TUESDAY, 14 MAY 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—

Constitution (Parliamentary Secretaries) Amendment Bill;

Courts (Video Link) Amendment Bill;

Choice of Law (Limitation Periods) Bill;

Local Government Amendment Bill;

Land Amendment Bill;

Land Title Amendment Bill;

Education (Work Experience) Bill.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Homosexuals, Legislation

From **Mr Carroll** (1,109 signatories) requesting the House to reject the Commonwealth Powers (Amendment) Bill or any similar Queensland legislation that might either refer to the Federal Government the State powers over property rights of "defacto marriage" parties or homosexual pairs or create any additional rights for homosexuals.

Cats

From **Mr Horan** (44 signatories) requesting the House to (a) direct councils to ban the use of traps by the general public for trapping domestic pet cats. Any such trapping of injured, stray or wild cats only be undertaken by the RSPCA or council personnel under strict conditions as they relate to the Animal Protection Act and (b) address the control of excess populations of cats, and to encourage desexing of cats with subsidies and, if favoured, overnight curfews, registration and compulsory identification of cats.

Bingil Bay

From **Mr Rowell** (196 signatories) requesting the House that, in the event of the realignment of the boundaries in the Mission Beach area, Bingil Bay remains in the Johnstone Shire.

Petitions received.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

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

Acts Interpretation Act 1954—

Criminal Code Regulation 1996, No. 84

Coal Industry (Control) Act 1948—

Coal Industry (Control) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1996, No. 92

Coal Mining Act 1925—

Coal Mining (Moranbah North) Exemption Order 1996, No. 91

Crimes (Confiscation) Act 1989—

Crimes (Confiscation) Regulation 1996, No. 89

Criminal Code [1995]—

Criminal Code Regulation 1996, No. 84

Electricity Act 1994—

Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1996, No. 86

Hospitals Foundations Act 1982—

Hospitals Foundation (Townsville General Hospital Foundation) Rule 1996, No. 90

Lotteries Act 1994—

Lotteries Rule 1996, No. 93

Queensland Cement & Lime Company Limited Agreement Act 1977—

Queensland Cement & Lime Company Limited Agreement Amendment Order (No. 1) 1996, No. 85

State Development and Public Works Organization 1971—

State Development and Public Works Organisation (State Development Area) Regulation 1996, No. 82

Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982—

Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements (Application of Parts 4 and 5) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1996, No. 83

Traffic Act 1949—

Traffic and Transport Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1996, No. 88

Transport Infrastructure (Roads) Act 1991—

Traffic and Transport Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1996, No. 88

Water Resources Act 1989—

Water Resources (Avondale Water Supply Area and Water Board) Regulation 1996, No. 87.

PAPERS TABLED DURING RECESS

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

3 May 1996

Valuers Registration Board of Queensland—Annual Report 1995

13 May 1996

Lang Park Trust—Annual Report 1995.

PAPER

The following paper was laid on the table—

Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for the Arts (Mrs Sheldon)—

Report in relation to third party premiums—1 July 1996.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Maternity Leave

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: It is with great pleasure that I rise in this place to inform the Parliament of the Queensland Government's moves to bring State public servants toward parity in regard to paid maternity leave. As the House may be aware, the State Government announced that from 1 July State public servants will be eligible for six weeks' paid maternity leave. This is a major breakthrough for Queensland public servants, and it is the first time they have been able to receive paid maternity leave.

The previous Government had announced during the Mundingburra by-election that it would provide paid maternity leave for the State's public servants. However, upon obtaining Government in February the coalition discovered that these promises had not been costed and that no money had been put aside to pay for the cost of paid maternity leave. When combined with the underlying 1995-96 deficit of $185m and the projected deficit of $240m in 1996-97, there was severe doubt over whether the Government could fund Labor's uncosted promise. Fortunately, the Queensland coalition Government has provided money out of contingency funds and supplementary savings to fund this initiative. The Government will also take the cost of this maternity leave allocation into consideration when negotiating enterprise bargaining in the future. The initiative will cost between $15m and $17m a year.

This is a major breakthrough for women working within the Queensland public service and it is a move towards the positions of the Commonwealth, New South Wales and Victorian Governments. In fact, this decision brings the Queensland Government into line with private sector companies like Westpac, AMP, the Commonwealth Bank and Lend Lease.

Our decision shows the Queensland coalition Government's commitment to providing improved conditions for Queensland public servants. Paid maternity leave helps the Queensland public service retain the investment in skills and training of its female employees. Six weeks' paid maternity leave is in line with the private sector and will, therefore, not put too much pressure on the private sector, which is already under enough pressure. This initiative will benefit a significant number of women within the public service, including nurses and teachers.

The coalition Government is again moving to clean up the mess left by the previous Labor Government, which had made yet another unfunded and uncosted promise in regard to paid maternity leave. On that note, I wish to refer to some of the quite unbelievable claims of the Opposition yesterday. The Opposition spokesperson on women's affairs, Judy Spence, rushed out yesterday to hold a press conference to do what she does best: have a whinge. In particular, Ms Spence made claims that our decision to introduce six weeks' paid maternity leave instead of 12 would severely affect those female public servants who had become pregnant because of Labor's pre-Mundingburra promise.

Let us get this right: Ms Spence is saying that some Queensland women ran out and became pregnant on the basis of a Labor Party election promise. Whom does Ms Spence think she is kidding? Anyone who made such a serious life decision on the basis of a Labor Party election promise obviously has not been keeping up with events over the last six years. Labor has broken more election promises than Paul Keating has antique clocks. Is Ms Spence suggesting that in November this year, nine months after Labor's February promise, we are going to have a baby boom—a Labor election-promise inspired baby boom? Talk about a case of hard labour!

I think Ms Spence made a fool of herself and the Labor Party with her unbelievable claims yesterday that Queensland faces a Labor election-promise inspired baby boom. The people of Queensland know better than to trust Labor promises. There is no way Labor could have afforded to provide 12 weeks of paid maternity leave this year, unless it took the Peter Beattie approach to Health and just stole money from capital works for recurrent funding or went into debt. The Queensland

coalition Government has taken the first steps in providing——

Mr BEATTIE: Those remarks are untrue. I find them offensive and I ask that, in the interests of the dignity of this House, they be withdrawn.

Mrs SHELDON: I thought the Health Minister, Mr Horan, had adequately explained and shown the House that the words are absolutely true.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition finds the remarks offensive and asks that they be withdrawn. I ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mrs SHELDON: Mr Speaker, on your direction I withdraw.

The Queensland coalition Government has taken the first steps to provide paid maternity leave for the State's public servants. It will happen under this Government; it would certainly have never happened under Labor.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Treasury Corporation

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: The Queensland Treasury Corporation half-yearly report provides details to Parliament of the corporation's activities over that period, particularly with regard to its operating surplus, borrowings and overall financial performance. Queensland Treasury Corporation's operating surplus before payment in lieu of tax was $66.6m for the half year ending December 1995 as compared with $31.7m for the same period in 1994. The increase was mainly due to part of the Stanwell cross-border lease transaction benefit received by QTC. The benefit flowing to QTC was approximately $64m, of which $28m was set aside in contingency provision and $36m contributed to the net surplus of QTC.

Offshore borrowings outstanding increased in market value terms from $7,891m at 30 June 1995 to $9,406m at 31 December 1995. Conversely, domestic borrowings outstanding decreased in market value terms during the half year from $11,524m to $9,084m. Growth in overseas borrowings was mainly due to QTC taking advantage of opportunities available in the Japanese retail bond market. QTC outperformed its benchmark during the half year by $50.3m. Some $14.8m of that amount was attributable to QTC management of its debt pools. The remainder, $35.5m, was attributable to QTC borrowing at margins below other central borrowing authorities. It has proved to be a productive six months for QTC, and I wish to commend this report to the House. I table the report.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Standard of Preparation and Timeliness of Departmental Statements

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (9.43 a.m.), by leave: On 14 November 1995, the report Response to Public Accounts Committee Report No. 33 on the Standard of Preparation and Timeliness of Departmental Statements was tabled in the Legislative Assembly. As the Minister responsible for actions relating to recommendations in this report, I now table a response to the 32 recommendations of the report.

Many of the recommendations are covered by existing responsibilities of the accountable officers under section 503 of the Public Finance Standards. No further elaboration on departmental responsibilities through legislation is considered necessary. My department is writing to all accountable officers in the context of the above report reminding them of their obligations in these matters. Several recommendations require minor amendments to the Financial Administration and Audit Act for implementation. These amendments will be included in the package of amendments that I plan to introduce in July.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Abuse Telephone Hotline

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: I refer to a resolution during the last sitting of the House calling on the Government to set up an independent authority to investigate allegations of paedophilia and child abuse. None of us condones paedophilia, nor do we want half-measures when seeking out and convicting those who commit such offences.

I am pleased to report that I have been actively following up on the resolution of the House with regards to the setting up of an independent authority. I believe that an authority set up along the guidelines of the Anti-discrimination Commission, which is responsible to both the State and Federal

authorities, would be able to investigate all forms of child abuse, including paedophilia. I welcome the House's endorsement of the Government's commitment to cooperate fully with any Federal Government inquiry into paedophilia.

Family Services Ministers struck an historical agreement on 22 March regarding a nationally coordinated child protection strategy, including information-sharing about convicted paedophiles and child abusers. I intend to inform the House of developments at a national level which will have consequences in terms of the State's response. The Council of Family Services Ministers is due to meet again on Friday, 17 May, to discuss progressing the National Child Protection Strategy.

I would further like to announce today my intention to set up a dedicated telephone hotline service as a measure—an interim measure, I must admit—to determine what resources need to be committed to the investigation of complaints of child sexual abuse. Many victims of child abuse are hesitant or intimidated by the prospect of raising the matter with police. This dedicated telephone service will provide an intermediary step and will also act as a referral agency in terms of accessing counselling for victims. The phone line will be a 24-hour service staffed by qualified counsellors who are highly experienced in child protection and abuse matters. It is intended that the telephone hotline service will receive complaints regarding abuse and will refer matters to existing investigative authorities, particularly the CJC and police, for investigation.

The two client groups that are expected to make use of the service are adult victims of child sexual abuse and children who are currently living with the spectre of abuse. These two client groups have starkly different needs and different procedures will need to be developed for dealing with issues pertinent to adult victims of child sexual abuse. The statutory duties of my department and the services it provides currently relate to child victims of abuse and neglect. There are significant legal implications that need to be resolved by my department in concert with Crown law and the police. Certainly, if information received has implications of a child currently at risk, that information will receive immediate attention.

It is also intended that this telephone hotline service will compile statistics related to the number of calls, age of caller, type of offence, dates of alleged offences and the like in order to have information on the types of responses and services required. My department is also liaising with police to ensure that information gathered is in a form that is useful for them in terms of seeking potential prosecutions. These statistics will also assist the department to formulate a budget response to this issue in the coming financial year, as well as determining the response to the Parliament regarding an independent inquiry. The information will also be valuable in terms of gauging a national response.

In conclusion, I recommend this initial course of action to the House as an interim but positive response to the issue of victims of child sexual and other forms of abuse and in determining a well thought out and targeted response from the Government.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gun Control Laws

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Racing) (9.47 a.m.), by leave: Last Friday, I represented Queensland in my capacity as Police Minister at the summit on gun laws in Canberra. That meeting, a specially convened meeting of the Australasian Police Ministers Council, was chaired by the Federal Attorney-General and addressed by the Prime Minister. That meeting of Ministers from all Governments—Federal, State and Territory—agreed to recommend to their Governments 11 separate resolutions.

Queensland went to that meeting with a bipartisan position worked out cooperatively with the Opposition, and I thank it for the constructive nature of its input. I thank also the honourable member for Gladstone for her valuable input.

At that meeting, all Ministers shared the concerns articulated by the Prime Minister that urgent action be taken on gun laws. Understandably, there were differing viewpoints as to how we could best reach new, practical and achievable gun control laws and implement the awesome logistical and practical operation needed to make these new laws work. That does not imply disagreement but, rather, mature discussion on how to best meet the generally agreed need.

The Prime Minister, Mr Howard, spoke to the ministerial council of his understanding that tens of thousands of decent, law-abiding citizens who have legally owned, operated and used firearms—often for years—will be adversely affected by these laws. Mr Howard

admitted that many of them will feel understandable resentment at the new prohibitions. Certainly, I fully understand and share his concern. I cannot stress enough the anger, hurt and dismay felt by these many tens of thousands of people. These people are honest and responsible and have complied with the existing law and they feel that they are now being punished, even though many of them have owned and stored without incident guns which will now be banned for decades.

Every Minister at that meeting believed that people who currently legally own guns which will now be prohibited should be fairly and properly compensated for the loss of their assets. I believe that the Federal Cabinet is meeting in Sydney today to discuss the compensation issue. The Prime Minister has said that he expects to be in a position to advise the States and Territories on the details of the financing of this compensation-for-surrender scheme by the end of this week, and I understand that he will be writing to the Premier about this matter. I am not interested in or intimidated by the vocal minority of extremists, but I repeat that I am acutely aware that the nationally agreed course of action will severely and directly affect the chosen sport or hobby of many decent, law-abiding people. Their sense of disappointment and even anger is profound and sincere. However, the resolutions taken at that summit now need to be translated into legislation, and all State and Territory Governments are now moving to amend or introduce firearms legislation which incorporates all of those resolutions.

I am advised that the ban on importation of weapons already banned by the Federal Government will be effective immediately, and I understand that the only exceptions to the ban will be a limited range for official or occupational purposes certified by a permit. Fortunately for their sake and their legitimate, proper purposes, primary producers will be able to access low-powered, self-loading .22s and self-loading and pump-action shotguns if they can satisfy police that they have a genuine need for them. The resolutions provide for all Police Services to link into an effective nationwide computer system, with the databases of individual States and Territories linked through the National Exchange of Police Information. The resolutions provide for five categories of licence, with requirements to provide genuine reasons for owning, possessing or using a firearm. A licence would be refused, cancelled or seized also for specific reasons such as a history of domestic violence or if there is reliable evidence that the applicant or licence holder has a mental or physical condition which would render the applicant unsuitable. The coalition in Queensland had already addressed this issue in Opposition by its promise to establish a prohibited persons register.

Under the resolutions, a separate permit will be required for every firearm and all such permits will be preceded by a 28-day cooling-off period prior to issuing. All Governments will develop a standard approach to tighter and more secure storage of firearms and ammunition. All firearms sales will be conducted only by or through licensed firearms dealers, with special provisions for those in remote locations where licensed gun dealers may not be easily accessible. In this case, it may be that local police officers will be authorised to certify sales or purchases. Similarly, mail order sales will be strictly controlled and apply only on a licensed gun dealer to licensed gun dealer basis, with strict controls on advertising as well.

There is myriad complex detail to be worked through in translating these resolutions into workable law. That will require patience and time. Yesterday, I briefed Cabinet on the implications, and Cabinet endorsed my actions both prior to and on my return from the Canberra Police Ministers' conference. My advice from the Queensland Police Service has indicated significant implications for them for staff numbers and equipment, with a conservative estimate of the cost at this stage being around $2.2m to establish the necessary expanded administrative machinery. I have already raised this concern with the Prime Minister, and he has indicated that he will be sympathetic to appeals for special assistance to the States and Territories to meet the added impost. As I said earlier, we are waiting for the Commonwealth to get back to us with details on how it proposes to finance the buy-back of guns which will be prohibited.

Adequate and proper compensation will be absolutely critical to the success of the national decisions, and the amnesty, proposed at 12 months, must be genuine if we are not to see vast numbers of these guns go underground. Any failure to ensure adequate and fair compensation will only serve to create a dangerous underground, illegal black market in dangerous weapons. The implications of such a black market are horrendous because it would inevitably mean that illegal, high-powered, military-style assault weapons would fall into the hands of those most determined to pay any price and break any law to obtain guns.

The Commonwealth has also undertaken to provide advice to all Governments on recommended minimum penalties for breaches of the new laws, and this also is awaited. It is imperative after this advice is received and considered that we undertake detailed briefings with all affected groups to explain how the new laws will operate. I intend to convene these meetings after the further necessary advice is received from the Commonwealth and the Queensland Police Service and the Government has considered it.

Again I stress that I am fully aware that these proposed new laws will present enormous difficulties and cause great disappointment to many decent, law-abiding gun owners who feel that they are being penalised by the actions of a very few—a few who generally have failed in the past to recognise what law existed. The resolutions arrived at at the ministerial meeting are no guarantee that we will not see a repeat of the horror of Port Arthur in the future, but they form the basis for laws which are designed to contain, as far as is humanly possible, the risk of such a future tragedy.

We—as a Government, as a community and, of course, let us not forget the media—must look way beyond simply tightening gun laws if we are to meet the community's absolutely heartfelt wish to have a safer society. We must look at all of the other aspects that contribute to any culture of violence. That includes assessing the impact of violence-orientated films and videos and the way Governments and society respond to the challenge of ensuring that the mentally ill are treated humanely and, for the greater good, safely. These new gun laws will play a part; reducing the overall number of firearms floating around in the community must contribute positively to creating that safer society. But it cannot be and must not be seen to be the whole answer, because that would be nothing more than dangerous self-deception.

We have already begun preliminary work on the necessary draft legislative amendments. My office has been deluged—as have been the offices of all members, I am sure—by letters, faxes and telephone calls from people with points of view from across the spectrum of the debate. I know that most Honourable Ministers and members have also felt the heat. I table the ministerial council resolutions reached last Friday and the Prime Minister's statement on that day.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

John Oxley Memorial Hospital; Death of Mr S. Johnson

Hon. M. J. HORAN (Toowoomba South—Minister for Health) (9.56 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House of the findings of an inquiry held into the death of a patient at the John Oxley Memorial Hospital on 12 January 1996. Mr Shaun Andrew Johnson, a young Aboriginal man, was found dead after tying his shirt around his neck and hanging himself from a window security grille in Urquhart Ward of the hospital. Queensland Health was of course concerned that a patient under its care had committed suicide, and public concern about procedures at the John Oxley Memorial Hospital led the Government to direct the Chief Health Officer to use powers under the Mental Health Act 1974 to inquire into the circumstances of Mr Johnson's death and recent cases of patients going absent without leave from the facility.

The inquiry was formally called on 16 January 1996 by the then Minister for Health. Terms of reference of the inquiry were set after consultation with interest groups and Crown law. The inquiry was conducted in three parts. Firstly, a review was undertaken of operations at the John Oxley Memorial Hospital; secondly, consultative input was sought on the findings of the review team; and, thirdly, a proposal for implementation of the recommendations of the review team was prepared. The Chief Health Officer appointed three health professionals to form the review team: Dr Angus Dodds, a psychiatrist with knowledge of the Queensland mental health treatment system and mental health legislation, who was appointed chairperson; Ms Raighne Jordan, a clinical nurse consultant at an adult mental health facility in Sydney who has experience in forensic psychiatry; and Mr Ronald Doyle, project coordinator of the Ambulatory Care Reform Project which involves a study into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to health services.

The review team undertook an information-gathering process which included calling for written submissions, conducting interviews with hospital staff, patients, ATSI groups and other stakeholders to the inquiry and gathering documentary material. Information was also obtained from other agencies which conducted inquiries into the death of Mr Johnson. The Commissioner for Police provided copies of the police file and, although the coronial inquest is not complete, autopsy details were provided to the inquiry.

Mr Johnson's family agreed to the inclusion of certain detailed information in this statement.

The inquiry found that Mr Johnson took the opportunity to end his life deliberately and that no blame could be attached to any individual or group of individuals for his death. As sad as it is, Mr Johnson was determined to commit suicide. Whether by plan or premeditation or on sudden impulse, the patient took the opportunity between nurse observations, scheduled at 15-minute intervals, to hang himself. Lengthy interviews with nursing staff of all levels did not identify any evidence of failure to comply with nursing policies and procedures or any evidence of negligence or failure to carry out nursing duties or obligations towards Mr Johnson. All formal requirements of the Mental Health Act and regulations were complied with and all forms appropriately completed at the correct times. There was no evidence of inappropriate action by the police. Also, interviews with medical practitioners involved in the care of Mr Johnson while at the John Oxley Memorial Hospital did not identify any lack of proper psychiatric care, assessment or treatment of Mr Johnson while at the facility.

The report of the inquiry makes recommendations to Queensland Health and to the Wolston Park Hospital for improving the delivery of mental health services in this State. Thirty recommendations apply internally to the John Oxley Memorial Hospital or to the Wolston Park Hospital complex, and 14 relate to indigenous peoples' issues within the facility or generally. A key recommendation relates to submissions from Aboriginal and Islander groups to include deaths in custody of Health, under the forensic provisions of the Mental Health Act, as part of the Aboriginal deaths in custody register. Given that the royal commission decided to specifically exclude such deaths, I undertake to seek further advice on this recommendation.

Several matters raised by this inquiry are of general concern. Firstly, the inquiry reflected the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody that there exists a gross overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custodial care facilities. At the John Oxley Memorial Hospital, indigenous patients are approximately one-quarter of the patient population, while in the general Wolston Park Hospital complex that figure is approximately 5 per cent. This overrepresentation in part reflects the realities which still exist of predisposing social disadvantage. As Professor Ernest Hunter put it, this overrepresentation "reflects issues of systematic bias" found in both medical and criminal jurisdictions. He further comments—

> "There is a tendency for the criminalising of Aboriginal disputative and confrontative behaviour, with sequences set in motion which lead to the escalation in charges and consequences."

Whilst at the John Oxley Memorial Hospital, Mr Johnson was secluded on four occasions for altercations with other patients. There is no issue that Aboriginal and Islander patients complain of more than the use of seclusion, which so closely resembles incarceration and which is almost invariably perceived as punishment.

It is clear that health facilities have a significant way to go before the real and special needs of ATSI patients are fully realised and addressed. Consequently, specific recommendations from the inquiry focus on the need to improve cultural awareness training across mental health facilities. Queensland Health has developed a plan for implementing the recommendations of this inquiry. It intends to implement immediately the inquiry's recommendation that an Aboriginal mental health worker be appointed to work with ATSI patients at the John Oxley Memorial Hospital. ATSI patients at the Wolston Park Hospital complex and John Oxley Memorial Hospital currently share the services of one ATSI liaison officer. Queensland Health will establish a steering committee to overview the implementation of recommendations made by this inquiry. This steering committee will report back to me regularly on progress.

Mr Johnson's mother and eldest brother have been briefed on the findings of this inquiry by the Chief Health Officer. Additionally, at 10 o'clock this morning, the Chief Health Officer will also brief the various involved stakeholders, including staff unions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and legal health professional groups. John Oxley Memorial Hospital staff will be briefed on the results of the inquiry this afternoon at 2 p.m., also by the Chief Health Officer.

For the information of members of the House, I table the report of the inquiry under section 9 of the Mental Health Act 1974 into incidents at the John Oxley Memorial Hospital.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill

Hon. T. J. PERRETT (Barambah—Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: At the first reading of the Primary Industries Legislation

Amendment Bill on 1 May 1996, Explanatory Notes were presented to the Parliament. There were three inconsistencies between what was provided for in the Bill and the explanation contained in the Explanatory Notes. For the purposes of completeness, I now table the corrections to the Explanatory Notes.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Flood Relief for Farmers; Allegations by Mr T. Black

Hon. T. J. PERRETT (Barambah—Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: Farmers all over this State are disgusted by the disgraceful tirade launched against them by Terry Black in the *Courier-Mail* yesterday. They are disgusted, and I am disgusted. That piece on the lead business page of the *Courier-Mail* had no basis in fact. It was just the fevered imaginings of a man with no knowledge of real life, or of the situations facing the farmers he so obviously detests. That tirade was not even written by a journalist. No journalist would have put his or her name to the garbage which appeared under Mr Black's picture and name. Mr Black is an academic at the Queensland University of Technology—highly paid from the public purse. He is also a man who chooses to satisfy his ego by using his privileged position to write poison-pen columns for the *Courier-Mail*. Unlike a trained professional journalist, Mr Black has not bothered to research the subject he chose to gratify his need for attention.

I want to consider some of Mr Black's false assertions in detail, but firstly, I want to make a general point. Food is grown by farmers; it is not magically conjured out of thin air. Consumers have to buy food, and the price they pay is determined by supply and demand. Even someone locked away in the ivory towers of QUT should realise that, if a large part of the State supply of fresh vegetables is ruined by flood, then there will be shortages and price rises. That is precisely the situation in the Lockyer Valley and surrounding areas right now. Vast quantities of produce have been ruined, and farm infrastructure has been severely damaged. When Government decides on measures to get farms back into production, and new crops planted, that is not a handout or a waste of money; it is an investment in putting food on Queensland tables, and an investment in keeping down the shortages and price rise which so badly affect consumers, including Mr Black. If the Government did not act, the whole community would suffer—not just the farmers Mr Black asks us to consign to bankruptcy.

Let me turn now to some of the arrant, unsupported nonsense in Mr Black's column. For a start, he tells us that the public does not support the Government's proposed $500m relief loans. What induced that fever in his brain? There are only 500-odd growers in the area affected by the floods. At most, 100 would have been affected to the degree that they would need emergency carry-on loans. Even if each borrowed $50,000—highly unlikely—the total would not pass $5m. Of course, the amount will probably be much less. Certainly, $5m is a very long way short of $500m—perhaps a mere detail to Mr Black, but important to a paper of record such as the *Courier-Mail*. Mr Black tells us that, in Queensland, the climate is harsh, with droughts and floods, and that farmers should self-insure. Certainly, the Lockyer Valley has floods; the last was in 1974—a mere 22 years ago. Mr Black glossed over that one. There has been drought in the Lockyer Valley, too—five years' worth—but farmers have done all they can. They have succeeded to the point where they produce 30 per cent of the State's vegetable crops. Some figures here are interesting.

Lockyer Valley farmers produce 100 per cent of our cauliflowers, 84 per cent of our carrots, 62 per cent of our broccoli, 60 per cent of our potatoes, 57 per cent of our lettuce and 85 per cent of our onions. I make the point that if we farmed only those areas which never have floods and never have droughts, we would have no farms at all. As to self-insurance—that is precisely what farmers do: they put aside the profits of the good years to tide them over the bad ones. They do not have the luxury—as Mr Black does—of a permanent call on the public purse, not even remotely dependent on how well they perform. A dud farmer soon goes out of business, while a dud lecturer keeps on peddling his nonsense.

Mr Black regales his audience with this little gem. He says that because politicians invariably give disaster relief, farmers have no incentive to take steps to mitigate the effects of drought or floods by building dams. The man lives in la la land! He must go down to the bottom of the garden and dance with elves! Does he seriously believe that individual farmers, or even groups of them, could muster the resources to build dams to hold back the water generated by the recent rains? Much of south-east Queensland has had rainfall totals of well over a metre recently. It takes more

money than even Governments can muster to harness the power of that much water. Implicit in Mr Black's tirade is the notion that farmers alone should pay for dams. We do not ask metropolitan water users to do that. Why should we ask farmers to do so?

Mr Black should venture into the world of reality. He should attempt to understand that the world does not revolve around academic economic theories. Real people in the real world make their decisions on the basis of a whole range of factors, and economics is just one of them. People have to eat; they have to wear clothes made from fibres; and they depend on the output of farms for everything which keeps them alive and comfortable. It is the prime purpose of Governments to ensure that citizens have access to these things, to make decisions based on the needs of the community, and to balance expectations against economics. Farmers provide our food and fibre, and we, as Government, must see they are able to do so. That means providing infrastructure such as dams, power stations and transport systems. It means providing a banking system and regulatory regimes which ensure we have food which is healthy, reasonably priced and in good supply. It means getting farmers back into production quickly after natural disasters, and I make no apology for being part of a Government which does that. I am proud to be part of a Government which is prepared to act decisively to ensure a quality food supply for local consumers. I am also proud to be part of ensuring that we have quality produce available for our export markets—part of raising export income. If we can keep that up, Government will have the means to pay for all sorts of other things that society asks us to do, including paying the wages for academics who abuse their privileged positions as newspaper columnists.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Local Government Commissioner; Report

Hon. D. E. McCAULEY (Callide—Minister for Local Government and Planning) (10.12 a.m.), by leave: By law I must table a copy of any report from the Local Government Commissioner within seven sitting days of receiving it. Today is the final day to do that, so under the Local Government Act 1993 I lay upon the table of the House—

(1) a copy of a notification of the Local Government Commissioner dated 16 April 1996 withdrawing part of a reference to the Local Government Commissioner dated 20 March 1996 in relation to a review of a local government matter in respect of the Council of the City of Caloundra;

(2) a copy of the each of the final reports to the Local Government Commissioner on the review of the external boundaries of the following local governments: the Shire of Dalrymple and the City of Charters Towers, the Shire of Maroochy and the Shire Noosa, the Shire of Kilkivan and the Shire of Cooloola, the City of Caloundra and the Shire of Caboolture, the Shire of Calliope and the Shire of Monto, the City of Caloundra and the Shire of Maroochy, the Shire of Cooloola and the Shire of Noosa.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Valuations System

Hon. H. W. T. HOBBS (Warrego—Minister for Natural Resources) (10.13 a.m.), by leave: Much concern has been expressed over a long period by industry groups and members of the general public about the State's valuations system. The last major legislative changes to the process were in 1985 when annual valuations were introduced. A report on the system was instigated in 1990, but little action was taken, and the system has continued largely as it was since then. In short, the Government believes that the current system is not working anywhere near an acceptable level of performance. Accordingly, I have initiated a review of the system with the aim of making it more open, accountable and understood by the public. We want a fairer system and one that puts service delivery at the forefront.

A person well experienced in the field, Mr Len Evans, a former employee of the Land Administration Commission and previously private enterprise, has been appointed as the independent project manager to head the departmental study of the system. Mr Evans will liaise with the major stakeholders both in Brisbane and in regional Queensland. He and his working group will take into account previous studies on this issue, call for submissions and examine processes used in other States. The review report is due to be with me by the end of September, but this will not preclude rolling announcements to be made as some issues are decided. Overall the working group will also study whether valuations should be linked to productivity and the health of different industries, the level of resources needed to deliver the new program and the appropriateness of the objection and appeal processes.

There is no doubt that both the general public and industry bodies feel disadvantaged under the present system. A large number of objections have been received over recent valuations and many Queenslanders have valid concerns about them. As well, land tax and Crown rentals are assessed on unimproved capital value, and there is a flow-on effect across all these areas. We will be seeking to ensure that people are being taxed by the correct or appropriate method. Also, the review will be seeking to sort out relativity problems between valuation districts, where cliff face changes can result in properties side by side having variances in their valuations. A significant part of the problem is resource based, following departmental staff cutbacks by the previous Government, and we will be ensuring that staff levels accord with the service delivery performance required.

Another consideration is that in some sections within and between shires we hear of people being excessively rated, and local government can play an important role here and strike a differential rate. However, they have been reluctant to do so. We will be talking with local authorities over the next few weeks and the Minister for Local Government with a view to obtaining a cooperative approach to this issue.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Petroleum Fuel Products

Hon. R. T. CONNOR (Nerang—Minister for Public Works and Housing) (10.15 a.m.), by leave: A two-year standing offer arrangement for the supply of petroleum fuel products was put in place on 1 September 1994. The standing offer arrangement is designed to ensure Government not only gets maximum benefit from its purchasing power but also improves its management of fuels to reduce inventories, fraud and evaporation as well as its exposure to environmental concerns in storage and handling. The arrangement, which covers all Government departments and agencies and a number of port authorities and local authorities, provides contractual cover over annual fuel purchases of around $120m. Of this figure, fuel card transactions represent $39.6m, with some $80.4m in bulk purchases. Products covered include petrol, diesel, propane, lighting kerosene and aviation fuel.

Prices paid under the contractual arrangements are set monthly and based on international oil prices and exchange rate variations. This ensures that best value for money is achieved over time and throughout the State, despite short-term discounting where the retail price in some areas may fall below that set under contract.

The Public Accounts Committee recently tabled report No. 34 dated 14 November 1995 titled "The Use of Fuel Cards in the Public Sector" in which 21 recommendations were detailed. I table the response to that report.

ABSENCE OF PREMIER

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer—Leader of Government Business) (10.16 a.m.): I wish to inform honourable members that the Premier will be absent from the House today as he is attending the Indonesian Trade Summit in Jakarta.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURAL REVIEW

Extension of Time to Report

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer—Leader of Government Business) (10.16 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That the resolution of the Legislative Assembly of 2 April 1996 requiring the Select Committee on Procedural Review to present its report on the estimates process by 14 May 1996 be amended to provide that the committee present its report on or before 9 July 1996."

I offer a brief explanation. Political developments in Mundingburra and the subsequent change of Government have interrupted the work of the Procedural Review Committee and some groups have been unable to complete their submissions. The committee requires a further extension of time to enable it to conclude its consideration of the various issues that have been raised. The committee anticipates completing its report by the end of June.

Motion agreed to.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham) (10.17 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's Alert Digest No. 3 for 1996, and move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Queensland Schools Curriculum Council and Board of Senior Secondary School Studies

Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (10.18 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

"That this Parliament—

(a) recognises the legitimate concerns expressed by the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association, the Queensland Independent Parents and Friends Council, the Queensland Catholic Parents and Friends Federation, the Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Association of Teachers in Independent Schools about proposals by the Education Minister to abolish their positions on the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council and the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies; and

(b) calls on the Minister to guarantee representatives from these parents and teacher groups positions on the two boards."

Mr and Mrs Aragu; Helicopter Crash

Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (10.18 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

"That this House—

(a) notes with regret the tragic circumstances surrounding the recent helicopter crash in the Torres Strait, which claimed the lives of the Chairperson of the Dauan Island Council, Mrs Sanawai Aragu and her husband and Council Deputy Chair, Mr John Aragu;

(b) notes the important contribution that Mr and Mrs Aragu have made to their own community on Dauan Island and to the development of the Torres Strait and its people; and

(c) conveys its deepest sympathies not only to the relatives of Mr and Mrs Aragu but to all of the Dauan Island community who have suffered this shocking loss of two of the island's and Torres Strait's most respected leaders."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

May Economic Statement

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—Leader of the Opposition) (10.20 a.m): I rise to address the issue of the cancellation of the May economic statement by the absent Treasurer. Today was going to be a great day for the Treasurer. She was going to deliver her May economic statement. I am delighted to see her return to the Chamber. What happened four days before this much-heralded economic statement was to be delivered? It was cancelled via the pages of the *Courier-Mail*, leaving all Queenslanders without any doubt that this Government is rudderless, directionless and simply not up to the task.

When the Treasurer won her way through the back door into office, she said that the coalition Government would hit the ground running. All she has done is sink into a quicksand of indecision. What she cannot freeze, she is reviewing. She has commissioned a total of 84 reviews. She has put the Queensland economy to sleep.

Queensland business is suffering from very serious frostbite—a $3.6m cutback in capital expenditure. The Treasurer said that the freeze would be temporary. It is more than a cold snap; the Treasurer has introduced an ice age. However, did the Treasurer come into Parliament today to explain why her May economic statement has been cancelled? No, she did not. She made three ministerial statements and did not once refer to why her May economic statement has been cancelled. She took the opportunity to attack the honourable member for Mount Gravatt, but did she deal with the serious issues confronting the Government? No, she did not! It is a shame that the Treasurer has cancelled that statement.

Time expired.

Health Budget

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.22 a.m.): Over the last two weeks those opposite have made a concerted effort to peddle a lie. That lie is the claim by the Health Minister, Mike Horan, of a big blow-out in the Health capital works budget under Labor.

The amount of coverage given to Mike Horan's claim and the number of times it has been repeated by him, by the Premier and by the Treasurer has caused knowledgeable commentators in this State to say that the day has now arrived in Queensland when the lie becomes the truth. Officers of Mr Horan's own department have labelled him the "Minister for Misinformation". They consider him to be the

Goebbels of the Borbidge Government—the Minister for propaganda.

The Health Minister claimed a massive blow-out. However, he has fiddled and fudged the figures. He gave a misleading brief to the private sector consultants, then he misused their findings. Those hundreds of millions of dollars were never part of Labor's first 10-year Hospital Rebuilding Program. The Minister then lumped into that document every program that had not reached tender stage and added his own election promises and the four planned hospitals for the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast. The Minister is an absolute fraud!

Officers of the Health Department know the Minister's tactics. The Minister does not want anything written down. He has told all the health organisations, "You will not get any funding. Do not complain, or else." The Minister will not accept honest advice from anyone within his department. If officers give their advice, he chops off their heads! At the end of the day, he wanders around in blissful ignorance and officers of the department are all waiting for him to make his next blunder.

If the Minister wants to sit in the Premier's empty seat, he had better hurry and make his move before the Health Department unravels. The department has started to unravel, and the Minister's chance of reaching that seat is a long way off.

Time expired.

Woree-Chalumbin Powerlines

Mrs WILSON (Mulgrave) (10.24 a.m.): Electricity demands in the Cairns region are growing faster than anywhere else in the State. The existing powerlines will be unable to cope with peak demands by the summer of 1997-98.

