a shed in which to write, while not away at writers' camps around Kuranda. It was an unpretentious iron structure, which local residents say was made from two small sheds taken from the Kuranda railway and moved on a rail car to Redlynch. The shed was reputed to contain a tool bench, some spartan luxuries, a camp stretcher, a deck chair and a low table on which he wrote using an ancient Remington typewriter. There is also an electrical gadget of his own invention supposed to keep him awake.

As I mentioned previously, all of Herbert's novels except *Capricornia* were written while he was living at Redlynch. It is thought that he was working on *Soldier's Women* when he moved into the house, although most of the concepts for this and other novels were actually written at a camp outside Kuranda. However, *Poor Fellow My Country* was typewritten in the shed. There have been suggestions that the house be moved to the grounds of the campus of JCU.

Time expired.

Specialist Services, Country and Regional Queensland

Mr NUNN (Hervey Bay) (7.20 p.m.): I believe that no-one in this place would say that specialist services in country and regional Queensland are anywhere near adequate, although some specialists have tried to convince us that such is the case. After years of complaining about long waiting lists and working until they drop, recently a Maryborough specialist claimed that there is not enough work to go around. In the next breath she said that she would be too busy to service public emergency patients in the Hervey Bay Hospital—not private patients; only public patients are to be barred. Not content with speaking for herself, she also named five other Maryborough specialists who, she says, are prepared to do likewise. None of those specialists have been prepared to deny her allegation, and quite frankly, I would not insult them by asking them to do so. A couple of these people were involved in the closure of the low-risk birthing unit, to which I referred earlier today.

Having regard to that matter, I call on the Minister for Health to support me when I call on the royal colleges of the various medical specialities to change their attitude towards the supply of specialists to the Australian health system. Firstly, I challenge the colleges to say that there are enough specialists to properly service the growing waiting lists, which are an inevitable consequence of the pace at

which new technology is increasing the demand for health services in this country. I also challenge honourable members opposite or, for that matter, anywhere in this House, and in particular the Health Minister, to say to their constituents that they are happy with the number of specialists available to country and regional Queensland. I know they will not say that because, in truth, they cannot say it.

On top of that, everyone in this Parliament is aware that specialists are the major controllers of the waiting lists. It is the specialists who prioritise those waiting lists. There is one inescapable conclusion: we urgently need more specialists in regional areas and it will need a concerted and united effort to get them. I again call on Mike Horan to support me when I call on the AMA and the royal colleges to actively participate in an effort to give our people the health care that they deserve.

In the short term, those people who have tremendous power and influence should, where there is a demonstrated need, actively encourage qualified overseas specialists to practise in Australia with the proviso that they spend their first years in regional centres. That is not too much to ask. In the long term, they should admit more of our own brilliant young doctors to the colleges—and I mean both male and female doctors—and they also should be prepared to serve in the regions outside the capital cities.

It is important that there be established in the regions the right mix of private and public facilities. Health professionals recognise that need as much as I do. Labor and the regional health authorities were set to achieve that. The public Capital Works Program was largely in place and it was time to encourage the private sector to play a complementary role.

It is important that remuneration for specialists in the public system be reviewed. I believe that the scale of remuneration for specialists in Queensland is some \$80,000 to \$100,000 behind what is available in New South Wales. I have said that specialists have obligations to the community. They have developed skills and their responsibilities are great. We have an obligation to provide them with not only proper remuneration but also better facilities and equipment. It is incumbent upon Governments to do that.

On the face of things, the medical establishment appears to be keeping Australia artificially short of specialists. I hope that that is not the case. However, the perception exists and members of the public are not pleased. As a matter of fact, they are quite angry about

it and they are looking for somebody to help them out of the position in which they find themselves. If that perception is inaccurate, then it is up to the royal colleges, in conjunction with State and Federal Health Departments, to work out a more efficient use of the specialists' time. If that perception is correct, then the royal colleges have a moral duty to see that the numbers of specialists available to the health system are increased.

It may be that specialists have lost sight of the fact that they are part of the community they serve. They have a responsibility to the community of which they are a part, and it is a responsibility which they themselves sought. It was not forced upon them; it was something that they took upon themselves. If the chiefs will not remedy the situation, then it is up to the indians to force the issue. Who would blame them if they forced the issue?

Time expired.

Professional Services, North Queensland

Mr STONEMAN (Burdekin) (7.25 p.m.): Tonight, I bring to the attention of this Parliament and the people of Queensland a situation that causes me the gravest concern. Following six years of unbelievable mismanagement by the former Labor Government, the lives of many professional people throughout this State have been devastated. I refer particularly to architects, solicitors, engineers and builders, who are all suffering.

Dr Watson: What about the accountants?

Mr STONEMAN: I am sure that accountants and, no doubt, professors as well are suffering. Under the Labor administration, those people in country areas have all suffered enormously. They have been excluded from tenders and, on many occasions, they have not even been invited to tender. Where they have been tendered for jobs, they have been cast aside.

I refer to architects, engineers and builders who live in north Queensland, particularly in Mackay, Townsville and Cairns on the coast, and who have great expertise in tropical architecture, tropical construction and the use of special building materials that make living in such tropical areas more bearable. Yet when the Labor Party was in Government, it let contracts to people who live in other areas. A prime example is the Thursday Island hospital. Would members believe that all the services—the architectural design and

development—are being carried out in Sydney, New South Wales—not even in Brisbane! What would architects and builders' suppliers in Sydney know about block building, overhanging walls and the stresses placed on buildings by cyclones? Yet once those people in Sydney are awarded the contracts, they give their mates down the road the jobs. I draw members' attention to the enormous cost involved in travelling from Sydney to Thursday Island, a cost which would be factored into the tender process.

Another example is that, in recent elections, the ALP had material printed in Brisbane that was used for its election campaign in north Queensland.

Mr T. B. Sullivan interjected.

Mr STONEMAN: No doubt the cost to the community is enormous. Members of the Labor Party should hang their heads in shame for the way in which they devastated those people and the services they provided in northern areas.

Time expired.

The House adjourned at 7.30 p.m.