On 9 April this year, the Minister for Mines and Energy, Mr Tom Gilmore, decisively put to rest the continued debate on the undergrounding of the final route of the Woree-Chalumbin powerlines in the Cairns area. The Minister announced that, instead of traversing through World Heritage areas along Mount Isley and looping around Edmonton, the new double circuit 275 kV transmission line would, after exiting the World Heritage area, involve a section near the Lake Morris Road and into the former Cannon farm, thence underground for 2.8 kilometres travelling alongside Crowley Creek, under the Bruce Highway, and then under the cane fields south of Sheehy Road to a point near the rubbish dump. At the end of Sheehy Road, it would include a 2.5 kilometre overhead section along the western fringe of Trinity Inlet into the new substation at Woree. The selected line would reduce the overall length of the new line within the Wet Tropics area from 19 kilometres to 14 kilometres.

That puts to rest the years of speculation and inaction by the previous Government on this issue, at a time when undergrounding of powerlines is fast becoming a reality—and Cairns is at the forefront of this issue—and when debate is strong to underground such lines for safety and visual amenity. The new route means that the residents of Kowinka Street and White Rock will see the removal of the 132 kV powerline which stands very close to their homes. Also, the residents of Bayview can look forward to the future removal of the existing 132 kV Mareeba to Cairns transmission line when the new Chalumbin-Woree line is fully energised at 275 kV.

At a time when the issue of electromagnetic fields causes concern with residents, the Cairns City Council has formulated a draft policy to deal with the issue of powerlines. I welcome this step. After consultations and submissions with and from many groups within the community, it is now time to get on with the construction.

Time expired.

Affordable Access to Justice

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga) (10.26 a.m.): The Attorney-General, Mr Beanland, is turning back the clock on the right of ordinary people to have affordable access to justice. The Attorney-General has announced that there will not be common admission rules for barristers and solicitors. That puts Queensland in a position in which it stands against the national tide. It makes it very difficult to have a national market for legal services and hence prevents the reform of the legal profession, which is so important in ensuring that Queenslanders get affordable access to justice.

That reform is all the more ironic in view of the Treasurer's introduction of competition legislation to this House. That means that the moves towards the Priestly 11 subjects—the common subjects—for admission that were designed to make a standardised approach to the legal profession throughout Australia are to no avail because the Attorney-General is hostage to some interest group that wants to turn back the clock. It is all the more disturbing because the Attorney-General is failing to deliver on the promise to appoint five

additional judges to the District Court and the Supreme Court.

That is yet another broken promise of the coalition Government. It comes at a time when the Commonwealth Attorney-General is slashing access to Family Court services in Queensland. Already, the Mackay subregistry of the Family Court has closed down, and the Rockhampton subregistry is under threat.

That shows that for coalition Governments at the State and Federal levels, ordinary people getting access to justice does not matter. Those Governments are prepared to slash access to justice, to look after vested interest groups and to deny ordinary citizens the access to justice which they rightly deserve. This is all the more disturbing because the coalition parties campaigned on a promise of appointing extra judges.

Time expired.

World Mountain Bike Championships

Ms WARWICK (Barron River) (10.28 a.m.): I would like to inform the House of a very significant sporting event which is to be held in my electorate in September this year. I refer to the World Mountain Bike Championships, which are expected to attract 2,500 international athletes, support crews and media, as well as 15,000 international and domestic visitors.

This event is an enormous coup for the Cairns region. It is the first time ever that the championships have been held outside continental America or Europe. It is the first time ever that a world cycling championship is to be held in Australia and it is the first ever world championships of any kind to be held in north Queensland. The organisers of this event expect to spend $1.3m in the local area. Added to that, it is estimated conservatively that the event will bring between $4m and $5m into the region. Already, approximately 1,200 entries have been confirmed and 4,300 room nights, worth about $200,000, have also been confirmed.

This event will have significant positive implications for our tourism industry. It is estimated that international patrons will each stay for an average of 10 days. Those visitors will not spend every day at the championships. They will want to visit the natural attractions of the area, which will greatly benefit the local economy.

I am a member of the advisory committee for this event. Along with the Mayor of Cairns, Tom Pyne, and other council and business representatives, I am in the unique position of observing the work being done by the organisers. I would like to place on record my congratulations to the championship's general manager, Don McGrath, the operations manager, Lachlan Rogers, the Australian Cycling Federation and the Cairns Mountain Bike Club for their very professional approach to this event.

I urge all local business people to join with me in supporting these championships. I certainly will be bringing this event to the attention of coalition Government Ministers and urging them to do all in their power to encourage maximum participation by business in this world-class event.

Time expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Funding for Fire Fighters

Mr BEATTIE (10.30 a.m.): I refer the Treasurer to comments made last week by the Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Sport, Mick Veivers, on ABC radio. The Minister said that he was not concerned about finding an extra $10m for 135 extra fire fighters because he was sure that the Treasurer had the money up her sleeve. I ask: is this the same sleeve from which the Treasurer pulled $200m for the abolition of the Sunshine Coast tollway? If not, will she finally confirm where the money is coming from to fund both the Sunshine Coast toll and the $10m for fire services?

Mrs SHELDON: I thank the honourable for his question, inadequate as it was. As the member knows, the Government is currently going through its Budget review process. We will have a Budget in September and Mr Beattie can read all the details in that Budget.

Capital Works Program

Mr BEATTIE: We will have to have a look at that sleeve, Mr Speaker! I refer the Treasurer and Deputy Premier to the *Courier-Mail* of 10 May, and I table a copy for the information of the House. Nearly three months after the Government took office, the Director-General of the Government's Public Works Department was quoted as saying he was still waiting for policy clarification and that he was expecting it in the May economic statement today—a statement cancelled later that day. I ask: with the capital works budget of $3.6 billion frozen and the unemployment rate rising, will the Treasurer take note of the urgent call from the construction industry to kick start the Capital Works Program, or will the

director-general and the many Queensland companies depending on Government contracts have to wait until the September Budget?

Mrs SHELDON: I thank the member for his question. Of course, as usual it is based on a false premise. There is no freeze on capital works.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, or I might introduce a freeze.

Mrs SHELDON: It would seem that the only source of fact for the Leader of the Opposition is the *Courier-Mail*. I feel very sorry for him.

Mr Elder: *Business Queensland*, the *Australian*, the *Courier-Mail*! You name it; they are all out there.

Mrs SHELDON: I suggest the honourable member reads the editorial in *Business Queensland* this week. It is interesting that Mr Elder quotes selectively all the time as he endeavours to mislead the people of this State, but they are not buying it, just as they are not buying the honourable member given his absolutely hopeless ability as Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

I will lay a few of these misconceptions to rest. There is not and there never has been a freeze on capital works.

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Would the honourable member like me to answer this question or not? It is the Opposition's question time. If the Opposition members want time wasted the way they are currently wasting it, they should continue.

If I may begin again: there is no freeze——

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Opposition has asked the question. We will hear the answer. I call for order.

Mrs SHELDON: There is no freeze on capital works spending. The State Government is reviewing capital works expenditure as part of its fundamental review of the former Government's expenditure commitments, most of which, of course, were totally unfunded.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: That is a fact. These are not my facts; they are the facts of the Queensland Treasury. If Opposition members are saying that the Queensland Treasury is wrong, then they had better speak to their former Treasurer, Mr De Lacy.

The ongoing Capital Works Program is continuing and, of course, individual Ministers have responsibility for managing their own capital works expenditure. Capital works investment is a key priority of this coalition Government. Since coming to office, the Government has announced a number of major capital works projects, including the Pacific Highway upgrade and the redevelopment of the Herston hospital precinct. Indeed, the paper to which the honourable member referred, *Business Queensland*, listed very clearly all the capital works that are under way. Minister Horan said that there has certainly been no freeze on spending on health infrastructure. He says his department is——

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: The honourable member should listen; she may learn something. If I may continue? Mr Horan said that his department is spending every single dollar of its capital works budget this financial year, which is more than was done by the previous Labor Government. Mr Beattie knows that: he never spent all his capital works budget. He kept running it over to the next year. That is why hospitals have run down to the degree that they have. This Government's spending will represent a total investment of $190m. Mr Horan also said that $210m has been allocated to the department for capital works programs next financial year. We are spending all of our funding for capital works.

Also, the Health Department has recently announced the start of work on Stage 4 of Logan Hospital, and work on the Royal Brisbane, Princess Alexandra, Cairns and Hervey Bay Hospitals is under way. This from the Government that is not supposed to be spending money on capital works!

Mr FOLEY: I rise to a point of order. People in the public gallery are not allowed to read the newspaper while Parliament is sitting, and nor should the acting Premier.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I will not accept any more frivolous points of order from the honourable for Yeronga. I warn him not to rise on another frivolous point of order today.

Mrs SHELDON: We are used to those sorts of contributions from the "Rumpole of the Opposition".

A Opposition member: You were only looking at the pictures.

Mrs SHELDON: No, I am quoting from the paper that the honourable member is constantly holding up. I am sure he would like to have all the facts that are in that paper, not just the ones as misrepresented by him.

As Mr Horan has said, it is full steam ahead for capital works in Health. As a Government, we are fully committed to our Capital Works Program. All Ministers will spend their allocation on capital works, unlike the previous Labor Government, and particularly the failed Health Minister who is now the Leader of the Opposition, who misled the people of Queensland and did not spend his budget allocation for capital works on such work. We know why: because he was busily rolling over his capital works budget to pay for his recurrent expenditure. On any economic basis, that is a no-no. Mr Beattie has no economic credibility at all.

Under-resourcing of Department of Families

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care to recent media coverage of the former Family Services Department's case management procedures, and the tragic murder of a two-year-old Maryborough toddler in 1994. Specifically, I refer the Minister to the *Four Corners* program last night, during which the former director-general of the department, Mrs Jacki Byrne, admitted to a critical under-resourcing of the department under Labor. I ask: what steps has the Minister taken to ensure that this matter is thoroughly investigated? What has he done to relieve the resourcing pressures in area offices?

Mr LINGARD: Those members who watched that ABC current affairs program last night would surely have been amazed at the admission by Jacki Byrne that one of the problems of her department was a shortage of workers and a shortage of resources. This comes on top of the Grants Commission statement that under the ALP Government Queensland was 22 per cent under-funded as compared to the national average. The ALP Government was in office for six years and now we have an admission by a former director-general that one of the problems in the tragic case of Kate Beveridge was a shortage of workers and a shortage of resources.

When this Government came to power, I had an urgent meeting with Mr Gordon Rennie and Mr Mark Scott of the State Public Services Federation Queensland. I told them that they could go to my department and to the area offices, with my divisional heads, and report on any problems they saw involving resources and personnel. They have reported to me and, as people know, in the last two weeks we released at least $2m for the employment of 37 personnel in those area offices. In addition, extra resources will be ploughed into those area offices.

A problem which came through clearly last night was the fact that an aggrieved party under a previous Government, such as Mr Col Jones, did not have anywhere to turn in order to challenge a decision made by the former Department of Family Services. We have acted very quickly to put in place five officers who will act as advisers to people, such as Mr Col Jones, who feel aggrieved. I will not be saying to those aggrieved people, "You must come back to the Department of Family Services to receive a new decision." There will be five additional advisers.

In addition, this morning we announced a hotline within the Department of Families which will act as an interim measure until we set up our special authority to look at child abuse and paedophilia. As all members know, each morning from half-past six until a quarter to eight seven days a week, I conduct a hotline during which any person in the community can ring and talk to me about any problems within the Department of Families.

In conclusion, I point out that early intervention is now a policy within my department. When we look at young people we will hopefully focus not just on the children but also on their family and infrastructure, that is, if there is a family and/or an infrastructure. Tomorrow, I will be announcing extra personnel for the program of early intervention with respect to child abuse. Tomorrow is a very special day: the International Day of Families.

Business Community Support for Treasurer

Mr ELDER: I ask the acting Premier and Treasurer: given her amazing claims of widespread support for her decision to continue her freeze and her lack of leadership on economic matters by cancelling the May economic statement, and in the context of her willingness to continue to make massive funding commitments such as the $200m for the Sunshine Coast tollway and $636m for "half a highway" from Beenleigh to Nerang, when a wide range of business leaders are telling the Opposition her lack of leadership is an economic disaster for Queensland, can she please name for the House three business leaders other than those who are members of

the Liberal Party or who have close connections to it who support her lack of economic leadership?

Mrs SHELDON: I answer that question with great pleasure. I have the answer ready. I quote Clive Bubb, the General Manager of the QCCI.

Mr Elder interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: So now the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is defaming Mr Clive Bubb, who heads the QCCI.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mrs SHELDON: In what way were they offensive?

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. I find the remarks offensive and I ask them to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member finds the remarks offensive.

Mrs SHELDON: Mr Speaker, if you wish me to withdraw them, I will. The fact is that the honourable member for Capalaba does not like the truth. However, as the honourable member has discredited the QCCI, which is what he is trying to do—and indeed business in this State does not discredit the QCCI——

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. I am not discrediting the QCCI. I find the remarks offensive and I ask them to be withdrawn.

Mrs SHELDON: Yes, the honourable member did. He just discredited its leader, Clive Bubb.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. I ask that those remarks be withdrawn. I find them offensive. I ask them to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition finds the remarks offensive.

Mrs SHELDON: If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition does not like the heat in the kitchen, he should not go in.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs SHELDON: Mr Speaker, if you wish me to withdraw, I will.

I quote the QCCI General Manager, Clive Bubb.

Mr Elder interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: The QCCI has considerable standing within the business and industry community, unlike the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The honourable member would not know about that, because he has no contact with the business community whatsoever. The business community does not think much of him.

Mr Livingstone: Name three.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will be naming three in a minute—and it will not be former Liberals. The House will come to order!

Mrs SHELDON: Mr Bubb said that he was not surprised that the Queensland Government had been forced to postpone the statement. In common with the Government, he was very concerned about the likely Federal Government cutbacks. I suppose Paul Fennelly is another Liberal stooge! Paul Fennelly is the Metal Trades Industry Association Queensland director. So the Opposition is dumping on the metal trades now. Members opposite are really pro-business! Paul Fennelly said——

Mr Elder: You told him you'd chop his head off if he didn't start supporting the Government.

Mrs SHELDON: Is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition saying that I told Mr Fennelly what to say? I do not think that was the case. He is an extremely independent man. He said——

Mr Elder interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: The honourable member should sit back and listen; he asked the question. The honourable member should not really ask a question unless he knows the answer. He obviously did not know the answer to this one. Mr Fennelly said the postponement was a "wise decision" and he recognised that Federal Government funding was an "important source of information".

I wish to elaborate on a couple of points. The fact is that this Government was left in a very bad economic position by the actions of the former Labor Government. Treasury's figures, not mine, show that there is an underlying deficit of $185m this year——

Mr Elder: What rot!

Mrs SHELDON: These are Treasury's figures. Does the honourable member doubt Treasury? He has doubted the QCCI, the MTIA and now he doubts the Queensland Treasury. No doubt we should ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition how this State should be run!

Mr Elder interjected.

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

Mrs SHELDON: Those same figures also show a real deficit for the following year of $240m.

Mr Elder: Rot!

Mrs SHELDON: It is not rot. A lot of it is due to the way that between July and February the former Government ran around this State promising anything that came into its mind, spending like crazy and trying to buy its way back into power. The community was not fooled. The community did not vote members opposite back in. We have all these unfunded promises floating around. I refer to the classic such as the 12 weeks' maternity leave. That was a totally unfunded promise. Members opposite know there was no money for that promise.

Being faced with that situation, plus a $100m blow-out in the Health budget under the former Minister for Health, Mr Beattie, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, and the obvious very severe cutbacks in funding we will face from the Federal Government, this Government felt that it was in the best interests of the business community that it did not make an economic statement this week. When we make a statement to the business community, we want to offer a clear statement and one on which businesses can act. We were not in a position to do that. The business community has said—and I am sure members opposite hate reading this—that it supports our action and that it was based on sound principles. The Premier and I will be going to COAG to find out, if we can, exactly what sorts of funding cuts we as a State will face from the Federal Treasury, and what we will have to face in the September Budget.

Gun Control Laws

Mr CARROLL: I refer the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Racing to the contentious Canberra guns prohibition proposal mentioned in his ministerial statement this morning, and I ask: will the Minister outline to this House how he will explain to the people of Queensland the decisions made in Canberra?

Mr COOPER: I thank the honourable member for the question, because all members of the House would be concerned about the procedure that we will have to adopt in order to bring legislation before the Parliament.

As a slight preamble, I wish to say that most political parties formulate policy over time, and the coalition had formulated a very soundly based policy that was practical and sensible. It is the sort of policy that we can feel comfortable with, because it addresses the issue. Be it the Sporting Shooters Association or gun clubs, rifle clubs and pistol clubs all around the State, the issue cuts across political boundaries. The members of those organisations must receive some consideration.

When the Port Arthur massacre occurred, everything changed. It was not just a national horror; it was an international horror. It was the sort of thing that we never thought would happen in this country. It has happened. We must realise and accept that fact. We wish that it had not happened, but it did happen. It was a catastrophe of absolutely enormous proportions. We are a young country. We are not used to such tragic events. Justifiably, much emotion surrounds such tragedies. At such a time, we need to be careful in the judgments that we make. The people require us to come to grips with an issue such as this and deal with it sensibly, sanely and practically.

The ministerial police conference was brought forward by the Prime Minister—and justifiably so—so that we could respond to this tragedy. All parties approached this issue from different angles as they all had different policies. It was a case of a meeting of the minds in order to emerge from the meeting with some sensible solutions. Earlier today, I tabled the 11 resolutions which were carried at that conference with the best of intentions. All members must read those resolutions. I ask all members to read them line by line, word by word, so that they can try to understand where the Police Ministers of this nation are coming from. There is no doubt that there are anomalies in those resolutions because of the time constraints involved. We needed more time to pursue these matters, but we did the best that we could in the circumstances.

Of course, legislation will flow from those resolutions. The national interest prevailed at the conference, and it still prevails. From those resolutions, we must develop good law. We will need input from all those who have an interest in this matter. Members must listen to the people and they must bring forward their views to the various party rooms so that we can develop good law. Amendments to the Weapons Act will also be part of this process. That will require a lot of effort from many people, not least from me, because I am the Minister responsible for preparing that legislation. I accept that responsibility absolutely.

The legislation will have two basic features. Firstly, it will reflect the fact that the public must be kept as safe as possible. That will be a provision of the legislation to be based on the resolutions and the amendments to the Weapons Act. Secondly, we must consider those who will be adversely affected by these changes. I refer to the tens of thousands of honest, law-abiding, decent citizens who belong to sporting shooters clubs, rifle clubs, pistol clubs and gun clubs and also firearms collectors. We must not forget sportspeople. We realise that there will be anomalies, but we do not want to see our sportspeople disadvantaged by the laws prohibiting certain types of firearms. We must give all interested groups due consideration. All of those factors must be accommodated. In many respects, that will require an act of Solomon. None of us is Solomon; we will merely be doing the best that we can under the circumstances.

I want to drive home this message: people should not believe that problems such as the ones that we are currently trying to address can be solved overnight. This is a massive issue that will require a tremendous contribution not just from members of this place but also from those affected around the State and around the nation. I will devote myself totally to the cause of accommodating the needs of as many people with diverse interests as I possibly can.

Mr Fouras: What are you saying? Are you saying you're changing your position?

Mr COOPER: No way. I am saying that we must consult and brief widely. We must make sure that people understand the contents of the resolutions. I am asking people to make sure that they read and understand those resolutions so that we can make good law. What is the point in bringing in bad law if it will not work, if it will not offer people the protection that they deserve and if it will not allow honest and decent people to continue their pursuits in the sporting field or wherever else? That is what we are charged with. That is our responsibility. I am simply saying, in answer to the question, that these are the issues that we must address. Every single one of us needs to be aware of that.

There will be sacrifices all round. Every single one of us knows that we must address these issues as best we possibly can. Everyone will have to make sacrifices. We must not forget those 35 people who were sacrificed in Port Arthur. I do not believe that any member of this House will forget them. Members can rest assured that my position is not going to change. My responsibility is to produce the necessary legislation. As members are aware, the legislative procedure involves discussing these matters with the people. That is democracy; that is where it starts. The views of the people then come through the Labor caucus and our party rooms and back to the House. That is the procedure that must be followed. We will undertake the widest possible consultation.

At the end of the day, we have to bring in sensible, sane, practical, workable laws with the major priority being to keep people safe, while at the same time accommodating as many interests as we can. That will require endless meetings around the State. I will be throwing myself into the task. I ask all members to ensure that they contribute in a sensible, sane and rational way so that we can introduce the best legislation that we possibly can. Obviously, it will never be perfect, but we must make every effort to produce the best possible legislation. Those are the procedures that we will follow. I sincerely hope that members opposite will make a positive contribution to the process.

Economic Statement

Mr HAMILL: I refer the Treasurer to her claims on Brisbane radio this morning that the reason she cancelled her promised economic statement was that she was unaware when she announced the statement would be delivered in May that the Federal coalition was planning to cut $4 billion a year from its Budget. I ask: how could the Treasurer be so ignorant of the Federal Government's intentions when she made her commitment to a May economic statement on 19 March when the Federal Government had announced its intentions on 12 March—a full week before her speech to the Conservative Club?

Mrs SHELDON: I thank the honourable member for his ill-informed question. In fact——

Mr HAMILL: I table the press release with regard to the Federal Government's statement.

Mrs SHELDON: Certainly the member may do that, but he should listen to my answer. The first time I stated that I would make a May economic statement was before the Federal Government election. It may have been subsequent——

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: No, just a moment. The commitment by the Government——

Mr Hamill: You said it on the 19th.

Mrs SHELDON: It may well have been mentioned on 19 March, but the commitment by the Government to make a May economic statement was made before the Federal election. In subsequent discussions with the Federal Treasurer, it became very obvious——

Mr Hamill: They heard a week later.

Mrs SHELDON: Does the member want to listen or not? If he will stop shouting and interjecting and being a bully, I will give him the answer.

Subsequently, in discussions between Mr Costello, the Federal Treasurer, and Mr Howard, the Prime Minister, we were told that the States would have to wear a very large proportion of the $4 billion that will be cut each year. The Federal Treasurer said that every State would have to wear its fair share and that Queensland would have to face up to that fact as well. We understand that our funding cuts may be quite considerable. It would be very irresponsible of any Government to be putting forth an economic statement not knowing what funds it was to receive from the Federal Government. The member for Ipswich should ask the previous Treasurer about the amount of funding that comes to this State from the Federal Government. We have to be sure that, when we make a statement, it is soundly based.

Prince Charles Hospital

Mr J. N. GOSS: I direct a question to the Minister for Health. Recently, the Minister announced additional funding to assist in the reduction of cardiac surgery waiting lists at Brisbane's Prince Charles Hospital. I ask: will the Minister please inform the House of the current status of cardiac surgery waiting lists at Prince Charles Hospital?

Mr HORAN: It is indeed a pleasure to inform the House of the progress that has been made. When the coalition Government came to power at the end of February, some 66 per cent of the patients who were classed as Category 1 patients at the Prince Charles Hospital were waiting outside the recommended clinical waiting time of 30 days. Subsequently, we identified the Prince Charles Hospital as one of those hospitals around the State that had significant problems, and we were able to obtain some additional funding from Treasury. It had to be additional funding, because the budget was in such a mess, particularly with the budget overrun that we inherited. We obtained that additional funding from Treasury and applied it to the Prince Charles Hospital.

The result has been that, by the end of April—two months—that 66 per cent of people in Category 1 who had been waiting longer than 30 days was reduced to 33 per cent. The information from the hospital is that, by the end of June, no people will be waiting for more than 30 days for Category 1 operations at the Prince Charles Hospital. That is a very significant achievement. I believe that it is a demonstration that the coalition's policy of getting back to basics and providing all those services is actually working.

Mrs Edmond: No, Mr Beattie's and Mr Elder's policy. All you had to do is keep it going.

Mr HORAN: The Opposition Health spokesperson can stamp her feet all she likes, but those are the facts. At the end of February, 66 per cent of Category 1 patients were waiting for more than 30 days for one of the most crucial operations, that is, a cardiac operation. Imagine how those people felt when they were waiting outside those 30 days and wondering what was going to happen to them. Within two or three months, we reduced that percentage by half. By the end of June, that figure will be reduced to no-one waiting outside the 30 days.

The important thing is that not only in relation to cardiac surgery but also in other sectors of health, particularly in relation to waiting lists, we are moving ahead with our task force. The task force has already appointed elective surgery coordinators in all of the 10 major hospitals. They have conducted a number of meetings, including a recent inspection of the Gold Coast Hospital, where they looked at the innovative short-stay surgical wards and pre-admission systems.

In relation to information management—we now have elective admission systems implemented in eight of the 10 major hospitals in Queensland, and under way in the remaining two hospitals. At the Royal Brisbane Hospital, we are in the process of implementing a theatre management information system, which will be fully implemented this month and will bring about even more efficiencies in the usage of the theatres.

Mr Elder: What about something new? They were already under way.

Mr HORAN: Members opposite are obviously embarrassed. We took over a system of financial mismanagement and budget overruns. We found some extra

money, and we actually attacked and fixed the problem. I notice that the member for Chermside is pretty quiet. He knows that the people in his electorate are seeing some results and that people are being operated on within a reasonable time. What the people of Queensland can continue to look forward to is that we are getting back to basics.

Mr T. B. Sullivan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Chermside!

Mr HORAN: The adult psychiatric ward at the Royal Brisbane Hospital was opened, but there was no funding for staff. There was no funding for staff in the mental health wards at Nambour Hospital. There was only half funding for staff at the Kirwan rehabilitation unit. Where is it all? The former Government opened things, but there was no funding for staff.

One by one, we are fixing the problems. We are fixing Prince Charles Hospital. We are in the process of reopening two wards at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. We have fixed the closed ward at the Gold Coast Hospital. We are putting a urology service into north Queensland. Already we have additional VMO urology sessions booked for the Townsville Hospital. We have been able to provide funding for doctors at the Cairns Hospital. We are providing some funding for the Gladstone Hospital in relation to obstetrician and gynaecologist positions, and some associated health services. One by one, we are fixing the problems. The Prince Charles Hospital is well on track. I believe that the achievements of the coalition Government in getting back to basics should be applauded.

Water and Sewerage Subsidies

Mr MACKENROTH: I refer the Treasurer to the postponement of the Budget to September and her cancellation of the May economic statement, and I ask: is the Treasurer aware that to enable local governments throughout Queensland to deliver their budgets by 30 June, they require a firm commitment that the coalition Government will honour its promise to increase water and sewerage subsidies by 100 per cent? If so, will the Treasurer give local governments in Queensland a firm commitment today that these subsidies will be increased in this year's State Budget?

Mrs SHELDON: The Minister for Local Government and Planning, Di McCauley, is very adequately dealing with local governments on this issue. Local governments are very happy with the way that Di McCauley is handling her portfolio—unlike the previous Minister.

Business Licences

Mr WOOLMER: I ask the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry: can he advise the House on what he proposes to do to reduce the previous Government's red tape burden for the benefit of business in Queensland?

Mr DAVIDSON: I am delighted that the honourable member has chaired my backbench policy committee and organised a meeting last week with various departmental people. That was a very fruitful meeting.

It is staggering to note that the Queensland Business Licence Information Centre, QBLIC, provides details on 544 State business licences and 236 Commonwealth business licences. In addition, business must also contend with local government licences. Given the number of licences and the tiers of government involved in their administration, there is an urgent need for reform in the business licensing area. I therefore intend to establish a one-stop business licence shop for processing of all State Government business licensing applications. My department has just completed a feasibility study into the most practical way to establish a one-stop shop, in particular, one where the aims of both reduced red tape and enhanced customer service can be achieved. In addition, the Government will shortly be discussing with the Commonwealth the possibility of integrating some of its high-volume licence application forms into the basic business licence. As members may be aware, the Government has already signalled its intention to remove the fee for registering a workplace.

QBLIC, using its advanced database technology, will then be able to create an individually tailored licence form, which will include the appropriate elements of the basic business licence and other high-volume licences. QBLIC will also be able to complete some parts of the form electronically. When completed by the applicant, this form would then be returned to QBLIC for processing. While the responsibility for licensing and inspection would remain with the appropriate agency, QBLIC would act as a branch office of those agencies. As a result, most businesses requiring licences would deal only with QBLIC. Where it can be shown to be cost effective and provide better customer service, QBLIC would also collect other less common licence application forms and fees and pass them to

the appropriate agency for processing. The recommendations of the study are currently being worked through, and further consultation with other Government agencies will be required to develop them to the implementation stage. I do not intend to rush this process, as I want to ensure that the final solution is practical and that we do not simply insert another level of bureaucracy.

Apart from making it easier for business to get licences, the other essential task is to reduce the number of licences and regulations with which business must comply. The previous Government's so-called systematic review of business regulations was, by and large, a failure because it left the reviewing of regulations to the very departments which administered them—in other words, a case of Caesar judging Caesar. I will be establishing an industry task force, comprising representatives of the major industry and small-business bodies, to oversee a review of regulation and licensing imposts on business. The review process, which will be administered by my Department of Tourism, Small Business and Industry, will involve wide consultation with the business community. The industry task force will be responsible for preparing the final recommendations to the Government on specific measures to reduce the regulatory burden.

In listening to the concerns of small business, the Government is also aware that the way bureaucrats manage regulations is as serious a problem as the level of regulation itself. So I will be looking to the industry task force to also recommend specific ways in which agencies can better manage the operation and administration of necessary regulation. In this regard, my department is already undertaking an investigation of the cost of compliance with Government regulation on small business. This will provide information on overlaps and inefficient administration from the perspective of small business. These initiatives relate to existing regulation, but the Government is also concerned that new or amended regulations being proposed are subject to significant scrutiny to ensure no unnecessary burden on small business. Therefore, all such new regulations will be subject to a regulatory impact statement process.

Mr Braddy: He's just reading this.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is using copious notes.

Mr DAVIDSON: The member was the relevant Minister for about four years. How long was he the Minister? What did he do? What did he achieve? Where did he stand on those BSA charges on the building industry and the subbies? Where did he stand in Cabinet on the licensing and compliance fees under the Environmental Protection Act? Where did he stand on protecting business? Where did he stand on the issue of unfair dismissal? Where did he stand on workers' compensation? The business community tells me continually that he stood nowhere.

Agencies, under the auspices of my department and with reference to the task force, will be required to make an assessment of the cost and benefits of proposed new regulations. Agencies must justify to the Government and to the business sector that significant net benefits will result from the proposed regulations. The process will again involve wide consultation with business and the community. In addition to these broad initiatives, the Government will also be focusing on particular sectors of the economy where reduction of the regulatory burden can be most productive.

Tourism is a major growth sector in Queensland and as part of my portfolio responsibilities, I will be initiating an examination of regulation in this sector. I will establish a working party of industry and departmental representatives to review the range of regulations which affect tourism.

Sale of Electoral Roll

Mr FOLEY: In directing a question to the acting Premier and Treasurer, I table newspaper reports that state that the Federal Police are investigating the involvement of the Queensland Liberal Party in the illegal sale of confidential electoral roll information about Queensland citizens to an insurance company setting up an Orwellian national database. I ask: can the Treasurer confirm that Federal Police are investigating the Queensland Liberal Party regarding this serious matter? Does she condemn such a serious breach of privacy? What action will she take against any Liberal Party officials found to have illegally sold confidential electoral roll information?

Mrs SHELDON: I have no knowledge of this issue whatsoever.

Koala Coast Protection Plan

Mr HEGARTY: I direct a question to the Minister for Environment——

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. I will have some order. I have

a sore throat and therefore a shortage of patience. I cannot hear the question. I will have order if I have to invoke Standing Order 123A.

Mr HEGARTY: I ask: is the Minister for Environment aware of concerns expressed by some landowners in the area designated as koala habitat about State Planning Policy 1/95, conservation of koalas in the Koala Coast? What are the major concerns expressed to the Minister to date?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I thank the member for his question, which obviously relates to his electorate. When I became Minister, one of the first concerns I had to address was accusations that there was not enough consultation with the public with regard to the implementation of SPP1/95, so I made a decision to extend the period of consultation to 30 June. It has been interesting to note that since then there has been widespread acceptance of the idea of protecting the koala habitat. The issue is broader than that; it is about maintaining a lifestyle that the people in that part of south-east Queensland enjoy and want to preserve.

In response to the issues that are being raised with me and about which people are expressing concern, I have set up a reference group. Members of that reference group include representatives from the Redland Shire Council, the Logan City Council and the Brisbane City Council. It is being chaired by the member for Redlands, Mr Hegarty. The role of those people is to receive deputations and submissions from people in the community who are expressing support for or concerns about the issues.

I have received personally many submissions, and just last week I received a deputation from concerned landowners, who claimed to be—and quite rightly so—representative of people in those three local government areas. I have also received a deputation from the Mayor of the Redland Shire Council.

Mr Fouras: Have they all changed their minds now?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: They are more concerned with the ways that that SPP will impact on land ownership. They support fully the protection of the koala habitat and the koalas. They can understand that there is a need to ensure that there are green belts throughout south-east Queensland and that they have to play their part in the setting aside of such green belts.

As to action that has been taken to date—firstly, the Department of Environment and the Redland Shire Council are setting up information booths in the relevant area because some confusion exists about the role of district control plans of local governments and where they and SPP1/95, the protection of koala habitat, merge and complement one another. Because not enough consultation was carried out at the direction of the previous Minister, we are trying to work our way through that issue.

Following my meeting with people in that area, I have reached an agreement with the three local governments that, in fact, a review of the corridors that join the various habitat areas should be conducted. They believe that that will placate some people who have concerns. Above all else, the underlying concern—and it is not confined to SPP1/95—is with the approach of the previous Government to what it said was for the community good.

The big issue to be addressed by this Government is that the previous Government always desired to act for the community good and community benefit, but that was done at the expense of the individual landowner. Governments that have occupied the Treasury benches in years gone by have always had the right to resume land for the public good, but it was always on the understanding that the private person would be compensated adequately. Underlying many of the concerns of the landowners in that area is the need for this Government to somehow work out a way in which the community good that will flow from SPP1/95 will not be achieved at the expense of the individual. I am currently trying to work my way through that difficulty so that we can meet the expectations of the people in that part of Queensland but at the same time safeguard the individual rights of those landowners who currently have concerns.

Eastlink

Mr McGRADY: I refer the Minister for Mines and Energy to his Government's decision to pull the plug on the Eastlink project. I ask: is it true that he is now giving consideration to Eastlink by another name because he realises that his present decision is, firstly, costing the Queensland taxpayers in excess of $750m; secondly, losing jobs to other States; thirdly, causing Queenslanders to have to pay extra electricity costs; fourthly, losing the headquarters of the new organisation and, with it, over 100 high-tech jobs; fifthly, causing Queensland to become a

laughing stock to respected business people, journalists and industry experts because of the amateur way in which he is conducting the affairs of his portfolio; and, sixthly, if he does change his decision, how would he justify that to the people who live along the new route?

Mr FitzGerald: Is that on notice or without notice?

Mr GILMORE: I thank the honourable member for the multi-part question. I find it interesting that I should receive such a question, which really ought to be put on notice so that I could give him a detailed answer. It is a seven-part question, but that is okay.

I am very thankful for the question because it gives me an opportunity to outline to the House once again, and for the elucidation and edification of the honourable member who quite clearly has been unaware of what has been happening around the State and country in the past several weeks that we have been in Government, that the former Minister was correct when he stated that we have cancelled Eastlink. I am glad that he has finally realised that that is the case. I am quite sure that other members of the Parliament got that message some weeks ago. Yes, we did cancel Eastlink.

In response to the rest of his multi-part question: no, I am not in the least bit embarrassed about that because, quite appropriately, it was part and parcel of a thought-through process and policy in respect of the electricity industry which is now coming to full fruition. As part of that policy development, we have now determined that there are a number of ways that we can, will and should go about the provision of adequate electricity supplies for the people of Queensland now and into the future.

Let me say that that is more than the people of Queensland could expect from the previous Government and, indeed, from the previous Minister. Some little time ago the Government called for an open megawatt tender, over a short period, for the provision of electricity supplies for the first quarter of 1999 and the first quarter of the year 2000. That move was to provide for what might have been perceived to be a shortfall of supply because of the cancellation of Eastlink. Later this year, we will be calling for expressions of interest for the provision of powerlines in this State for a period post the year 2000. That is a very important period in Australia because we are going into a national electricity market—a deregulated, competitive market—and it is the time when Australia's electricity industry will reach maturity. Of course, it is at that time that Queensland will once again be put back on the map as the pre-eminent electricity generator in this country.

Mr Elder: When are you going to plug into the national grid?

Mr GILMORE: This morning, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has been doing his best to appear somewhat less than half-witted. I am pleased to see that he has been successful.

I have said in public forums throughout this State and previously in Parliament—and it is interesting to note that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has not listened to what I have said in at least two ministerial statements to this Parliament—that the Government is not against interconnection with the rest of Australia because Queensland is now part of the national electricity market. That was signed off in Adelaide a couple of nights ago. We are part of it. We are proceeding with a very carefully prepared plan to ensure that the people and industries of Queensland have adequate electricity supplies for a long time to come. We are determined to continue with that and we will not be diverted from it. However, we have made the statement that, yes, we are in favour of interconnection; yes, Queensland will be selling electricity to the southern States; and, no, Queensland will not be dependent upon the southern States for its electricity.

The question has given me a great opportunity to once again remind Opposition members that, yes, the Government is very, very well aware of the electricity needs of the people of Queensland and the other States of Australia. We are moving in a very careful and professional way in respect of those needs.

Business Queensland Article about Treasurer

Mr MITCHELL: I refer the acting Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts to the editorial on page 14 of the 13 May edition of *Business Queensland*, to which she has alluded already in question time, titled "Sheldon's stand deserves support", and I ask: could the Treasurer tell the House whether the views outlined by the author are an accurate assessment of her approach when compared with that of her predecessor, Mr De Lacy?

Mrs SHELDON: I thank the member for his very incisive question. Yes, I am aware of that editorial and I thank the author of it for such an insightful commentary. I recall that the

editorial stated that, as Queensland Treasurer—and I would like Mr Hamill to listen to this—I had again shown that in matters of taxation the new Government would preside over policy and would not sit by passively while the bureaucrats raised tax levels. Yes, that is accurate. The editorial stated further—

> "Her stance stands in marked contrast to the position taken by her predecessor Keith De Lacy, who often stood aside while senior public servants in the Office of State Revenue applied new interpretations to the law, which in effect increased taxation."

The editorial continues—

> "A captive of the bureaucracy who stood back and allowed his bureaucrats to wallop Queenslanders with sneaky 'new taxes'."

Yes, I also agree with that summation of the former Treasurer.

Mr Elder interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: The member likes to selectively quote articles, and I am quoting them back to him. The editorial also stated that it was a notable announcement when I said after a recent court decision that the coalition Government would not seek retrospective payment of stamp duty. The author of that editorial was referring to Labor's CitiSecurities debacle, in which the Commissioner of Stamp Duties ruled that stamp duty was payable on certain types of mortgage guarantees regardless of whether or not the loan went into default and the guarantee was exercised. Last year, the commissioner's ruling was challenged in the Supreme Court, with a ruling in favour of the commissioner. Just like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition got stuck into business today, the then Labor Government decided that it would really get stuck into business by collecting the tax from when the law went into effect, which was 1988. It was nothing more than another sneaky Labor Government tax grab, which served as a body blow to the confidence of an already punch-drunk business sector.

The editorial also stated that the coalition Government would consult widely with business before a rewrite of the Stamp Act was introduced into Parliament. I confirm that the Government is doing that. It has its door open to business and already a number of people have consulted with me about changes to that legislation. Those people said that they were never asked by the previous Government for any input at all, which I find quite extraordinary seeing that those taxes affect mainly business people and their clients. Obviously, no consultation with the people who are directly involved was conducted by the Labor Party.

The coalition Government has reopened that door to business people after it was slammed in their faces by that arrogant former Labor Government. We have moved to quash the retrospective payment of the tax applied by Labor in the CitiSecurities fiasco and we will seek to return any tax paid before the court's ruling. This Government is establishing stability and certainty for business in Queensland.

The editorial also stated—

> "In the exercise of government, there is hardly anything more noxious than retrospective legislation of any kind."

Unlike Labor, this coalition Government believes that retrospective applications of the tax law should be avoided at all costs. We made the decision in the CitiSecurities case to restore much-needed certainty and confidence in the business community after its dark days under Labor. The editorial concluded—

> "In the CitiSecurities controversy, Sheldon has moved with great foresight and richly deserves the approval her decisions gained from many segments of the Queensland community."

Although I am humbled by such lavish praise, I do indeed like the sound of it.

Airport Motorway and South East Freeway

Mr BARTON: I refer the Minister for Transport and Main Roads to his ministerial statement of 2 May on the proposed airport motorway and his decision to widen the South East Freeway to eight lanes, and I ask: how does he justify his refusal to attend public meetings in Eagleby and Beenleigh to discuss his decision, which will result in the resumption of a significant number of homes, when he has been prepared to attend public meetings on the proposals for roadworks which may impact on the Liberal-held seat of Clayfield?

Mr JOHNSON: I thank the honourable member for Waterford for the question. Yes, one thing that I have done as Minister is to attend two public meetings held by people in the northern suburbs of Brisbane who are affected by the Nundah bottleneck and also the former Government's proposed airport motorway.

As for the people of Eagleby—I have to say that this Government has put in place a

consultation team that will look after the needs of the people of Eagleby and all other people affected by the Gold Coast motorway. This Government is a little different from the former Government in that it has concerns for those people.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Queensland Economy

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): The State of Queensland is suffering from a lack of direction. It has a rudderless, leaderless minority Government which is struggling to cope. This morning, on two occasions, the Treasurer misled the House. On the first occasion, in response to a question I asked, she said that the Government was full "stern" ahead. That is a view that we share! On that matter the Treasurer was dead right. The Government is full stern ahead. However, in that statement she said that there has never been a freeze.

Let me quote the Treasurer—as she leaves the House—from her speech of 19 March this year to the Conservative Club in which she said—

> "To this end, I have already instituted a rigorous review of expenditure. Specifically, I have written to all Ministers instructing that a temporary freeze be put on all initiatives of the previous Government until the review is completed."

The Treasurer misled the House. What a disgrace! She later said—

> "The outcome of this budget review will be embodied in an Interim Budget Statement which I intend to present to the Parliament in May."

The people of this State want to know: where is the statement? That is the commitment she gave the people of Queensland. I table a copy of an extract from that speech to clearly prove that the Treasurer misled the House.

If that is not enough, this morning, when the Treasurer tried to defend the non-delivery of this economic statement, one of the people she used as a reference was the Director of the Metal Trades Industry Association of Queensland, Paul Fennelly. In an article in the *Courier-Mail* of 1 May, Mr Fennelly said that figures produced by his organisation did not correlate with Mrs Sheldon's optimism. He said that Mrs Sheldon's economic interpretation is not reflected in the manufacturing sector and the larger construction sector. He was quoted in the *Courier-Mail* as saying—

> "We are suffering sluggish market conditions, weakening employment growth, increasing competition pressure from overseas and slower economic growth."

Mr Fennelly went on to say that the negative net balance of 28.9 per cent represented the worst employment result for four years. Further on in the article he said that the manufacturing industry was looking for a package measure from the Government to kickstart major infrastructure projects in Queensland. In other words, the person who Mrs Sheldon used as a reference for her action today does not agree with her on economic matters.

In addition, in an article in the *Courier-Mail* dated 24 April 1996, Mr Fennelly said—

> "But from a business point of view, not everything is wine and roses. We still have a Government with a one-seat majority and we have not seen how"—

the Government—

> "will act on environmental tax, industrial relations and some of the bigger economic issues."

Mr Fennelly said that a general election would have provided certain outcomes. In other words, the person who Mrs Sheldon used as a reference does not support her position. I table that article for the information of the House.

Let me go one step further. I table for the information of the House a day-by-day record of the freeze and the famine in the first 12 weeks of the Borbidge/Sheldon Government. Those 12 weeks expired yesterday. I table a 32-page report which is the record of this Government and which shows exactly what it has been up to. It shows economic confusion, a lack of leadership credibility, turning back the clock, backflips, broken promises, freezes, a lack of direction and disunity. All in all, it shows that this Government is not up to the task.

Also for the information of the House, I table a diary of damning opinions arising from independent assessments of the performance of this Government. It, too, condemns the lack of leadership and the lack of direction of this Government on economic and other matters. That shows that this Government clearly is not up to the task. It is a rudderless, leaderless minority Government which is struggling to cope.

At a time when the business community and the community generally were looking for leadership in the form of the May economic statement, the Treasurer did not deliver it. The Borbidge minority Government is struggling to cope with the demands of providing essential services to the people of Queensland and ensuring the continuing development of the State, and nothing is happening. That is reflected in yesterday's editorial in the *Australian*, which is headed "Borbidge losing his way." The editorial states—

> "Mr Borbidge, judged by his performance so far, inspires little confidence that he will run a competent or effective government."

I totally agree with that statement, and I also table a copy of that editorial for the information of the House.

This Government is characterised by reviews, postponements, freezes, sackings and cancellations. We know, of course, that Mr Horan would agree with that assessment. When are we going to get some positive decisions? The Premier, the Treasurer and the rest of this fibro Cabinet are crumbling at the edges. They are lost for ideas about what to do, so they have initiated a plethora of reviews—84 at the last count. That means that the Government has frozen most of the capital works projects planned by the previous Government at a time when the economy has flattened and unemployment is creeping up. The construction industry has warned the Government that it is losing subcontractors and skilled labour to other States because planned Government projects are not coming on stream.

Let us look at the "nonsense" outlined in last Friday's *Courier-Mail*, which the Treasurer tried to flick aside because she does not care about the construction industry. An article headed "Government urged to speed works projects" states—

> "Building design professionals"—

not the Opposition—

> "have called on the State Government to kick-start its capital works program, citing alarm at the industry's general lack of work.
>
> Queensland's construction industry was in danger of grinding to a halt because future prospects were alarmingly negative, the Australian Council of Building Design Professionals said."

In the same article, it is stated—

> "Department of Public Works Director-General Kevin Davies said he expected policy clarification in the Treasurer's forthcoming economic statement."

That statement was due today. He wanted clarification.

Mr Bredhauer: What do we get today? A policy-free zone!

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed it is a policy-free zone. Mr Davies is quoted in that article as saying—and this is a great line—

> "The Government is still shaking down and has to determine its policy position on these issues."

Shaking down! Unfortunately, it has crumbled. I table a copy of that article for the information of the House.

What is Mrs Sheldon's answer to the call for action that I referred to: a further postponement of the economic statement in which the outcome of the capital works review was supposed to be announced. As I said, we do not just have a freeze; we do not just have frostbite. We are heading into an ice age under this Government. The economic statement was planned to be announced in April, then May, and now the Treasurer says that it will be as far away as September. This means that building contractors and their suppliers will be expected to sit on their hands and wait for six months to see whether they have any work at all.

A vibrant economy such as this one cannot be put on hold; it cannot be put into suspended animation, as this Government has done. What brilliant economic management! Growth is flat and unemployment is rising in response to the Government as it turns off the expenditure tap and says, "Come back in September. Go away and have a rest." The Government has put the economy into sleep mode. Little wonder yesterday's editorial in the *Australian* stated that the Borbidge Government "is overlooking the basics of good Government". The Opposition totally agrees with that statement. The list of examples is endless. The Government abolished the Sunshine Motorway toll, lumping $200m of debt onto the State's taxpayers so that Mrs Sheldon's safe seat of Caloundra could become even safer. It abandoned Eastlink, reducing opportunities for a more competitive and cheaper electricity supply. In order to expand the Pacific Highway to eight lanes, this Government has hijacked the total State road construction budget for the next four years.

Yesterday's editorial in the *Australian* also warned of an emerging style of "government-by-crisis", reeling from one problem to the next. I totally agree: this is a Government in crisis, and it cannot manage its crises very well. If a crisis does not exist, the Government will just go out and invent one! The Premier and the Minister for Mines and Energy invented a power shortage—a blackout crisis—to justify a new transmission line from central Queensland and forestall another Eastlink campaign. The Premier invented a gas crisis to intimidate a south-west Aboriginal group from pursuing its native title claim. To pursue his short-term goals, the Premier has willingly diminished perceptions of reality in regard to energy supply.

This Government is not up to the task. It is prepared to do anything to try to stay in power, but in the meantime it is destroying the economy and affecting the quality of life of ordinary Queenslanders.

Time expired.

Mundingburra By-election Campaign

Mr GRICE (Broadwater) (11.40 a.m.): The Criminal Justice Commission is conducting a very public inquiry into the so-called police memorandum of understanding signed prior to the Mundingburra by-election. Today, I raise matters relating to the behaviour of those in and associated with the former Labor Government during the Mundingburra campaign. These activities—the Labor Party's "park people" memorandum of understanding and a fake Independent candidate—also warrant a serious and public inquiry by the Criminal Justice Commission. I will not speak to any matters that are before the current inquiry.

Presumably the CJC is concerned that the police memorandum was used to induce the union to support the coalition during the campaign. So if the CJC is to be perceived as showing impartiality, I am certain it will immediately launch a public inquiry into the following matters. I am also hopeful that this new inquiry would be conducted publicly, not behind closed doors as was the so-called inquiry into Labor Party inducements offered to former candidate for Mundingburra Ken Davies to go quietly before the by-election.

I now table a memorandum arranged by Labor's Mundingburra candidate, Tony Mooney, and signed by five former Goss Government Ministers—former Ministers Woodgate, Mackenroth, Braddy, Barton and Beattie—and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council. The covering memorandum states—

> "On 18 January, 1996 Tony Mooney, candidate for Mundingburra"—

and I repeat: Tony Mooney, the Mayor of Townsville, Labor mate and not a member of the State Government—

> "announced a proposal which was agreed to by the Chairperson of the ATSI Regional Council."

He was not a member of the Government! The memorandum offered four beds in the Townsville Hospital solely for treating alcoholic Aboriginal people, extra staff for those beds, special arrangements such as accommodation for these so-called park people, a worker for a night shelter and so on. These facilities were to be provided and funded by the State Government. The covering memorandum was signed by a senior Health Department bureaucrat. It asked that appropriate action be taken to secure the promise made by Mooney during the Mundingburra campaign.

While no-one questions the worthiness of the need for proper treatment of Aboriginal people with alcohol problems, this memorandum has a number of questionable aspects. Why was the promise for State Government funding made by someone who was not a member of the State Government? Unfortunately for Mooney, early in the Mundingburra campaign he got himself into a spot of bother with local community groups and civil libertarians when he announced a slash-and-burn approach to dealing with the longstanding Aboriginal park people problem. The issue had become very emotive and controversial in and around Townsville. Mooney refused to act over a long period and, finally in panic, he tried to deal with his neglect and dispose of the park people with a set of very strong measures.

The people of Townsville were not impressed by Mooney's new-found toughness. His Labor mates in the former State Government saw the Australian Women's Party and the Australian Indigenous People's Party candidates attacking Mooney's get-tough stand and the preferences disappearing. So in came the boys from Brisbane with a bagful of State-funded promises and "a memorandum of park people" to retrieve the preferences of AWP candidate Pauline Woodbridge and AIPP candidate Michael Bourne. Both candidates initially told the media that they were reluctant to give their preferences to Mooney because of his rough treatment of the park people.

How many female Labor heavies were flown to Townsville at the taxpayers' expense to convince the AWP that this memorandum was enough to make them give their preferences to Mooney? We have all heard about the number of people who flew up there. As to Bourne—it might be worth considering where the funding for his campaign budget and his expensive how-to-vote cards came from. Early in the campaign, Bourne was strongly opposed to giving preferences to Mooney. Have the rigorous CJC investigators pursued these issues with as much enthusiasm as they did when they tried to connect Independent Green candidate Antony Bradshaw with the National Party in recent weeks? Why am I not surprised that its far-reaching investigation has not yet shown the connections between so-called Independent business candidate Tisha Crosland and the ALP?

The honourable Leader of the Opposition, Mr Beattie, may not be aware of these connections because, as we all know, he was kept out in the cold prior to Mundingburra because his colleagues did not believe he could be trusted. He unfortunately had a habit of leaking information to the media in his various failed attempts to destroy his former leader, the honourable Mr Goss. I offer Mr Beattie a friendly warning: he might not be aware but Wayne and his mates the honourable Mr Braddy and the honourable Mr Mackenroth are talking of a leadership comeback for Wayne—the regurgitated failed leader. The Leader of the Opposition had better watch his back.

I return to Crosland. The Townsville dogs were barking that the ALP was desperate to run a bogus Independent small-business candidate, preferably a woman, who would direct her preferences to Mooney in the by-election. The burden to small business of such Labor creations as the unfair dismissal laws, deregulated trading hours and workplace health and safety was going to hurt Labor badly in that campaign. In spite of the anger of the small-business community towards Labor, Crosland had no sooner nominated as a small-business candidate than she announced that her preferences would go to Labor's Mooney. One might ask: why? The answer is that Mooney and his great Labor mate and No. 1 branch stacker Andy Kehoe had arranged for Crosland to stand. They were old mates.

When Mooney was trying to get back in from his rather unpopular attacks on the park people, Crosland and Kehoe tried to get a petition together to back Mooney's slash-and-burn policy. The CJC should look at the source of funding for Crosland's campaign. Her election posters were printed by PR Graphics of Rocklea, the same company which printed Mooney's election posters. Who placed the order? Who paid the bill? Who organised her fund-raising? Who organised Crosland's direct mail? Her letter was stunningly similar in style to that used by the ALP. Who was handing out Ms Crosland's how-to-vote cards on the day of the Mundingburra poll? It was Mooney's good mate Kehoe at Mundingburra State School, and the honourable member for Caboolture, Jon Sullivan, handed them out at the Mundingburra South booth. Mike Bailey, a former staffer of the former Treasurer, the Honourable Keith De Lacy, was handing them out at Heatley.

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: I rise to a point of order. The member is alleging that I handed out how-to-vote cards——

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

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is false, untrue and offensive, and I demand that it be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member asks the honourable member for Broadwater to withdraw those remarks.

Mr GRICE: Mr Deputy Speaker, if you ask me to withdraw, I withdraw. It was evident on television. I table photographs of Mike Bailey, a former staffer of the former Treasurer, the Honourable Keith De Lacy, handing out the cards. I table the photographs. Does the honourable member want me to withdraw that?

When interviewed by a newspaper journalist, Mr Bailey told her the ALP had too many people to hand out its how-to-vote cards so he just decided to help Ms Crosland. What a kind person he is! By the way, he wants the Honourable Keith De Lacy's seat when he retires. That is his next plan. I am sorry to inform Mike that the seat has been promised to the former member for Barron River, Lesley Clark. This desire to help the Independent Ms Crosland took over a number of other leading ALP members on 3 February. There were reports that even the former Premier's senior adviser, Ron Watson, who acted as Mooney's press secretary during the campaign, was handing out Crosland's cards.

I return to our old friend Andy Kehoe. Before Labor decided to crucify poor old Ken Davies, Mooney was after the seats of Ken McElligott and Geoff Smith. In an attempt to get these incumbents out, there was, of

course, the infamous Magnetic Island branch stack on 14 November so ably conducted by Kehoe and a few of his mates. ALP membership lists show that on 14 November 104 people saw the light and showed up to sign up at Magnetic Island. That is amazing because, prior to that night, the Magnetic Island branch had 13 members! But those joining up did not just have the wondrous guidance and political philosophy of the Queensland ALP to entice them to hand out their hard-earned cash for an ALP ticket. No, they had a lot more than that. The famous Kehoe, who runs a service station on Charters Towers Road, had been heard offering free car services to the lucky ones who joined up. Join the ALP, hand over your party voting rights and get a free lube—get greased on the way through! How good are members opposite! It is a hard offer to resist. They were obviously beating off new members with baseball bats.

By the way, Kehoe is the money helper credited with asking officers of the Police Union how many police they wanted from the Goss Government for the Townsville area during the campaign. The deal was that the police would be provided if the Police Union would not run a campaign for more police during the Mundingburra by-election. What was the pay-off for Crosland and Kehoe? That is simple: Kehoe was promised that he would be the Mayor of Townsville when Mooney went on to a better superannuation scheme in the Legislative Assembly. For her services, Mayor Mooney was recently about to appoint Crosland to the vacancy on the Townsville City Council which came about as a result of Liberal Councillor Peter Lindsay winning the Federal seat of Herbert.

Unfortunately, the best-laid plans of mice and Townsville mayors came unstuck the day before the announcement of the appointment when the story was leaked to the Townsville media. Mooney had dumped the plan——

Time expired.

Higher Education Places

Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (11.50 a.m.): The Federal and Queensland coalition Governments are about to preside over the greatest travesty of justice for Queensland's higher education students ever witnessed in this State. Plans by the Federal Government to slash funding for student places and capital works at Queensland's universities are a slap in the face for the universities, their students and parents who want their children to get a fair go in higher education in Queensland. The Queensland Government's meek acquiescence to these plans will see it condemned as incompetent and inefficient and surely not up to the job of running this State.

Under Labor, Queensland's higher education services underwent an unprecedented period of growth, especially through the expansion of regional campuses. Substantial further expansion was planned in the coming years. But all the progress made over the last six years is about to grind to a halt and in fact be slammed into reverse as the coalition Government slashes expenditure in the ideological pursuit of smaller government which has no regard for the availability, quality or distribution of services in a decentralised State such as Queensland.

It is being mooted around the universities that the Commonwealth has targeted higher education for cuts of up to 20 per cent across-the-board. Not only would this seriously affect every campus and every student but also Queensland would be doubly disadvantaged as our traditionally poor participation rate through the allocation of places from the Commonwealth will continue and the deal struck last year to fund additional student places will amount to nothing. Even the more conservative estimate of a 10 per cent cut needs to be viewed in the light that many universities will seek to protect their research programs at the expense of undergraduate studies. Not only that, but those students who are fortunate enough to secure places at Queensland's universities also face the very real prospect of a major hike in the Higher Education Charges Scheme which will essentially make it far more difficult for many students to afford the cost of going to university. Parents and their families will suffer as they struggle to assist students through universities in a system of fees reminiscent of the pre-Whitlam era. If the hike in HECS fees proceeds, the parents of ordinary working-class families will no longer be able to afford to give their children a university education. I believe that is a major travesty of justice.

New and developing campuses in Cairns, Ipswich, Logan, Hervey Bay, Gladstone, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast particularly are at considerable risk, both in terms of student numbers and capital works. The Queensland Education Minister himself has admitted that the State Government's contribution to capital works is heavily dependent on matching Commonwealth funds and must now be under considerable doubt. He expressed that view in a letter to one of the

Sunshine Coast members of this Parliament, of which I have received a copy.

In the face of this expected onslaught, the reaction of the Queensland Government and this Education Minister can best be described as wimpish. For the first six weeks, coalition members went into a state of denial, saying that it could never happen here. Then, finally stung into action by persistent warning bells from the Opposition and the universities, the Minister sought a meeting with his Federal counterpart, Senator Amanda Vanstone. What happened when the Minister sought that meeting? She refused! The Federal Education Minister thought so little of her Queensland counterpart that she refused to meet with him. She is one of the Minister's parliamentary Liberal Party colleagues and she would not even meet with him! Mr Quinn even offered to fly to Adelaide on Anzac Day to meet the Federal Minister on her own soil, but she still would not meet with him. Not only that, she refused to answer his letters, she refused to return his phone calls, and, in the final ignominy, when they were on a conference call, Mr Quinn asked the senator a question about when they could meet and she did not answer—she went silent on the other end of the phone. Mr Quinn might as well have been speaking French to her!

What happened next? Faced with his Education Minister's failure to secure even a conversation let alone a meeting with the Federal Minister, the Premier had to intervene to get a meeting. Last week, the Minister girded his loins—after the Premier had intervened on his behalf because Mr Quinn was too weak in the eyes of his Federal coalition counterpart to secure a meeting—and charged off to Canberra to do battle with the forces of higher education darkness in Canberra. What did he achieve? Nothing! As the Premier would say, he got nothing—zero, zip, zilch.

Queensland's traditionally poor participation rate in higher education is about to become permanently embedded in the system, to the detriment of thousands of Queensland students who will continue to suffer poorer access to higher education than students interstate. This problem is manifesting itself throughout Queensland. The *Bundaberg News Mail* ran a story titled "Uni places in doubt", which stated—

> "Two new Queensland University campuses and about 3000 student places were now in doubt after the federal government on Tuesday failed to guarantee promised funds for the projects."

The *Queensland Times* ran a story titled "Canberra uni cash in doubt", which has the Minister himself admitting that those university places are in doubt. An article in the *Hervey Bay and Maryborough Chronicle* predicts that Hervey Bay's University of Southern Queensland campus may go ahead but states—

> "However, long-term cuts could affect the university's plans for the future . . .
>
> 'The last government had a . . . firm commitment to increasing equity in Queensland with other states but if that doesn't go ahead, we don't really know what to expect for the future.' "

An article in the *Daily Mercury* of Mackay, under the banner headline "Fears for uni places", states—

> "Central Queensland University is 'very concerned' about the Commonwealth's refusal to guarantee that Queensland will hold on to extra tertiary places promised by the Keating Government."

The *Courier-Mail* carried an article with the heading "State bids to stem uni cuts", which states—

> "Senator Vanstone yesterday again refused to guarantee Queensland would retain more than 3000 extra university places promised by the previous Labor government."

An article in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* carrying the heading "Fight on to save Coast uni from razor's edge" states that the new Sunshine Coast university is under grave threat in terms of its expansion and the much-needed additional student places as well as additional resources for capital works. In the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, under an article with the heading "Logan university in doubt as federal funding cuts mooted", the Griffith University chancellor, Roy Webb, is quoted as making this comment—

> "More than 4700 tertiary places over three years—costing about $107 million in federal funds—were promised to Queensland by the Keating government.
>
> But Professor Webb said yesterday that funding—and associated tertiary building works in Logan, Ipswich, Cairns, the Sunshine Coast and Hervey Bay—would hinge on Education Minister Bob Quinn's talks with his federal counterpart . . ."

Well, what did Mr Quinn get out of that? Nothing! He got nothing out of his Federal counterpart. As Peter Morley said in the *Courier-Mail* on Saturday—

> "But what has happened? Vanstone has refused to say whether she will provide the 2450 places still to be delivered and the associated capital funding needed for new campuses, especially in regional growth centres."

Morley's column goes on to say—

> "While she prevaricates, using the excuse that she will not pre-empt the content of the federal Budget which will contain cuts, the chance of expansion occurring on time—if at all—is slipping away.
>
> The only undertaking Quinn managed to extract from Vanstone was that Queensland would be fairly treated and get a per capita share of whatever places were approved."

That is code for the fact that Queensland will share equally with all the other States in the cuts, and that is what I say will entrench the system of imbalance in Queensland's tertiary places forever. At the end of his column, Peter Morley states—

> "If funding is cut short now, it is likely that—short of a massive injection of funds"—

and that is unlikely, because the Minister has admitted that Queensland's contribution is dependent on the Federal contribution—

> "Queensland youngsters will never enjoy the national level of access to tertiary education."

Morley is spot-on in that article.

I say to members of this House that it is just not good enough. The people of Queensland deserve better than a Minister who cops a whipping in Canberra on such a vital issue and is sent scurrying back to Queensland with his tail between his legs. I call on the Premier to again intervene at Prime Ministerial level to ensure that Queensland's higher education places are secure. I call on every member of this House, especially those on the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Logan, Ipswich, Cairns, Hervey Bay and Gladstone, to redouble their efforts or run the risk of seeing their campuses disappear or relegated to insignificance.

Waste Management, Far-north Queensland

Ms WARWICK (Barron River) (12 noon): I wish to inform the House of a matter of urgent and grave importance pertaining to the people of far-north Queensland. I refer to waste management strategies in my area. In a damning report just released, titled "Far North Queensland Waste Management Strategy Options", prepared for the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, we have been alerted to problems which we must now address.

Domestic waste, which contains many unacceptable toxic substances, such as household chemicals and solvents, along with batteries and putrescibles, ends up in landfill. This then becomes a toxic brew. The report lists some 24 sites in far-north Queensland of which all but one are "environmentally unacceptable". This is a damning indictment of past policies and strategies. Presently, we use landfill predominantly for waste disposal. Experts tell us that there is no such thing as a safe landfill. The basic construction of a modern multi-layered landfill dump has a gravel drain system in case of leakage. In the USA, research shows that landfill systems will leak either immediately they are constructed, because of faults in the joins, or at some other time in the life of the dump. This is particularly so in times of floods, cyclones and earthquakes.

North Queensland is in an area where frequent heavy rain occurs. It is also a cyclone-prone area. I refer to a region which is unique in having two World Heritage areas within its confines, namely, the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef. The region also has significant areas of coastal wetlands which require protection, for example, Trinity Inlet. There are also vast areas of forest outside the Wet Tropics World Heritage area, including remnant rainforest, open woodlands and dry tropical forests. Other sensitive areas include the vast tracts of potential acid-sulphate soil along the coastal plain which, according to the study just released, should not be disturbed without appropriate management plans. The permeable nature of the soil on much of the tableland also makes protection of ground water difficult and, therefore, effective landfill engineering is costly.

Suitable sites for landfill on the coastal plain and tablelands are extremely scarce, due to proximity to environmentally sensitive areas mentioned earlier. Land values are also high and would impact on site acquisition costs. The tropical climate in far-north Queensland is characterised by hot, wet summers and mild, dry winters. Annual average rainfall in Cairns is 2,195 millimetres, with an average of 140 wet days per annum. Average humidity in Cairns ranges from 69 per cent in January to 63 per

cent in July. As I mentioned previously, the region is subject to cyclones, with subsequent risk of flooding and wind damage. This high rainfall on the coastal plains and much of the tableland makes environmental control in landfill operation extremely difficult.

We are at a crossroads in terms of waste disposal in my region. Last Friday, the *Cairns Post* ran a front-page story headed "No room at the dump". This article quoted Douglas Shire Mayor, Mike Berwick, who is also chairperson of the Local Authority Waste Management Advisory Committee. He said—

> "Cairns and some other parts of the Far North could start running out of waste disposal space within months and needed a regional waste management plan to tackle the problem."

He went on to say—

> ". . . the problem would not be easily solved by digging a giant new regional landfill in someone else's backyard.
>
> The Far North produces about 190,000 tonnes of rubbish a year, of which 80 per cent goes unsorted into landfills."

The editorial in the *Cairns Post* that same day supported the stance which Mayor Berwick had taken and urged the powers that be to take note of the timely warning issued by him. The editorial went on to say that—

> ". . . garbage creation is a real growth industry with the coastal strip around Cairns being one of Australia's fastest growing areas in terms of population and industry."

The *Cairns Post* editorial explained that—

> "Cairns city, before last year's amalgamation with the Mulgrave Shire, had been seeking an alternative landfill for several years to replace its rapidly filling wetland dump sites. One proposal was to establish a major regional landfill in the Lamb Range area, roughly halfway between Kuranda and Mareeba. However, this was knocked back a couple of years ago by the Mareeba Shire, which did not want to be the site of a regional dump."

And rightly so.

According to the report, it is obvious that the option of retaining the current types of landfill for unsorted garbage on the wet coastal areas does not appear to be feasible, because it is virtually impossible to manage leachate and stormwater. It is obvious that a long-term regional landfill for unsorted rubbish is out of the question for those reasons and because no local shire will want to take the unsorted waste of another. Many existing landfills in the region, including two in Cairns, are reaching the end of their lifespan and are already causing environmental concern. A decision must be made soon, and local authorities must be courageous and visionary. They must look at options other than landfill, which, in my view, is clearly not a viable option.

What are the western European modern technological alternatives to landfill? Incineration and anaerobic digestion. Let us consider the two. With incineration, the big cost is in the maintenance of the boiler and anti-atmospheric pollution equipment. Anaerobic digestion does not have a boiler, and the digester has no moving parts. A readily available off-the-shelf slurry pump is used to pump the prepared waste into the digester. Ash from an incinerator may need to go to landfill. Residue from the digester is Class A1 compost, with no dangerous pathogens. Several countries are currently building, contracting and/or operating anaerobic digester systems. These include France, the UK, the Netherlands, Tahiti, Belgium, Germany, Finland, Austria, the Ivory Coast and Senegal. Additionally, in excess of 20 other locations are currently studying the anaerobic digestion options.

With an anaerobic digestion unit, the hazardous waste is sorted, it reclaims recyclable materials and it sorts and treats digestible waste. Nothing in the waste stream is missed. Digestible waste comprises all putrescibles, not only from households but also from markets, abattoirs, farms, sewerage sludge—which is currently a big problem in far-north Queensland—grease trap sludge, septic tank pump-outs, shredded waste paper and all natural fibres. Of course, let us not forget the green waste which, in our coastal regions, represents a large volume of digestible matter. An anaerobic digester waste treatment plant is able to store the methane in compressed form, and the gas can then be used to generate electricity at peak periods. It is a very simple matter to shut down the electric generating system and continue to store the energy source, that is, the methane, but to shut down an incinerator quickly is a very demanding task, and the energy source is then wasted.

Modern methane digestion technology is now well proven and fully operational in western Europe. This process could be fully utilised in far-north Queensland and has the advantage of not being affected by ambient humidity. There is no release of odours, as the

system is anaerobic. Methane is recovered, which is not the case in composting. Methane is a very valuable energy source. Methane digestion has been used for the past 50 years in the treatment of liquid waste. The best example is in the pig industry, where all large piggeries use this technology to provide energy for their own operation. Anaerobic digestion is a closed system and, as such, it is environmentally friendly. A modern digester to handle 100,000-plus tonnes throughput can be established on five hectares of land and the site landscaped to fit in with the environment. Such a unit is able to be expanded at minimum cost—compared to landfill and incineration—to meet an increasing urban growth, as is planned for the far-north Queensland area by the year 2010.

The current waste collection vehicles in the City of Cairns could be converted to use biogas, which would reduce vehicle emissions by some 50 per cent in nitrogen oxides and 70 per cent in carbon monoxide, with no release of lead or aromatic compounds and no release of unburnt hydrocarbon particles in exhaust gases. Soil impoverishment and erosion are global phenomena resulting from many modern farming practices. The recycling of organic matter as humus reverses this trend and can be used in restructuring poor or depleted soils. Soils rich in humus have a superior biological activity which aids plant absorption of nutrients and, unlike chemical fertilisers, avoids the pollution of watertables and rivers by leachates.

Anaerobic digesters are self-sustainable within 28 days of being commissioned. They do not require grid electricity. Fluids are treated within the unit through a centrifuge, and there is no further requirement for water throughout the life of the plant. In other words, the unit is self-sustaining, as long as waste is being processed. It is possible that this wasted energy and environmentally damaging materials could be recycled through the digester and, over a period of years, some of the smaller existing dumps could be cleaned up. Over a longer period, possibly even the large coastal dumps, such as Portsmith in Cairns, could be treated, as waste remains in an inert state when——

Time expired.

Maddern Valuation Services

Mr DOLLIN (Maryborough) (12.10 p.m.): I rise to speak on a matter of public interest that concerns the valuation industry in general and in particular a valuation company operating in the Wide Bay Region, namely, Maddern Valuation Services. That company first came to my attention when I received complaints from nine battling families in Aldershot, a village near Maryborough. Those families were victims of a house and land package rort that was being perpetrated against them by Peter Coombs, a finance broker and licensed real estate agent.

Coombs advertised that low-income families could purchase a house with no deposit required and low repayments for $65,000 all inclusive, no hidden costs, no extras and nothing further to spend. To cut a long story short, eight of the nine families who purchased have now walked away from what they believed was to be their dream home. They are financially broke and heart broken with little faith left in their fellow man.

The commonly accepted risk in the lending industry is 90 per cent of valuation. To get around not having a deposit from the purchaser, Coombs arranged Maddern Valuation Services to jack up the value of those $65,000 house and land packages to $76,150. This jacked valuation conveniently allowed for a loan of $65,000 from the financier B. H. Knowles and Company who now has very limited security. Eight of the jerry-built houses are now for resale at $65,000 or near offer. The builder built the houses for $46,900, which included his profit, and they were advertised widely for $65,000 for house and land. It is obvious that Maddern Valuations gave not an honest valuation but one to suit a deal, a crooked deal at that. I table one of those valuations.

I will now explain where, in three other instances, Maddern's dubious valuations almost cost Hervey Bay ratepayers $1.2m. I quote in part from the *Hervey Bay Independent*—

> "Hervey Bay Council has narrowly averted paying out nearly $860,000 in compensation for the resumption of two parcels of land after a councillor questioned the valuations on the properties. The resumed parcels had originally been valued at $457,000 and $400,000 respectively. However, a subsequent second valuation by a different firm of valuers revalued the $457,000 property down to between $47,000 and $82,000 and the $400,000 property down to no value at all. It is believed Council eventually paid between $80,000 and $150,000 in total for both properties. The original valuations, which were commissioned by the two developers from the same firm of valuers, had been accepted by Council. So close

> was Council to paying out the money that it had even been set aside in this year's Budget."

I table that newspaper clipping.

I table a valuation assessed on 23 March 1995 by Maddern Valuation Services, signed by N. L. Maddern, regarding an assessment of compensation payable by the Hervey Bay City Council to Westlakes Development, Truro and Ann Streets, for their client Mr J. West. That valuation, which I table, is for $400,000. An alternative valuation by Dr J. F. N. Murray and V. L. Brett and Associate Consulting Valuers, which I also table, is for nil value, because that land is a swamp. I think it is fair to say that $400,000 of ratepayers' hard-earned money almost went west. What a discrepancy—$400,000 against nil. Is valuer Lloyd Maddern acting as a valuer or agent?

There is more! The Lygon group of companies of Carlton, Victoria, contracted Maddern Valuation Services to value a lot at Central Park, Urraween Road, Pialba, for resumption by the Hervey Bay City Council. This time the valuation by Maddern Valuation Services, which I table, came in at $457,000. The alternative valuation from Murray, Brett and Associates, which I also table, came in at $47,000. That is a difference of a massive $410,000. One might wonder which of these two valuers was right. It is not Maddern, as the Hervey Bay City Council is reported to have purchased both lots for approximately $80,000, saving Hervey Bay City Council ratepayers $800,000. There is one thing I will say for Maddern Valuation Services: they sure try for their clients and do not allow a few ethics to get in their way!

I turn now to a third very controversial valuation by Maddern Valuation Services, again involving Hervey Bay City Council. I again quote in part from the *Hervey Bay Independent*. The article, headed "Council severs links with valuer", stated—

> "The latest controversy involves a section of former rail corridor. This parcel has been the subject of negotiation for some time between a Sydney based company and the original owners, Queensland Rail, and then the new owners, Hervey Bay City Council. A recent valuation by the valuer placed a worth of $240,000 on the site"—

and I table that valuation—

> "despite an earlier offer by the Sydney company to Queensland Rail of $800,000."

That offer was withdrawn after council bought the rail corridor from Queensland Rail. It is believed that the company made a subsequent offer to council of $300,000. A second valuation from another firm of valuers, which I table, ordered by council's Acting Chief Executive Officer, Bob Chambers, has now valued the site at $770,000.

This week, Mr Chambers said that in light of that and the previous contentious valuations, council would no longer deal with that valuer. He stated—

> "I don't use that valuer. I haven't had discussions with him since the last issue and I have certainly instructed that none of the people in my department use him again."

Honourable members should note that Mr Maddern is again working hard for his client but this time he is undervaluing the ratepayers' assets by $540,000. Had not the recently appointed CEO, Bob Chambers, insisted on a second independent valuation from Murray, Brett and Associates, someone would have picked up a very easy $540,000. Added to the other two transactions, the Hervey Bay City Council stood to lose some $1.2m. After reading the reported instructions by the CEO that the council would not deal with the valuer again, through FOI I checked through the council records of valuers employed in 1996. Whom did I find on that list? None other than Maddern Valuation Services! I table that list.

It is beyond my comprehension why a council would turn back on its own instructions and employ a valuation company that almost cost its ratepayers $1.2m through bodgie valuations. I ask the Hervey Bay City Council: why? I ask: how many times has the council paid out on Madderns' valuations? I now draw to the attention of the Minister for Natural Resources, Mr Hobbs, that it recently came to my knowledge that, through being the lowest tenderer, Maddern Valuation Services won a major contract through its Maryborough office to do extensive valuations throughout the Maryborough region for the State Government. I believe that the documentation that I have tabled today indicates without a shadow of a doubt that this company is incompetent or worse. I ask the Minister to act before taxpayers' money is wasted.

Mr Mulherin: Was this Maddern the National Party candidate during the last election?

Mr DOLLIN: The same fellow.

I call on the Government to thoroughly investigate the valuation industry in

Queensland as a whole, with a view to making it a criminal act to tender false valuations—both overvaluations and undervaluations—to suit particular deals, especially when local, State and Federal Governments are involved.

Flooding in Lockyer Electorate

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer—Leader of Government Business) (12.17 p.m.): The weekend before last, my electorate was subjected to flooding and large areas were inundated. Homes were inundated and farms suffered much loss**.** People in Brisbane probably became aware of that flooding when they were told that the Warrego Highway was cut and one could not get through to Toowoomba.

As members of this House know, when such flooding occurs, a lot of personal trauma is involved. People suffer large financial losses. Help is sought from Governments and it behoves the local member to assist those people in any way that he or she can. My office has been inundated with people requiring assistance, and we are trying to point them in the right direction.

I thank the Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services who visited the Lockyer Valley on Monday, 6 May. They experienced great difficulty getting there. They were to leave the Gold Coast by helicopter—as was fitting—but that flight was terminated at Archerfield, because the conditions were so hazardous that the helicopter pilot had to land when he was able to find a place to land. The Premier and Minister Veivers came to Laidley by car. Laidley was accessible from the Brisbane side and, from that morning, it was accessible also from Toowoomba and Gatton via the Warrego Highway.

The Premier and the Minister came to receive a briefing from the Mayor of Laidley, Councillor Moon. Of course, as the local member, I also attended that briefing. We observed that the counter disaster plan was working well at Laidley. The mayor himself was involved heavily with that operation. Other people had been working for long hours over a number of days to provide support to the citizens of the Laidley Shire. At the same time, the Gatton Shire was inundated. Although the town of Gatton was not inundated to the same extent as that small portion of Laidley, considerable damage was done.

I would like to place on record my thanks to Trevor Perrett, the Minister for Primary Industries, who on Wednesday, 8 May, inspected the area. At that time we were able to see the aftermath of the flooding. The Minister saw large-scale devastation of the cropping area. We spoke to farmers who, at that stage, were still in a state of shock and, although some of them would not admit it, traumatised. It is a very testing time for those farmers and other people who, over the last few days, have suffered losses.

Some people say, "So it was a flood. Farmers should be prepared for floods. The citizens of Laidley should have been prepared for floods. It was a natural phenomenon and they should have taken steps to avoid it." The area had an unprecedented amount of rain for the month of May, and that caused the major problems. Previously, there had been floods in the area, notably in 1974. The area also experienced floods in 1959 and 1988 and at other times. With the exception of the 1974 floods, most of those floods were minor. However, in anyone's language, this flood was very large.

In Gatton, the average rainfall for the month of May is in the vicinity of 43 millimetres. The average rainfall for Laidley for that month is exactly the same and, for Lowood, it is 47 millimetres. That gives members an idea of the average rainfall for that area for that month—about 43 millimetres. However, during the week leading up to 7 May, Withcott had 507 millimetres of rain; Helidon, 584 millimetres; Laidley, 520 millimetres; and Gatton town, 433 millimetres, while some of the headwaters had considerably more. Hatton Vale, which is downstream, had 498 millimetres of rain. Adding to the problem, during the week ending 30 April all of those areas had between 22 millimetres and 43 millimetres of rain. In other words, in terms of the old scale, those areas had generally already received about an inch or an inch and a quarter of rain. That was beautiful, soaking rain. It was badly needed because the area had been through a prolonged period of drought. However, on top of that week of beneficial rain, the area had this massive inundation.

Of course, nobody could plan for such a phenomenon. Although in Laidley some flood mitigation work had been carried out, which I understand was quite successful, the farming areas were not in such a good position. When the creeks burst their banks in certain places, there was a large amount of scouring and inundation of land.

During the time left to me, I want to refer to an article by a Mr Terry Black, which appeared in yesterday's *Courier-Mail*. Terry Black is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of

Business at the Queensland University of Technology. In that article, he referred to the recent flood rains and stated that, although people have sympathy for farmers, that does not indicate that they support the Government's proposed $500m in relief loans. Where on earth did he get the figure of $500m for the farmers in the Lockyer? There are probably only a couple of hundred farmers in the area. If the Government gave each of them $1m, they would walk off their farms. I do not know where Mr Black got that figure, but I am very concerned that people who read that article may have been given a false impression and believe that the farmers are being given $500m.

Let me place on record that those payments are not grants; they are loans made to people who qualify for them under very tight guidelines. Firstly, people have to apply to their banks for an extension of their overdrafts. If the banks will lend those people money, they will receive nothing from the Government. The Government is offering to those people who qualify loans at 6 per cent payable over seven years. Members should be aware that that interest rate is about 4 percentage points below the current housing-loan interest rate—I believe that some institutions are offering housing loans with interest at 9 per cent. Although the Government's loan is not a gift, it has a subsidised interest rate.

Secondly, to receive this loan, people have to not only prove that they cannot receive any more loans from the banks but also that their farms are viable and that they can repay the money. So if people can meet those stipulations, they may be eligible to receive money from the Government. That is a very narrow financial gate for people to go through. I call upon the Government to loosen up the conditions so that people can be assisted and stay in business.

Mr Black states further—

> ". . . politicians invariably give disaster relief, farmers have no incentive to take steps to mitigate the effects of droughts or floods by building dams."

That is absolute piffle! He should travel the Lockyer Valley and see the number of dams that were built during those drought years. Although some of them gave small flows to some farmers, some of them did not yield any water. A couple of farmers who met Mr Perrett when he inspected the area told him that they had just completed their water scheme, which cost a large amount of money, and then they were flooded out.

Another matter of concern is that May is the worst season for the Lockyer Valley to be flooded. The whole cropping program of the valley—and I am talking about cabbages, broccoli, carrots, lettuce, celery, capsicum, tomatoes, beetroot, French beans, lucerne, potatoes and onions—is for crops to be grown during the winter months. It is also harvest time for sorghum and soya beans. Those crops had sprouted, and they were lost. The farmers have outlaid all of their money to plant those crops—whole paddocks full of plants. Each plant costs 4.5c from a nursery and thousands and thousands of those plants went under water; that caused massive losses to farmers. I invite Mr Black to see what work has been carried out on farms.

I support totally a scheme to keep the good farmers in business because we as consumers need them to survive. I am not talking about handouts to help those farmers who cannot manage their properties; I want this Government assistance being given to those good farmers so that they have a chance to survive.

Time expired.

Optus Cables

Mr ARDILL (Archerfield) (12.27 p.m.): Over two and a half years ago I spoke in this Chamber about Optus and its attitude towards the people of Brisbane. It was erecting towers in children's playgrounds and various other places in residential areas without so much as a by-your-leave to the people who live near them. Despite the fact that I held a press conference, which was well attended, JJJ was the only media outlet to give any publicity to this matter. The other media outlets ignored the matter totally. In that regard, I believe that the media fell down very badly.

Today, Optus is putting cables on existing power poles in some suburbs, including those in my electorate. It is accepted that power poles are well-known traffic hazards. Sooner or later, we have to take steps to get rid of them. However, through Optus placing its cables on those power poles, the process of removing them will be delayed.

On 7 April 1992 I tabled in this Chamber a report from Travelsafe that drew attention to the fact that police believe that each year in Melbourne an average of 45 fatalities occurred and 785 people were injured because of the proximity of power poles to traffic lanes. Traffic engineers recommend that, in a 60 kilometre an hour speed zone, no power poles or firm objects should be erected less than three

metres from any travelling lane. Yet, we see the situation of trees being removed and dead trees being planted. In a 100 kilometres an hour speed zone, nothing should be erected within nine metres of a traffic lane.

Time expired.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Laming): Order! The time allotted to matters of public interest has expired.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 1 May (see p. 816).

Mr WELFORD (Everton) (12.30 p.m.): I am pleased to speak in this second-reading debate of the Environmental Protection Amendment Bill. The Opposition has some concerns about this Bill. By and large, the Bill is procedural and remedies a number of both typographical and drafting errors. However, this Bill, like most of the random and ad hoc amending regulations that the new Minister has introduced, is full of all sorts of errors and the Opposition will be opposing some elements of it.

Obviously, for some time the Opposition has been concerned at the way in which the Minister has extended the moratorium on licences. Not for one moment do I deny that, as the Minister responsible for this legislation, he is entitled to make decisions about extending the time limits within which people might be liable to or exempt from prosecution. However, quite apart from the comedy of errors which have surrounded the way in which the Minister has introduced this legislation, he has simply delayed the inevitable. He has created even more uncertainty and confusion than he says there was previously. If anything, this amending Bill will conclusively demonstrate to any operator who might undertake activities which fall within the category of environmentally relevant that any attempt by an ordinary person to come to terms with this Bill might as well be given up; they will need legal advice.

Until this amending legislation, and until the regulations which the Minister purported to introduce and which are still subject to a disallowance motion moved in this House, there was some prospect that people reading the legislation could get a grasp of what they were required to do. That ends today with this Bill. If this Bill is passed, I urge the Minister to make appropriate arrangements for the amendments to be incorporated in a consolidated Bill, so that anyone trying to work out what the legislation is about does not have to refer to a dozen different pieces of legislation. In other words, arrangements need to be made with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel to issue a fully consolidated version of the Bill. I urge the Minister to do that because, notwithstanding my past legal experience, it is no easy matter to get one's head around these amendments, even if one also looks at the provisions in the substantive legislation.

Of course, at the end of February and in early March the Government introduced regulations purporting to facilitate the four-month moratorium. As will be seen from my discussion on this Bill, it appears that the moratorium will in fact be longer than four months. Leaving aside the validity of the regulations that purported to provide for the moratorium, as people were led to understand it, the idea was that, provided business operators carrying out environmentally relevant activities obtained their licences by 30 June, they would not be liable for prosecution for failing to have a licence. As I will explain, this Bill seems to shift the ground so that operators do not need to have licences by 1 July; they need only to apply for licences by 1 July. Other provisions in this Bill allow the department a period of up to four months in which to consider an application for a licence. Therefore, on a technical basis there is an argument that licences will not be required under this legislation until some four months after 1 July. That takes us well and truly towards the end of the year.

If that is the effect of this amending legislation, as I suspect it is—and we have already debated the merits of it—in terms of his administration of the legislation the Minister has created an enormous headache for himself. All sorts of businesses, many of which are already undertaking environmentally relevant activities, will be emitting and dispersing toxic effluent and emissions into creeks, waterways and the air. The operation of legislation which had been in prospect since at least 1992, which was brought into the Parliament and passed in 1994—a full two years ago now—and which came into operation on 1 March 1995, is now being put back even further.

The Minister has expressed some legitimate concerns, which I must confess that until now I had not conceded to him, in relation to information being available from the department for local authorities—for example, on how they should administer environmentally relevant activities in their area. However, I would not have thought that that was an excuse for businesses being given

ever-recurring extensions of time within which to start taking steps towards getting a licence and, more importantly, bringing their business activities up to speed so that they are conducted according to the best practices for environmental management. The Minister says that that is what he stands for and that that is what he will continue to endorse, but he has to concede that my criticisms of his Government over the last couple of months are based on the very clear indication, from all the steps he has taken so far, that he is demonstrating anything but an unequivocal commitment to what he says he believes in: namely, requiring businesses to get up to best practices for environmental management. All the steps he has taken so far have been dedicated towards weakening or delaying the inevitable need for all people in our community to operate in that way.

Last week the Chairman of the Pine Rivers Shire called a meeting which up to 200 business people of all kinds attended. I do not know whether the Minister is aware of it, but he might as well be: the Chairman of the Pine Rivers Shire is doing her best to undermine the Minister's credibility in that neck of the woods by criticising him and his Government and alleging that fees should not be charged, that they are too onerous and cause too much hardship. I will tell the House more about that meeting in a moment because, in some respects, it was quite amusing.

As I said, the Opposition accepts that the Government is entitled to review any matter of policy that is within its area of responsibility. However, the steps that the Minister has taken so far in respect of environmental protection, and in particular the current legislative arrangements to protect our environment, have created an absolute mess and complete confusion. Firstly, in late February the Minister introduced regulations which left exposed all operators who have spent the last 12 months investing in upgrading their business equipment, facilities and operations. All that expenditure was rendered to nought by the first round of regulatory amendments that the Minister made. Indeed, part of the mess has been created by the Minister's failure to consult with the business community. The Government's suggestion that it is making these amendments out of a concern for the problems the business community is encountering completely flies in the face of the fact that none of the business community was consulted when the first regulatory amendment was made at the end of February.

Businesses immediately phoned the Minister and said, "Look, you have made an absolute hash of this. You have left all of the good businesses that were getting on with the job of putting in place environmental management practices with no protection or security at all." With respect to the licensing requirements for all environmentally relevant activities, anybody who was about to get a licence was left stranded high and dry without any protection under the Act. As honourable members may be aware, the Act provides protections for businesses that have a licence. Having compounded the error by making a subsequent regulation, which is also the subject of a disallowance motion in this place, the Minister then thought, "Well, maybe I should go and start consulting. Having made two errors, it is about time I consulted someone. After all, we did make an election promise"—one of the Premier's contracts with the community—"to set up an environmental protection council." However, the Minister was not ready to do that.

To address the immediate concerns of business and the conservation groups, who were all howling from the rooftops about the complete mess that had been made of the moratorium proposal, the Minister then set up a ministerial advisory committee. However, in stark contrast to both the Minister's and the Premier's commitment to consultation, the Minister appointed a ministerial advisory committee. That committee was never mentioned during the election campaign. It was just another ad hoc review—one of the many undertaken by the Government. I suggest that none of the current members of the committee was consulted before the committee and its representation was announced.

Notwithstanding commitments given to environment groups before the election, that committee was constituted in such a way that environmental representation on it was nowhere near adequate. Consequently, the committee is struggling and experiencing enormous difficulties in addressing the problems handed to it by the Minister. The committee simply does not have the experience that many people in the conservation groups have. By going ahead and constituting a committee in a fashion contrary to promises made by the Premier before the election, and by constituting a committee that did not give equal representation to environmental representatives, one might conclude that the Minister set out to deliberately provoke a

response from the environment groups, that is, a refusal to participate on the committee.

The Minister must have known before he constituted the committee—and, if he did not know, he ought to have—that the environmental groups had consistently told the Government that that would be the basis upon which they were prepared to participate. The Minister either knew or ought to have known that to be the position. Notwithstanding that, the Minister deliberately confined the representation of environmental groups to about 25 per cent of the committee and, as a result, guaranteed—perhaps that is what he was seeking—their rejection of any participation. That outcome has been to the Minister's detriment, because the committee is struggling to make any progress whatsoever. It looks increasingly unlikely that by 31 May the Minister will have anything approaching a comprehensive response to the problems he has cited.

A number of times last year and again since becoming Minister, the honourable member has made allegations about the difficulties small business is experiencing. However, those problems have less to do with the fees than with the lack of information provided from the department to local government and business. The big problem that business has in relation to this legislation is neither the legislation itself nor, as the Minister will ultimately find out, the fees per se; the problem is the lack of information at the local government level. The Opposition must accept some residual responsibility for that position. I agree that many small businesses, not unlike some of the members on the Minister's back bench, were absolutely opposed to environmental protection; however, many businesses were willing to make the change and improve their operations to achieve good environmental practices. They simply did not have sufficient information. That uncertainty is being expressed by business more than anything else.

The Minister and those, such as the Chairman of the Pine Rivers Shire, who might normally be regarded as being of the Minister's ilk, have grasped onto the issue of fees as an excuse for taking the action that is being taken. I do not seriously believe that the fees are in issue. If they are, the Minister will inevitably have to address the question of how he and local government will fund proper inspections and enforcement of good environmental standards, if he is going to reduce or wipe out part of the fee collecting capacity under the legislation. We must recognise that the potential for fee collection under this legislation is much less than that in other States. The Minister may create for himself more problems than he has solved by taking the step he has taken. I hope that is not the case and that he is able to resolve the problem. In the near future, I hope he is able to offer more categorical information to business so that its concerns can be addressed properly. He should adopt this course rather than continuing to whip up the flames of discontent. As I say, the problem stems largely from a lack of information rather than from any particular concern about elements of this legislation.

I do not think that any business wishes to damage the environment. I do not think that the Minister would find any business that would openly say that. Certainly, I would hope not. However, rather than talking about problems with the legislation which he himself will not discard, the Minister would be better served by talking more about how he is going to get information out to business. In particular, I refer to the complaints of the Chairman of the Pine Rivers Shire about fees and her call on the Minister to abolish the licensing fees. The Minister might care, for the edification of the Chairman of Pine Rivers Shire, to alert her to the regulations that were already in place before the Minister came into power, namely, regulations which allow local authorities to waive either in part or fully the licensing fee in respect of any business where hardship was in issue. I would have thought that provision undermines entirely the criticisms that the Minister has been making previously—and I suspect he is backing away from those now—and the complaints that the Chairman of Pine Rivers continues to make about licensing fees. Such complaints would be entirely unjustified in the context of an existing regulation which gives the discretion to local authorities to give a partial waiver of any fee in circumstances in which a small business would suffer undue hardship as a result of the fee imposed.

At the end of the day, we all acknowledge that the fees are relevant only in terms of providing Government with sufficient revenue to enforce the environmental protections that this law applies. What is not in dispute is that these protections should be put in place. What is not in dispute is that the standards that this Act requires should be the standards that we bring Queensland business up to. The only question is: how do we do it? The Minister will need to be careful not to undermine his own capacity to achieve the goals of this legislation

by leaving himself short of sufficient resources to police it.

The Minister might care to clarify the matter I raised about his apparent shift of ground on the issue of when a licence will be required by. Under this amendment, it certainly looks as though people will not require a licence by 30 June; they need only make application by that time, and no-one will be liable for prosecution after 1 July for at least some period even though they do not have a licence. That certainly seems to put back the time. That has two effects. One, as I have already indicated, is that it just delays the inevitable and sends the wrong signals to Queensland businesses about the importance of getting themselves up to speed. It is a bit late to do it now, but the Minister might have been better served to have retained the requirement for applications to be in by 1 March or some period shortly thereafter—but certainly not allowing another three months—and to have simply postponed the period within which businesses would not be liable for prosecution. Instead, what has been postponed is the requirement to apply for a licence—to make application in the first instance. To my mind, that is entirely the wrong message to be sending. That is precisely the concern that I have been expressing to the media over the last couple of months, and it is precisely the concern which many of the environmental groups have also expressed.

Turning to particular aspects of the amending legislation—there is a provision in the amendments which are part of these transitional arrangements which in effect postpones the offence provisions of the legislation. Basically, proposed section 236A provides that persons are exempt from the offence provisions if they make application before 1 July this year for an environmental authority and if they continue to carry on an environmentally relevant activity after 1 July but were carrying on that activity at 30 June 1996. So if persons were carrying on an activity at the end of June and they have made application and they are still carrying on that activity on 1 July, then presumably those persons are exempt from the offence provisions for a period. This is an awfully cumbersome way of dealing with this problem. However, given the circumstances in which the Minister has left himself, there is no other truly effective way of dealing with it.

With regard to the validation provisions—and I will turn to some specifics in a moment—they would have to be the most convoluted and cumbersome piece of legislative drafting that I have seen for a long, long time. Even though I do not recall any, I recall criticisms from then Opposition spokespeople that this type of drafting occurred under the previous Government. Coalition members are certainly in no position now to make any further criticisms about the quality of legislative drafting that previous Governments have introduced, because the provisions relating to validation are absolute doozies. They are quite extraordinary. I might mention a couple of them. One provision states—

> "An unlawful past act is taken to be, and always to have been, authorised to be done or omitted to be done under this Act."

What an extraordinary provision! That is a piece of legislative drafting that lets one do whatever one likes whenever one likes without any consequences.

Mr FitzGerald: It doesn't cover the future.

Mr WELFORD: We had better have a look at that, because who knows? The further one goes into this legislation, the more confusing it becomes, and one starts to wonder whether there is anything that is not allowed.

Mr Littleproud: What clause is that?

Mr WELFORD: Clause 27, proposed section 247. The clause goes on to state—

> "An application made during the suspension period for, or for the amendment or transfer of, an environmental authority is taken to have been made on 8 March . . ."

That may be of some assistance to the Minister in sorting out just when licences are required by or just when the period during which the department's consideration of a licence must be carried out, but the Act becomes almost incomprehensible as a result.

The Minister made some comments during his second-reading speech which I believe need to be addressed. Firstly, he stated that part of the purpose of this legislation is to address "the inequities and anomalies so apparent under the Environmental Protection Act but which had eluded the attentions of the previous Government". One matter which had not eluded the attention of the previous Government was the concern that might have been expressed about the impact of licence fees. If that is what the Minister is talking about, then he is misleading the House. It is

false to claim that that matter eluded the previous Government. The reality was——

Mr Littleproud: You ignored it.

Mr WELFORD: We did not ignore it. As the Minister well knows, there are already provisions in the regulations which address the impact of licence fees on business and give a discretion to local authorities to vary licence fees accordingly. There were certainly no inequities under the legislation which had eluded our attention when we were in Government; in fact, we had addressed them. What the Minister is doing here is trying to create a false shadow which he then proceeds to box under the pretence that this legislation was ever justified.

Some of the typographical errors and drafting errors could have been included under the provisions of the legislation that the Office of Parliamentary Counsel can use to address such matters. Those errors did not require legislation, although it is appropriate to include them if there are substantive issues to be addressed in amending legislation. Apart from the complete mess that the Minister made of his attempt at the moratorium, there was nothing that required legislation of this type. The Minister is simply creating a smokescreen behind which he is attempting to hide by suggesting that there was anything that our Government missed that justified this legislation. Let it be clearly understood that this legislation is required for one reason, and one reason only: because the Minister and the Government have made a hash of their attempt to allow polluters to escape their responsibilities for another four months, and possibly six months.

The Minister mentioned another matter in his second-reading speech. He stated that one of the things the Bill does is to clarify the term "environmental nuisance", making it clear that the provisions dealing with environmental harm apply also to environmental nuisance. I can only suggest to the Minister, out of the most friendly advice, that he read his speeches——

Mr FitzGerald: That's free.

Mr WELFORD: It is free. I am a solicitor. Come to me any time. I am here to help you! I suggest that the Minister take a moment to read through his speeches before he actually delivers them. In reality, this legislation does nothing to clarify the meaning of "environmental nuisance". There was never a reference to "environmental nuisance" in the Act before the Minister introduced it with this amending Bill. So this legislation does not clarify "environmental nuisance". What the Minister meant to say was that the legislation clarifies the meaning of "environmental harm", which is defined in the Act.

Mr Foley: It's a generous contribution to Law Week.

Mr WELFORD: It is indeed. I acknowledge the very kind reference by the shadow Attorney to my contribution to assisting the Minister on basic matters such as this during Law Week. Perhaps it would be appropriate if I continued after lunch.

Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.30 p.m.

Mr WELFORD: As I was saying before the luncheon adjournment, the amendments to this legislation have the potential to create enormous confusion. I turn now to some particular elements of that confusion. One of the things which this amending legislation purports to do is allocate powers to local government. In particular, clause 17, which relates to the amendment of section 196 of the Act, seems to be extraordinarily broad. I know that it has drawn comment from the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. It expands the powers of local government to make provision for fees by way of resolution, not just local law. Previously, any adjustment to fees for which the previous Government provided had to be made by local law. This expands that to allow the adjustment to be made by resolution of the local authority. I have no particular objection to that.

However, paragraph (b) of subsection (3) provides that the local government may make a law about any matter for which it is necessary or convenient to make provision for carrying out or giving effect to the devolved matter. Under this legislation, devolved matters are all those environmentally relevant activities for which local governments have authority to administer. In a quite extraordinary way, this provision signs away the authority of this Parliament to make appropriate laws for the administration of environmental protection. It means that local governments throughout the State—all 125 of them——

Mr Littleproud: 130.

Mr WELFORD:—give or take a few—can make their own local laws with respect to particular procedures for enforcing this legislation. Indeed, as long as it is not directly inconsistent with the substantive provisions of this Act, they can make their own local laws, for example, specifying what additional matters might be in environmental management plans.

So here we have an extraordinarily wide provision which gives local authorities the

power to expand upon the requirements of State legislation on an ad hoc basis from one council to the next without any mechanism for this Parliament to scrutinise that law-making process. I urge the Minister to turn his mind to that issue, otherwise we could have 120-odd different laws relating to environmental protection, quite clearly creating the potential for some local government areas to be set up as pollution havens for those businesses that want to skirt around the requirements that other local governments might impose over and above what is required in this legislation. So this provision is fraught with risk.

Obviously, given that nothing which is inconsistent with this legislation can be provided for in a local law, the requirements for environmental management plans and the licensing conditions for which this legislation provides cannot be watered down, they can only be increased by a local authority. So one might assume that, in some local authority areas, higher standards may be imposed and that, in other local authority areas, lower standards may be imposed. That may or may not be desirable in itself, but what is certainly undesirable is that this Parliament would have no way of monitoring or scrutinising the development of those additional impositions which local governments might create under their own local laws. So while I understand the flexibility which it is desirable to give local government with respect to the fees—and that is done in paragraph (a)—I simply alert the Minister to the fact that I believe that paragraph (b) is fraught with extraordinary risks for the Minister, this Government and the administration of this legislation. The Minister ought to give serious consideration to whether or not he allows it to proceed today.

I turn now to former section 240 which, presumably, is replaced by clause 24 of this Bill. I might point out what seem to be inconsistencies in the drafting of these amendments. For example, specific reference is made in clause 15 to the omission of section 89 and the insertion of a new section. But nowhere in this amending legislation is there specific reference to the omission of section 240, yet a proposed new section 240 is inserted. One would imagine that there are not going to be two separate sections 240. There seems to be an inconsistency in the way this Bill is drafted. In some instances, sections that are replaced are first omitted and then replaced. However, section 240 is not omitted, but a new one is inserted. Proposed new section 251 is very confusing. Section 240 is replaced by clause——

Mr Littleproud: 240 is replaced by 251.

Mr WELFORD: That is right. Section 240 is replaced by section 251. However, section 251, along with a range of others, is dealt with under clause 27. Proposed new section 251 is the one to which I am referring. The original section 240 was simply a provision that allowed for regulations of a transitional nature to be made. In other words, regulations could be made for the transitional period between when the Act came into operation and when licences were required. It was that transitional provision which the Minister breached when he purported to make his second amendment to the regulations in early March. He purported to make the second amendment to the regulations under that transitional provision, but the provision itself had expired on 1 March.

Proposed new section 251 is an extraordinary provision. Again, it draws special reference from the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. In particular, it provides, by way of a regulation-making power, the opportunity to amend the legislation, that is, the substantive Act itself. Those members who are familiar with the extraordinary nature of this process would know that it is called a Henry VIII clause. In every Parliament of the world, according to proper parliamentary drafting practice, it is not appropriate to allow the Executive Government to make regulations which amend the substantive law. Yet that is what this provision purports to do.

The Alert Digest of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, which was tabled in the Parliament today, states—

> "Section 251(1)(b) allows a regulation to be made about any matter of a savings, transitional or validating nature *for which this part does not make provision or enough provision*. This sub-clause therefore clearly anticipates that the Bill may be inadequate and matter which otherwise would have been of sufficient importance to be dealt with in the Act will now be dealt with by regulation."

The Alert Digest continues—

> "In the Committee's view, this is not an appropriate delegation of legislative power. Since the predecessor of this committee (the Subordinate Legislation Committee) was established in 1975, it has consistently maintained that if a matter is of sufficient importance to be included in an Act of Parliament, that is the only appropriate place for it to be dealt with. Such a significant matter can not appropriately be dealt with by subordinate legislation."

The committee recommends the removal of proposed section 251(1)(b), and so it should. It is totally inappropriate for this legislation to authorise the validating provisions of this amending Bill and the Act itself to be further amended by regulation.

I have already given a certain level of acknowledgment to the Minister that this amendment was required because of the errors that were made with respect to regulations already passed, but I am not prepared to go so far as to authorise the Minister first to make mistakes and then to come into the House to validate them, and then to purport further to amend the substantive legislation to allow him to correct further mistakes without even coming back to the Parliament. That is entirely unsatisfactory. In the context of the Minister's undertaking to consult the broader community on his activities in this area, that is entirely hypocritical. I hope that the Minister takes that serious matter on board.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister referred to an amendment that ensured that where prescribed in an EPP, certain provision of a policy could be mandatorily imposed by an administering authority and therefore be legally enforceable. I may be missing something, but I cannot find any such amendment in the legislation. In relation to EPPs, the Minister stated that the previous Government adopted the term "policies", that is, environmental protection policies, in order to obtain a degree of uniformity with southern States, and that is true. However, he said that the term has led to some legal questions over the enforceability of provisions of the draft environmental protection policies. In his second-reading speech, the Minister said that there is an amendment in the Bill that addresses the question of enforceability of the draft environmental protection policies. In his reply, I would like the Minister to point to the amendment that addresses that matter, because on my reading of the amending Bill, I have not found one. The Minister might further clarify just what legal questions of enforceability are problematic with respect to the draft EPP, because he does not outline them in his second-reading speech. To the extent that there are such questions, the Minister he does not seem to address them in any amendment that I can identify in this legislation.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the protocol that had been established previously with local government. I endorse his action on that front. It is absolutely critical that, in the administration of this legislation, there be close cooperation between State and local governments. Although local governments will be responsible largely for the leg work involved in ensuring that local businesses in local government areas are brought up to standard, they will rely very heavily on the advice, assistance and information that the State Government and the Minister's department in particular will provide. I am pleased to see that he will maintain that close cooperation.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister said that—and I wonder whether it was said almost facetiously—after ratifying those decisions, the Bill provides substantive outcomes that will immediately improve community understanding of the Environmental Protection Act. I wish him well. As I have outlined here today, there are any number of provisions in this legislation that I imagine will do anything but improve anyone's understanding, least of all the community's understanding of this legislation. It is going to be difficult enough for the Minister and his department to follow, without suggesting that it will improve the community understanding. I am only hopeful that other information will be distributed by the Minister and his department to give the community and, in particular, those businesses that are conducting environmentally relevant activities a clearer understanding of their responsibilities under the spirit of this law.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister mentioned the proposal—which was an election promise, in contrast to the ministerial advisory committee—to establish an environmental protection council. He said that that will be established in the second half of this year. While it is not directly related to the legislation, I invite the Minister to reinforce that statement to his colleagues in the Government, because I noticed in the press just last week, in his column in his local newspaper, Mr Perrett, a Government Minister, was proudly proclaiming that the Minister for Environment has established the environmental protection council. Either Mr Perrett has jumped the gun or the Minister has made a mistake or misled the House. Just one week after the second-reading speech was delivered, it is out of date. The Ministers of this Government are the left hand that does not know what the right hand is doing.

Mr Fouras: What's new?

Mr WELFORD: Indeed, as the member for Ashgrove says, "What is new?"

I draw that article to the attention of members of the Government and not only the Minister, because the members of the coalition have been trying to beef up their environmental credentials by pretending that they have done something positive rather than the negative steps that have been taken. In reality, there is no environmental protection council yet in place, and those members of the Government who are pretending otherwise in their local papers are simply misleading their constituents.

An appropriate point on which to conclude is another reference to the second-reading speech and the Minister's comment that in fine tuning environmental policy he proposes to consult with the community, explaining how the policy changes affect their livelihoods and their quality of life. To date, what has occurred in the way of consultation? The Minister took office in a blaze of panic, inflaming fear among small business where no fear needed to be. He is maintaining the legislation, and so he should. He has acknowledged that provision already existed in the legislation to relieve business of the hardship that might accrue from any licence fee. However, under the pretence of making some positive change to the law, he has introduced an amending Bill which remedies a comedy of errors. In his reply, the Minister might give those of us in the community who have some vestige of concern for environmental matters, unlike some of his back bench, a reassurance that the extraordinarily provocative and negligent statements and media comment, such as that coming from Mr Lester and other members of his back bench, who want the entire legislation abolished, that he will not acquiesce——

Mr LESTER: I rise to a point of order. There is no way in the world that I said I wanted it abolished. I find the honourable member's comments offensive, and I am taken aback by them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr J. N. Goss): Order! The member finds those comments offensive and asks for them to be withdrawn.

Mr WELFORD: I withdraw. Later, I will take the opportunity to table the comments made in that media release in which——

A Government member: Haven't you got it here?

Mr WELFORD: I do not have it with me, no. Why do I need it? I will table it later.

The member for Keppel said that the Government should abandon the legislation. He said that it should scrap it and start again.

Mr Lester: You made a mess of it.

Mr WELFORD: There was nothing wrong with it before the Government made a mess of it; that is the point. A month ago, when Mr Lester made that comment, I did not agree with him. However, with each new development from this Government, I am becoming increasingly at one with the member for Keppel, because too many more amending Bills like this and we will have to scrap the legislation and start again; it will be disaster.

I urge the Minister to consult and take a more open and proper approach to consultation than the ambush approach to consultation that he has taken so far in his deliberate attempts to lock out genuine input from environmental groups. I urge him also to give the House the assurance that he will not acquiesce but will maintain the standards of environmental protection that the previous Government worked long and hard to put in place in the face of the outrageous and environmentally vandalistic approach that is advocated by members of his own back bench. They are desperate to make a knee-jerk response to the loony extremists in their electorates who do not care about the toxins they throw into the creeks or emit into the air. If the Minister has any serious commitment to this legislation, and he says repeatedly that he does, then he will dissociate himself from the comments of people such as the member for Keppel, who advocates that these important, fundamental environmental protection standards be abandoned.

Subject to the matters that I have raised, it is clear that the Opposition opposes fundamental elements of this legislation. Of course, the Opposition does not pretend to oppose some of the smaller corrections to the existing legislation. However, because the substantive purpose of this Bill is to remedy errors which the Opposition says should never have been made, it will be voting against it. During the Committee stage, the Opposition will propose an amendment, query some sections of the legislation and, subject to the Minister's clarifications, vote accordingly.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel) (2.51 p.m.): I am quite pleased that the Minister has delayed introducing this legislation to at least allow people to state their views. I made it very, very clear indeed that the existing legislation just would not work. Many of the people affected by that legislation were not consulted at all, and I can assure members that the comments I made at the time that legislation was debated needed to

be made. I was astounded earlier when the member for Everton referred to those small-business people who have come to me with problems because of further taxation and further levies as "loonies". This afternoon, the Labor Party has said that all small-business people are a pack of loonies! I do not think that is very good. However, it indicates where the Labor Party is coming from.

On coming to office after six and a half years of a Labor Government, this Government inherited neglect and mismanagement. The Labor Government did not care. That has been demonstrated this afternoon by the Minister calling small-business people a pack of loonies. The previous Labor Government did not listen and it introduced legislation that was impractical, unfair and totally ineffective.

Mr FitzGerald: The member said that, not the Minister.

Mr LESTER: I had to make sure that the Minister was listening. He was, which is good. It is now on the record that it was the member for Everton and not the Minister who called small-business people a pack of loonies. That is really what the exercise was about.

Mr WELFORD: I rise to a point of order. The member for Keppel is really desperate. He misrepresents me. My point of order is that I said that people such as the member for Keppel were responding to an element of lunatic extremists in small business. I did not say that all small-business people are lunatics.

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

Mr LESTER: There are no lunatic small-business people in the electorate of Keppel. Not one of them is a lunatic. I can assure members that I had to defend the small-business people in my electorate.

There is no better example of Labor's inability to understand how to address problems than the fiasco of environmental legislation. This Government remains committed to protecting the environment, but it believes that a balance can be struck between protection and sustainable development. That is really the only way that we are ever going to get ahead in Queensland. At the end of the day, if we have impractical, unworkable legislation, we do not have any protection at all. It would be only a matter of time before the shortcomings of the existing legislation surfaced and its intent would be lost.

To achieve a successful result, this Government believes that it is vital to listen to the concerns of all sections of the community. That is what I was doing when I consulted my constituents. If the previous Government had bothered to make the same effort as I made and listened to the concerns of small business, local government and other bodies about the regulatory provisions of the Environmental Protection Act, then we would not be in the mess that we are in today.

The environmental protection regulations were due to come into effect on 1 March this year—just a few days after this Government, which the people of Queensland elected in July last year, was sworn in. Because of the confusion over the licensing provisions of the Environmental Protection Act, many businesses had not applied for licences. Local governments, which had the responsibility for determining fees and issuing licences, were confused about the scale of the fees and the licensing process. They did not quite know what to do because they really did not know the intent of the legislation, how it worked or anything else.

Mr Dollin: About time you fixed it.

Mr LESTER: The member says it is time that we fixed it. That is what we are doing! I cannot understand why on earth the previous Government did not fix it in the first place. This Government is fixing it. Under no circumstances could the previous Government have brought the existing legislation into effect on 1 March. That legislation had no chance in the world because the previous Government had mucked it up.

On coming to office, this Government acted swiftly and declared a moratorium on licensing requirements so that the mess left by the previous Government could be sorted out. That is what we are doing—sorting out the mess by listening to the people. Despite what the member for Everton says and what my friend from Maryborough believes and continues to carry on about, the environmental protection provisions remain in force in this legislation. Businesses that are engaged in environmentally relevant activities have been told to apply for licences.

Since the Labor Government and, in particular, the previous Minister would not listen to the concerns of business, I will inform members opposite why they were worried about the Act. Larger industries were concerned that the previous Government had no supporting environmental protection policies to guide them. Under the provisions of the existing Act, they were unsure about the

cost of compliance. Larger industries requested quite reasonable changes to the schedule of activities within the regulations. However, the previous Government did not listen and it did not act.

Small businesses were concerned about the magnitude of fees which would have been imposed upon them, particularly when they were causing little or no environmental harm. That is where the former Government went bung on this particular legislation. Small businesses were being asked to comply with other environmental regulations—indeed, they did not really quite know what they were being asked to comply with. They complained that there was no flexibility, and because neither they nor local government had full knowledge of the rules, there were substantial variations in the levels of fees which were to be applied. Worse, the regulations took no account of the scale of operations, so that small businesses were being hit with the same licence fees as much larger businesses. This was unfair to all concerned.

Even more damning, the necessary procedures required to implement the regulations were not in place by the required date. How on earth can we proceed with legislation when the regulations are not there? Although businesses engaged in environmentally relevant activities were required to apply for licences, and many did, the bureaucratic support services to process the applications did not exist. The uncertainty that was created in both business and local government through the pressure to meet unreasonable implementation deadlines simply created widespread confusion and concern.

I will give honourable members a few examples. A small foundry on the Sunshine Coast employing 60 people at four sites applied for a licence within the time frame. It still has not had any inspections to advise on compliance requirements in terms of monitoring emissions or on noise levels. The local council has been unable to advise it on supervising its waste stream or on an appropriate recycling strategy for its wastes. It does not yet know what additional plant and equipment it might have to install to comply with the Act. And honourable members should remember: a lot of this plant has to be specially made. The company is concerned that the compliance cost might result in its becoming less efficient and its product more expensive, making it less competitive in relation to similar businesses elsewhere. That means that we may end up importing products that are not as environmentally friendly as ours are.

Another example is a small food processing company located west of Brisbane. It is the biggest employer in its small community, employing about 30 people, depending on the season. All its vegetable scraps are used for cattle fodder and it has to meet local council regulations in relation to the quality of its waste water. Because it is a small community, the company is closely monitored by the local council with which it works closely. Monitoring of this company has been going on all along, in cooperation with the council. However, the former Government came along and required the company to pay a licence fee equal to that paid by a major processing company employing hundreds of people and producing thousands of tonnes of product per year. How on earth could a small company compete with that company? Apart from the fact that it did not hear about the regulations until the last minute, this small company is struggling because of the drought, and now the rain, and the general economic mismanagement of Opposition members and their Labor mates in Canberra. Now the company has to pay approximately $10,000 for a consultant to find out what it has to do to comply with the legislation, in order to duplicate a process that it had in place and which suited the local council requirements. In addition, farmers in the area, engaged in similar activities, do not necessarily have to comply with the regulations because those activities are not clearly defined. An environmentally responsible, small family business is being hit with a double whammy and unnecessary compliance costs to meet regulations which are not being fairly applied and which do not take into account the scale of the operation, as bigger businesses pay the same fees.

Mr Schwarten: You said about the farmers. Do you think they should pay? Do you think they should be included in it?

Mr LESTER: I am coming to that. A small Brisbane brick-making business, employing 150 people, applied for a licence as required, but its application was rejected as unacceptable. It then employed a consultant at $1,000 per day to amend the application and resubmit it. Guess what? It was then told that the Department of Mines and Energy would process the application. Apparently, no-one knew what was going on, let alone what was required to comply with the regulations. That business is affected by the downturn in the building industry which the former Government and its Canberra mates unfortunately created. In addition to economic uncertainty, the company still does not know

what to budget for in terms of meeting the compliance costs of the legislation. The company is not unhappy about being environmentally responsible; it is unhappy about the process which the Opposition put in place which is cumbersome, costly and difficult for everybody to understand. The list goes on.

Small businesses are concerned about the costs and the scale of the fees. Everybody is concerned about the bureaucratic nightmare of applications, inspections, uncertainty of compliance costs, the complexity of the regulations and confusion about implementation. The Government is simply trying to get some order into the chaos created by the former Government when it overreacted to claims that industry was responsible for messing up the environment. I say: hold your fire, boys! Sit quietly and see how the environment can be protected in a professional and lasting way, and then compare the Government's results with the Labor Party's knee-jerk reaction. The Government believes this legislation is necessary, and will give careful consideration to the subject before the legislation is finalised.

Mr D'ARCY (Woodridge) (3.08 p.m.): I join this debate on a more global basis by saying that too often we see coming before this House legislation that is produced by bureaucrats organised by Governments with the best intentions that turns around and gives us a result that we do not hope for.

As other members did, I give the House an example from my electorate of Woodridge. A small tin smelter, Northern Smelters, which employs only a handful of people, came under this regulation. If the original legislation had been implemented without consultation, that smelter would have closed down. Del Hayes runs that smelter, and although its closure would not necessarily have worried him, it would have put two or three Woodridge families out of work and left a gap in the community. It would also have left a gap in the industry. As some honourable members have pointed out, industries such as these are valuable to Australia, particularly when there is only a very small number of them left. In fact, I think that Northern Smelters is the smallest of only two or three smelters left in Australia. I repeat that bureaucrats sometimes go over the top with some of the legislation that they ask us to pass in this Parliament, without the inclusion of a grandfather clause to protect people who have been operating successfully and fulfilling a role within society.

The single most important task confronting us is the preservation of the environment and its long-term protection. Although the environment must be protected, we also need a balance. When one looks at what Ministers of all political persuasions have done, it seems to me that there is not enough cooperation. An interesting statement was made at a recent conference on wetlands. The State Environment Minister, Mr Brian Littleproud, was quoted as saying that the most significant threat to Queensland wetlands was the way in which decisions were made. He said also that more cooperation was needed between State agencies to improve conservation and management.

In speaking to proposed coastal protection and management legislation, Ms Robson stated that the Government would be able to obtain a quicker process for development applications with environmental considerations up front. She stated that the new legislation would give developers a clear idea at the planning stage of what was and what was not allowed to be approved in development sites. In this place, we often all have the same goals; we all set out to achieve the same thing—the best outcome for Queenslanders. However, many groups have a vested interest and there is so much legislation that things often get confusing. Our expectations on members of the public often become confused when our measures are interpreted by the bureaucrats and agencies we employ. This often means that the average Queenslander loses business and is confused. Consequently, we do not achieve the desired result.

Over many years, I have been an advocate of streamlining development processes but at the same time protecting the environment. Coastal management is something for which I have fought since I came into this Parliament. Although Governments have brought about changes, those changes have often been corrupted in one form or another by bureaucrats. In some cases, because of these changes we see the type of development that is not what Queenslanders of the future will want, either environmentally or commercially. A lot of such developments are not acceptable. The fact is that, if we had a fully streamlined and proper approach in which all considerations were taken into account, we would not see the type of mess that we end up dealing with at every level. When we look at some of the developments that take place on the coast of Queensland in particular, we see that it appears to be only those developers who manage to browbeat the local council, break every law in the book and every small Act who

are successful in the end. Such developers say in the media, "Look, the mangroves have all gone. The place is an environmental disaster, anyway. Let me develop it." I am not pointing the bone at anyone, but the point is that that is what has been happening along the coast of Queensland.

Had we had the proper legislation, we would have had strategic plans for the coastline of Queensland, and developers would know from day one whether they could develop and what they could develop in particular areas. Those areas that we did not want them to develop would be sacrosanct. Before my time in this place comes to pass, I hope that a future Government will get struck by lightning as on the road to Damascus, and we are able to introduce long-term, sustainable economic legislation that will allow development to take place with consideration for the environment.

I wish to speak about some of the ways in which people and areas get around this type of development. I return to coastal management. This piece of legislation will give councils the power to administer the regulations and the application of environmental legislation. A very good friend with whom I went to school has been on a country council for 20 years. He always says to me, "Bill, what should happen is that councils shouldn't have powers over planning, because they don't understand it. They do not have the ability." Yet in this place we seem to keep foisting these types of powers onto councils when, in many cases, they do not have the qualifications to apply or understand them. It is a worry that we do not have more regional and strategic planning.

I wish to refer to a recent example. I will not name the council, because it will end up in the newspapers. Under coastal management, we often see flood mitigation programs. For example, an engineer will recommend that a safe creek be destroyed along with the mangroves. It is ripped up using bulldozers and widened with cement and wire. The result is a great big drain, which previously was a fish breeding ground. That work is done upon obtaining a mangrove removal permit from the DPI, which the council applies for. However, if we read some of the other legislation in this State, we will find that it is illegal to remove mangroves, that is, unless it is the DPI or the council and it wants, for example, to build a golf course. We can speak about protection for the environment, but in this State the fact of life is that these are the types of applications that get through. It is an indictment of the system that we at this level cannot administer programs of this nature properly because the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. Developers push through a lot of developments in illegal areas because we do not have strong enough legislation.

In my 20-odd years in this place, I have been pressing for that type of legislation. Nobody has come up with successful legislation. In most cases, such legislation has been changed by bureaucrats. Honourable members can sell the idea to every member in this House that we want full and open environmental protection, but the moment we reach the stage of applying it, one bureaucrat says, "That's my corner. I'm not giving that up." As a consequence, the development and the plan stalls and we come back again to amend legislation to try to introduce regulations being suggested by one side or another.

As I said, the clinical questions of who applies the fees, who collects them, what should they be, who should be fined and who should not, should really be addressed as part of the whole planning process. For example, when we chip around the edges of an environmental Act to fix up something that somebody got partially wrong, we might end up with a bigger mess than we started with. That is basically what members on this side of House are saying. Mr Lester and the shadow Minister might have got it right. They said that perhaps we should go back to the drawing boards, start from scratch and wipe out some of the bureaucratic decisions that have been made and the number of people who have a finger in the pie.

Be it this legislation, coastal management legislation or environmental legislation, if we look at the big picture and say in this Parliament, "We want to achieve proper and real environmental change in Queensland that is sustainable in the long term, be it coastal protection or addressing pollution", we have to adopt a streamlined approach. If honourable members and the public of Queensland understand and support it, the bureaucrats will not be able to mangle it.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands) (3.17 p.m.): The Environmental Protection Amendment Bill 1996 is a timely and necessary move to address the shortcomings of the environmental legislation introduced by the former Labor Government, a Government which, in spite of concerns expressed by organisations such as the LGAQ, the QCCI, the MTIA, the QFF, small business and the others who cried out when the legislation was

being introduced, would not listen. The former Minister for Environment procrastinated for three or four months until his dilemma was relieved by our coming into office. The member for Woodridge is obviously one of the few thinking members on his side of the House, because he recognised that the previous legislation was far from perfect. I commend him on his foresight in that regard.

A number of points have been raised by members on the opposite side of the House both today and previously in relation to this environmental Bill. After six years of failure to formulate legislation that would provide the right protection for the environment—something which members on both sides of the House want to achieve—it is rather a sad situation that the Opposition is now claiming that the Government is not doing the right thing by trying to tidy up the mess and providing some degree of certainty and commonsense that is required so that all the players in this scenario—the business sector, people concerned for the environment; everyone who has a place in Queensland society and Australia as a whole—can go about their business while providing for the maintenance and ongoing preservation of the environment in as pristine condition as possible.

The thrust of the previous legislation was to unnecessarily penalise people who were essentially trying to do the right thing—trying to preserve the environment and trying to go about their daily business in a careful and considerate way. Unfortunately, the previous legislation was framed in such a way that some people were being penalised for doing the right thing. Such an approach offers no encouragement to anyone. After decades of ignorance when we did not pay it the attention that it warranted, we are now finally starting to address the preservation of the environment. Given that our economy is emerging from a period of stagnation caused both by Government policy and the world economy, we should be saying to small businesses and others, "We will give you a chance to get back on your feet." Only if we have a prosperous society can we address the fundamental philosophical issues involved with caring for the environment. That comment relates directly to the previous legislation, which sought to penalise those who could have provided the funding for bigger and better environmental initiatives.

I am sure that all members would support more resources being allocated to protect the environment. But as we all know, everything comes at a price. Governments can spend only as much money as they collect. Revenue is generated through taxation and the other fees and charges which are usually levied on business as a significant provider of Government income. Let us be clear in our minds that we must protect the goose that lays the golden egg. This amending legislation is designed to achieve that end.

It is not the intention of the Government that polluters get off scot-free during the interim period of the moratorium. The environmental harm provisions included in the Act are not being removed or tampered with in any way. The administering bodies—the councils—need to be clear on how to administer the regulatory provisions covering the licensing aspect of the legislation. Most local governments are reeling under the responsibilities that have been thrust upon them over a number of years in different areas. The environment is just another example of that.

Most councils take environmental issues seriously. I would not be too far short of the mark in suggesting that the vast majority of councils in all parts of this State and all over Australia adopt a fairly responsible attitude towards the environmental issues under their charge. When we devolve to local governments the responsibility for administering an Act, we must give them the tools with which to do so effectively. Local governments have raised many questions about the regulatory provisions of the Environmental Protection Act. For that reason alone, this amending legislation is not a bad thing. Anything that is taken on without clear direction can have horrendous ramifications. Even with all the best intentions, local authorities could have made extra imposts upon small businesses and could have demanded excessive requirements from them. This uncertainty needs to be addressed quickly so that we do not head down the wrong path.

The member for Everton referred to the composition of the committee established by the Minister to clear up the confusion which currently exists. The member for Everton claimed that the committee did not have any community involvement and that the players were floundering in trying to come to some resolution. Although I do not have any direct knowledge of the deliberations of the committee to date, I do know that when one tries to assemble a cross-section of the community in order to take a broad approach to a particular issue, it is not always possible to get everybody to agree with one another. Although there are players who have gladly

taken up the opportunity to serve on the committee, some other players who were invited to participate chose not to do so. That is the prerogative of any group in the community. It has to make a decision on whether it will abide by the rules of consensus and work harmoniously with other community groups. Some groups choose not to be involved in a certain process if the agenda is not going to be set by them or if it does not follow the course that they want to follow. It is unfair and inaccurate for the member for Everton to allege that the committee that the Minister has established is not representative because several people have chosen not to take up the offer to participate.

The Opposition seems to be obsessed with the aspect of licensing. That is not the thrust of this amending legislation. It is not about the collection of fees; it is about the protection of the environment. If we can make that distinction, we will go a long way to realising what this legislation is trying to achieve. The licensing process aims to identify those businesses which need to be monitored because of the type of activity in which they are engaged. But to collect fees from businesses for doing the right thing in providing the necessary equipment and infrastructure to mitigate the effects on the environment of the by-product of their activities is not the best method of protecting the environment. I want to highlight that point. We should not penalise those businesses which are endeavouring to provide the necessary equipment. They have incurred a lot of expense in just meeting their obligations under the new regulations to dispose of their harmful by-products. We should not impose a further heavy fee on them. As has been pointed out by other speakers, that fee is not always commensurate with their activities. There seems to be a standard fee for large and small operations. In that regard, we have to ask: are we being fair and equitable? I reiterate that small businesses should not have to suffer through unnecessarily heavy imposts.

If we consider the thrust of these amendments, the sentiment behind them and the objective that they are trying to achieve, there should not be too many objections from the Opposition to this legislation. A few technical aspects of the clauses have been highlighted, and I do not believe that anyone will object if those matters are rectified, but that is up to the Minister. In conclusion—I believe that we have moved in an appropriate and timely fashion to correct the shortcomings of the Environmental Protection Act. I believe that we will gain the support not only of business but also of the environment movement and the public at large in our efforts to maintain the environment in the most pristine condition possible. I support the Bill.

Mrs ROSE (Currumbin) (3.30 p.m.): I am pleased to speak to the Environmental Protection Amendment Bill 1996. However, this Bill does little more than further delay the implementation of regulatory reforms under the Environmental Protection Act. The moratorium, which this Government claims is necessary to provide more time to review the wide range of adverse impacts on business, is merely an attempt to influence business and industry into thinking that the Act, in its present form, is formulated in such a way as to have a detrimental effect on them. That is not the case. The majority of businesses have overcome any inconvenience or uncertainty that they may have had, and they have acknowledged the long-term benefits, both in economic and environmental gains. They also acknowledge that the licensing enforcement guidelines are necessary to reduce risks to the environment so that the best environmental outcome is achieved for all concerned. I do not believe that postponing the licensing is welcomed by the majority of business and industry, as they see it as this Government's procrastinating on yet another of its environmental promises.

The Environmental Protection Act is one of the most important landmark pieces of legislation that the former Labor Government introduced. It is to the credit of former Labor Environment Ministers Pat Comben, Molly Robson and Tom Barton that this State was rescued from the slash, burn and develop-at-any-cost era of the previous National Party Government.

There is an expectation in the community that Governments provide the legislative provisions which will ensure the protection of the environment. There is an acceptance in the business, industry and rural sectors that they have a role to play in the formulation of environmental policies and management. Only with a collaborative effort will we minimise the impacts that may be felt in some sections of industry. The previous Labor Government recognised business and industry as essential parts of the community and consulted widely with them during the drafting of the Environmental Protection Act.

There is recognition in the business community that cooperation between Government and industry is preferable to a

Government-imposed regulation approach. Business and industry on the southern Gold Coast have been very cooperative in developing and establishing environmental protection measures. They are keen to comply with best practice standards in relation to environmental management and protection. The wider southern Gold Coast community has a deep appreciation of our natural local environment. We are fortunate to live in an area with two very diverse natural environments. To the east, the southern Gold Coast boasts some of the world's most beautiful beaches. To the west, merely kilometres away, is the spectacular Mount Cougal National Park, which preserves areas of open forest and rainforest.

The southern Gold Coast community as a whole welcomed legislation which provided the mechanisms for environmentally responsible practices which could actually save money for business and the community. They can see the benefits in the Environmental Protection Act to our Gold Coast community which, each year, welcomes thousands of tourists who visit the area to enjoy its natural beauty and benefits. Our communities welcomed the Environmental Protection Act, which would protect the coast's environment, along with the other natural wonders and environs of our State. They welcomed the efforts of the Labor Government in meeting the challenge of providing laws to protect, restore and enhance the quality of the environment in balance with maintaining ecologically sustainable development.

On the other hand, the coalition Government, by its dillydallying, has put our environment at risk. Future generations in Queensland will hold this Government in contempt for any attempt to water down the former Labor Government's commitment to the environment. One could be forgiven for feeling that we are going back to the future when this Government, in its infancy, seems to be no more attuned to environmental issues than were the Governments which ruled Queensland in the sixties, seventies and eighties. It is a sad indictment of members opposite, who claim to represent people in the interests of the environment, if they support delaying legislation that was designed to keep our State special. Those members should have the courage to stand up for their constituents and demand that this State and, indeed, the Gold Coast get the environmental protection they deserve.

Members opposite have selective recall when it comes to remembering their promises to protect the environment before the last election. They cave in to the concerns of a select few who still want to make a profit at the expense of our fragile environment. This vote today will be a test of the coalition's commitment to looking after the environment. The Government's move to delay Labor's legislation will have far-reaching impacts if allowed to proceed. As I mentioned earlier, the environment will be the main loser. However, other areas will also suffer. The hundreds of thousands of people who visit the Gold Coast each year because of its environment inject billions of dollars into the economy and provide thousands of jobs. This Government, through its actions, places those dollars and, consequently, jobs at risk. People do not want to visit the Gold Coast or Queensland to see polluted rivers or beaches. They come from Japan, Britain, Korea and Sydney to escape environmental degradation. It appears that the coalition wants our State to be no different from those places.

Businesses on the Gold Coast understand that they need to play a role in preserving our environment. Under the former Labor Government, the Act ensured that our State's environment received the protection it deserved. The Labor Government responded to calls from the community to reform environmental management measures. Queenslanders and, most certainly, southern Gold Coasters want clean rivers, fresh air and safe disposal of hazardous and toxic wastes. The Environmental Protection Act provided for enforcement of environmental standards, and those people who chose to ignore their environmental duty did so at the expense of the environment, the community and all those who obey the law. Those who break the law should pay a penalty for any damage that they cause to the environment.

One component of the legislation is the devolution of enforcement powers to local authorities. Local governments of the past in the Gold Coast region have shown little or no regard for the environment. Development and profit dollars were a priority for many aldermen and Government representatives on the Gold Coast. There has been some change in this attitude by many councillors who acknowledge that the haphazard development of the past has left a permanent blur and caused irreversible environmental damage to our coastline. The Government must ensure that local governments do enforce the regulations. They cannot be allowed to abrogate their responsibility to supervise and apply penalties when the regulations have been breached, regardless of who breaches the regulations.

Environmental awareness is not good enough by itself. It means providing the legislative processes for the enforcement of management practices in environmental protections. Those regulations as laid down in the Act should be implemented. I will be joining with the Opposition in opposing this amendment Bill.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook) (3.39 p.m.): I rise to support this legislation and the moratorium that has been placed on the Environmental Protection Act. I would like to traverse the importance of small business. Small business really has the capacity to employ large numbers of people and, over time, that has proved to be the case. In fact, if an additional worker were placed in each small business, we would not have anywhere near the current unemployment levels or the number of social security payouts.

Small business has been burdened with the requirements of a tax file number, superannuation, workers' compensation and workplace health and safety. Those are the sorts of things with which business must comply. Before an employer makes a dollar, these are the sorts of things that he or she must take notice of and comply with. Small businesses, being small operators, often do not have the capacity of larger businesses to operate the you-beaut computer programs that ease the workload involved in implementing Government regulations.

Problems have existed in the past and still exist in relation to apprenticeships. Small business tradespeople are reluctant to take on apprentices. That is critical, because it results in a reduction in the trained work force. If more people are not trained by skilled tradespeople, Australia will find itself looking elsewhere for tradespeople. Many countries, such as Malaysia, have to look beyond their own country for skilled workers. England certainly finds itself in that position and seeks people from the Continent to provide the special skills required.

Many small businesses have retracted to become one-man operations. As I have said, those operators find it extremely difficult to contend with all the regulations involved in employing staff, which require a considerable amount of book work. As a result, many small operators have decided to dispense with staff and do whatever they can on their own, so as to avoid the rigours of tax file numbers, superannuation and other requirements. Those operators are struggling and have great difficulty staying afloat. Many of them are on the bread line. Some of them are working for less than a fair reward for their efforts.

Too often small businesses have had to pay the same environmental protection levy as larger organisations. When considering the environmental protection legislation, very little consultation was carried out by the Government of the day with groups representing small business. The former Government may have consulted the big operators, but the small operators did not get much of a say, and they are finding it pretty hard going to comply with that legislation. For example, boilermakers or engineering electrical machine manufacturers have to pay a fee of $500. A small business operator in that field pays $500, which is the same fee paid by the very big multinationals. Motor vehicle workshops pay $500. Sometimes very large agencies, which compete against small operators, have the capacity to pay $500 without affecting profits, but that is a large sum to small operators. Sawmills are in the same category. You-beaut, computerised sawmills pay the same licence fee as a sawmill that employs only three or four people. Battery reprocessors pay a very high fee—$1,880.

Anyone who wanted to engage in an aquaculture venture would think twice before starting up under the process of the former Government. They would have to find a licence fee of between $500 and $3,300, depending on the size of their ponds, and that is before the viability of the business had been proved. In my electorate, new ventures in that industry are experiencing considerable problems getting off the ground, and they do not need deterrents such as an environmental protection levy or the difficulties associated with compliance. Certainly, they should ensure that they fit into the environment and that the discharges are properly dealt with. However, such operators pay only a flat fee of $400 in Victoria, and from $100 to $300 in South Australia, depending on the tonnage of their harvest. That is quite a substantial difference in an industry competing with southern States.

A piggery in New South Wales does not attract a licensing fee, but here in Queensland an operator would have to front up with $2,200. At least, I suppose, that would have kept an unemployed former Prime Minister where he belongs.

Storing chemicals in this State costs $1,740; it costs $400 in Victoria; and no fee is charged in New South Wales. Honourable members might think that it would be more attractive to operate a foundry in Queensland, where the licence fee is $5,540 per year, as

opposed to $10,000 in Victoria. However, the licensing requirement necessitates almost a complete weather station to monitor the effects of climate on emissions. Whether or not the operator would have to employ a meteorologist is a moot point. In Queensland, operators involved in alcohol distillation pay a fee of $5,540 per year; in South Australia, from $137 to $1,092; and there are no environmental licence fees in Victoria or New South Wales. That could place Bundaberg Rum on the endangered species list.

This Government is not opposed to the principle of user pays. It is not opposed to practical measures to control or monitor environmentally harmful or potentially harmful by-products of manufacturing industries. We are determined that Queenslanders will be environmentally responsible and we will deal with those who are irresponsible and who needlessly pollute the environment. We are equally determined that, whatever provisions are put in place to regulate the Environmental Protection Act, they will be fair, practical and enforceable.

I return to compliance, which is not clearly defined. Often large fees have been paid to consultants to unravel the mess. Costs to upgrade to required standards can be prohibitive. Many small businesses operate out of rented or leased premises. Structural changes are often required for compliance. Some of those businesses have a short-term tenure of lease and one must consider the building owner's position and whether he or she accepts those structural changes. Many small businesses have major problems in relation to compliance, particularly out of rented premises.

Consideration for staging the implementation of the necessary requirement of sound environmental policy will be a major undertaking. It does not matter which party is in Government, currently massive changes are occurring and there is little doubt that people have more impact on the environment today than ever before. The Minister has established a ministerial advisory committee, which will include five representatives from industry, three representatives from local government and two representatives from the environmental lobby.

It was somewhat disappointing that the environmental lobby decided not to participate. It is essential that its voice is heard and I believe that it should reconsider its position. If the environmental lobby does not participate, it will be left out. Later, it may decide that it wants to have a say but, by that time, it could be too late. If the environmental lobby is playing ducks and drakes, it should consider seriously what it is doing. The findings of that advisory committee will be valuable in deciding the best direction to take. We have to investigate the problems that have occurred with the existing legislation and I believe that this advisory committee could come to terms with some of those problems.

Apart from clearing up anomalies in the Act, this amending legislation gives business people breathing space during which they can put forward their concerns. I believe that there are a number of concerns, and I have touched on some of them very briefly. However, through representation on the ministerial advisory committee, business will be able to make the Government and the Minister aware of how the environmental protection levy is impacting on them. It is not just a matter of the levy; it is also the compliance. Those points are extremely important. I do not think any Government wants to place people who are contributing towards society in difficult circumstances. By the same token, this Government has the important task of ensuring that businesses have a minimum impact on the environment.

One might say that the environment is a delicate beast. We do not want environmental damage to reach the point of no return. I believe that we will have to be even more concerned about the environment in the future than we have been in the past. However, I think it is going down the wrong track to simply say to business, "You have to do this, you have to do that, you have a very limited amount of time in which to do it, and we will not pay a great deal of regard to your situation." The previous Government took something like two years to consider all the provisions that were incorporated in the Environmental Protection Act. This Government has taken only three months to amend it and, yes, as the shadow Minister has indicated, the Government might take a few more months to amend it further. However, it is extremely important legislation, and it may take a little longer to get it right.

I would like to touch briefly on the responsibility of councils to carry out the day-to-day administration of the Act. They have been placed in a very delicate position. There is a degree of uncertainty about what is happening with the current Act. After the legislation was passed, the former Government said to local authorities, "Here it is. You look after it. You administer it." There is very little doubt that councils are the best entities to administer the legislation. However,

they have to be well equipped to enable them to do so, and they do not want to have to try to resolve contentious issues. The degree of uncertainty in relation to the current Act has made the task difficult for councils.

The members opposite may criticise the Government but, when they were in Government, they were pretty slow to do much about such issues. I believe that a degree of discretion should be allowed under the Act. I am not referring to a discretion in relation to pollution; I am talking about a discretion as to how people go about complying with the Act. Certainly the polluter has to pay. There is very little question about that. The Act ensures that those people who are creating effluent are responsible for its disposal. However, if we reach the point at which the whole process is too onerous, we may well find that people will take short cuts. If people are in financial difficulties, they will probably not do the right thing if they can get away with it. If we say to them, "We want you to adopt a responsible attitude," I am absolutely certain that we will receive a good response.

This legislation relates to extremely important issues. The Minister has gone about addressing the problems in the best possible way. He is going to provide a level of consultation that was not available prior to this Government coming to office. I am certain that people who are experiencing difficulties will be listened to. At the end of the day, despite what the shadow Minister has said about some of the technicalities of the Act, there will be a greater level of goodwill because the stakeholders in industry will be consulted. That did not occur under the previous Government. I believe that with this legislation we are going down the right track in relation to protecting the environment.

Mr ARDILL (Archerfield) (3.56 p.m.): This Bill is a further exercise in procrastination. That is what it is all about. In September 1994, this House passed a Bill which brought Queensland into line with the provisions of the Commonwealth Act. It took the former Government 12 months to undertake all the consultation processes to enable it to introduce a Bill that was adequate and gave people plenty of time in which to conform to a reasonable standard of environmental protection. Instead of continuing that process, which the former Government had virtually completed, this Government has carried out the usual activity it engages in when it comes to environmental protection and procrastinated further.

Many Government members have not experienced what happened under the previous National Party Government, but I have. Over the past 20 years, I have been closely involved in proceedings. Under the previous National Party Government, all we had was procrastination and cancellation of any legislation which tried to hobble people who wanted to pollute the atmosphere, the land and our rivers. I was a member of the Air Pollution Council, which was set up by the previous National Party Government. It acted as a smokescreen and took away the responsibility from the then Minister of the day, one Mr Tenni, who overruled just about every action that was taken by members of that committee and also by the officers involved. During those days, I never saw public servants as frustrated as those officers who were trying to do something about air pollution. Air pollution was not our only problem. Our creeks were polluted. They turned black because of the rubbish that was poured into them. I refer to the creeks in Brisbane. Our rivers were poisoned.

Mr Palaszczuk: Oxley Creek.

Mr ARDILL: Oxley Creek and its tributaries are prime examples—Stable Swamp Creek, Rocky Waterholes, Moolabin. They were monitored continually by the Brisbane City Council and community groups that tried to prevent the shocking situation that existed in those days because of the total inactivity by the National Party in Government. The National Party Government was not the least bit concerned about the pollution of our rivers and streams.

According to those Government members who have spoken on this Bill, small businesses are honour bright and are concerned about the environment. That is not what this Bill is about; it is about the people who are interested only in profit and could not care less about the damage that they do to our environment. As I said, the problems of poisoned rivers, polluted streams, waste deposited out in the bush, arsenic levels in the land, the problems at Willawong—even the residue from industrial waste that was deposited legally—occurred because the Government would not take any action. When the Brisbane City Council said that it was going to stop Willawong from being filled with disgusting and poisonous rubbish, the Government said, "We will issue an Order in Council to force you to keep it open."

Mr Palaszczuk: And I think they still want to do that.

Mr ARDILL: There is no doubt. Business people who do look after the environment and do take necessary steps are unfairly disadvantaged by those who have no concern whatsoever for the environment.

This Bill comes about because of the mistakes made when the coalition Government first came to power. It failed to proceed with what the Labor Party had started, and this Bill is an attempt to overcome that difficulty. For 200 years, people have been polluting the Australian environment and, instead of proceeding with legislation to stop that pollution, this Government has given offenders a further six months in which to pollute. There is no excuse for that whatsoever. There is no reason why people should not be conforming right now.

The one way that companies will learn to conform to reasonable standards is to penalise them. The only one way in which these matters can be policed is by the provision of sufficient funds. Therefore, in order to provide that funding for necessary policing, it is necessary to tax the people who produce toxic substances.

Mr Hobbs: Are you being a monkey on the back of small business?

Mr ARDILL: No, I am not. Any business which is involved in producing toxic substances has to pay the cost, which will be passed on to the consumer, as happens now anyway. This Bill allows the present situation to continue until sometime in November when, in most cases, local government will be made to handle the situation.

There has to be a fair cost structure in the fees that are charged. I have no objection to the matter being closely questioned and monitored to ensure that the funds derived from the licensing system are necessary to provide only for adequate policing, particularly when that job will be performed by local government. It is very important that there are sufficient funds available, and it is also important that businesses are not saddled with any unnecessary charges. I am quite sure that the charges, however fair they may be, will not be accepted by or acceptable to the business sector and, therefore, the Government has to be prepared for criticism.

Government members tend to go into bat for people such as Keith Williams, who is now attempting to pollute the Hinchinbrook Channel—people who have a history of being bad corporate citizens in terms of the rubbish that they have poured into our oceans, rivers and streams. I have absolutely no sympathy for people on the other side of the House who try to justify what those people do.

As I have said, the fees charged must be fair, and they must also be sufficient to meet the costs of policing. This Bill, late as it may be, is aimed at just that. To that extent the Opposition supports it, but I certainly do not accept that there should be a further delay in enforcing the requirement to apply for a licence, which is merely giving people further time to pollute our environment.

Ms WARWICK (Barron River) (4.06 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to support the Environmental Protection Amendment Bill 1996. When the implications of the Environmental Protection Act were first realised by small business people in my area, my phone and fax ran hot. These people were appalled at the compliance requirements under this Act. They had no idea that these requirements would be so onerous. I am talking about small business—in some instances, a one or two person operation. I would like to point out to the Opposition spokesperson for Environment that these are not lunatic businessmen.

One man contacted me and told me that he owned a garage, but probably spray painted only three cars in the course of the year. He sold a small amount of petrol and a little fruit, and generally netted only $15,000 per annum. Under the provisions of the Act, he would be required to spend large amounts of money installing equipment which was most likely totally unnecessary. He sent me a copy of a letter that he had sent to the then Environment Minister, Tom Barton. In that letter he said—

> "I have a small business a garage. I have been approached by council on behalf of the Qld State Govt for new state taxes and charges that I can only say may force me to shut my doors. Not only that, the so called environment costs of additions to my workplace would cost more than my garage."

The people of Barron River do not support industrial pollution, and neither do I. In fact, during the election campaign I protested very vigorously against the illegal dumping of what was probably millions of litres of toxic waste on a property in my electorate. The dumper got away with this irresponsible action because of a loophole in the law. We must ensure that this type of action never again occurs, especially in an area so close to the waters of the Great Barrier Reef. I will not support any business which knowingly or wilfully pollutes

the environment, especially if that is done in order to make a profit.

If I may be allowed to digress, I will correct a statement made in the House last week. The former Minister for the Environment, the member for Waterford, in attempting to discredit my green credentials, informed the House that I was elected on Green preferences. I would like to point out that he is quite incorrect; he was obviously confusing me with my colleague, the member for Mulgrave.

I am extremely mindful of the fact that we must regulate and police business to ensure that the highest standards of environmental responsibility and accountability are met and maintained, but we must do this in a commonsense way. It is acknowledged by all and sundry that small business is the backbone of our nation. We should be making it easier for small business to stay in business and employ people. That is why I object to the outrageous, unfair compliance requirements of the Act in its present form. The potential is there for small business to be sent to the wall.

Whenever I go around my electorate, the common cry is for government to facilitate small business recovery. We must put in place measures which will assist small business to grow and enable them to employ more people. We must not place impediments in their path which will serve only one purpose, and that is to force them out of business, thus placing more people on the unemployment scrap heap at the expense of the public purse.

In its present form, the Environmental Protection Act is a dark and negative piece of legislation. It was obviously ill-thought through and not designed to assist the electorate at large. That is why I, along with many of my colleagues, approached the Minister for Environment to urge him to address the anomalies and inequities apparent under this Act. I cannot allow an opportunity to go by without reminding members opposite that, if they had been more in tune with the people, we would not be in the situation in which we now find ourselves of having to amend this Act.

In response to community concerns, the coalition Government reacted immediately. Steps were taken to introduce a moratorium which has provided time to review the wide range of adverse imposts on business, and in particular small business. The moratorium will provide a much-needed breathing space for businesses and industries yet to lodge applications. In addition, the Minister has set up an advisory committee to examine ways of making the licensing system more effective, fair and practical. Written submissions, comments and suggestions were invited before 1 May, which is evidence of the fact that this Government is serious about the people of Queensland and about honouring its election promises. I am very disappointed with members of the conservation movement who declined the invitation to join this committee. The committee, which will report back to the Minister by the end of May, will look at ways of making the environmental regulations more acceptable to business while still safeguarding the environment.

The Borbidge/Sheldon Government is committed to the sustainable management of the environment, and that will be maintained. However, we must assist in a sensible way the people of Queensland by ensuring that licence compliance costs are kept at reasonable levels relevant to the environmental risks involved. Many small-business operators were not able to install new equipment on day one; newer technologies take time to introduce and significant investments can be involved. We have responded to the needs of the people of Queensland by allowing a reasonable time for businesses to achieve compliance. In some cases, the environmental risks are so insignificant that small businesses should not be required to spend vast amounts of money on new equipment. This is money that most can ill afford and the expenditure would mean that they would be forced out of business. The Government will provide environmental protection, but it will also protect the interests of the small-business community and will ensure balance.

I am concerned at the handing over of the administration of this legislation to local authorities. I am told by many business people that council officers cop a fair amount of abuse because they are untrained and therefore unsure of the guidelines required for the administration of this legislation. Most of those council officers were appalled at the implications of the Act and sympathised with the people whom they had to police. I am pleased that the Borbidge/Sheldon Government will assist councils with training so that local council officers will be able to carry out their duties efficiently and confidently in administering this Act.

Later this year, the Minister will also set up an environmental protection council which will be broadly representative of all community interests—industry, local government, community and environmental interests. Those stakeholders will help to ensure that proper environmental controls are in place and

that the rights and interests of all members of the community are upheld.

By way of a history lesson, I remind the House of the chain of events that preceded this debate. The Environmental Protection Act was passed in 1994 and was to commence on 27 February 1995. A future date, described as the applicable date, was set as 1 March 1996. Clearly, the commencement date was set so that it could be said that the Act was operational prior to the 15 July election. The applicable date was also set at this time, that is, with a 12-month lead time. However, that, too, would be known before the election. As mainly administrative work was to be undertaken in the lead time, it went to ground and came to the surface only when the fee structure was released. It was at that time that small businesses realised that there was a problem ahead and that they were almost completely locked into a time frame which would have disastrous implications for them.

There was complete chaos. Any information was complex and misleading, and no-one appeared to know what was happening. Today, the member for Everton admitted that his Government was responsible for that lack of information. My office was inundated with complaints. The Goss Government must have realised that many activities could be in question and that other factors were emerging, with some items placed in the wrong fee bracket, with substantially wrong cross-referencing and a compete lack of clarity surrounding the whole exercise. Clearly, remedial action was needed. Consequently, the former Labor Government produced the Environmental Protection Interim Regulation 1996 No. 1. That regulation was made on 15 February 1996 and needed to be produced then because the transitional section of the Act became ineffective on 1 March 1996; the applicable date had been declared. This regulation postponed the operation of the interim regulation relating to intensive animal industry, that is, feedlots, piggeries and poultry farms.

By supporting this Bill, I will be able to go back to the residents of Barron River and tell them that I have represented their interests. I will be able to answer in a positive way the constituent who wrote to me asking, "When are all these hidden costs going to stop? I hope I'm entitled to the dole when I have to close my business." I support the Bill.

Mr BARTON (Waterford) (4.16 p.m.): Although I do not intend to speak for very long, I wish to try to put to bed some of the mistruths about the impact of the current Environmental Protection Act. I am very concerned that this legislation is primarily about covering up some very badly drafted regulations. It demonstrates a clear lack of commitment by the new Government to the environment. The legislation is a step back and a reinforcement of the moratorium put into place and has the capacity to wreck all of the very good work done in implementing the licensing provisions under the Environmental Protection Act—something that was absolutely necessary.

These changes are unfair on the businesses that have complied with the provisions, as opposed to those people who were being tardy. The people who were being tardy have got away with it. They have been given additional time. An awful set of circumstances was in place—at least for a while until the Minister started to bring down one poorly drafted regulation after another—that meant that the people who had complied were required to uphold the standards and those people who had not complied were home free, without any effective standards being applied to them. That is very bad.

I am very concerned that this is nothing more than a holding mechanism before the Minister and the new Government set out to totally gut the current Environmental Protection Act with the inquiry that is now running. What was said publicly all the way through prior to the terms of reference being announced was that the fee structure would be looked at. However, we find that one of the terms of reference is to examine whether there is even any need for an Environmental Protection Act. The whole issue is back up for grabs. In time, I hope I am proven to be incorrect, but I am concerned that this is nothing more than a holding provision to gut the existing legislation out of existence. That is certainly on the table now.

I wish to speak briefly about some of the false premises on which the Minister made his decision, both with respect to the regulations and to this Bill, because intrinsically they are tied together. The Minister has been very vocal in his claims that there was no consultation with business and that local government and businesses are in uproar because the fees are too high; that there is no need to license many of the environmentally relevant activities; that the basis of the Environmental Protection Act should be minimum licensing provisions and that there should be prosecutions against only those who are proven to be polluters. The Minister has claimed that standards were not in place

and that licence levels are unfair to small business in comparison with big business. I will go through each of those accusations briefly, because nothing could be further from the truth.

The experience of the implementation of this Act certainly showed that there were some teething problems. However, during the term of the Goss Labor Government and while I was the Minister for Environment those teething problems were being addressed systematically, and certainly would have been addressed by the time we reached 1 March. However, instead a new Government came in and, in a very inept way, moved to look after some of its small-business mates, particularly those who were in small organisations in the Minister's electorate, as opposed to looking after the environment of this State.

In terms of ineptitude—I have to say that the interim regulations in relation to which there are disallowance motions currently before this Parliament are an example of the worst possible ineptitude. I am amazed that the Minister attempted to implement those regulations. I am sure that if the Minister had been given proper advice he would have been only too aware that he could not pass those regulations, particularly regulation No. 3 of 8 March. As Minister, I was given consistent advice about my inability to bring down regulations after that date, particularly when we were still engaged in negotiations regarding mining activities and the memorandum of understanding for the mining industry and also for licensing proposals with regard to feedlots and poultry farms, which were mentioned only a little while ago. There was a clear understanding within the department, at least in terms of the advice that I was given as the previous Minister, that I could not bring down the sorts of regulations that this Minister attempted to bring down.

We do not need to wonder why the Minister is receiving bad advice, because the best person to give him advice is the person who was appointed as the director-general, who is still sitting at home—and the Minister may have a laugh and a giggle—on leave on full pay waiting for the message boy to arrive every Friday evening to tell him whether he is still on full pay. Depending on who is providing the advice to this inept Minister, is it any wonder that at this point in time there is no understanding within the department of important environmental issues?

Let us examine the lack of commitment to the environment on the part of this Minister. I want to repeat something that I said on 20 February. In January this year in one of his local newspapers, the *Northern Downs News*, in a column titled "Local Member's Views by Brian Littleproud MLA", the Minister had this to say about the environmental protection levy——

Mr Palaszczuk: Which paper was this?

Mr BARTON: The *Northern Downs News*. The Minister stated—

> "The Environmental Protection levy is high on my list of priorities if the Coalition can seize government after the by-election in Mundingburra.
>
> My own personal opinion is that polluters should be made to comply and be fined if they do not. All others should not be asked to pay yet another tax to the State Government."

The Minister made good on that promise. It was a promise that he had made previously on 9 November 1994 in the *Toowoomba Chronicle*. I will not read that quote, but it is very similar to the one in the *Northern Downs News*. From the very beginning, this Minister has had an attitude of tearing down the licensing provisions of the Environmental Protection Act, and it is simply not good enough. This Minister was prepared to back a small minority group operating in a couple of towns in his own electorate—an organisation named BANG, Business Against Needless Government. To my knowledge, that group operated in only three small country towns, two being in the Minister's electorate, Dalby and Oakey. The group attempted to establish a branch in Kingaroy, but it was more of a whimper than a "BANG"! The self-interest of this Minister in looking after some noisy, irrelevant small-business groups in his own electorate has led him into taking this action, which is based on a very false premise.

Mr Palaszczuk: It was the Liberals within the coalition who actually rolled him on this.

Mr BARTON: That is interesting. It must be noted that this Minister is taking action which is totally inappropriate and which is not in the best interests of the environment in this State.

I want to talk about one of the other false premises—that extensive consultation was not undertaken on the fee structure before it was put in place. Much of that consultation took place under my predecessor, Molly Robson, at the time when the original legislation was passed through the Parliament. There was extensive consultation with all of the peak industry councils and many individual

employers. They included the Queensland Confederation of Industry, the MTIA, the Australian Sugar Milling Council and the Mining Council. I can vouch for the fact that, as soon as I became the Minister, all of those bodies beat a path to my door—and many, many others as well—to talk about this issue, among others,and to talk about some of the concerns that they had about the teething problems. In turn, they all became supportive of ensuring that the licensing structure got up. Bodies such as the Motor Trades Association were running positive articles in their own local internal magazines.

I want to stress that the fees were set by a body which had representatives from those peak councils on it. The very people whom the Minister claims to be defending and protecting now were very much part of the whole process of setting the fee structures and declaring which were the environmentally relevant activities. It is not something that they can walk away from now and claim that there was no consultation, because they were very much at the heart of the consultation process all the way through—before the Bill was enacted and certainly during the entire period of its implementation. I can speak of the six and a half or seven months that I was the Minister, when those groups just about lived in my office when they had any concerns about this legislation.

I want to make some other comments about the fees supposedly being too high. They are not. Not only were they set in conjunction with business but fees can also be aggregated. This is something that seems to have escaped the mental giants on the other side of the Chamber. If a person owns a small business or a string of small businesses in a country town which undertake a range of different activities and operations—a range of environmentally relevant activities—that person can hold one licence. A person is not required to have multiple licences; they can have one licence. It is an aggregated fee that is worked out based on the highest licence that a person would have had to pay for an individual one. People are running the line that high fees are being paid and that people are being caught up in all sorts of different licences for different things. That is simply not the case, and it is something that is understood by the business organisations, the local authorities and the Local Government Association of Queensland.

I want to try to nail home something that was said by the member for Barron River. Most of the complaints that come in are about small businesses, such as the gentleman in her electorate who spray paints only three cars a year. But he sometimes spray paints them in the open; they rub them down and wash them down so that all of the muck goes into the gutters. If mechanics are servicing cars on footpaths, these are the types of things that get constituents in all of our electorates upset and are the types of complaints that come into the department or through individual members' offices. Those are the sorts of issues that this legislation, as originally enacted by the Labor Government, was intended to resolve.

Some members have claimed that the responsibility for licensing has been kicked off to local authorities. There was agreement on that, because local authorities have in the past had most of the responsibility for these types of activities. Apart from the major industry that was licensed by the department directly, local authorities did have the licensing devolved to them. They were not thrown to the wolves. I will admit that there were a few teething problems. This was a major change, and there will always be some teething problems that have to be worked through. But there were subsidies in place for councils. Over the past year, a total of $2.5m worth of subsidies was allowed for. Each local authority was paid a $500 fee for every licence that it put into place. There were some very significant amounts paid to local authorities in this State, and the local authorities that were pro-active liked it that way and worked very heavily to make sure that the licensing regime was put into place.

There are also some benefits for business. Not every business has to be licensed but only those—such as the motor repair shop or the spray painter or maybe the small foundry which got a mention before—which are potential polluters. If they have a licence and they keep to those standards, then under the legislation they are protected from prosecution. Similarly, there are certain provisions which can apply if businesses cannot meet the new standards straightaway. I have been in motor repair shops that have all the entrapment systems for waste water and waste oil, but if a business is not in a position to outlay that capital expenditure immediately, environmental management plans that are part of the licensing regime could be drawn up that give them time to put that in place over a period of years. They are still protected, provided they do the right thing within their environmental protection licence. There was not this great onus on small business. We had a few vocal rednecks in electorates such as those of the Minister, the member for Western

Downs. This Government has pandered to that small minority of rednecks.

The difference with what the former Labor Government was putting in place was that the legislation provides for a pro-active approach. It is not a heavy hand. It is a pro-active approach whereby the environmentally relevant activities are identified, the businesses that undertake them are identified, and they are licensed in a manner which encourages and allows them to improve their environmental standards over a period. The outcome that the previous Government was seeking to achieve, and which this Government seems to be prepared to throw away, is that we end up with a better environment. It is not a question of going back to the days when that lot on the other side of the Chamber were last in power, when they said, "We will prosecute the offenders who pollute." We did not see many prosecutions, did we?

Mr Pearce: One in 32 years.

Mr BARTON: Yes, one in 32 years. It was proved that that system did not work. It was not a matter of saying, "We will run around with big penalties and flog everyone who pollutes." It was a matter of working with industry, individual businesses, peak councils and local authorities to put in place a pro-active regime which meant that the environment was improved over time, we knew where the people were who potentially had problems, and that licensing system was put in place. I will not belabour this point. I did mention that there were some teething troubles. Several members have spoken about that issue and made great play of it. Yes, there were a few anomalies. Northern Foundries in the electorate of Woodridge was one of which we were aware. The licensing system was in place. It had been through Cabinet. It had not reached the point of being legislated, because of the change in Government. However, we were aware of those anomalies, and they were in the process of being worked through.

Great play has been made of the fact that appropriate standards were not in place. I must admit that, as the relevant Minister, I was frustrated by our incapacity to get some of the environmental protection policies through as rapidly as had been intended initially. However, interim standards were in place. Business and the local authorities which were doing the licensing were aware of those standards. A great deal of assistance was provided to ensure that that licensing took place within those interim standards until the final EPPs were put in place. In about October last year, we became aware that some local authorities were falling behind. Agreement was reached between the Local Government Association of Queensland and myself, and a considerable amount of additional resources was applied to those local authorities. Some had been doing it very well and did not need that assistance. Others had fallen behind. We had to put more resources into training and support to make sure that we could reach that deadline of 1 March this year.

Those types of actions were taken. What happened? There was a change of Government a month before that deadline. The new Government came in, threw out the baby with the bathwater and put in place a moratorium. I stress that my greatest concern—and why I am really opposing this Bill—is that I believe that this is just the holding step while this Government ensures that its moratorium on licensing is made legal for the people who have not followed the procedure and got their licences properly, so that this Government can tear the heart out of this legislation. I oppose this Bill.

Mr MALONE (Mirani) (4.34 p.m.): I am pleased to speak to the Environmental Protection Amendment Bill 1996. This Government has honoured its commitment made when coming to office to address the anomalies and inequities of the Environmental Protection Act which the previous Government failed to recognise. In doing so, I am pleased to say that the coalition Government immediately introduced a moratorium in order to review the wide range of adverse impacts on business. That included small business in particular. I was especially pleased to hear the Minister, in his second-reading speech, acknowledge the problems which local governments face in administering the Environmental Protection Act. The Bill provides for local governments, as administering authorities, to be able to set fees by resolution under the Environmental Protection Act rather than through a process of establishing a local law.

It was pleasing to hear the member for Woodridge talk about the imposition of these types of Acts on local government. I have six local authorities in my electorate, only one of which is rather large. I am sure that all of them would have real difficulty in dealing with these very complex Acts that are passed by the Parliament. They need all the protection and the resources that can be provided by State Governments. I must admit that there has been a lot of heartache among local authorities in regard to this legislation.

This is in line with fee setting for other approval processes administered by local governments in Queensland. Although local governments will have a degree of autonomy, where a fee has been set by regulation that fee will be the maximum that a local government will be able to impose. Local governments have confirmed that they have a commitment to, and an understanding of, environmental management issues and are truly in partnership with this State Government in protecting Queensland's environment.

The State Government has given a commitment to the Local Government Association of Queensland to maintain infrastructural support to local governments, including provision of training and guidelines for administration of the legislation. The Government has further reaffirmed these commitments by agreeing to re-sign the protocol with local government. The amendment Bill provides for a four-month transitional period in which to address a number of issues where inequities for businesses regulated under the Environmental Protection Act have arisen or would arise in the future.

I would like to talk about some of the adverse and ridiculous situations that have arisen in my electorate. Just the other day, I had a call from a small operator—a single operator of a mobile heavy equipment repair business. He was approached some time ago by the local government to comply with the Environmental Protection Act. Members should realise that this chap works out of the back of a truck. He travels to outlying areas in my electorate to work on equipment. As such, his business has no premises. He was informed as recently as a week ago that his operation would attract exactly the same fee as that paid by Tulk Goninan or Hastings Deering or one of the other big operators which work on hundreds of machines.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr MALONE: I can assure members that it is the case. I have a letter here, if members would like me to read it.

There are a number of reasonably small sawmillers in my electorate. In the clear light of day, some of those people would probably be better off if they decided to give up and go on the dole. But they are proud people. The one I am talking about is a fourth-generation sawmiller. His sons work in the mill with him. They do not earn a lot of money, but in relation to their quality of life and that sort of thing——

Mr Stoneman: Don't name him; if ever they get back into power, they will wipe him out.

Mr MALONE: I know that. I am not going to do that. They enjoy a particular quality of life as a small family organisation, and they contribute substantially to the community. However, that fellow has been asked to comply with the regulations and will be charged exactly the same fee as that paid by a multinational operation that is sawing hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of timber a year. His operation is among a dairy farming community. There is no sign of pollution in that area. The creeks run as clearly as they ever did. The grass around his property probably grows better than it ever did, simply because of the amount of sawdust that is spread around. Yet under the Environmental Protection Act he has to contribute in a very substantial way. In the clear light of day, the reality would have been that that small family company would have gone to the wall and those people would have disappeared into a community on which they would have to rely for support.

I refer also to another situation in my electorate relating to the supply and extraction of sand and gravel from local streams. This situation is quite ridiculous. I intend to read selectively from a letter that I received recently. It relates to one company, but there are four or five large companies that operate in that situation. The letter states—

> "Our company is the major supplier of sand and gravel to the concrete and building industry of Mackay and Sarina.
>
> The only available coarse sand supply for the area is in the Pioneer River.
>
> The sand deposits of the river upstream of the Ron Camm Bridge to Dumbleton Weir are now largely exhausted—this is the area that has supplied the district from Mackay's beginning until the present day.
>
> . . .
>
> The river bed downstream of the Ron Camm bridge to the mouth contains millions of cubic metres of coarse sand—sufficient to supply the district for many years to come.
>
> This area had huge quantities removed in the late 1970's to fill the Caneland Shopping Centre development. This area has now totally replenished as a result of annual flooding and tidal influences.

> The river bed from Ron Camm Bridge to the river mouth is totally filled with sand—what used to be a deep river navigable to quite large vessels, right to the centre of Mackay is now only knee deep at low tide.
>
> . . .
>
> No environmental damage can result from the removal of sand from these areas—this would only assist the river in returning to its original state.
>
> The Pioneer River Improvement Trust is currently spending approximately three million dollars on levee banks in the area to prevent flooding in the city. We, as sand removal contractors, are assisting to clean out the river bed, and PAY FOR THE PRIVILEGE of doing so.
>
> Our company's royalty payments"—

amount to $30,000. The letter continues—

> "Prior to June 1995 all Mackay area sand removal permits were issued and administrated by the Mackay Port Authority and permits outside the Mackay area were issued and administrated by the Harbours Corporation of Queensland. Since that time"—

June 1994, a crucial point in time—

> "all permit issues and administration were handed to the Department of Environment and Heritage and this is where the problems really began."

To highlight the problems, the letter continues—

> "Our company has eight different applications before the department over the period from 30.06.94 to 26.06.95. We have paid the relevant application fees and survey fees for the different areas, an obtained all relevant approvals, yet have not received permits for sand removal from any of the areas requested."

As a result, that company is operating illegally. The letter continues—

> "Our company has, without fail, submitted regular monthly sand removal returns to the Mackay Port Authority and paid royalties to that authority, although they are no longer the responsible body. At a meeting with one of their senior executives in recent weeks I was informed that various other sand removal contractors in the area no longer bother to submit returns nor pay royalty.
>
> Our company recently received a 'please explain' letter from the Department of Environment and Heritage as to why we were removing sand quantities in excess of our permit application . . .
>
> Our company took a deputation to the Department of Environment and Heritage, Brisbane . . . We came away most disappointed. Our impression of their attitude was that they had been handed the extra work of administering the states sand removal industry, without funding, staff or expertise to do the work and were not particularly interested."

As that letter shows, the sand removal industry in Mackay is in utter chaos. I have talked with the Minister about that problem and we are trying to work through it. Unfortunately, as a result of the current Environmental Protection Act, all different sorts of problem exist. Four or five companies exist in that area, each operating millions of dollars worth of equipment, and the building industry is screaming out for material. We are working towards resolving that problem, but it is longstanding; it has existed for almost 18 months and, so far, we are getting very little in return for our efforts. Hopefully, the Minister will soon rectify that problem.

The terms of reference of the ministerial committee that will report to the Minister by 31 May include the need for a regulatory system involving licensing and approval of industries that have significant environmental risk to ensure that they are aware of their environmental requirements, which is very important; the appropriateness of the schedule of environmentally relevant activities; and the need to ensure that aggregate licence fee revenue is commensurate with the cost of administering the environmental protection regulation by the administering authorities. That is, whatever comes in will go out in administration. That makes that the comment of the former Minister a lie. This Government will make the process cost effective, and we will ensure that the income from fees will cover the costs involved in administering the Environmental Protection Act.

The ministerial committee will also investigate the need to ensure that the level and nature of a licence fee bears a relationship with the environmental risk and harm of that activity. That reflects the attitude of this Government in relation to businesses that pollute: they should cover the cost of any pollution and should have to bear the cost of clean-up.

The ministerial committee will also investigate the implementation costs of any

conditions contained in such approvals or licences and the opportunities for business to utilise environmental management programs to gain protection for a reasonable time to allow implementation of improvements that will meet approval or licence conditions in a timely and financially viable manner. The committee will also seek and receive advice from stakeholders, which it appears has not been done before. The committee will be provided with information from previous investigations by the Department of Environment and previously established committees. The committee will be required to report to the Minister prior to 31 May 1996.

In summary, the coalition Government is committed to the people of Queensland to finetune environmental policy, to consult with the community and to explain the policy and changes that will affect their livelihoods and the quality of life. The policy of our Government is to protect the Queensland environment.

Hon. B. G. LITTLEPROUD (Western Downs—Minister for Environment) (4.47 p.m.), in reply: I congratulate all members who participated in this debate. It has been debated in good spirit and in the right mood. We are more productive in this House when we debate in a reasoned manner, not shouting across the Chamber but listening to what members have to say. I have taken note of various points on which I will comment in detail in this reply.

I renew a call that I made quite often, as recently as last week in Townsville, to all business people in Queensland who have not applied for a licence to get on with it, because this Act will be enforced. I make it quite clear that there is no intention to abandon or to gut the Environmental Protection Act. I know of at least two prosecutions being processed since I became the Minister.

With regard to the amendments to the legislation and claims that they left the State completely unprotected from environmental harm—that is not the case. The State has never been left unprotected. There always existed penalties that could be applied under the Act. Now, not only penalties can be imposed but also action can be taken for breaches of a licence. It has been acknowledged by various speakers on the other side of the Chamber that local government representatives still have some misgivings about the legislation and a lack of information. They accepted the opportunity for me to prolong the licensing period. Later, I will quote from some of the mail that I received from those people.

I have heeded the strong call from business speaking about this legislation as highlighted by the members on this side of the House. I listened to the comments made by various speakers. Consultation occurred certainly with the major stakeholders, the major industry bodies, but the reality is that small-business operators are now allowed to belong to peak bodies, and those operators were the ones who had every reason to realise that the system was not fair. I believe that the Government had a moral responsibility to act on that. I inherited a policy developed by the coalition well before July last year. It was not as if I was reacting to some ratbags in my electorate, as the member for Waterford so unkindly referred to those people. That policy was drawn up by the coalition policy committee well before the State election in July last year. That committee knew about the concerns that exist in the community and that policy included a promise to review the legislation and, more importantly, the regulations pertaining to it and the schedule of fees—hence my decision to act when I became Minister for Environment.

The member for Everton referred to a report tabled in this House today by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. The chairman of that committee, the member for Cunningham, is in the House. I advise the House that I was alerted to the comments made by that committee about proposed section 251. I have discussed the matter with the chairman and pointed out that the words in proposed section 251 of the amending legislation are almost word for word those used in the Act—I think it was section 240. I recognise the comments of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and assure the House that I will address that matter in the future.

I will make some specific comments about the contributions made by various people. Obviously, the major speech from the Opposition in this debate was by the member for Everton. He stated that we should have a consolidated Bill. I accept that. It is a good suggestion and I have passed it on. It is something that I will consider. There may be some more amendments to the legislation down the track. Certainly, it would be a good idea to put it all together to make it much easier for the practitioners to use.

There was an accusation made that the moratorium is longer than the promised four months. Yes, it is true to say that the Government has changed the wording to say

that as long as people have applied for a licence before 1 July they are complying with the Act. However, they are still liable under the Act. I am advised that the vast majority of businesses had only a four-month extension. Those businesses that were already licence holders had to comply by 1 March 1996.

My commitment to seeking the best environmental practice was queried. I assure the House that this Government is committed to ensuring the usage of the best practice that is possible. However, the Government also wants to make sure that it carries out its responsibilities as a Government, and that is to facilitate development and facilitate business in this community. We are a community that relies upon business to create the wealth that provides us with our quality of life and our infrastructure support.

The member for Everton questioned the need for the second amendment that I made to the legislation at the end of February. I will explain the circumstances for that amendment. On the last Monday in February, I was sworn in as the Minister for Environment. That same afternoon at 2 o'clock, Cabinet met for the first time. Recognising that the Environmental Protection Act came into force on Friday, 1 March—the Friday of that week—we had to get the ECMs to Executive Council by the Tuesday afternoon. A decision was made by Cabinet that I should move quickly to carry out a coalition promise. So I went back to my staff. They worked all Monday night and into Tuesday morning to come up with an amendment, which subsequently was taken to and adopted by Executive Council. After that I was approached by Mr Greg Hallam of the Local Government Association, who expressed concern that the legal advice that he had received was not the same as the legal advice that I had received. To accommodate his fears, some seven days later I made that second amendment to the legislation. Given the same circumstances and the same time lines, I would not hesitate doing the same again. I want to thank publicly the staff of the department who were prepared to work as quickly as they could and to liaise with Parliamentary Counsel to draft that first amendment on the Monday night. If further down the track I have to make this legislation work better, I will do it again. However, there were time constraints in that I was sworn in on the Monday and we had to get something before Executive Council by Tuesday lunchtime.

The comment was made that the Premier promised equal representation for conservation groups. I defend the stance that the Government has taken in this regard. The ministerial advisory committee that is investigating the licensing and compliance costs is made up of three people from local government, three from major industry groups and three from conservation groups plus two others. I think that any fair-minded person would recognise that three people from major industry groups, three from local government and three from conservation groups is equal representation. In fact, the Government took the trouble of investigating councils and committees that had been set up by the department over recent years, and the representation given to conservation bodies on those councils. In those circumstance, it was never the case that conservation bodies made up more than half the committee. In fact, there was proportional representation. So I believe that I can rebut that accusation. Previously, I have spoken in this House about those people from the conservation groups who did not take up the offer. In fact, the chairman of the Queensland Conservation Council wanted to take up the offer, but he was talked out of it. The former Minister for the Environment, Pat Comben, also wanted to take up the offer, but he was dissuaded by his own organisation.

Over the last couple of weeks, because people from conservation groups have chosen not to be part of the committee, I have invited Mr Bruce Fleming from the QUT to come on board. He is a man who has academic excellence in environmental matters. I welcome his contribution.

The member for Everton raised an issue that has been exercising my mind, and that is the funding that will be required so that the department can adequately carry out inspections and licensing. We are aware of that. The Local Government Association of Queensland has also made strong representations in that regard. I recognise its problems and I also recognise how the requirements apply to the department itself. We are taking that into account in our deliberations.

The member for Everton also referred to comments made by the Chairman of the Pine Rivers Shire, a former colleague of mine in this House, Councillor Chapman. I was not present, but the reports that I have received indicate that she was certainly critical of the regulations and she was certainly expressing a personal opinion about licensing. However, I do not think that she made any personal attacks on me. In fact, over the years she has been a pretty good supporter of mine. Although I was not present, I believe the reports that I received.

The member for Everton referred to sections in the Bill that related to exemptions. The member will probably refer again to those matters during the Committee stage. However, I have sought advice on those matters and I will discuss that with the member at that time.

The member for Everton claimed that there were no inequities in the Goss Government legislation, that it was all out there ready to go, that everything was right and that the Goss Government had taken into consideration the concerns of business people. I will refer to a few press releases that have been issued since I announced the review. I refer firstly to an article in the *Herbert River Express*, which states—

> "The Australian Cane Farmers Association has endorsed the more practical approach to environment matters that was outlined recently by the new Queensland government's Environment minister Brian Littleproud.
>
> . . .
>
> Mr Littleproud's recent remarks that he intends to balance environmental concerns with the need for economic growth and development was heartening news for Queensland's 6500 cane farmers.
>
> . . .
>
> Now it looks as if Queensland's new Environment Minister is about to inject a badly needed dose of commonsense and pragmatism into what has become a very confused and misunderstood area of public policy."

An article in the *Gympie Times* states—

> "Cooloola Shire Mayor Adrian McClintock yesterday welcomed an announcement by the State government to review all environmental legislation introduced by the former state Labor government."

The article stated further—

> "One of the most controversial pieces of environmental legislation passed by the former government was the Environmental Protection Act which sparked dissent from small and large businesses across the State facing expensive mandatory upgrading of premises and hefty licence fees.
>
> Cr McClintock yesterday described the Act as being 'in some cases over the top'.
>
> Welcoming a review of the licence fees, he said more time 'has got to be given (to business proprietors)'."

I believe that those types of comments give the lie to the fact that, as the member for Everton claimed, everything was perfect. In fact, everything was not perfect. I refer now to the Local Government Association, and what it thought about it. I refer to a facsimile transmission dated 26 April which was sent to me from the Local Government Association of Queensland. It is addressed to Sharleene, who works in my office. The facsimile states—

> "Herewith further copy of our letter to The Honourable Tom Barton MLA dated 16 November 1995. We do not appear to have received a reply to this letter. Could we please have your reply to this letter."

In fact, Sharleene enclosed a copy of the letter, in which it referred to a resolution passed at the 1995 annual conference of the Local Government Association, which states—

> "That the LGAQ be requested to finalise arrangements for the infringement notices system under the Environmental Protection Act 1994."

That letter was dated 16 November 1995, and it was never answered by the previous Minister.

The same group of people saw fit to put out a news release, under the name Greg Hallam, which states—

> "The state government's move to extend the moratorium on environmental licence fees was welcomed by councils, Local Government Association of Queensland executive director Greg Hallam, said today."

The news release is dated 30 April. So I believe that there was recognition that all was not right. That was even conceded by the previous Minister. He certainly may have done a fair bit to improve matters that existed under his predecessor, Molly Robson. She made a hell of a mess when she introduced that schedule. He retrieved the situation somewhat, and I acknowledge that. However, it still was not perfect and it was a matter of finetuning. While the member for Waterford was not present in the House, I said that it was the small-business people who were not properly represented by the major industry groups, and they were the ones who really had a beef.

Turning to the contributions of other members, I point out that the member for Keppel has built a reputation in this House, and throughout Queensland, as a good

grassroots politician. Therefore, there is none better able than he to talk about how this Act will apply to the people he knows best. I served with the honourable member when he was the Minister responsible for business and TAFE, and he was very effective and knew how to make things relevant. His comments today were very relevant to the action being taken by this Government.

The member for Woodridge, who also has a long history in this House, made a good contribution. He talked about the relationship between Government and the public service, and how that relationship affects the sort of legislation that is introduced to this House. It is difficult for members of Parliament, while representing the interests of all sorts of people from all parts of the State, to put together legislation that will work hunky-dory. The honourable member also focused on the importance of the environment and our considerations in relation to it. His contribution was a good indication of the fact that the environment debate has matured. We no longer have a debate typified by the hand-over-heart style, and spruiking forth with a fair bit of hype. More reasoned thoughts now prevail. The member for Woodridge is a very reasonable man and has a good understanding of the problems involved in introducing legislation which impacts on business.

The member for Redlands listed all the bodies and people I consulted with throughout the State. He mentioned the Metal Trades Industry Association, the QCCI, the Timber Board, urban developers, the Queensland Farmers Federation, the Queensland Graingrowers Association, the Local Government Association and the Major Cities Association. Representatives from all of those organisations came through my door, and always high on their list of items to discuss was the Environmental Protection Act and the regulations pertaining to it. All expressed support for it, but all could quote anomalies. The big manufacturers were more concerned about the compliance provisions than licensing, and small business certainly had concerns.

The member for Currumbin made the accusation that the Government was simply delaying. I assure her that that is not the case. Indeed, she reverted to the sort of debate that has become old fashioned: she let forth with bit of hype and, really, went over the top, saying that we will go back to all the terrible things that have happened in the past. I can tell the honourable member, and the member for Archerfield, that there were approximately 30 convictions under the environmental legislation during the term of the National Party Government. That type of debate is really getting old fashioned, and we should stay with the sort of contribution made by the——

Mr Ardill: You will be hearing more of it.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I can imagine that. It will not do me any harm at all because the reasoned debate is the one that is winning.

The member for Hinchinbrook targeted the unfair impact of too much legislation on small-business owners. He talked of the broader picture, and how there is an operating charge even if a profit has not been made. That really concerns the people in small business and the people in private enterprise, because too many of the costs they bear now are not paid after profit but are setting-up and operating costs. The honourable member related that problem to this particular Act.

The member for Archerfield accused the Government of procrastination. I have already mentioned that quite a number of prosecutions have been launched. I remind the member that it was the Queensland Conservation Council which accused the Goss Government of delivering on only about 30 per cent of its environmental promises. Therefore, the honourable member should not be throwing around too many accusations. The member also talked about the previous National Party Government forcing the Brisbane City Council to retain Willawong. I seem to remember that it was the Goss Government that used its jackboots to impose the Gurulmundi toxic dump on the people of Miles. It is a case of tit for tat, and there are plenty of other examples I could cite. The member for Archerfield is a nice chap, but I could not resist that!

The member for Barron River, who comes to this House with strong environmental credentials, made a very fine contribution. She represents the understanding of the Government of the need to strike a balance between protecting the environment and achieving sustainable development. That is a point of view that is prevalent within industry and the community in general. We need to acknowledge that we are all on the same side, whether we are conservationists, business people or industry people. It is not a case of us and them; we are all in this together. When we have finetuned those sorts of things, we will have a more mature debate. I thank the member for Barron River for her contribution.

The previous Minister, the member for Waterford, made some references to his

experience when Minister. I acknowledge that the honourable member picked up one hell of a mess from his predecessors. He consulted widely.

Mr Barton interjected.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I identified that, but the honourable member said that he had had a lot of consultation. I reiterate his criticism that, although he consulted with big business, small business felt they were not well represented because they do not belong, or are not allowed to belong to the large organisations. Therefore, there was still a need for finetuning, and that is what I have tried to do since becoming Minister by reviewing the licensing system.

Rightly or wrongly—and I think wrongly—from 15 July 1995 there was an expectation in the business community that there was a very good chance that there would be a change of Government. Some of those blokes were thinking, "If we get a change of Government, she's out the door." They are in for a surprise. I have made numerous calls to tell those people that they must obtain a licence. Nevertheless, they refused to do that and, all of a sudden, in the last few days of February, the phones in the ministerial office ran hot. The local governments could not possibly handle all the people who were applying for licences. I was aware of the coalition's policy promise and agreed that we had to do something about the situation. That is why I have reacted as I have. Those people may have been a little shonky, but they will get caught. The previous Government devolved this responsibility to local government, and it proved to be an administrative mess. From the responses I am now receiving from local governments, they are pleased with the action that I took. I reaffirm in this House that we will not walk away from the Environmental Protection Act, but I will make it fair.

The last speaker was the member for Mirani, another man with vast experience in the private business sector and also a fellow who knows all about the people who are being caught up with this process and are finding it very tough. He confirmed our greatest fears, that small business are not properly consulted. They knew about the inequities and they were the ones who had to speak up. The member for Mirani, and others like him, spoke up in this place and told us that we had to put equity into the process and consider the cost of compliance with the Act for the businesses which had to change their processes.

I thank all members for their contributions and commend the Bill to the House.

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

AYES, 41—Beanland, Connor, Cooper, Cunningham, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Goss J. N., Grice, Harper, Healy, Hegarty, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Radke, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Stoneman, Tanti, Veivers, Watson, Wilson, Woolmer *Tellers:* Springborg, Carroll

NOES, 40—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bird, Bligh, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Burns, Campbell, D'Arcy, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, 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, Borbidge; Gibbs, Warwick; Hayward, Baumann

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Committee

Hon. B. G. Littleproud (Western Downs—Minister for Environment) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—

Mr WELFORD (5.15 p.m.): Clause 8 addresses a concern that I raised earlier in the second-reading debate. The Minister might recall that I raised the issue of an amendment that he referred to in his second-reading speech. I refer to the enforceability of elements of the environmental protection policies. During my speech in the second-reading debate, I indicated that it was not clear that there was any such amendment, but I now note that this clause and clauses 9 and 15 have the effect of enforcing environmental protection policy provisions. I simply acknowledge that to the Minister.

However, I wish to make one other point in relation to the Minister's comment about our assertion that everything was perfect. We have never asserted that everything in relation to the Environmental Protection Act was perfect. However, what we did say—and what I have repeated here today—is that the amendments to regulations and the Act itself which we had put in place before the Minister came to office addressed all of the concerns that the Minister and members of the Government back bench raised during the second-reading debate today. All of the issues to do with equity and the impact of licensing fees were already addressed. It puts the lie to the proposition that members of the Government back bench are supporting this

amending Bill on the basis that it addresses those concerns. This Bill does not do any of those things. All this Bill does is validate the errors that the Government has presided over with respect to regulatory amendments. There is no fee relief in this legislation. That is yet to come; it is still to be determined by the ministerial advisory committee, as the Minister has acknowledged.

The real issue with respect to the outcome of that assessment is: how many environmentally relevant activities can be done away with before we cease to have the resources to enforce the legislation properly at all? That is the real balancing act that the Minister has yet to address. Let us not kid ourselves into believing that this legislation does anything to remedy what Government members claimed were the limitations of the legislation. There was already ample discretion for the variation of licence fees to protect small businesses or indeed businesses in hardship. That point needs to be reinforced. It would do the Minister well to reinforce it, otherwise he will have many businesses expecting much more to come out of his review process than he can realistically deliver.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: If the former Government, now the Opposition, believes that it addressed these problems with regard to the regulations, and in particular the schedules, it did not do that very well, because there was enormous pressure and people complained about it. I explained in my reply to the second-reading debate that, because there was so much anger and a hope that this would all be done away with, the administrative backlog had to be addressed. I had to act to ensure that things would work. I listened to local government officers when they said, "Please help us. We are swamped." The amendments providing for the moratorium will help to ease the administrative backlog. I reiterate that, although the former Government may have thought that it addressed those problems, they were not addressed to the extent that the people were pacified.

Mr WELFORD: I acknowledge that the Minister is making an effort to address what he sees to be the concerns raised by business. However, the point is that there was nothing in relation to the equity of the licensing fees that was the cause of their concern. The cause of their concern was uncertainty. If the Minister does nothing other than address the information shortfalls that business has in relation to this legislation, my guess is that he will largely overcome any concerns about the licensing fees as such. If business has greater certainty and an understanding of what this legislation does—namely, that it gives businesses time to come up to speed and there is no immediate requirement for them overnight to spend many thousands of dollars to come immediately entirely into line; the Act specifically contemplates that progressive improvements will be implemented—a lot of the so-called concerns that the Minister has made great play of whipping up will be dissipated. Sooner or later, the Minister will have to come to an appreciation of the fact that the longer he keeps whipping up concerns about this issue in the business community the more difficult he will make it for himself, if indeed he does not intend to gut the legislation.

Today, the Minister again called on business to apply for a licence. I applaud him for doing that, but there is one problem. Not a single business today knows whether, at the end of May after this review committee reports, its activity will require a licence at all. If some of the environmentally relevant activities now in place are not still environmentally relevant activities for the purpose of a licence after the review committee reports, businesses would be silly to apply for a licence now for one of those activities because they may find out that they will not need one. Why would any business respond now to a call from the Minister to apply for a licence if within a couple of months it will find out that its activity does not require a licence? That is the dilemma and the conundrum that business faces, and that confusion has been created not by the legislation bequeathed to this Government by the former Labor Government, it has been created by the Minister's actions.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I think it is the height of speculation to claim that there will be no licensing fee whatsoever. In fact, I am reminded of the comments by the member for Waterford during the second-reading debate. I have in front of me a copy of the terms of reference of the ministerial advisory committee. Nowhere in there does it state that the licensing fees will be gutted; it is just not there. I table those terms of reference for the benefit of members.

Mr WELFORD: I think the Minister missed my point. I was not saying that there would be no licensing fees at all. What I am saying is that if some of the environmentally relevant activities listed in the schedule are removed, then no-one will require a licence for an activity that is not listed in the schedule. In other words, why would a person apply for a licence now if in two months' time, after the report comes down, anything adopted by the

Minister that removes one of those activities on the list means that they do not require a licence? People will not have to get a licence, let alone worry about a licence fee.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The member for Everton is being hypothetical. He cannot pre-empt what is going to be in that report, and he cannot pre-empt what I will consider and what Cabinet will decide. I think the member is being hypothetical, but I take his point.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10—

Mr WELFORD (5.23 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"*Insert*—

'(4) To avoid doubt, Section 42 applies to applications under this section.' "

This amendment clarifies the provision relating to those who hold a provisional licence, and this applies to a number of organisations which under the existing law applied for a provisional licence pending the collection of sufficient information to apply for a full licence. Under this provision, the holders of provisional licences can convert to a full licence, but it is not clear whether in applying for a full licence some of those major——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr WELFORD: The point of this amendment is to protect the community and protect the accountability of this legislation. Members of the Government will be aware that under the legislation anyone who applies for a licence will, when it is proclaimed, be required to give notice of their application. This allows people who have concerns about the manner in which a licence is to be addressed or what conditions should attach to a licence to make an appeal or lodge an objection to a licence being granted. The right to receive notice is covered under section 42 of the Act. This amendment seeks to clarify that, in addition to people who apply for a new full licence, people who apply under this clause for the conversion of a provisional licence to a full licence will also have to give notice.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I have looked carefully at the member's amendment. If in fact it had the capacity to clarify this provision of the legislation, I would have been prepared to accept it. I sought advice from my departmental officers. I will read the advice I was given. It states—

"This amendment may cause a company to give public notice twice for one licence within a short period of time.

There is no special application for a Provisional Licence—hence when s42 commences, public notice will be required to accompany the original application, and again when the licence is 'converted' to a full licence.

Business should not have to go through two public consultation processes for one activity.

Further, no provisions relating to public notifications have commenced, therefore such a clause would not have the effect desired by the member for Everton."

That was the advice I was given. I have given due consideration to the amendment. If it was going to help me, I would have taken it on board, but I cannot accept the amendment.

Mr WELFORD: The exception to that is this: there are a number of organisations which already have provisional licences and obtained them without giving notice because, as the Minister pointed out, the current requirement under section 42 for notice has not yet been proclaimed. The Minister does need to proclaim those notice provisions, but in any event there are a number of organisations which currently have provisional licences which will not be required to give two notices; in fact, they will escape giving any notice at all unless the Minister accepts this amendment and proclaims the notice provision.

What I am saying is that we need this amendment and the proclamation of the notice provision under section 42 to ensure that those who already have a provisional licence will give notice at some point, otherwise they will never have to give notice. Some of those organisations have significant and quite substantial environmental impacts. That is the point of the amendment. The amendment obviously does not stand on its own; I acknowledge that. It requires this amendment and the coming into effect of section 42—which ought cause the Minister no angst anyhow; he could do that within a matter of days by virtue of Executive Council minute—to ensure that some of these substantial organisations with enormous environmental impacts will, at some stage through the process, at least be subject to some measure of scrutiny that is not just the department's scrutiny.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: My departmental officer was engaged in conversation with another person at the time of the member making that point. I will give him this assurance: I will study what is in *Hansard*, take on board what the member has said in response to the response I gave, and if necessary I will act at a later time.

Mr WELFORD: I am not sure where that leaves the amendment. In the circumstances, assuming that the Minister's advisers are as on the ball as I am, I believe that he will accept this amendment. I am afraid that I must press the amendment.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 40—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bird, Bligh, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Burns, Campbell, D'Arcy, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, 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, 41—Beanland, Connor, Cooper, Cunningham, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Goss J. N., Grice, Harper, Healy, Hegarty, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Radke, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Stoneman, Tanti, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wilson, Woolmer *Tellers:* Springborg, Carroll

Pairs: Woodgate, Borbidge; Gibbs, Warwick; Hayward, Baumann

Resolved in the **negative**.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12—

Mr WELFORD (5.36 p.m.): Clause 12 relates to new environmentally relevant activities. This clause provides for the time within which a person must apply for a licence when some new environmentally relevant activity comes onto the list of environmentally relevant activities after 1 July this year. It is pleasing to note that, in the context that there has been a lot of advocacy to the Minister about cutting back the list of environmentally relevant activities, he has included a provision that allows new ones to be created. It will certainly be interesting to see whether or not anything happens on that front. I dare say that those small-business representatives who litter the Government back bench will be running out to tell small business about the amendment that this Government is introducing, which allows new businesses to be added to the list of relevant activities to be licensed under this legislation.

This clause provides that the section will apply within four months after the day the activity becomes a new environmentally relevant activity. Once a person applies, the administering authority has to decide on the application within three months. So I suppose that, overall, the time from the declaration of a new activity to the issue of a licence could be as long as seven months. How did the Minister come by these arbitrary four-month and three-month periods?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: My briefing notes state—

> "Section 12 inserts a new section (s.61A) which provides transitional timeframes for activities which become environmentally relevant activities for the first time. An operator has four months to apply for an environmental authority after an activity first becomes an environmentally relevant activity.
>
> Despite section 43(1) of the Act under which an administering authority has 28 days to consider an application, the amendment provides three months for such consideration for those activities which have become activities for the first time.
>
> This new section also provides that once an application has been submitted, an applicant cannot be prosecuted for carrying out an environmentally relevant activity without an authority until the licence takes effect or has been refused."

Mr WELFORD: So this means that, if any new environmentally relevant activities are declared as a result of the Minister's current review of the list and the licences, anyone who needs to be licensed under that provision will have another seven months after 1 July this year—taking us into February next year—in which to obtain a licence?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I will put it this way: the person then has to make an application. As long as he has made an application, he is covered. It takes a certain time after that for the application to be granted as a licence.

Clause 12, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—

Mr WELFORD (5.40 p.m.): I did mention this clause during the debate on the second reading of the Bill. This clause delegates to local authorities all the power to make any local law about any matter

necessary or convenient to give effect to a devolved matter. A devolved matter simply means those environmentally relevant activities which local government licenses and which it will administer. As I indicated earlier, this provision seems to be far too broad. It creates the potential for all sorts of different standards of licensing procedure and environmental management programs from one local government to another. When there are 125-odd local authorities—give or take a few—I believe that is a cause for great concern and raises the possibility of confusion.

The point is that this provision should somehow be limited. As the Minister would be aware, these sorts of provisions which previously gave authority to local government were limited to specific circumstances. In other words, they could vary fees, but only on specific grounds. This gives local authorities carte blanche to make local laws. I believe that could cause all sorts of problems in terms of the different standards applying between local authorities, and it could create the opportunity for pollution havens.

I will conclude my story to the Minister about the actions of the Mayor of the Pine Rivers Shire, Mrs Chapman. After a meeting of small-business people in her area, many of whom expressed very angry concerns during the first part of the meeting, an owner/operator of a paint and panel shop rose and told the meeting how business people should get off their backsides and bring their business into line and stop polluting the creeks and the atmosphere. After that, the meeting settled down and discussion proceeded on the basis that business needed to lift its game and that people had legitimate concerns. At the end of the meeting the mayor gratuitously volunteered a resolution of the meeting, without putting it to the meeting, and said that she was going to call on the Minister to abolish licence fees. No doubt the Minister has been shaking in his boots waiting to receive that correspondence, and in due course he will acquiesce to the Mayor of Pine Rivers Shire, abolish all licence fees and provide her with all the funds necessary to maintain the standards in her area.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I say facetiously that she may be planning a second career in State politics after she leaves the Pine Rivers Shire.

The member for Everton said that the amendments may cause problems. I refer him to clause 17(3)(b) and the bracketed words "not inconsistent with this Act". I am advised that that provision covers his concerns. On the other hand, I understand that he was referring to the flexibility given to local government and that the fee set by local government may not be higher than the fee set by the Act. That fee has to be consistent with the spirit of the Act. The provision gives the Minister of the day the opportunity to stop blaring inconsistencies.

Clause 17, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 18 to 26, as read, agreed to.

Clause 27—

Mr WELFORD (5.44 p.m.): This final clause of the amending Bill contains a number of provisions, include two provisions of particular concern. One relates to proposed new section 247 that effectively legitimises every unlawful past act that has ever been committed against this legislation. The legislation states—

> "An unlawful past act is taken to be, and always to have been, authorised to be done or omitted to be done under this Act."

This is an extraordinary provision. The definition of unlawful past act in proposed new section 242 is incomprehensible. It states—

> " 'unlawful past act' means a past act that—
>
> (a) caused serious or material environmental harm or an environmental nuisance; and
>
> (b) would have been authorised to be done or omitted to be done under an environmental authority if the Environmental Protection (Interim) Regulation 1995, section 64A, had not commenced."

How small businessmen are supposed to make any sense of that is beyond me. On its face, clause 27 seems to authorise unlawful past acts which include those that cause serious or material environmental harm. Why would the Minister, who professes to be concerned about the environment and says that he will not allow the environmental harm provisions to fall into a black hole, allow a provision such as that?

Mr ELLIOTT: I had a meeting with the Minister in regard to clause 27, proposed new sections 251(1)(b) and 251(2) and (3). The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee believes 251(3) to be a Henry VIII clause and we had some difficulty with the other two that I just mentioned. The Minister has indicated to me that he will be bringing this legislation back to the Chamber around June. The Minister pointed out that, as the time was so short from when I was able to speak to him about it and

when this was brought on for debate, it would be difficult to change those sections as there was not sufficient time to investigate the legal ramifications of such changes. I appreciate the undertakings that he has given, and I would appreciate his comments.

Mr WELFORD: I do not know what undertakings have been given to the Chair of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, but I do not think that an undertaking to bring the legislation back into the Chamber at a later time and to investigate the matter is satisfactory.

Proposed new section 251 can have no legal ramifications for the amending legislation, because it can only apply from the time the legislation receives assent. Therefore, it can apply only to regulations that will be made by Executive Council after this provision is passed. If the Government was genuine in its concern about the effects of this provision and its Henry VIII effect—that is, undercutting the authority of the Act by potential future regulations—this provision would not proceed; the Minister would withdraw it now.

This is the final issue on which the Opposition contests this legislation in Committee. We believe that that provision is unsatisfactory. We endorse and agree with the comments of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. We do not see that there is any basis upon which the Minister can say that he needs that provision. It does not protect anything done in this amending legislation; it does not protect anything done under the previous legislation. It can only serve to authorise regulations which should be in the legislation. That is the point of the comments of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. The Opposition opposes the provisions and will divide accordingly.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: In response to those comments, I remind honourable members that the words being referred to in proposed new section 251 are almost word for word those of the original legislation. I looked at the two Acts this morning, and I reiterate what I said during the second-reading debate. The member for Cunningham, the Chairman of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, should bear in mind that the report of that committee was handed down today and that this debate came on before lunchtime. Members would appreciate that it was difficult for me to have access to Parliamentary Counsel to make any changes to the legislation. I note the comments of the members, especially in regard to proposed new section 251(3), and I agree with honourable members that it is most likely that there will be further amendments to the legislation in the near future, at which time I will address that particular problem. I hope members understand today's problems.

The member for Everton spoke about proposed new section 247. Section 242 defines "past act" in these terms—

> " 'past act' means something done or omitted to be done during the suspension period."

The suspension period was the period from 1 March 1996 to 7 March 1996. That provision is not ongoing; it covered the period between amendment 2 and amendment 3. It is now null and void. It existed to validate actions or omissions during that time; it does not continue. The member's fears about the future are without foundation.

Question—That clause 27, as read, stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 41—Beanland, Connor, Cooper, Cunningham, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Goss J. N., Grice, Harper, Healy, Hegarty, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Radke, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Stoneman, Tanti, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wilson, Woolmer *Tellers:* Springborg, Carroll

NOES, 40—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bird, Bligh, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Burns, Campbell, D'Arcy, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, 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, Borbidge; Gibbs, Warwick; Hayward, Baumann

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

QUEENSLAND SCHOOLS CURRICULUM COUNCIL AND BOARD OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDIES

Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (5.58 p.m.): I move—

"That this Parliament—

(a) recognises the legitimate concerns expressed by the Queensland

Council of Parents and Citizens Association, the Queensland Independent Parents and Friends Council, the Queensland Catholic Parents and Friends Federation, the Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Association of Teachers in Independent Schools about proposals by the Education Minister to abolish their positions on the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council and the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies; and

(b) calls on the Minister to guarantee representatives from these parents and teacher groups positions on the two boards."

Last week, Queensland's minority Government took another step back in time to the pre-Fitzgerald corruption inquiry days. In a leaf straight out of Bjelke-Petersen's industrial relations and community consultation manual, Queensland's Education Minister has indicated that he intends to terminate union and parent representation on the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council and the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies.

The Minister can couch it in whatever terms he sees fit, but there is no doubt in anyone's mind that the QTU is the target and the Minister does not mind taking a few other groups with it. In fact, today the Minister refused to meet with representatives of the Queensland Teachers Union when, together with representatives of the other organisations, they came to meet the Minister to present their united position. I acknowledge that in the past the Minister has had meetings with the QTU but today he delivered a letter to Julie-Ann McCullough, whom I met standing out the front, and told her that she was not welcome.

Not since the bad old days of the SEQEB dispute have we seen such blatant anti-union edicts emanating from Queensland's Executive Government. However, the Minister has not only excluded Queensland Teachers Union representation from these boards but also he has sought to exclude parents from involvement in Queensland's curriculum development for students—State school parents, Catholic parents and independent school parents who are simply trying to ensure a high standard of education for their children in the system of the parents' choosing. One has to ask the question: why would the Minister exclude two of the key stakeholders to the education process from representation on key educational boards in Queensland?

However, the Minister has brought about one significant achievement. In one day he has incensed and then united in a strategic alliance the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, the Queensland Independent Parents and Friends Council, the Queensland Catholic Parents and Friends Federation, the Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Association of Teachers in Independent Schools, which have formed a united front to fight these proposals by the Education Minister.

Members should be aware that Queensland teachers and parents have long played an important role in the development of curriculum and the oversight of education for Queensland students. And why should they not? They are key stakeholders in the delivery of education services and bring a practical and professional perspective to deliberations on issues such as curriculum development and the maintenance of syllabuses and work programs.

The Minister claims to have released a discussion paper, but this is draft legislation. There was no consultation prior to the draft and no input from interest groups or the community generally. There are no options or alternatives, it is just a legislative draft. Therefore, I ask myself: what was the Minister's rationale for destroying the working partnership that had been built up between teachers, parents and their various systems which had delivered education to Queensland students over decades? What made it so important to abolish the representation of these organisations on the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council and the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies? There is only one answer: the Minister is purely ideologically driven. In his statements released at the time that the so-called discussion paper was published, the Minister asserted that the boards needed to be smaller. In the ideological pursuit of this vague notion of smaller government, the Minister is prepared to place at risk the goodwill and working relationship with teachers and parents across Queensland so that he can have smaller boards, and for no other reason.

The Minister has no evidence to suggest that the current arrangements are unworkable; he has no evidence to suggest that the current arrangements are inefficient; and he has no evidence to suggest that the new arrangements will deliver better outcomes for Queensland students. In fact, in the legislative

draft that he presented, he admitted the high standard of the work of the current Queensland Schools Curriculum Council by saying that the new arrangements will adopt everything that the council had done in the past. However, because he wants fewer numbers, less people, he is prepared to sacrifice teacher and parent representation on these respective boards—to sacrifice the parents of State, Catholic and Independent school students and QTU and QATIS representatives.

There is further evidence of the singularly ideological bent behind these moves in the Minister's statements in relation to representation by the Queensland Teachers Union. On 9 May, in the *Townsville Bulletin*, the Minister admitted that some interest groups, particularly the Queensland Teachers Union, would be offended. He indicated that there was some scope to include parents and individual teachers on the boards, but he would make no concession to include union representation. The Minister said—

> "The interest group that's not on there, that's got it's nose out of place, is the Queensland Teachers' Union. That's an industrial organisation. I don't see any link with industrial matters and school curriculum, quite frankly."

Quite frankly, I am astonished at those remarks, as are the 33,000 Queensland Teachers Union members, and the QATIS representatives and parents who have been offended by the Minister's flippancy. This man is the Minister for Education and a former member of the Queensland Teachers Union, and it is this which smacks of the worst excesses of union bashing of the old Bjelke-Petersen days. The Queensland Teachers Union has played a role in professional development issues across Queensland's education system for 107 years. Even the current director-general, Frank Peach, was once a QTU representative on the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies. We can see the pedigree that representation by the QTU on those boards breeds.

The Minister is prepared to concede that the Queensland Teachers Union should continue to be represented on the Board of Teacher Registration—the body dealing with professional matters for teachers and students in Queensland, which ensures that schools have properly qualified teachers—but he is not prepared to allow it to play a role on the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council or the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies. The inconsistency in the Minister's argument makes it unsustainable.

Furthermore, the Minister claims that he has the capacity to appoint parents or teachers to the boards, but will not appoint representatives of parent and teacher organisations. It should be noted that the Minister is under no obligation to appoint either parents or teachers as his nominees, even though he has a couple up his sleeve. However, the Minister misses the whole point: by having parents and teachers, who have a Statewide constituency and who are a part Statewide representative organisations involved in the delivery of educational services throughout Queensland or who have an interest in the quality of those services, we will have people on the board for whom delivery of quality outcomes for Queensland students is part of their charter.

One can pick a teacher from a school in Brisbane and put them on the board, but they do not represent anyone but the Minister; they are not responsible to anyone but the Minister; and they are not accountable to anyone but the Minister. In fact, one might say that if the Minister appoints them to the board, they are beholden to him for their position. One can pick a parent from a parents and friends association in Toowoomba and, likewise, they have no constituency and they have no responsibility except to the Minister. The folly of the Minister's position is further evidenced by the vehement campaign which is emerging from the strategic alliance formed by parent and teacher groups.

The inclusion of representatives of the parent and teacher groups ensures that they become a part of the process of curriculum development and educational evolution in the interests of the highest standard of education for Queensland children; their exclusion alienates them from the process. The Minister has clearly, and in my view very shortsightedly, alienated them by releasing the so-called discussion paper at this time, thus inflaming the debate unnecessarily. When will the Minister stop flying kites? If it is not an undisclosed means to attract more male teachers, it is the concept of elite schools or the debate over OP scores. The Minister lights the fuse, stands back, waits for the explosion, and describes the ensuing outcry as a debate. It is not a debate, it is not focused and it is not going anywhere.

If I could discern some educationally relevant reason or rationalisation for the Minister's decision, then I would be prepared to consider it. However, it is clear that the

Minister's position is ideologically driven. It theorises that smaller is better, irrespective of who is offended or excluded, and it will lead to the establishment of a rarefied curriculum council lacking the important perspective of grassroots practitioners drawn from among parents and teachers. I have no doubt that the QCPCA, the Queensland Independent Parents and Friends Council, the Queensland Catholic Parents and Friends Federation, the Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Association of Teachers in Independent Schools are today asking themselves: is this coalition Government up to the task of governing Queensland and providing educational services in the interests of all Queensland children, or is it hell-bent on pursuing its own ideological objectives, irrespective of the implications for the quality of service delivery in this State? Once again, we see this coalition Government harking back to the pre-Fitzgerald days and demonstrating that it is not up to the task. I call on all parents and teachers to write and protest to this Minister about their concerns.

Time expired.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—Leader of the Opposition) (6.08 p.m.): I second the motion. In doing so, I say very clearly to the Minister that he has antagonised not only every parent but also every teacher in this State. He is telling parents and teachers that they have nothing of value to contribute in terms of the way in which children should be educated. The Government is saying that parents and teachers should not be consulted about the way in which children should be educated. The Government is saying to parents and teachers, "Keep out! Go away! Leave the education of children to us." As a parent, I find that offensive.

Let me make it clear that the next State Labor Government, elected at the next State election, will ensure that parent and teacher organisations will be represented on authorities which decide what children are taught. I make that very clear commitment in the House tonight.

This proposed education Bill, which intends to drop the main parent and teacher organisations from the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and the Queensland School Curriculum Council, the organisations which decide what our children are taught, is offensive to every parent and teacher in this State. For the information of the House, I table a letter written by the president of the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association, Rosemary Hume, to all P & C presidents. In referring to the Queensland Curriculum Council, the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority and the Board of Teacher Registration, Ms Hume states—

> "As well as changing the status of these bodies into separate statutory authorities, the Minister proposes slashing their membership in half. This would be achieved by excluding parents, teachers and employer/industry representation.
>
> The implications of this proposal if adopted, would eliminate any opportunities for the balance of perspectives that parents, teachers and other community members are able to bring to the decisions made by these authorities.
>
> Just as serious for parents is the concern that the proposal indicates that the Minister does not believe parents have any role to play in the important curriculum decisions affecting the learning achievements of every child in every Queensland school."

What a disgraceful start to the Minister's stewardship of the Education portfolio! The Minister had the audacity to say in a press release that he gave himself 10 out of 10! Parents and teachers in Queensland are giving the Minister zero out of 10. I again quote from the letter, which states—

> "Two recent major curriculum reviews in Queensland strongly supports QCPCA's policy which advocates for a partnership of students, parents, professionals through representation in all decision making processes associated with the education system."

If that is not enough, the letter also highlights exactly how much opposition there is to the Minister's proposal. The bottom part of the letter states—

> "The Officers also decided"—

that is, officers of the QCPCA—

> "to meet with representatives from other non-government peak parent organisations, teachers unions, and other interested education stakeholder groups. Representatives from the following organisations attend a subsequent meeting on Friday 10 May."

The letter listed the following groups: the Independent Parents and Friends Council—Queensland; the Parents and Friends Federation—Queensland; the Queensland Teachers Union; the Queensland Association

for Teachers in Independent Schools; and the Queensland Council of Deans of Education. They unanimously expressed alarm at the Minister's proposals and resolved to meet with the Minister to inform him of their "collective concerns as a matter of urgency". The Minister is the first Minister to combine and unify the whole education area in opposition to him—every one of them. The Catholic system, Parents and Citizens and teachers—all of them oppose the view that the Minister has taken.

Mr Bredhauer: That is exactly why.

Mr BEATTIE: That is exactly why.

In another disgraceful performance, today the Minister excluded the Queensland Teachers Union from a meeting. What did we see tonight on television? Tonight we saw members of the Teachers Union standing outside the Parliament. The Minister would not even listen to the Teachers Union. He tried to pretend that a previous meeting that they attended was sufficient for their view to be put. Let us be very serious about this issue. As a parent, I find it offensive that the Minister would take the position of excluding parents' organisations from curriculum development. Until this time, I thought that the Minister was making a reasonable fist of the portfolio. Not only has the Minister blown that perception out of the water; he has also behaved in a way that is offensive to all teachers and parents.

Time expired.

Hon. R. J. QUINN (Merrimac—Minister for Education) (6.13 p.m.): The motion before the House will not be supported by the Government, because it is a piecemeal approach to what we are trying to do with respect to reforming the education system in this State. Several days ago, we did not skulk around in the dark like the former Government did with respect to putting forward ideas to reform education; we came out with a paper which stated clearly what we wanted to do and we put it in the public arena so that all of the interest groups could see what we were proposing. The front cover of the paper itself states clearly that it is a discussion paper.

Mr Beattie: It said "a Bill".

Mr QUINN: On every page of the document, it says also that it is a discussion paper.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr QUINN: I will read the front page; there seems to be some confusion. It states, "The preliminary legislative proposal is prepared for the purpose of discussion and comment." It goes on to state that it "does not commit the Government or the Minister for Education to a particular direction for future action." The idea is to put this in the public arena and ask for comment. We have asked for written comment within two or three weeks. When those written submissions are forthcoming, we will look at what is proposed.

The focus of the debate and the public comment so far has been on about two pages of this document. The vast majority of the document has received overwhelming support from both the non-Government and the State school sector. Both sectors realise that this is a giant step forward for education in this State. There is some debate—and I will acknowledge that—over the composition of the board. However, what is in the discussion document is not the final position. There is room to move for both the Government and the various people involved.

It is not true that, in consulting with the various groups, I have locked out the Queensland Teachers Union. In fact, I or representatives of my office have met with the QTU three times in the past four days. Its representatives came to my office on Friday for at least a full hour. I spoke at the Queensland Teachers Union State Council on Saturday for an hour or so and took questions, and then again on Monday representatives of the QTU met with representatives of my office. We have met three times in four days. When the meeting was arranged for today, the original intent was to meet with the parents. It was arranged by the representative of the Queensland Council of P & Cs, and the indications to my office were that only the parent groups were coming. There was no mention at all of the unions. So it is not surprising that, when they turned up here, I wanted to meet with only the parents.

Having met with the QTU three times in the past four days and having met with the parents today, I have now made arrangements to meet with the Independent Teachers Association tomorrow. So in the space of three or four days I will have met with all the various interest groups on a number of occasions. The outcome of the discussions today was that we would meet again in the future. So there is a commitment to ongoing consultations about the contents of the paper. It is not a final position by the Government, as the member for Cook is trying to suggest.

The motion tonight simply pre-empts or locks in the current situation. If that is the case, there is not much use having this discussion paper. We might as well tear it up and go back to the current situation. However,

that is not the intent of this Government. We are about improving the education system in this State, and we will do it by public consultation. If people wish to make public comments about it, they are free to do so. We will not skulk around in the dead of night like members opposite did when they tried to change things that they knew would be controversial. They tried to keep the lid on the issue because they were afraid of a public debate.

Time expired.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN (Chermside) (6.18 p.m.): The proposal to exclude parent and teacher representatives from major educational bodies has been widely condemned by many groups throughout Queensland. The minority Borbidge Government has turned back the clock to the bad old days of former National Party Governments. Under the oppressive Bjelke-Petersen regime, many interest groups were ignored and the people of Queensland were treated with disdain. In so many ways, the Borbidge/Sheldon coalition Government is returning to a form of Government that has been rejected by the people of Queensland. I am surprised that the current Education Minister, whom I believe generally to be a person who has listened to people, has even deigned to consider this proposal.

For six and a half years under the Goss Labor Government, statutory authorities, boards and consultative organisations in so many areas had memberships that reflected a wide cross-section of views from many different sections of society. It is essential that parents and teachers be sitting at the table at which decisions are made. Just expressing views through a written submission does not equate to being one of the decision makers. For six years, I was the independent teachers' nominee on the Board of Teacher Education, which is now the Board of Teacher Registration. There were also representatives from the Queensland Teachers Union, the CAEs, universities, parent groups, employing authorities and community representatives. The make-up of that body and any other decision-making body is important.

In Parliament we see examples of debate on appropriate representation—for example, when members speak about the gender make-up of a Cabinet, the urban/rural composition, or how many Liberals or Nationals there should be in a decision-making Cabinet. Where people come from is important. It is not necessarily because of malice or bloody-mindedness that a person tends to vote along certain lines of interest; it is simply because a person's knowledge, experience and work environment necessarily shape that person's thinking and decision making.

Parents and teachers must be represented on educational bodies if their views are to be given due regard. It is an insult to teachers and parents that their loss of representation is even being considered by the coalition Government. During his contribution to this debate, the Minister said on a number of occasions that no final decision has been made. I accept that, and I am certain that this will never be the final decision. However, the mere fact that it is even being considered shows that there is a major problem.

Mr Bredhauer: That's what they're thinking. It's in their legislative draft.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: It is in their legislative draft. Even so, the Minister should have come out and said, "I reject this proposal even being considered."

Parents are the first and foremost educators of their children. Children's attitudes and values are largely formed by the time they set their foot in the schoolroom for the first time. Teachers recognise that they stand in loco parentis—in the place of parents. Teachers do not usurp, overturn or negate the role of parents, and that is why, under Labor, parents were given a greater say in many school matters. Whether it be the school budget review committee, human relationships courses, religious instruction classes, school uniforms or behaviour management strategies, parents were involved. Most people acknowledge the primary role of parents as the first and primary teachers of their children.

With respect to teachers—they are the educated professionals who have the day-to-day responsibility for implementing the school curriculum and the policy of the school or the department. Their knowledge, experience and expertise in so many areas is essential. It is unthinkable that teachers could be left off major educational bodies that are making decisions about what is to be taught in schools and about the future of our children.

In the last week at C and K meetings, at P & C meetings and at another community meeting, I have been asked the question: who will make the decisions? My answer had to be: we do not know, but I presume it will be academics, employers and industry representatives. How can the Minister even consider leaving parents and teachers off educational boards? This proposal is a

disgrace, and I am disappointed in the current Minister that he is even considering it. The response from the QCPCA, the Queensland Parents and Friends Federation, the Independent Parents and Friends organisation, the Queensland Teachers Union and QATIS, the independent teachers union, indicates that there is a rejection of this proposal. Perhaps the Catholic P and F federation was a bit slow in its initial response—and there might be a particular reason for that—but the general response from the Government and non-Government school sector and parents' organisations was to reject this proposal. I hope that the rest of this Parliament will also reject it.

The Minister has said that the final decision has not been made. Let it be clearly stated by every member of this House that we do not accept that parents and teachers should be taken off educational bodies. They must be there, they must have their say and they must be part of the decision-making process.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore) (6.23 p.m.): I wish to set the record straight on a number of important issues concerning the preliminary legislative proposal for an Education (P-10 School Curriculum) Bill 1996. The first point to make is that this is still only a discussion paper—a carefully considered and quite precise document, as one would expect on a subject of such importance at this level, but a discussion paper nonetheless. In other words, its express purpose is to generate constructive, reasoned debate and facilitate meaningful consultation with the various interest groups concerned. To that end, the Honourable Minister for Education has made it abundantly clear from the outset that he would welcome any and all submissions. The invitation has been extended, and it is now up to those concerned to present their case. Those submissions will be accepted right up until the close of business on Friday, 24 May—Friday of next week. That is still more than 10 clear days away, so to some extent this debate is rather premature.

The second point I want to make is that this discussion paper is a sizeable document of some 29 pages incorporating eight parts, 85 provisions and several schedules. Of those 85 preliminary provisions, the public debate over parent and teacher representation concerns just two provisions—membership of the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council at 2.7 on page 5 and the constitution of the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies at 5.7 on page 20. In the absence of any indication to the contrary, I can only conclude that there is broad public backing for the other 83 provisions. According to my calculator, that is an initial success rate of almost 98 per cent, which would seem to suggest that the Minister and his department have done an exceedingly good job. As far as I am concerned, that makes an absolute mockery of recent criticism by the Queensland Teachers Union that the Minister is out of touch—quite the contrary.

That brings me to my next point. Why should an industrial organisation be given automatic entry to the boards of these statutory organisations? The QTU's primary concern is not the efficient administration of curriculum development in this State or even the welfare of students. Its first and paramount responsibility is to protect the interests of teachers or, to be absolutely correct, the interests of those teachers who are union members. So it is more than a little perplexing to hear QTU bosses claiming that their presence at board level is essential for the future good of our schools and our children. It is even more surprising when they threaten to go out on strike or prevent Year 12 school leavers being issued with senior certificates. So much for caring about the welfare of students! Even so, the Minister has gone to considerable lengths to give union officials a fair hearing and to assure them that their concerns will receive due consideration. In fact, he or his most senior advisers have met with the QTU on three separate occasions already during the past week.

As if that were not enough, I am told that the union also tried to gatecrash the Minister's meeting today with parent representatives. That raises another crucial point. There seems to be a widespread misconception that this proposal seeks to exclude teachers and parents from the process of curriculum development. That is totally false and misleading. There is not one provision anywhere in this document that seeks to secure such an outcome. What this paper declines to do, however, is confer an automatic right of representation. Even under these preliminary proposals, the Minister has ample discretion to appoint parents or teachers to the relevant bodies, but the onus is on them to justify their inclusion. The reason for that is simple. There are at least six major parent and union bodies vying for representation. They cannot all be accommodated in the organisational hierarchy, and we do not intend to try. If we start down that road, we will eventually end up with boards of 50 representing every educational splinter group in the State.

I am also disappointed by the QCPCA's apparent backing for the QTU's threat to escalate its industrial campaign. How any responsible parent organisation could publicly condone strike action or the use of innocent school students as union cannon fodder is quite beyond me. I can only hope that cooler heads will prevail. After all, whatever the final composition of these boards, the Minister has already offered repeated assurances that parents and teachers will play a key role at the business end of curriculum development—writing new syllabuses. That is where the real action is, and that is where we really do need their expertise and input.

Time expired.

Ms BLIGH (South Brisbane) (6.28 p.m.): The issue which goes to the heart of this debate and which has really been called into question by the actions of the Minister is the role of public sector unions in public sector activity and deliberations. A quote from the *Gladstone Observer* and other regional newspapers from the Minister in which he states that the QTU is an industrial organisation and "I don't see any link with industrial matters and school curriculum, quite frankly" typifies the attitude of not only this Minister but also this Government to the role of public sector unionism.

I want to touch briefly on the constructive roles that public sector unions have to play in the deliberations and activities of public sector organisations. Firstly, there is the representative role. For example, the QTU represents 33,000 teachers in this State. It brings to the deliberations or discussions of any board the policies and views of its members. This is not to be easily dismissed if we are looking for good outcomes that will be implemented effectively. Secondly, unions bring professional expertise. The history of public sector unions is that they were essentially professional organisations representing, for the main part, the professional interests of their members. Over time, these organisations have developed to take up industrial issues, but they have never lost their professional base. The professional interests of teachers have a very clear relevance to curriculum matters. Thirdly, unions have a duty to monitor and protect the interests of their members. This is an entirely legitimate role for which their members pay union fees. In the education realm, those interests will inevitably be affected by curriculum changes.

However, Mr Quinn is not alone in his actions. Various other Ministers have made it clear to the unions in their field that, when it comes to representation, they can look elsewhere. For example, the Premier and the Minister for Industrial Relations have been keen to claim that they have an open-door policy for unions and have been keen to claim that they want to consult with unions. But when it comes to actual consultation, there has been none. In relation to the recent maternity leave decision, we saw that the unions were told long after the media release. There was no consultation with the relevant unions, and they had no involvement in the development of alternative proposals.

In relation to the public service Act, which is being drafted in secret by the Premier's staff and officers of his department—the ACTU has been told that it will hear about it when it is tabled in the House. That is hardly constructive consultation. We see this attitude reflected in a number of the current reviews which are bogging down the Queensland economy and the public sector. It is a very clear reflection of the attitude of this Government to the involvement of unions when the review of the building industry's security of payments involves no representatives of the building unions. These unions have a long history of pursuing payments on behalf of their members. They are, therefore, well placed to make a valuable contribution to the review. In fact, in many cases they probably have a better understanding of how difficult it is to pursue payments from some builders.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for Bulimba for his contribution.

In relation to the workers' compensation review—again, the very people who represent, and advocate on behalf of, injured workers day in and day out are excluded from the deliberations of that review. So it really comes as no surprise that this Minister wants to lock the unions representing teachers out of the policy and decision-making boards of his department. In common with his colleagues, the Minister is hell-bent on demonising unions—like some 1950s eccentric. However, the modern workplace has moved beyond this kind of nonsense. The legitimate role of unions and respect for their place in the public sector is now well accepted. All the wishful thinking of this Minister that he can create a backward pocket of elite policy development, locked away from the scrutiny and involvement of the unions and organisations which represent the people who have to implement his new decisions, is a complete and utter fantasy and it will not work.

We have heard a lot of discussion from the Minister and the member for Maroochydore that this is just a draft discussion paper; that we should not be alarmed; and that organisations such as the QCPCA, which have been referred to this evening as a splinter group, are whipping up hysteria for no reason at all because it is just a small possibility. If that is the case—if this is just a possibility that is really not on the agenda—then this debate is the Government's opportunity to rule it out. This is the opportunity to finish this conflict and upheaval, to finish the uncertainty across the education community once and for all, and to prove that the Government is not hell-bent on being in conflict with teacher unions and parent representative organisations. I urge Government members to do this by supporting this motion. But, of course, they will not be able to do that because, as I outlined earlier, this is not about what the Government wants on these boards; this is about delivering an ideological agenda to those people whom this Government sees as part of its constituency.

I promise that the Minister will regret the absence of teacher union representatives and parent organisations on the boards that are represented in his department. I encourage the Minister and those who are advising him to reconsider, because reconsideration is the only thing that is going to get him and the Government out of the mess that they have bought for themselves over the last two weeks by deliberately stirring up and completely failing to put anybody's mind at rest.

Time expired.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands) (6.34 p.m.): By moving this motion, the shadow Minister for Education has not sought to evaluate the real concerns in this State about the development of curriculum. The announcement by the Minister for Education that he was going to create statutory bodies out of the existing Queensland Curriculum Council, the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority and the Board of Teacher Registration must be welcomed without reservation. This move cements the long-held view of the coalition that such organisations should be removed from the political fray and placed in an environment which is free from any interference. After all, the education of our children and the integrity of the teaching profession is something which should be beyond the overwhelming influence of any one person or organisation.

The media storm surrounding a reduction in size of the boards that will govern two of these statutory authorities is unfortunate. The storm shows a real lack of understanding of the stated position of the Minister and of the important role that these organisations will play in the provision of education to students across Queensland. Similarly, the media storm ignores the many indisputable good points of this proposal that have been heralded across the education profession. Such good points address issues that have been neglected for years, because the previous Government did not have the vision and stamina necessary to make such fundamental changes.

Comments in today's *Courier-Mail* suggesting that the Queensland Teachers Union would force its members to withhold information necessary to the calculation of OP scores underline the necessity to keep the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council—preschool to Year 10—and the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies free from political interference. I am absolutely disgusted to think that an industrial organisation such as the QTU would try to hold students to ransom in order to blackmail the Minister into giving them a position on the council—preschool to Year 10—and the board.

It is even more alarming that the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association has announced its support for this outrageous proposal. It is hard to believe that an organisation that represents parents could be prepared to support an industrial organisation in a threat to disadvantage students. In spite of the threats and the establishment of a strategic alliance between the QTU and the QCPCA, it must be remembered that the document that is being debated has been circulated purely for the purposes of discussion. It is my understanding that all parties involved in the existing boards of these organisations were invited by the Director-General of Education to attend a briefing on the proposed changes. Furthermore, an invitation was subsequently extended to all groups to make a submission on this proposal. If groups such as the Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association are so sure of their need to be represented on the QSCC—preschool to Year 10—and the BSSSS, then I would expect their submissions to be comprehensive, objective and worthy of consideration by the Minister. It is without doubt that the Minister will consider these submissions.

In an interview on ABC radio this morning, the Minister made it abundantly clear that nothing had yet been cast in stone and that he will not make any firm decisions until every

interest group has had the opportunity to comment.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr HEGARTY: I invite the member to get the tape and listen to it.

The decision to challenge the status quo would not have been an easy one to make. In the political environment that exists today, it would be very tempting for someone such as the Minister for Education, when confronted with having to make a decision like this, to try to take the easy option, but he has not. The Minister has proved that he is a man of integrity who supports the concept of producing curriculum and students of the highest calibre.

It is about time that the honourable member for Cook began to appreciate the importance of the education system, considering he is shadowing that portfolio. I oppose the motion that has been moved by the honourable member for Cook.

Mr Bredhauer: You even had to get someone to write this speech for you.

Mr HEGARTY: If I had left it up to the member, I would not be anywhere. I urge members opposite not to take a leaf out of the book of the member for Cook, and give the Minister a chance in this very important issue.

Ms SPENCE (Mount Gravatt) (6.38 p.m.): I rise to support this motion that the House calls on the Minister for Education to guarantee representatives from parent and teacher groups positions on the two new curriculum boards. This is an extraordinary move by the new Education Minister by anyone's standards. To remove teacher and parent representatives from major curriculum boards in this State flies in the face of current education thinking. Members can ask anyone the following question: who are the major players in our children's education? They will be told that it is the children, their teachers and their parents. What affects the educational outcomes of our children? It is the quality of the teaching, the influence of the curriculum, and the input and encouragement they receive from their parents. Education is fundamentally about the student, the teacher and the parent. Yet none of these groups is to be represented on Mr Quinn's revamped curriculum boards.

Mr Quinn is very quick to acknowledge the importance of parents when it comes to criticising them for producing students with behaviour problems. His shameful attacks blaming single mothers for disruptive children will not be forgotten by the education community in this State nor, indeed, by all those single mothers he offended with his callous, offhand remarks. It is all right to blame parents when children fail, but Mr Quinn does not want these same parents to have the opportunity to contribute to their success.

Do Mr Quinn's attempts to eliminate teachers from the new curriculum board reveal his lack of understanding of the important role of teachers in the education process, or is this his thinly veiled attempt to reduce the relevance of the Queensland Teachers Union? I heard Mr Quinn's speech tonight, saying that his proposal is just a discussion document, but who can believe him when we read in this last month his provocative statements in the press about the Queensland Teachers Union? Mr Quinn can put forward whatever reasons he likes for his course of actions, but virtually no-one in semi-educational circles believes that it is anything other than a move to exclude the Queensland Teachers Union.

Whether Mr Quinn likes unions or not, he is very foolish if he fails to appreciate how representative the QTU is of the whole teaching body. The union is the voice of Queensland teachers and they are satisfied with the job their union performs in representing their interests. The member for Maroochydore fails to understand that. She asks why a union should be represented on a curriculum board. The member for Maroochydore has never been a teacher and fails to understand the culture of teachers, how important the union is to them and how they believe that their union represents their interests, and that is precisely why it should be represented on a curriculum board. The Minister for Education risks losing the confidence of teachers in this new curriculum board if teachers are not properly represented. As Tony Koch in his *Courier-Mail* article "A Copybook Mistake" explained, this is like creating a wheat marketing board and not allowing farmers representation on it.

I think we all might legitimately ask: what is wrong with the present Board of Senior Secondary School Studies that this new Education Minister would want to change it? Is it incompetent? Is it inefficient? Is it not performing? Of course, none of those could be further from the truth. Among its other duties, that board has produced over 50 new syllabuses for subjects from Years 7 to 12 over the past six years. I believe that Mr Quinn has supported, accepted and approved those syllabuses. That organisation has been so successful because it has a diversity of input from industry, parents, teachers, the bureaucracy and vocational educationalists.

Parents and teachers are not the only people Mr Quinn wants to exclude from curriculum decisions. His proposal is to eliminate representation from vocational education and early childhood education. At a time when an integrated curriculum is increasingly recognised, it is amazing that this Minister should reject that type of expertise on a curriculum committee. The Board of Senior Secondary Studies currently has a representative from VETEC and one employer representative. Those are the people whom Mr Quinn would like to remove from the board. At a time when he has proclaimed his support for the convergence of general and vocational education, such a move is astonishing. Over the years, those people have been able to give the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies expert advice on syllabus and curriculum material.

Time expired.

Mr BAUMANN (Albert) (6.43 p.m.): It is important that we consider the size of the boards that the Minister has proposed to reduce. Examination of those boards reveals the extent of the bureaucracy that has to date curtailed the effectiveness of the Queensland Curriculum Council and the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies. The Queensland Curriculum Council has, as prescribed in the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989, a total of 21 members. Those members include six official members, 15 members appointed by the Governor in Council, and any additional members that the Minister may wish to appoint.

The official members are the General Manager, Queensland School Curriculum Office, the chief executive and one other departmental officer nominated by the Minister, one nominee of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, one nominee of the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, and the executive officer of the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies.

The appointed members are one nominee of the Queensland Teachers Union, one nominee of the Queensland Association of Teachers in Independent Schools, one nominee of the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, one person from the non-State school sector jointly nominated by the Independent Parents and Friends Council of Queensland and the Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Queensland, one member of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission nominated by the Vocational Education Minister, one employer representative nominated by the Vocational Education Minister, one nominee of the Australian Council of Trade Unions Queensland, one person from the tertiary education sector nominated by the Minister, one person from the early childhood education sector nominated by the Minister, one person from the distance education and open learning sector nominated by the Minister, three practising teachers—two from the State sector nominated by the Minister and one from the non-State sector jointly nominated by the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, and two nominees of the Minister. This is an extraordinary number of board members. How on earth any decision could be made objectively by this board is beyond me. With 21 board members, one really must call into question the intention of the previous Government when originating the council. Was the council to actually try to achieve something, or was it established in such a manner that it would be stymied by internal bureaucracy?

The Board of Senior Secondary School Studies is very similar. Currently, that board consists of one nominee of the Minister, who shall, on appointment, be designated and shall be chairperson; three nominees of the director-general; two representatives of teachers unions, who shall be practising secondary education teachers with experience in senior secondary education, one each to be nominated by the Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Association of Teachers in Independent Schools; one representative of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission nominated by the Vocational Education Minister; three representatives of community groups involved in education, all of whom at the time of appointment as members of the board shall be parents of students currently attending Queensland schools and enrolled in either Year 11 or 12; one each to be nominated by the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Associations Incorporated, the Parents and Friends Federation Queensland and the Independent Parents and Friends Council of Queensland; one nominee of the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Affairs or other Minister of the Crown for the time being charged with the administration of the Employment, Vocational Education and Training Act 1988; two representatives of institutions of higher education, nominated by the Higher Education Forum, one of whom shall be a practising

teacher educator; two representatives of the industry and commerce sectors, nominated by the Minister; two representatives of non-State secondary schools providing secondary education, one to be nominated by the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and one to be nominated in accordance with the procedure prescribed in the regulations by the Association of Independent Schools in Queensland and other non-State secondary schools providing secondary education; and one person nominated by the Minister if, in the opinion of the Minister, additional representation is desirable. That is a total membership of 18 people.

Comparisons with other statutory authorities and private corporations indicate that, of private industry boards that have been surveyed in Queensland, most seem to have a maximum of 10 or 11 members. Recently, the overwhelming trend has been to reduce the size of boards. A smaller board facilitates less red tape, efficient decision making, the minimisation of interest group pressure, and a greater emphasis on the calibre of board members.

Time expired.

Mr SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton) (6.48 p.m.): I rise to support the motion before the House tonight and in so doing I warn the House that, if the Minister is to proceed along these lines, he will effectively disenfranchise a host of people in rural Queensland who depend upon peak bodies for representation on bodies such as these. The QCPCA and QTU are the bodies that are competent to carry the voices of the parents and teachers in this State into the policy-making processes and the curriculum-making processes of this Government. That has always been accepted in this State. The Minister is making a very dangerous error in judgment if he tries to take those people out of the game.

I suggest to the Minister that his recent derisive comments about the Queensland Teachers Union have not gone unnoticed. By association, his derisive comments are directed at his own director-general, because his director-general served as a Queensland Teachers Union representative on the very board from which the Minister now seeks to disenfranchise teachers. The Minister's comments on ABC radio this morning were nothing short of disgraceful. He suggested that teachers could have their representatives in the lower ranks, but when it came to decision making, they were not wanted. He made similar comments about parents. I caution the Minister not to go down this track. If he does, it will be at his own electoral peril. He will be on the nose with his own Government; he will be on the nose with the people of Queensland. There will not be a piece of chalk under which he could hide.

A dangerous precedent is being set that will affect members from rural areas. I see the member for Mirani is in the Chamber. He has expertise in the sugar industry and has served in that capacity on various boards. He held those positions only because of his knowledge of that industry, and that principle was well accepted. The former Government also accepted that principle and, as a result, I believe we had a pretty good master plan. If the tories knock the teachers and parents off this board, and then knock the farmers and other stakeholders off all the other representative boards, they will see how they get on with their own constituents.

The other point that I would like to make is that I believe that this Minister is allowing his own personal dislike for the Queensland Teachers Union to get in the way of good decision making. The Minister's dislike of the Queensland Teachers Union is well known by his peers. In fact, yesterday one of the Minister's peers rang me to tell me what the Minister used to say about the Queensland Teachers Union before he escaped from the classroom into the haven of some resource centre. However, the Minister now talks about teachers not pulling their weight in schools. I believe that it is bad politics to allow one's own personal hatred to get in the way of good decision making.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: As the honourable shadow Minister informs me, it clouds one's judgment.

What is the real agenda behind this move? If one refers to the *Gold Coast Bulletin* of April 1995, one would gain some insight into the Minister's real agenda. In that article the Minister stated that now was the time to cut out the claptrap which was being forced upon teachers by the Government's social policy agenda. Of course, the social "claptrap" to which the Minister referred were initiatives such as workplace health and safety and gender equity.

I have taken the trouble to obtain from one of the schools located in my electorate an excellent document titled *Enough's enough!*, which was prepared in our schools. I suggest that the Minister and every other member of this place obtain a copy of this document because it gives us an insight into what is actually happening in our schools. As a former

teacher, I am horrified by what is contained in the document. As a parent, I am disgusted by this behaviour that is occurring in our schools. I doubt if the Minister has even seen this document. However, the statistics that have been gathered from research such as that which is contained in this document will be nobbled as a result of the Minister taking the parents and the Queensland Teachers Union out of the process. For example, the document states—

> "Approximately 13 000 charges were laid against boys; around 1 300 charges were laid against girls."

Documents such as *Enough's enough!* identify clearly the need to adopt an agenda to address problems such as those created by the gender imbalance. I will not quote further from the document. Instead, I suggest that any member of the press gallery should get hold of the document. The Minister will stand condemned if he takes teachers out of the process, because they are the people who push that agenda. I can tell the Minister that that is very important for the kids in the schools in my electorate. I do not want them in places where these sorts of activities are taking place. As I said earlier in this debate, the Minister will take teachers and parents out of the overall decision-making process at his peril. I warrant that the Minister has not even read the document. I warrant that the Minister has not even taken this matter into consideration. However, that is how curriculum in this State is developed.

Time expired.

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland) (6.53 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of this motion. The question that needs to be answered is: why would the Government put forward a proposal to abolish teacher and parent participation on the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council and the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies? The answer can only be that the Government is continuing down that same old worn-out track of yet again turning back the clock. We have seen decision after decision made by this minority Government to turn back the clock, and this is yet another decision.

The Education Minister said that the changes were intended to reduce red tape and increase efficiency. How? What red tape is involved? If there are 10 members on the board instead of 18, what red tape is cut? If there are 11 members on the curriculum council instead of 21, what red tape is cut? Likewise, why is a 10-member Board of Senior Secondary School Studies any more efficient than an 18-member board? Why is an 11-member Queensland Schools Curriculum Council any more efficient than a 21-member council? There is no logic to the Minister's statement, let alone any sense. Not only will there not be less red tape and more efficiency as a result of the cuts but also there will be a great loss of expertise.

Teachers and parents have much to offer those two bodies. Since they have been members of those bodies, they have proved their worth. Parents need to have an input into curriculums; they need to have their say. Educating our children should not be left to one group; it should be a community responsibility. Parents are being encouraged as never before to take a more active role in educating their children.

The former Labor Government went out of its way to encourage more parental involvement in children's education. It is a well-documented fact that children do better at school if their parents are involved in their education. What message does this proposal send to parents in Queensland? The message is clear: the Queensland Government does not want their input; the Queensland Government does not want their involvement in their children's education. That is the typical pre-Fitzgerald, National/Liberal Government way of doing things. That action is turning back the clock to those days.

What about removing teachers from having their say in curriculum development? That is an equally retrograde step as the removal of parents' involvement in the process. It is imperative that teachers have a say. After all, they are at the coalface. They must teach the curriculum and, therefore, it is imperative that they have input into what is and is not included in the curriculum.

Time expired.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 40—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bird, Bligh, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Burns, Campbell, D'Arcy, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, 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, 41—Beanland, Connor, Cooper, Cunningham, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Goss J. N., Grice, Harper, Healy, Hegarty, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Radke, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Stoneman, Tanti, Veivers, Watson, Wilson, Woolmer *Tellers:* Springborg, Carroll

Pairs: Woodgate, Borbidge; Gibbs, Warwick; Hayward, Baumann

Resolved in the **negative**.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer—Leader of Government Business) (7 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy) (7.01 p.m.): The Queensland Government, and in particular the Education Department, must demonstrate its interest in the concerns of parents who have been lobbying for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder to be recognised as a disability. It is time for bureaucrats and Government Ministers to pull their heads out of the sand and take seriously the problem of ADHD. There is too much evidence to support the argument of some that ADHD is simply a behaviour disorder or the product of poor parenting.

In the 1930s, children with learning disabilities were considered to have emotional problems, mental retardation or were thought to be socially or culturally disadvantaged. A new theory emerged in the 1940s where, because children looked normal, it was considered that brain damage must be minimal, hence the term "minimal brain damage". Tests revealed that these children did not have brain damage, but they had difficulties with the way the brain functioned—with the exception of writing—hence the term "minimal brain dysfunction" was used. A review of this dysfunction, tabled in 1966, found that these children were of near average, average and above average intelligence, but they had learning and behavioural problems which stemmed from the central nervous system. In 1968, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disabilities officially recognised the disorder under the classification of "hyperkinetic reaction of childhood". This characterised an individual with the disorder as being hyperactive, impulsive, easily distracted, fidgety and having a short attention span.

In 1982, the same manual renamed the disorder, while acknowledging the previous classifications. However, the term ADD was broken into two subtypes, one with hyperactivity and one without. Further, it was recognised that there is a residual type which suggests that the condition continues into adulthood, but disregards the hyperactivity probably because adults become better managers of the disorder. In 1987, the manual changed the name to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder because, although inattention was an issue, hyperactivity played a major part in the disorder.

Contributing to the problem is the lack of community awareness and acceptance of the condition. From my observations, unless one is the parent of a child with ADHD, or a student or teacher in a classroom with a child suffering from ADHD, it is difficult to gain an understanding of the problems encountered by the sufferer, their families, fellow students and teaching staff. The condition is not selective. Just because it cannot be seen as physical impairments does not mean it does not exist. Therefore, it should not be swept under the carpet.

I publicly challenge the Minister to call for an immediate review of the behaviour disorder, ADHD, and to give due consideration to having this disorder recognised as a disability. There are at least 40 groups in Queensland representing 24,000 students enrolled in Queensland State schools. The Minister and the Government cannot continue to ignore the level of behaviour disorders, the fact that they are disabilities, and the fact that the children with these disabilities need specialist support services. The Government must also recognise that teachers and parents need support. It must invoke policy decisions so that the Departments of Education, Health, Families, Youth and Community Care and Corrective Services can work together to provide a more appropriate, global strategy to support those with these disabilities.

The question for consideration is this: is the Minister his own man or is he controlled by the same bureaucrats who have stuck their heads in the sand for the last 50 years? This issue will not go away and the Minister could show commonsense and leadership by moving quickly to address what is a real problem.

I have been working very closely with dozens of Rockhampton parents—and the member for Keppel, Mr Lester, is aware of these families—who have children with ADHD and other behavioural disorders. One has to speak with these people personally and listen to their stories to realise just how much pressure their families are under. Family breakdowns and divorces are not uncommon, and there is a feeling of desperation for someone to listen and understand about their children, their families, and the problems they have to live with. Governments in Queensland

have treated children with ADHD as outcasts. There is no-one willing to help and no-one who cares about their future, and that attitude must change. I am saying: give these children the support they need to get a good education, despite their disabilities. Someone must listen.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; Beach Erosion

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel) (7.06 p.m.): I thoroughly agree with the comments made by the member for Fitzroy in relation to children with ADHD. This is a very serious problem. It is a problem that is not understood by authority and it is a problem that is not understood by the people who could make the decisions to help.

The children who have this disorder have a problem; it is as simple as that. If one goes into the home of an ADHD sufferer, one can see that the difficulties that exist in trying to keep these families together are immense. These children can cause enormous damage, they can cause problems for neighbours and problems in the classroom. In saying that, I am not knocking the children or the parents; it is a fact of life. Some of these parents are the most caring parents in the world. Other people may look down on children with ADHD and their parents. I wonder how well they would cope if their child had ADHD. I assure the House that the parents of ADHD children are the modern martyrs of our community. We have to give more care, understanding and services to help them. I cannot endorse enough any comments aimed at helping these people.

What I really wanted to talk about tonight is my great concern over beach erosion. The southern media has had an enormous amount to say about the erosion of the beaches of the Gold Coast and the millions of dollars being demanded to fix them. I remind the powers that be that two beaches in my area have an erosion problem, Kinka Beach and Keppel Sands. We hear about Gold Coast beaches getting bucket loads of money, and that is well and good—I am not against that. However, I do suggest that one or two of those buckets be given, as promised, to the restoration of the horrific problems at Kinka Beach and Keppel Sands. It is absolutely imperative that this happens and that we not be forgotten. I make it abundantly clear, and I am speaking on behalf of the people of central Queensland: we must not be forgotten. In recent times, almost 50 metres of beach has been eroded. If that is not serious enough, I do not know what is.

In addition, there seems to be a Mexican stand-off as far as beach erosion is concerned. The Livingstone Shire Council does not have a lot of money, so obviously it wants help from the Government. It is thought that beach erosion in that shire will reach the main road before very long, and it has been suggested that it will then be a Transport Department problem. I know what will happen: it will just fix the bit that is being eroded, and the rest of the beach will be left as it is. We have to deal with the whole problem and fix the whole problem.

I do not know how long I have to preach about this, but enough is enough. Something has to be done. I will continue to fight the Premier on this. Let me put it this way: when Molly Robson was the Minister, she came and had a look at these beaches and then forgot about them. The Premier has a look at the problem——

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr LESTER: No, he has not forgotten about it, and I assure the House that I will make sure that he does not forget about it. That is why tonight I am talking about it in no uncertain terms.

Mr Pearce interjected.

Mr LESTER: Some of the constituents of the electorate of Fitzroy have homes at Kinka Beach, so naturally I would except the support of Mr Pearce. This is a very serious issue. It will not go away; it will get worse. At the end of July the study will be completed, and I want to ensure that money will be available to fix the problems. This is not a recent problem; notice has been given and it is nearly time to find out the results of the study.

Time expired.

Brisbane-Gold Coast Road and Rail Links

Mr ARDILL (Archerfield) (7.11 p.m.): The proposed widening of the Pacific Highway between Eagleby and Nerang to eight lanes is a scandalous waste of public money. Apart from the deleterious effect that offering such an encouragement for more traffic to use the highway will have on the environment of the Gold Coast and Brisbane and on the people who live in between, the spending of $620m on the least-used section of the highway is simply a non-justifiable waste of public money to satisfy an ill-conceived, pork-barrelling exercise dreamed up by the Premier during the July election campaign.

The Premier should realise his mistake of promising an eight-lane highway from Brisbane to the Gold Coast when it is obvious that six lanes is all that are justified in the third of the highway under discussion, while eight lanes provides the maximum width available in the most heavily trafficked section south of the Gateway turn-off and over the Captain Cook Bridge. The overpasses already provided over the Eagleby-Nerang section allow for only six lanes, as competent engineers did not expect to have to contend with an extravagant political decision to overcome all reasonable planning. This is a major part of the blow-out in cost from $244m to $630m, together with an unreasonable widening of river bridges which were built for six lanes, not eight.

I urge the Government to accept that an error has been made and that eight lanes are not needed for 40,000 to 50,000 vehicles per day, when double that number of vehicles are accommodated further north on eight lanes. Some 113,000 vehicles use six inbound and outbound lanes from Mains Road, and over three times that volume use the freeway from Woolloongabba to the city. Any additional available funds should be used to speed up the construction of the Gold Coast railway to the border. Instead of an unnecessary $286m being spent on the Premier's personal pathway to glory, that funding should be put towards an urgent extension of the railway.

Because of smart marketing, the Gold Coast railway has done very well, but it will not sustain that impetus unless it is extended to the Gold Coast beaches. The cold fact is that the railway line does not improve on the travel times in the old steam train days of the coordinated service to Coolangatta. The 1938 timetable provided for train/bus services via Southport leaving South Brisbane at 8.45 a.m. and 4.10 p.m. and arriving at Coolangatta at 11.20 a.m. and 6.25 p.m. The modern equivalent coordinated services leave South Brisbane at 8.54 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. and arriving at Coolangatta at 11.38 a.m. and 7.17 p.m.

The return trips were: Coolangatta, 7.45 a.m. and 4.30 p.m.; South Brisbane, 10.28 a.m. and 7.20 p.m. The modern equivalents are Coolangatta, 7.40 a.m. and 4.42 p.m.; South Brisbane, 10.26 a.m. and 7.19 p.m. It can be seen that although some services are slightly faster than steam, others are much slower. There are many more services. It is an excellent rail service as far south as Helensvale, but the bus connections are totally inadequate. That is no reflection on the bus operators, but it bears out the predictions of anyone who considered the matter prior to its introduction. The simple fact is that the distance between the rail terminus and the destination is too great. Too many stops occur and traffic congestion intrudes.

Individual bus connections are needed to a number of points along the rail line to and from the beach suburbs, with an ultimate terminus at Coolangatta. Instead of disgorging all passengers at Helensvale, those going to Surfers Paradise would go to Nerang, as would those from Broadbeach and Miami, in five minutes; Miami to Robina in 12 minutes; Burleigh Heads to West Burleigh in 20 minutes; and Palm Beach to Elanora in 25 minutes. The extension of the line to Coolangatta will reduce journey times by up to one hour. Bus connections to intermediate stations will create lesser time savings. The section of the line already built is necessarily overcapitalisd. The injection of the further $286m would be profligate waste on the highway, but it would provide urgently needed funds for a useful extension of the railway.

Violence in Society

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah) (7.16 p.m.): Following the recent tragic murders at Port Arthur, Tasmania, there has been understandable public shock, outrage and resolve that such an occurrence should not recur either in Tasmania or anywhere else in Australia. To his credit, the Prime Minister has already assembled the Police Ministers of various States to commence a legislative approach to adopting uniform gun laws in Australia.

However, it is not gun laws that I wish to discuss tonight. The problem of violence in our society is much more deep-seated than the gun debate. Violence has been an outcome of human conflict since the very first disagreements over land, food and shelter. As populations grew, the stakes grew higher, as did the scale and methods of violence. Virtually all societies have always encountered violence. Some civilisations gained temporarily, some lost and some even vanished because of it. No corner of the world that possesses the mark of human presence has escaped it.

The method of inflicting violence and the reasons for it are the only two variables in the equation. The tools of human damage and destruction have been the object of immense change—from stones and clubs to spears, swords and arrows; from rifles, canons and bombs to NBC horror, that is, nuclear, bacterial and chemical warfare. Just as we see the dawn—or the false dawn—of a possible

reduction in these new forms of massive world conflict and violence, Western societies are now being confronted with a new type of violence. It expresses itself in our streets and our homes. It can be random and senseless or targeted against those who either disagree with the offender or from whom the offender would expect to receive and in turn give protection and affection.

Why is this? Why when modern science and technology have given us the opportunity to lead such a rewarding civilisation does violence make up such a large part of it? Violence is not simply a gun any more than it is a stone, a club or a bomb—they are merely tools. Violence is a state of mind translated into an act against another human being. Does that state of mind find its source in our now much-relaxed religious and social customs? Can we blame a lack of control due to alcohol or drugs? Perhaps the huge pressures of unemployment and other stresses within a sophisticated society are simply too much for many to bear. These probably all contribute, but I believe that there is a more pro-active violence in our society that is feeding on existing frustrations and weaknesses and may contribute in no small way when an offender takes the violent option, either against society in general or against particular individuals.

Could it be that the underlying level of "accepted as normal" violence in films, on TV and in videos which has been formally approved by our legislative classifications has contributed? I might add that I expressed this concern during the last Parliament when the Classification of Films Amendment Bill was being debated. The Minister in charge of the legislation responded to my concern that the Commonwealth Censor had taken a very moderate and sensible position in relation to the classification of films. I did not agree then and I do not agree now. I personally believe that there is too much graphic violence depicted on our screens. The graphic, moving, coloured image is a powerful tool that I am sure can have a tremendous impact on a young mind or on a mind that is already affected by stress, drugs or alcohol.

Proving the connection—or lack of it—will be difficult. I am pleased that the Prime Minister has also raised the question of film violence, and I encourage Queenslanders to express their views. I encourage all members here and people in the wider community not to allow this issue to become lost in the smoke of the gun debate. For those who recoil from the thought of censorship, I might remind them that we already practise it with the ban on tobacco advertising. I suggest that violence is a far greater threat to our society.

Alternative Energy Policy

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa) (7.21 p.m.): In February last year, the former Premier and I launched the Queensland Government's energy efficiency and alternative energy program. This program was to cost $35m over a three-year period. When the policy was announced, it certainly captured the imagination of all Queenslanders, but in particular young Queenslanders. The policy was designed to try to change the culture of Queenslanders in their use of power and energy. The policy was the result of massive consultation with industry groups, green groups, conservation groups and indeed ordinary Queenslanders. The policy included many incentives for the people of this State. The main one was a $500 cash discount to people who moved away from electric hot water systems to solar hot water systems, but the policy included many other incentives.

We now find that the new coalition Government has put the big freeze on that policy and indeed has abandoned the main principles of it. I believe that that is very sad. Not only did the former Government offer cash incentives to the people of Queensland to try to change their culture but it also established an Office of Energy Management. That was the first time in the history of this State that the Government had tackled some of the alternative energy issues. After the announcement of the policy, we received inquiries from within Queensland, within Australia and from right around the world. Queensland was seen as a leader in alternative energy.

Regrettably, the lights have gone out. This Government has cut the funding for the incentives offered by the previous Government. This is a sad and sorry day for Queensland. In addition to this, there are the actions of the Minister with regard to the Daintree—a very special and unique part of our planet. The Labor Government declared that no further mains power would be allowed in that area. The coalition Government has reversed that policy and intends to run power through that unique part of our planet. If that were not bad enough, the Minister has stated also that he intends to proceed with the Tully/Millstream proposal. Of course, that will never occur, because the Minister's colleagues in Canberra simply will not allow it to happen.

This Government is being petty in the extreme, because the amount of money which

it is trying to save is minute. The coalition Government is turning back the clock. Queensland had set the scene in relation to alternative energy sources. This State had given a lead to the other States. Instead of trying to progress that initiative, this Government has turned back the clock. We are returning to the days when the Government was an environmental vandal. Nobody could ever accuse me of being a greenie—far from it. When I visited the Daintree and saw that beautiful part of our beautiful State, I was convinced that to allow mains power into that part of Queensland was a mortal sin. Yet one of the first acts of the new Minister was to ridicule the stance taken by the previous Government and me and to give a commitment that power could be run through that region. I make a forecast in this Parliament tonight that before long the relevant local authority will receive applications for industrial activities to take place in that unique part of our State. The Government and the Minister stand condemned, not just by people like me but also by young Queenslanders who thought that their Government had a vision.

Time expired.

Mundingburra By-election Campaign

Mr GRICE (Broadwater) (7.26 p.m.): This morning I raised matters that I have asked the Criminal Justice Commission to investigate with the same rigour as it has pursued the so-called police memorandum of understanding. They were the ALP's bogus Independent candidate in the Mundingburra election, Tisha Crosland, and the former State Government's park people memorandum of understanding. I would like to add more detail which would be of use to the CJC should it find the time to investigate the improper behaviour of the Labor Party and its friends during that election campaign. I again challenge the CJC to investigate these matters publicly, as it is doing with the police memorandum of understanding—that is, if the current criticism that the commission is beginning to look like the Toowong branch of the ALP is not to gain credence.

But back to the story of Mooney's mate and the ALP's "Independent" candidate in the Mundingburra election, Tisha Crosland. Mayor Mooney planned to reward Ms Crosland for her services and preferences in the election by giving her a casual councillor's vacancy on the Townsville City Council. He dumped that idea the day before the announcement when the plan was exposed in the Townsville media. The Mayor then filled the vacancy with another mate, Geoff Plante, who is one of Mooney's fundraisers.

So how much help did those candidates who handed their preferences to Labor get from the ALP? Crosland, Australian Women's Party candidate Pauline Woodbridge and Australian Indigenous People's Party candidate Michael Bourne certainly got some Labor Party help on polling day. In the pre-dawn, ALP booth workers were observed unloading material for all three candidates and setting up their booths. Labor Party supporters were full of the milk of human kindness towards their alleged political opponents on 3 February. Particularly in the case of Crosland, one begins to wonder whether she had any genuine input into her campaign at all.

With the park people memorandum of understanding, it is worthy of note that one of the five Ministers who signed the document was the honourable Leader of the Opposition, Peter Beattie. The State Government memorandum quotes failed ALP candidate Mooney as making promises for extra health funding for Townsville Aborigines which was signed by five Goss Government Ministers—Mr Beattie of course and, among others, the then Family Services Minister, Margaret Woodgate. The memorandum gives remarkable prominence to the wishes of the Townsville City Council—the council which, of course, is headed by Mayor Mooney. While the public hospital system was in chaos and patients were dying in corridors waiting for treatment, this document committed the State Government to a most generous program for Townsville's park people.

Like most of Labor's promises and commitments pre-Mundingburra, the memorandum is not costed. But the commitments are generous and include the construction of a diversionary centre on State Government-owned land at Old Common Road. The memorandum notes—

> "The Townsville City Council has urged the State Government to proceed with the construction of the diversionary centre at the earliest possible time."

While I am sure that all honourable members are delighted that the park people of Townsville had such influential friends as Mooney—that is, after he realised that trying to dispose of these people by driving and harassing them out of the park was considered a little inhumane and not great political wisdom—perhaps other Aboriginal and community groups throughout the State might wonder why they did not get such favoured

treatment from the former State Government, and they certainly exist. Was it because these other groups lacked AWP candidate Pauline Woodbridge and AIPP candidate Michael Bourne, who could give their preferences to Labor in a crucial election?

If the CJC holds a public inquiry into the behaviour of the ALP and its mates in Mundingburra, perhaps it might like to look at the cost to the taxpayer of State Government staff working on the Mooney campaign. Jacki Byrne, the former Director-General of the Department of Family Services, Labor AWU faction king-maker and new-found friend of the honourable Leader of the Opposition, Mr Beattie, would be a good starting point. The Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, the Honourable Kev Lingard, has already tabled Ms Byrne's hefty hotel expenses while she was in Townsville during the Mundingburra campaign. She was, of course, officially on leave. That is an old Labor Party hack's trick. It works like this——

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.30 p.m.